

Rhododendrons South Australia

Australian Rhododendron Society Inc. South Australian Branch

Issue 91 - August 2015

Coming Events

Annual General Meeting

19th August 7:45pm

The AGM will be held at the Crafers Hall and will follow drinks and nibbles and the sale of plants from the Raywood Nursery at Dellamere at very reasonable prices.

There will be no speaker. This will be an opportunity to mingle, socialise, and pick up something for the garden.

There will also be a door prize and drinks will be provided by the society.

Please bring a savoury plate.

September Meeting

There will be no September Meeting in lieu of the Grant Memorial Lecture.

Grant Memorial Lecture

Friday 11th September

The Grant Memorial Lecture will feature Andrew Rouse who will speak on the topic of "Conservation of Vireya Rhododendrons".

Andrew is an environmentalist who has recently returned to WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature) after a four year break, to manage their agriculture program. As a sustainability professional Andrew works closely with business and industry to help them shift to more sustainable practices. Andrew has previously worked for BHP Billiton and the International Finance Corporation, an arm of the World Bank.

Andrew developed an interest in vireya rhododendrons from his father who filled the family garden (and nature strip!) with species and his own hybrids. Andrew has dabbled

with vireya hybridising aimed at creating small, compact and floriferous cultivars - a task he readily admits is a challenging one! A priority for Andrew is to safeguard in cultivation in Australia the diversity of vireya species; a recent project of the Victorian Branch of the Rhododendron Society has been to refurbish the glasshouse to display the wide range of vireya species held in cultivation in Australia. This project has been a great success with the glasshouse now holding more than 150 vireya species and subspecies.

I'm sure Andrew will pass on many of his practical growing tips.

The lecture will be held in the Coventry Library on Friday the 11th of September at 7.30 for drinks and finger food with the lecture starting at 8pm. Tickets are \$20 and will be available at the AGM, or from Ian or Milton.

July Meeting

Simon Begg gave an update on the collection of the Australian native vireya. He outlined the difficulty involved in negotiating with the Queensland Government departments. There are now two academic institutions involved, James Cook and Dr Sue Gardiner; principal Scientist, Plant Gene Mapping, The Horticultural & Food Research Institute of New Zealand. Research grants have been applied for, so hopefully things will move in a forward direction.

Simon also discussed his proposal for the future direction on the National Council. He wished to streamline operations, reduce costs and attempt to entice branches back to "the fold" (as it were). His proposals require due consideration at a future date.

The night's raffle was won by a new member, Gary Seifried, however as Rob Hatcher was away there wasn't a prize in evidence, he will receive his prize this month. As usual a scrumptious supper was enjoyed by all.

Michelle



Rhododendron lochiaie



By Bill Voigt

Culture Notes

"What you should be doing with your rhodos and garden this August"

If you have old Rhodos in your garden, they may have been grafted onto Ponticum stock, a practice which was common once. Often suckers of the stock arise, and if not removed, they will eventually overwhelm the hybrid, or cause it to lose its vigour. These suckers are easily removed because their foliage is quite different from the plant which has been grafted onto that root stock.

Look out for seedling ivies that can quickly climb into Rhodos. Because they are spread by birds, they may emerge in your garden even if there is no ivy growing in your garden.

If you intend planting new Rhodos after our sales day, now is a good time to prepare the sites for the new ones. Loosen the soil and dig in some old well-rotted compost or animal manure, break up the soil to ensure the site is well drained.



Camellia "Donation"

Rhodos that look rather pale or haven't put on much new growth may either be suffering from water logging or they may need more nitrogen. Drainage may be improved by aerating the soil, using a fork, or even lifting the plant (if not too large) by placing a fork underneath it and raising it a little.



Nitrogen deficient Rhodo

Weak solution of sulphate of ammonia applied at monthly intervals will supply much needed nitrogen.

Camellias are coming into bloom now – Sasanquas have nearly finished flowering and now the Japonicas and Hybrids are showing their colours. One of the showiest camellias for its wealth of flowers is "Donation". This is a hybrid, sun tolerant and hardy.

Glenberry Nursery at Carey Gully has a huge range of camellias at this time, well worth a visit to see the vast range of rare trees and shrubs.



Frost damage on fuchsia

Heavy frosts have caused some heartache in those areas which are more frost prone. Don't be in a hurry to trim plants that have been "scalded" because the dead foliage protects the growth beneath. Fuchsias and Plumbago are two plants most likely to be affected.

After pruning roses, it is usually very easy to find any suckers that need to be removed. People often wonder why there are red roses among their chosen white, yellow or pink roses. The red is from the suckers from the rose stock

Cinerarias are often attacked by leaf miner which feeds beneath the surface of the leaves. This pest can be controlled with any insecticide applied about every three weeks. Cinerarias make a wonderful splash of colour during winter, but do not take heavy frosts.



Cineraria

If your soil is heavy and difficult to work, try using some of the potting mixes which are largely finely ground bark as a mulch. When worked into the top layer of soil it provides an ideal medium for young plants and seedlings.

Generally the hardiest Rhodos are the purple and pink varieties, while the yellows, oranges, and more pastel tones require more protection. If you have a favourite which has proved difficult to grow, try growing it in a container where it can be cherished.

Spring is on the way.



Librarians Report



by Ann & David Matison

Your Librarians would like to apologise for our tardiness over the past few issues of the Newsletter. We will try to do better in the future.

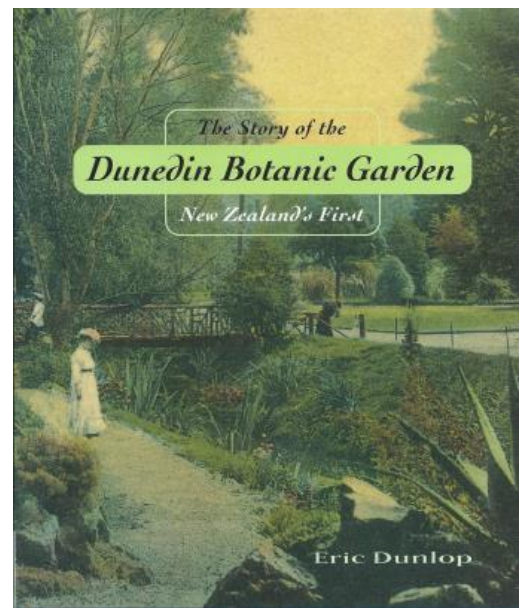
For new members we do have a good selection of specialist Rhododendron, Azalea and Vireya books that are kept in the cupboards at The Crafers Hall.

These are available for loan. We are happy to explain the borrowing system.

Due to a lack of space in the cupboards we have duplicate copies of some of the books plus back copies of the State Newsletters and Journals from the National Rhododendron Association at our home. Please speak to us if you would like to access these.

I was impressed by the beautiful pictures of the Dunedin Botanic Garden that Peter and Richard showed us to illustrate their talk at the beginning of the year. After the talk I realised that there is a book about the Gardens in our collection. It is a history of the development of the Gardens from 1863 until 2003, published to celebrate the Garden's 140th Anniversary. No wonder their plants are so well established.

For anyone planning to visit Dunedin or the South of The South Island of New Zealand this interesting background information will probably be of great value to access before your visit.



Bird of the Month

Sulphur-Crested Cockatoo

Cacatua galerita

A common cockatoo in the Adelaide hills. A colony of up to 50 can be seen just below the Heyson Tunnels.

They perch on the tall light poles.

A resident colony of 40+ can be seen on the grass paddocks just through Littlehampton.

Chris Thomas



Toolangi's Tough 20

I was recently in Mt Barker Bunnings and noticed a "Just Arrived" sign "Toolangi's Tough 20". A selection of very healthy and well-priced "Hardy Hybrids". It was pleasing to see Rhodos which have a chance of surviving in the casual gardener's yard !

Michelle



Tales from Forest Lodge



July has been a very cold month, in fact the coldest for almost 20 years. On most days the temperature has struggled to get to 10C and a more usual reading has been a max of 5 to 7 degrees. The core house temperature has dropped to 9C but our living areas are kept pleasant with the slow combustion heater and lots of firewood. The garden is cold and even the camellias are slow to bloom. The only rhododendron flowering is Sir Robert Peel.

July has been a good average month with 162mm of rain and at last the tanks are full again. August has started well with 34 mm in the first 2 days and I hope that it continues in the same way. We may even see the sun again and there are a heap of plants that need to be put in the ground on the next fine day.

Milton



From the Propagating Bench



By Richard Illman

Winter Joy

There are not many positives to dreary, wet, and cold winter days but when the first snowdrops and crocuses bloom they do lift the spirits. We have found that the true snowdrops are quite challenging to grow but a recent article by a renowned Galanthus grower in the UK shed some light on why they may prove difficult. Roger Harvey is a nurseryman in Suffolk who started breeding Galanthus in 2002 and has found that the received wisdom about not growing snowdrops in pots can be disputed. He plants the bulbs 2/3 way down in 1 litre plastic pots in a mixture of peat, perlite and 45% composted bark. A slow release fertilizer lasting 12-15 months is also incorporated in the mix. They are kept growing until the beginning of spring when they are allowed to dry out and not watered again until early autumn. During the dry period they are covered with a layer of grit so that they are not completely desiccated. I believe in our conditions they should also be placed in a shaded area during the summer months. In Roger's experience the bulbs will each produce up to 10 bulblets depending on the cultivar. This method is worth a try.



Galanthus



late winter crocuses

Crocuses are also coming into their own at this time of the year. You can have a wonderful display if you are careful to protect them from rain. Once fully open it is certainly worth getting out with a fine brush and "tickling" the flowers in order to produce seed. The seed head will emerge about three months after the flower has died and appear as a green cylinder about a centimetre long that rises as a stem from the centre of the plant. When the pod begins to crack the seed can be harvested and sowed promptly by scattering on the surface of

a pot containing seed raising mix. The seed should be covered with about a centimetre of gravel. Seedlings will emerge in about 3 months. A great way to increase your crocus collection.

More information about propagating Galanthus and Crocus can be obtained on Ian Young's weekly blog from the Scottish rock gardening society. (srgc.org)

Getting an early start- Raising your summer vegetables

With the increasing cost of punnetted seedlings you may prefer to raise your own and now is an opportune time to get your summer tomatoes and other home grown vegetables started. All you need is a warm and light location or one of our tried and true warm boxes. They are very easy to build and can be used for all manner of seed raising. Chat to Richard at the next meeting if you are interested in setting up a box. He also has a selection of open pollinated tomatoes, capsicum and pumpkin that he is prepared to share with interested members.



Propagating box

News Editor

As many of you are aware, this is David and I last newsletter as editors. We would like to thank those who have contributed articles over the last 2 years especially Chris, Bill, Milton, Bron and Richard. Their contributions have helped keep this newsletter interesting and informative for members. We would like to take this opportunity to wish Bron and Nataliya well as she takes over the role as editor.

David and I will now turn our attention to revamping and updating the website so any contributions would be greatly received !

Plant Sale

Due to heavy commitments in October with several National Garden conferences being held in South Australia, the date for the annual plant sale has been set for the long weekend of the 4th of October.

Please keep this date free.



Can you help ?

Unknown Rhododendron



Can anyone identify the following rhododendron for Lianne Healey ? It blooms about the same time as Christmas Cheer and is extremely prone to Lace bug.

Tree fern trunks

Does anyone have large dead tree fern trunks? Rick and I are looking for some in which to grow Vireyas.

NEUTROG™
The Experts' Choice

Article Submissions

The news editors welcome submissions for the monthly newsletter. In addition to Problem Corner, Recipe of the Month, and Bloom of the Month, members are welcome to submit articles on any topic that will be of interest to the Society's membership.

We have a deadline of the 1st of the month to allow time to prepare the newsletter for distribution a week before the meeting.

Submissions can be made directly to Bronwyn or Nataliya, or emailed to; -
news.editor@sarhodo.org.au

Michelle & Bronwyn

Bloom of the Month



Vireya Peach dream featured in the newsletter header



Editors Tip : Where possible images for articles in this Newsletter are sourced from members. Where this is not possible, images are sourced from the internet. Due to deadlines it is not possible to seek permission to use each image, so we hyperlink each of the images in acknowledgement of their source. This has an additional benefit, if you click on these images you may be able to find information in addition to that in the article.