

# Newsletter of the ARSV

PO Box 296 Olinda Vic 3788

## WE NEED SOMEBODY TO HELP WITH THE LIBRARY URGENTLY

We still need a volunteer to help bring our library into order. It is a valuable society resource and we are continually adding to it so as to keep up to date. It is now a long time since the collection was catalogued and we really need somebody to help us. If it requires special software we will endeavour to get it. Even if you are not able to do it all yourself any assistance in terms of how to do it or what we should do would be welcomed. **Please contact Michael Hare on 0405 659 741 or burrow@netspace.net.au.**

### Membership renewals due this month

Renewal notices have been posted and emailed out. If you haven't renewed please do so as soon as possible. If you have lost the renewal form please contact Francis Crome 0417 730 291.

### Many thanks for the donations

Members have been very generous with donations and we have had a particularly generous contribution to extensions for the Vireya House. Thank you all.

### Sunday working bee at the National Rhododendron Gardens at Olinda

The first Sunday working bee will be held on Sunday August 16<sup>th</sup>. Meet near the Vireya house, which is just past the restrooms, from 10:00 onwards. Please **contact Andrew Rouse on 0424 750 406** if you plan to attend.

### First flowering of *R. mendumiae*



This lovely flowering specimen in Simon and Marcia Begg's garden is the first time *R. mendumiae* has flowered in Australia.

### Annual Plant Sale

The annual plant sale is being held on Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> September at the National Rhododendron Gardens at Olinda. Plants will be available from 10 am and will be located near the Vireya house. **Members receive a 25% discount.** We cannot put aside plants nor ship them but members are invited to come along on Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> September for a first pick opportunity to buy plants ahead of the public sale. If you want to come Tuesday we will take you to the propagation area so please contact **Michael Hare on 0405 659 741 or burrow@netspace.net.au or Alex Pottage 03 5786 1595 to make arrangements.**

### Do you know this Vireya?



Liz Ray from Queenscliff sent us a picture of this beautiful hybrid which was flowering in early May. It was her father's (Allan Williams) prize rhodo with which he used to "win prizes at the show over the Cup weekend".

None of us know what this particular hybrid is, however. **If anyone out there knows could you drop an email to Andrew Rouse or Michael Hare?**

### Come Join us on Tuesdays

It really is rewarding gardening, propagating and learning about Rhodos and other plants at the National Rhododendron Gardens every Tuesday. Contact Prue Crome (0419 659 741) or Alex Pottage (03 5786 1595) for details.

Committee							
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## This contribution from Richard Gilmour-Smith

Vireyas give me a lot of pleasure in winter as several are in bloom this winter here in Middle Park. I removed a tub of *R. loranthiflorum* a few days ago to a better spot where I can see it from the house as it approaches full bloom (photo upper left). The perfume - even in this cold weather - is a joy. It is choice species as it has never needed tip pruning to keep it in shape, most unusual for a Vireya, and has never been attacked by fungus. I've had it 5 years and it has now reached about a meter high. The photo at lower left is one of its hybrid descendants, "Sweet Seraphim". Despite the promise, it has no perfume in this cold weather. The plant at middle right is ostensibly "Coral Flare". I thought I had this hybrid until the heatwave of 2009 when I lost it along with my *R. jasminiflorum*, so I bought this as a replacement a year ago. It isn't the same one. My original was like the photo on Vireya.net (photo upper right). My replacement has an unattractive floppy growth habit. The one I lost was a natural bushy type with internodes half the length of this one and it was a prolific flowerer, with the flowers being slightly smaller, more compact and of a softer colour than its replacement. The picture of "Coral Flare" on the upper right is exactly like the one I lost. Here you can see the blooms are more compact than in mine.

Finally, "Eastern Zanzibar" (lower right) behaves like a cool climate rhododendron and is happy in the garden, although it needs sun protection and regular Mancozeb. The photo was taken late when the pink has become harsh and so the bi-colour effect is lost. Despite it being prone to fungus disease it is a good doer and is easy to strike. I think it grows too big for a pot.



Coral Flare from vireya.net



*R. loranthiflorum*



Coral Flare



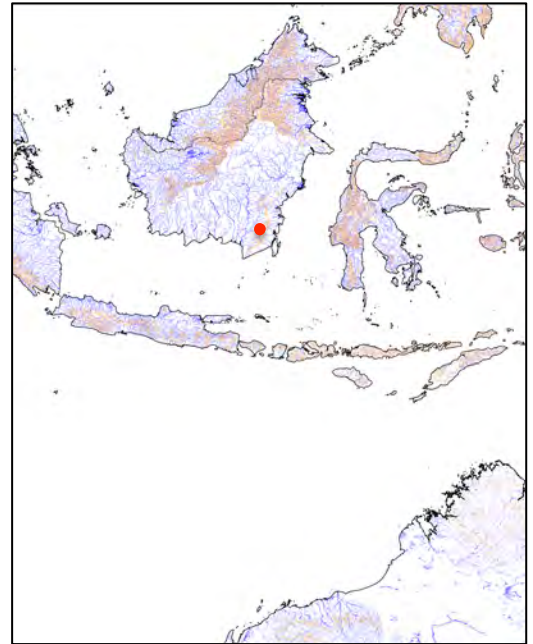
Sweet Seraphim



Eastern Zanzibar



## Rhododendron in focus - *R. alborugosum*



*R. alborugosum* Argent and J. Dransf. is a beautiful Bornean species only described in 1989. The type was collected in 1972 and George Argent and Peter Wilie brought it into cultivation as recently as 1996. It was discovered at 1400-1800 m elevation in montane mossy forest dominated by the conifer *Phyllocladus hypophyllus* (Malesian Celery-pine) on Gunung Besar (=Mt. Halauhalau) a mountain in southern Kalimantan (Indonesian Borneo). This is the red dot on the map. It was found on sandstone ridges amongst mosses and lichens with *Drimys* and *Vaccinium*, common companion plants with *Vireyas* throughout their distribution.

It is a large shrub growing up to 3 m high with pseudowhorls of highly attractive dark green rugose leaves with deep reddish veins on the underside. The leaves alone make it a very worthwhile plant to grow. The large flowers reach 46 mm across with tubes up to 40 mm long, have red pedicels and are pleasantly fragrant. They are commonly white; sometimes pink but all usually have a pinkish tinge in the bud. Those with a pink blush retain it throughout the flower's life. This is a very worthwhile plant. It is proving to be a vigorous species suitable for outdoor conditions and may in time prove to be one of the better *Vireya* species for temperate gardens in Australia. The specimen in the *Vireya* house, donated to the collection by Lyn Craven, is doing extremely well and flowered prolifically earlier this year.

### Appeal for earthquake victims in remote Nepal

Ken Cox, author, plantsman and owner of Glendoick Gardens in Scotland has launched an appeal for victims of the recent horrific earthquake in Nepal. He is specifically targeting helping those in the rhododendron trekking areas, which have been badly affected. These very remote areas are likely to be less well serviced by aid programs as they are far from Kathmandu. If you can help please log on to Ken's website to donate: <http://www.glendoick.com/Nepal-Earthquake-Appeal>.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition of Argent's *Vireya* book

George Argent has produced a second edition of his "Rhododendrons of the subgenus *Vireya*". It is a major revision with many new species and photos. The society is trying to put in a bulk order and is inviting members to add their names to the order list. If you want to purchase a copy please **contact Andrew Rouse (awrouse@bigpond.com, 0424 750 406) or Michael Hare (0405 659 741 or burrow@netspace.net.au)**.

### Norfolk Island Flora Week

For those with some time to spare, some cash and a love of plants there is an upcoming botanical tour of Norfolk Island. Although the island has no *Rhododendrons* a quarter of its native species are endemic so this is a special occasion to see a unique flora.

<https://www.norfolkislandtravelcentre.com/events/norfolk-island-flora-week>

### Another new species from China

Yongpeng Ma from the Kunming Botanic Gardens and his colleagues have described a new species: *Rhododendron bailiense* Y. P. Ma, C. Q. Zhang and D. F. Chamb. It is a small tree to 4 m high with pale violet flowers related to *R. auriculatum* and *R. chihsinianum*, species in subsection *Auriculata*, subgenus *Hymenanthes*. It was described from a small population at 1800-2100 m in the 130 km<sup>2</sup> Baili *Rhododendron* Nature Reserve in the highlands of NW Guizhou. It was only found in an area of 0.25 ha and at a single site in nearby Pan County. It is tentatively classed as endangered until more data can be gathered. There are no photographs available of this plant on the web but illustrations are presented in the original paper at [www.mapress.com/phytotaxa/content/2015/f/pt00195p200.pdf](http://www.mapress.com/phytotaxa/content/2015/f/pt00195p200.pdf).

## ARS Victoria Calendar for 2015

**Sunday August 16<sup>th</sup>** National Rhododendron Gardens at Olinda working bee (see note on page 1 of this newsletter)

**Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> September** first pick opportunity for members to buy plants ahead of the public sale on Sunday 27<sup>th</sup>. (see page 1 of this newsletter).

**Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> September** Annual Plant Sale (see page 1 of this newsletter).

**Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> October** Visit to Alistair Watt's collection at 35 Cobden Road Laver's Hill. Alastair has an extraordinary collection of conifers many grown from seed he has collected in the wild. This is an opportunity to see very rare plants and get some tips on conifer identification. Meet at 35 Cobden Road at 10:30 am. Please let us know if you are coming by contacting John O'Hara – (contact details on page 1)

**Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> November** Toorak and South Yarra garden visits. This will be a visit to two or three old established gardens. More details in the October newsletter. Bookings essential, to book **contact Andrew Rouse on [arouse@bigpond.com](mailto:arouse@bigpond.com)**

**AGM in November** - date to be announced. Details in the October newsletter.

## Other plant events coming up

**Saturday and Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> August** 44<sup>th</sup> Camellia and Garden Show presented by Camellias Victoria Inc. and Waverley Garden Club Inc. Venue: Mount Waverley Community Centre, 47 Miller Crescent, Mount Waverley. Times: 1 to 5 pm Saturday and 10 am to 4:30 pm Sunday

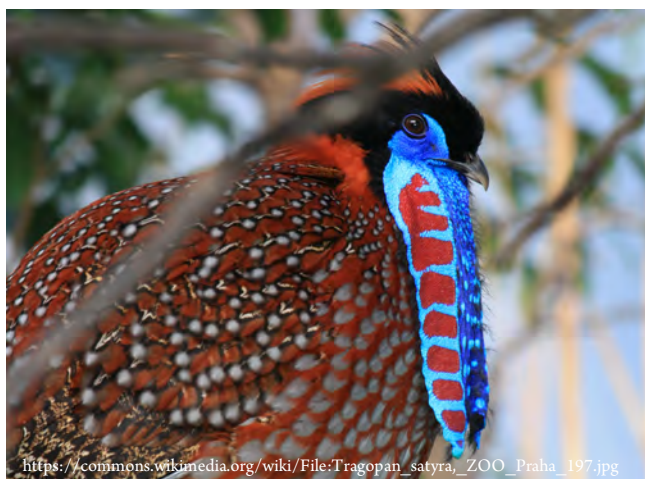
**Saturday and Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> September** Ferny Creek Spring Show at Ferny Creek. Entry \$5:00 for non members. Times: 12 to 4 pm Saturday and 10 am to 4:00 pm Sunday. For details see <http://fchs.org.au/>

**19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> September** "The Australian Landscape Conference, 2015 ART AND NATURE: Conflict and Harmony in the Landscape". An international conference with the "world's finest landscape and garden designers". Cost \$649. Venue: Melbourne Convention Exhibition Centre. For details see: <http://www.landscapeconference.com/2015/>

**Saturday and Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> October** RHSV "Horticulture and Gardening Festival 2015" at the Melbourne Showgrounds. For details see <http://rhsv.org.au/horticultural-gardening-festival-2015/>

**23rd October to 30<sup>th</sup> November** 63<sup>rd</sup> Annual Blackheath Rhododendron Festival. See <http://rhodofestival.com.au/>

## Companion animals: Temminck's Tragopan



Rhododendrons do not exist alone. They form parts of rich and fascinating ecosystems with equally fascinating plants and animals. We present here the first of an occasional feature on fauna that is particularly associated with Rhododendron habitats.

In China and the Himalayan region pheasants have radiated so that this region is a centre for global pheasant diversity in the same way as it is for Rhododendrons. Here we present one of the five tragopan species, arguably the most gorgeous and peculiar of pheasants.

Temminck's Tragopan (*Tragopan temminckii*) is a chicken sized bird weighing up to 1.5 kg found in evergreen or mixed deciduous forest, bamboo thickets and rhododendron scrubs from Bhutan and northeast India, through northeast Burma to central China and extending south to northern Vietnam. It is a montane species usually found between 2500 and 3600 m altitude but sometimes can be found as low as 900 m. They tend not to extend above the tree line but descend to lower altitudes in winter. While they are generally terrestrial feeders they spend a fair bit of time in trees and they nest in trees, generally low down. Males may be solitary or polygynous and bear sky blue inflatable "horns" and a spectacular metallic blue and red neck sac that they inflate during courtship dances. The female takes on all the nesting and chick rearing duties and stays with the chicks for up to 6 weeks until they have learnt how to feed and safely scramble up trees and shrubs by themselves. A video of the display can be viewed at:

<http://www.arkive.org/temmincks-tragopan/tragopan-temminckii/video-09.html>