



# Rhododendrons South Australia

Australian Rhododendron Society Inc. South Australian Branch

Issue 93 – November 2015

## October Meeting



This “blooms night “meeting was well attended and many beautiful spring rhododendrons were on display. Thank you to all members who provided blooms and also to those members who were able to identify many that were unknown varieties.

We welcomed three new members - Penny McClean, and Andrew

and Olivera Waterman and hope that their association with the society is both educational and socially rewarding.

Some members brought their cutting boxes to the meeting and gained advice about the next step in the process of hardening the cuttings prior to potting on. By all accounts there appears to have been some very successful propagation.

The raffle of a ‘Unique’ rhododendron was won by Belinda Cullum.



## From the Propagation Bench

### Companion plants for Rhododendrons

At this peak rhododendron time it is worth considering the wonderful variety of plants that can complement your rhodos as well as providing a different palette in your garden.

Clematis are ideal companions as they can be planted near the base of



rhodos (provides a cool root run) and be allowed to climb

through the plant towards the sun. The majority of Clematis also come in a variety of colours which complement the rhododendron flowers.

Azaleas are often viewed as the poor relation of the rhododendron, but their sheer impact in the garden cannot be overlooked. They respond well to being clipped after flowering and will give a spectacular show in the following year. Try varieties such as Seagull (a wonderful, large growing white), Red Wings, Herbert (a late, large flowered mauve) and Rose Queen. The greatest advantage of azaleas is that they strike well using the same method as for rhododendrons and a reasonable sized plant can be grown in two years.



*By Richard Illman*

### Caring for Spring Bulbs

#### Cutting back foliage

After flowering some bulbs-especially large Narcissus-can look untidy but it is important to resist the urge to cut or knot the foliage. The leaves harness solar energy and produce food reserves stored in the bulb for next year. Research at the RHS garden, Wisley, has shown that leaves should be left for a minimum of 6 weeks.

## Why & When to Deadhead

Removing old flower heads allows the plant to re-direct energy from producing seeds to reserves for next year's flowers and bulb.

Fritillaria and snowdrops will seed in suitable conditions (with a little hand pollination!) and form drifts over time so leave the plant to produce seed. Large flowered Daffodils are hybrids and don't come true from seed so remove the flower heads as soon as they are untidy.

## Feeding

Most people believe that bulbs should be fed when they are in flower but this too late.

Crocus replaces the entire corm each year and those that produce daughter bulbs (Tulips & daffodils) need very good growing conditions to enable them to produce a flowering size bulb for the following year.

Feed bulbs with a slow release fertiliser as soon as shoots emerge from the ground or if growing in containers add the fertilizer when potting up. Supplement each fortnight with a high Potassium liquid fertilizer.

## Culture Notes



*By Bill Voigt*

October is the month when the largest number of rhodos are in bloom, and the display this year has been excellent because there was little rain and no hail to damage the flowers. The later flowering varieties are more susceptible to attack by the fungal disease "Petal Blight" which rots the flowers almost overnight. Most nurseries carry supplies of fungicide suitable to use as a protection from this disease. The fungicide needs to be applied just before bud burst.

There are now many rhodos to choose from when making a selection for your garden. Possibly the finest white variety is "Loders white" which is a tall grower and one in which the white flowers have a touch of yellow in the throat and pink picotee edges. It is perhaps not as quite as hardy as White Pearl which is a wonderful rhodo, with a reputation for hardiness and prolific flowering.

The most effective way to fertilise plants in containers is a four to six weekly application of a soluble fertilizer, used at the strength recommended on the packet. It can either be watered into the soil or applied as a foliar spray. It is better to use a more dilute solution rather than a concentrated one.

The unusually warm spring has meant that the flowering cherries had but a short time to display their wonderful blossoms before they dried off. Now the new foliage is growing rapidly, and as it can soon be ruined by the cherry slug, an application of Confidor should protect the foliage and ensure that it remains to colour brilliantly next autumn.

Carnations are easy to grow from cuttings taken at this time of the year. Just remove small side shoots and plant them as you would seedlings, making sure that you ram the soil around them and keep them damp.

Deadheading rhodos can be quite a chore, particularly with large plants, but it does improve the appearance of the bushes, and saves them from putting their energy into seed production.

To encourage native birds in your garden introduce plants that provide nectar. Correas, Ericas, Grevilleas and Kangaroo Paws are some plants that supply a good quantity of food. Place water in a bird bath or dish in the shade, high up away from cats, and you will find the birds soon find the water and enjoy bathing in it on hot days.

Most Camellias have finished flowering, so now is a good time to shape any bushes that may look a little unbalanced.

After being dormant during winter, hydrangeas are soon to be in flower and it is important to keep them well watered as their flowers form. The immature flowers burn very easily, particularly if the soil dries out as the days become warmer.

As the various deciduous trees send out their new foliage, the branches can bend much lower with the increased weight. It can be necessary to raise the canopy above rhodos by removing or pruning back some lower branches, so that there is filtered light and air movement for your choice plants.

*Bill*

## **Philip's innovations and some ideas for companion planting**

Richard and I had the pleasure of visiting Philip and Myriam Sampson's garden earlier this week and were very interested in many of the innovative ideas that Philip is employing to grow his rhododendrons. He has very lush and healthy looking plants and even some of the more difficult varieties are thriving.

Here are some of Philip's innovations:

To avoid umbrellas and shade cloth to protect plants he employs an anti-transpirant (Droughtshield - available from nurseries) sprayed on both sides of the leaves to prevent dehydration. It is reputed to last 90 days but Philip applies a second spray for those exposed to hot afternoon sun after about 5-6 weeks.

He has also found that an excellent mulch for rhododendrons can be made from a mixture of 3 parts hydrated coir peat and 1 part Kahoona pellets.

A great companion plant for rhododendrons are hydrangeas. The variety Anabelle, not frequently grown, is a wonderful sight in full flower and able to take a good deal of sun. The pointed leaf variety is far superior to the rounded leaf form.

*Bronwyn*

## Bloom of the Month – ‘Pink Porcelain’



## Bird of the Month – White-throated Treecreeper *Cormobates leucophaeus*

A reasonably common bush bird in our Mt Lofty ranges.

There are 6 species of treecreeper in Australia but only the Brown and the White-throated occur in our hills area, and the Brown is now rare.

It flies to the base of a tree and works its way around and up the tree feeding on insects. The call is loud, ringing, clear musical ‘twiet-twiet-twiet’.

*Chris Thomas*



## A Plant Lover's Weekend



Any keen gardener who would like an enjoyable weekend break should consider travelling via Ballarat to the Dandenong Ranges on the weekend before the Melbourne Cup celebrations begin. This is the time when the Ferny Creek Horticultural show takes place and the National Rhododendron Gardens at Olinda are at their peak. The Ferny creek show is a plant lover's delight with many wonderful

plants both on display and for sale. The associated society gardens are full of mature Mountain Ash, large rhododendrons and a wealth of deciduous azaleas. The Olinda area is also home to numerous nurseries where one can browse and pick up bargains. The area also boasts fine eating establishments and luxurious B&B's. On the drive home one can spend a delightful hour or so in the Ballarat gardens where the conservatory has a wonderful display of flowering plants.



The Vireya House at the Olinda Gardens had a wonderful display of species vireyas. Some of these are available in the collection held by Richard and Bronwyn and hopefully will be available to members in the years to come.



## Librarians Report



*Ann & David Matison*

We have just returned from Melbourne where we spent a day in the Dandenong Ranges which included a visit to the Olinda Rhododendron Garden. We were there on a perfect day and the rhododendrons were at their best so I was inspired to read “Growing Azaleas and Rhododendrons” by Geoff Bryant. This is an Australian book published by Simon and Schuster in 1991.

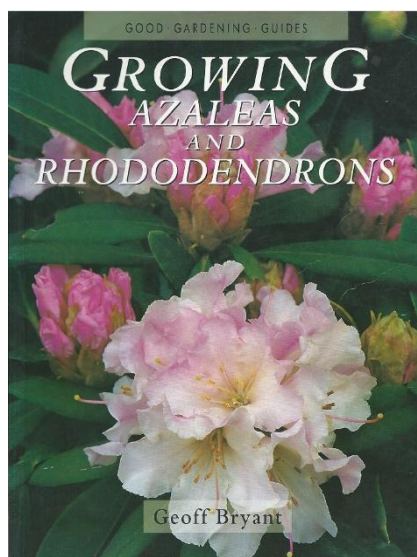
Chapter one, named ‘History’ starts with a comprehensive explanation of classification and naming which the author believes is important to understand if you are going to grow rhododendrons well. The chapter finishes with how rhododendrons arrived in our gardens.

The next chapter discusses where to grow rhododendrons in the garden. It finishes with a brief section on growing in containers. This applies particularly to vireya rhododendrons.

As the content of the book progresses the author covers soil and nutrition, climate and choosing your plant. There is an entire chapter on the plants. Geoff Bryant has listed a large selection of rhododendrons, evergreen and deciduous azaleas and vireyas that grow in a variety of conditions and that are useful and attractive, and as he says ‘and I like them’.

There is a chapter on planting and maintenance and he finishes the book with a section on propagation. For the extreme enthusiasts there is even a section on hybridising.

I found this a very well written easy to understand summary of the world of Rhododendron growing and the illustrations are magnificent.



## Tales from Forest Lodge



This has been a wonderful month for flowers. I have never before seen such a display from the rhododendrons and the garden is still looking wonderful. The blooms are lasting a long time and only slowly fading in the sun, and petal blight is absent. The fruit trees are full of small young fruit and it is clear that the bees have done their job. Even the weeds are doing brilliantly and the lawns need cutting weekly. It sounds and looks like a Garden of Eden.

However there is a reason for this. We have had a long and cold winter but over the last six or so weeks it has been unusually warm. This has caused all of the vegetation to suddenly wake up, the soil is warmer than usual, and thus everything is growing vigorously. The downside is that there has been very little rain and whilst this is good for stopping petal blight, we will soon be watering as the soil moisture depletes. The rainfall for October was 22mm, way below the average 98mm. This year is starting to look dry and I am hoping that the trend does not continue.

On the bright side, it is wonderful living weather and Christmas is coming.

*Milton Bowman*

## Interesting Facts & Resources

**South Australian Weed Control App** The free Weed Control app provides essential information about the control of weeds declared in South Australia under the Natural Resources Management Act 2004.

The weed control app includes:

- control recommendations for over 100 declared plant species
- chemical and non-chemical treatments
- information on the safe use of herbicides
- colour photographs of each species for identification.

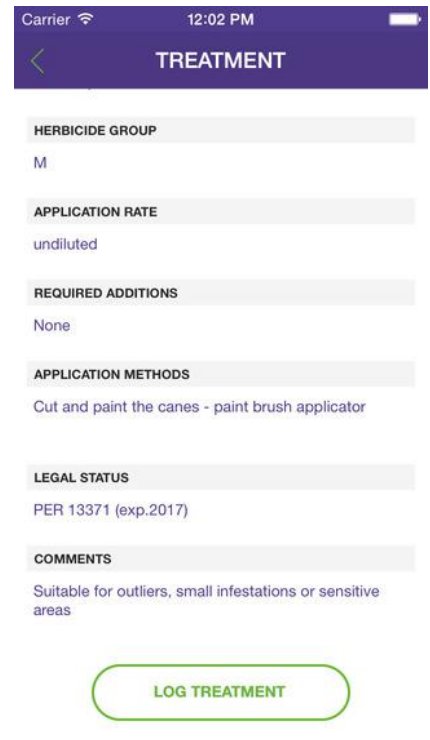
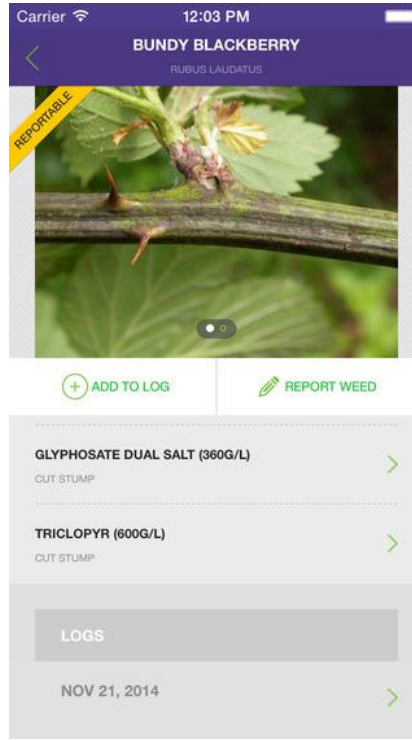
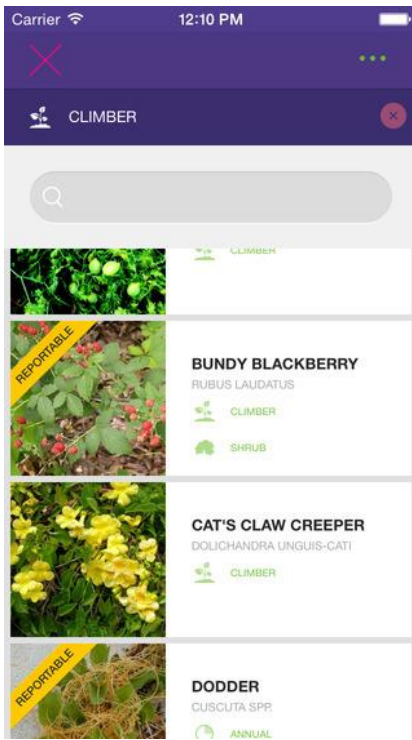
The Weed control app provides information from the Weed Control Handbook for Declared Plants in South Australia.

In addition app users can:

- record the location of weeds
- keep a personal log of control activities
- phone or email regional Natural Resource officers
- send photos and text of high risk weeds.

The app is updated annually as chemical uses and plant declarations change.





Download app from

[Google Play \(for Android devices\)](#)



[iTunes App Store \(for Apple devices\)](#)



## Notice Board

### Notice of National Council AGM

The AGM of National council will be held at 5pm on November 14<sup>th</sup> at Forest Lodge. Milton will be e-mailing proxy forms to members but any member is most welcome to attend in person. There will also be the opportunity to attend a dinner at either Locavore or Miss Perez following the AGM. Members are requested to notify Milton if they would like to attend the dinner.

### Next Meeting

Our next meeting will be held at the Crafers Hall on November 18<sup>th</sup> at 8pm. It will be a blooms/quiz/auction night. Please bring examples of your late flowering rhododendrons (both the ones you know and the ones you don't) to the meeting. The quiz, being organized by our president, will cover a range of questions and photo identification, with members being organized into teams so that the expertise in the society is evenly distributed. Many good prizes will be awarded, so come along and be involved in the fun.

## Plant Sales & Silent Auction

Members will find a list of rhododendrons attached to this newsletter. They represent those remaining from the plant sale + a selection supplied by the Victorian branch. It was decided at the last meeting that those remaining from the plant sale be offered to members at cost (\$20 for 20cm & \$12 for 15cm). Members need to notify Bronwyn of any plants from the plant sale that they wish to purchase. These will be reserved for members on a first come first served basis.

The Victorian plants are divided into those available commercially and those that are only obtainable through the Victorian branch. The former will be offered at \$15.00 per plant irrespective of size at the pot luck stall. There will also be a small number of *Irroratum Polkadot* offered through a silent auction with a reserve of \$15.00 where members place a written bid and the highest bid wins the plant. The remaining Victorian plants, which are mainly species, require members to nominate to be custodians of the plant(s) and once the member has successfully propagated the plant it becomes the property of the member. In both cases a register of plant ownership will be kept by the society.

If you wish:

To place a **bid** for the silent auction for ***Irroratum Polkadot*** please indicate the following on a piece of paper and bring to the meeting.



[http://www.rhododendron-azalee.fr/classification\\_gb/images/irroratum\\_3\\_polka\\_dot\\_cbl.jpg](http://www.rhododendron-azalee.fr/classification_gb/images/irroratum_3_polka_dot_cbl.jpg)

*Your name*

*Your bid*

To be a **custodian** of one or more of the rarer plants please indicate the following on a piece of paper.

*Your name*

*The name of the plant*

## Preparation for member's Cutting day 2016

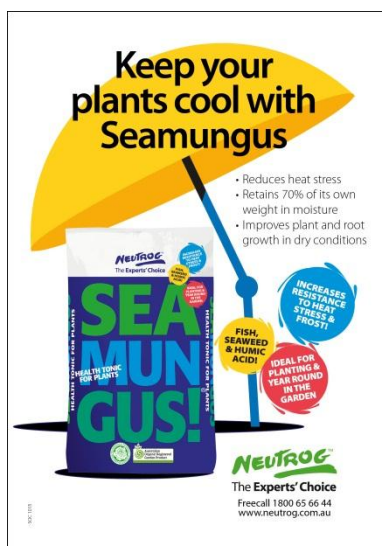
It was a unanimous decision by members at the October meeting that we should hold another cutting day in 2016. The rhodos taken in 2015 will not be ready to pot on by the time it is necessary to take this season's cuttings so it was decided that the society would again provide members with one cutting box + cutting mix. Additional boxes+ mix could be ordered at member's cost.

In order to organise this day, members will need to indicate to Bronwyn and Richard if they would like a society cutting box and any additional boxes they may require. Please do this via e-mail or at the November meeting. As was the case this year, permission will be sought to obtain cuttings from the MLBG but members will be encouraged to bring cuttings of their own hardy varieties.

## Christmas Lunch

A reminder that 2015 Christmas Lunch will be held at Ian and Janie Smylie's home, Wensleydale on December the 5<sup>th</sup>. It will be a BYO BBQ lunch.

## Neutrog Matters



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IDEAL FOR PLANTING & TEAR ROUND IN THE GARDEN

The spring order from Neutrog will arrive at Mount Lofty Botanic Garden on either Thursday the 12<sup>th</sup> or Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> November. Members will be notified when to collect their order from the nursery at the Gardens. Please remember to bring your copy of your order.

