

Newsletter of the ARSV

PO Box 296 Olinda Vic 3788

Dr Keith George Edward Moody 25/10/1925 - 22/12/2015



On Tuesday the 22nd of December just after 10am Keith passed away peacefully in the house that he built, surrounded by the garden that he had built in East Doncaster. Keith was an extremely high academic achiever and attained the award of a PhD. in Civil Engineering from the University of Illinois, USA. He was employed at the Country Roads Board and headed the Materials Research Division, the Bridge Construction Division, and finally became Chief Engineer; he had just over 8,000 staff under his control. Having both administrative and civil engineering skills, he was able to apply his knowledge to the benefit of the rhododendron garden at Olinda. The construction of the majority of the roads through the garden was executed under his direction, as was the lower dam, pump house, irrigation system, rock garden, ornamental bridge and the reconstruction of the upper dam. Other facilities such as the nurseryman's pavilion, workshop, glasshouse and toilets, were other projects that were undertaken.

Keith was twice president of the society but on completion of his presidency he became disillusioned with the direction that the administration of the garden was taking and he slowly withdrew his involvement. In October 2015 I took him to Olinda to view the garden for what has turned out to be his final time. It had been a number of years since he had seen the garden and he was astounded

as to how the garden had developed and indicated to me that he felt that the management of the garden was finally back in good capable hands and that a new and exciting period for the garden was about to begin with the extension of the garden into the old golf course. He said he wished he could be there to see it happen to finally complete the garden. It is without question that Keith has left a remarkable legacy of the base infrastructure that constitutes the NRG at Olinda as we know it today, for future generations to enjoy.

Steven Moody

Life membership to Simon Begg

Simon Begg was made a life member of the ARSV at the last AGM in Adelaide. He has been making major contributions to the ARS Victorian Branch since he joined in 1992. He is now President of the National Council.

He singlehandedly shifted the culture in the society away from collections being tightly held, to a higher purpose of making species and hybrids available to anyone interested in them, thus making a lasting contribution to safeguarding many species and hybrids in Australia. As an exhibitor he has collected innumerable prizes and trophies, keeping rhododendrons in the public gaze.

Simon has generously donated dozens of plants to the vireya species collection at the NRG Olinda, including the only *R. goodenoughii* that could be tracked down in Australia. He was a driving force behind the ARS 2012 trip to North Queensland where members had the opportunity to see a number of different populations of *R. viriosum* and *R. lochiae* in the wild. One of his outstanding contributions has been his engagement with AQIS in rationalising and expanding the list of Rhododendrons permitted for importation. His work has benefited all Australian rhododendron enthusiasts.



Plant Sale in April

We will have a stall at **Tesselaar's Gardening and Plant Expo to be held at Tesselaar's Nursery 357 Monbulk Rd. Silvan on 2nd and 3rd April 2016 from 9am - 4pm.** (<http://gardeningandplantsexpo.com.au/>). There will be many species, vireyas, deciduous azaleas and hybrids for sale.

Members will receive a 25% discount. Moreover if members, and members only, want to try to get a particular species or hybrid then contact any committee member and we will bring it along if we have it. Unfortunately we cannot ship plants.

Committee							
John O'Hara	President	johnohara@optusnet.com.au	03 9593 1323	Simon Begg		simonwbegg@gmail.com	03 9728 4466
Andrew Rouse	Vice-President	awrouse@bigpond.com	0424 750 406	Francis Crome	Newsletter editor	francis@crome.net.au	0417 730 291
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Alan Keper's Rhododendron in focus: *Rhododendron ciliicalyx*

Subsection Maddenia

Ciliicalyx Alliance.

We have two forms of this species in the NRG, and both are suitable for Melbourne gardens. My own plant of *ciliicalyx* "Pink" was obtained from our former President Arnold Teese and is now over 40 years old. It is generally lace-bug resistant, petal-blight-resistant, and heat tolerant, but requires some shade.

The second form was obtained in 2006 and is named *ciliicalyx* "Charisma", and is from an unknown source. This plant in the main rockery puts on a stunning display in October and has pale pink and white flowers with a pale yellow centre. (see photo). Both forms have a sweet spicy perfume.

This species has caused much confusion among botanists, and many of the plants in England have been wrongly named. However, both of our forms conform closely to the description given in "Rhododendrons of China" published by the American Species Foundation. These have a prominent calyx with long bristles, shiny leaves, which are paler on the undersides, bristles on the new growth, and a coppery bark. These characteristics do not agree with any other species, so we should retain the present name, although there is always the possibility of some hybridisation.

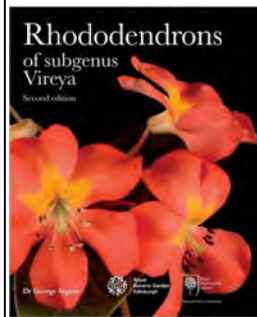
Distribution: Yunnan, at an altitude of 1800 to 4000 metres. It grows on rocky hillsides and woodlands. It would be an advantage if we could obtain new samples from the wild.



Flowering of *R. saxifragoides*



Vireya second edition



Our order for George Argent's second edition of "Rhododendrons of the subgenus Vireya" arrived a few weeks ago. Thanks to George, society members got a great discount. If you didn't get one there is a copy in our library, which is up at the National Rhododendron Gardens.



In November, Andrew Rouse flowered *R. saxifragoides*, the first time this species has flowered in cultivation in Australia for some years. Over the course of three weeks the plant put up three solitary flowers on the characteristically long flower stalks.

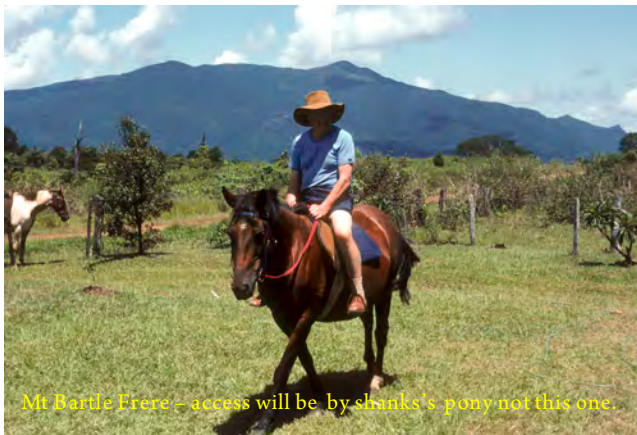
The species name "saxifragoides" (saxifrage like) refers to its growth habitat. It is a tussock forming species from the alpine meadows and bogs of the central cordillera of New Guinea. Woody "rhizomes" connect individual tussocks in these boggy situations but these rhizomes appear to be branches which, when buried in a bog, would look like rhizomes. What may appear to be a colony of plants may be only one individual and it has been suggested such "colonies" may be very old.

It has been used as a parent for excellent hybrids such as "Saxon Glow" (pictured at right), "Saxon Dawn" and "Saxon Blush".

North Queensland expedition progress

We announced in the December 2015 newsletter that the society will be mounting a trip to the Cairns region to work with James Cook University to survey montane plant populations on the peaks of the Wet Tropics of NQ where *R. viriosum* and *R. lochiae* occur. Our society is an integral part of this project and is contributing \$5,000, volunteer field helpers, horticultural expertise and our facilities at the NRG Olinda. This, and subsequent expeditions, requires volunteers from ARSV and the response to the announcement of this project in the December newsletter has been good, with several members already contacting Andrew Rouse expressing their interest in joining in.

The field trips will occur mid-2016 onward. We haven't worked out logistics yet and, obviously, those surveying on the mountains will need reasonable levels of fitness. However, there are likely to be a range of roles for members. Please contact Andrew Rouse - awrouse@bigpond.com or 0424 750 406.



Prue Crome with a magnificent *R. viriosum* on Bell Peak North



The following societies have events that may interest you.

Melbourne Begonia Society

See http://www.begoniasmelb.org.au/coming_events.html or contact Anne at 03 94899680.

February 27th and 28th Annual Begonia Show at Moorabbin Seniors Citizens Hall, 964 Nepean Highway, Moorabbin.

Ferny Creek Horticultural Society

see <http://fchs.org.au/events/> or ring 03 97551882

March 12th and 13th Plant Collectors Sale & Garden Expo at Ferny Creek Horticultural Society Hall, 100 Hilton Rd, Ferny Creek.

April 23rd and 24th Autumn Show. Horticultural Society Hall, 100 Hilton Rd Ferny Creek.

Companion animal –White Eared-pheasant *Crossoptilon crossoptilon*



This is another of China's beautiful pheasants and inhabits subalpine regions of southwestern China, between 3,500 and 4,300 m. coinciding with the heartland of Rhododendrons. It inhabits coniferous-broadleaf forest; rhododendron and juniper scrub but also forages in high alpine meadows. They are quite gregarious and are usually seen in groups of 5 to 20 although very large flocks have been recorded. The males are much bigger than females and can reach 2.75 kilos. I saw flocks of these on alpine meadows dotted with *R. nivale* on the Baima Shan – unforgettable. They forage on the ground for seeds and insects, browse foliage and dig for liliaceous bulbs. In winter they descend from the meadows to the lower altitude forests as low as 2800m.

Eared-pheasants get their name from an ear-like tuft of feathers on each side of the face but this species is the one member of the genus where this feature is much diminished. Just as in many species of Rhododendrons this pheasant varies considerably geographically and there are arguments about its taxonomy. Four subspecies are generally recognised differing in the amount of white in the plumage. They can vary from almost pure white to slaty grey. A second species, the Tibetan Eared-pheasant *C. harmani*, is sometimes lumped with this one.

Francis Crome

Plant propagation at NRG Olinda

Propagation is an important activity of the Society and over the last few years the Society has put great effort into improving the facilities and systems we use at the NRG. We have built a large contemporary potting shed, which contains the “Rouse House”, an automated seed raising “humidicrib” (top left) where seeds are germinated in sphagnum moss (top centre). Once germinated, seedlings are pricked out into pots and transferred to a recently constructed warm raised bed (middle left) in the “Vireya tunnel”, a long plastic covered area that retains the warmth and humidity needed for this group (middle right). Cuttings, meanwhile, are struck in a specially refurbished humidity-controlled greenhouse (top right). Once they are strong enough they are potted up and put in a heated bed in the main greenhouse. When well established they are potted again and put in either the Vireya tunnel or the main greenhouse (bottom left).

Sorting labelling and re-potting is a major on-going task and the whole process is managed by the indomitable Alex Pottage (Bottom right) and the Tuesday group is hard at it preparing plants for the sale at the the Tesselaar garden expo in April.

We Need You

Help us with propagation. No hard physical work. Pleasant company. Lovely plants. Excellent conditions. Tea and coffee provided.

Contact Alex Pottage (niceplants53@gmail.com or 03 5786 1595)

