



Rhododendrons South Australia

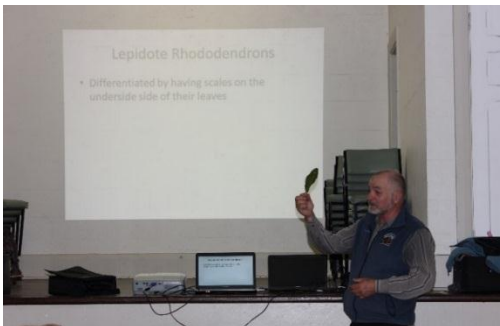
Australian Rhododendron Society Inc. South Australian Branch

Issue 107 - June 2017

President's message

It gives me great pleasure and a strong sense of responsibility to be president of our local branch of the Australian Rhododendron Society, which enjoys a diverse and enthusiastic range of people comprising its membership. This has the potential to provide opportunities for members to become involved in various ways, to suit their interests and endeavours, such as plant propagation, guest speaker suggestions, volunteering at special events, garden visit facilitation, and even meeting presentations.

Unfortunately our scheduled speaker for the May meeting, Dr Lucy Sutherland, Director of the Adelaide Botanical Gardens, at last minute was unable to attend, but we were able to call upon the services of Society member, Rob Hatcher, who is a supervising horticulturalist at MLBG. Rob's knowledge of the genus Rhododendron is unsurpassed within our membership and he provided a



very interesting and informative discussion on the difference between lepidote Rhododendron species and elepidote Rhododendron species. His presentation was supported by beautiful Rhododendron images and even digital microscope imaging of leaf surfaces, which allowed us to clearly see the tiny scales which identify the lepidote species. He went on to explain that Rhododendron hybridisation can only occur within the species

classification, ie lepidotes and elipidotes cannot be crossed. Personally I find the categorisation of Rhododendrons to be somewhat confusing, and to have this method of classification explained, I hope others found to be as useful as I did.



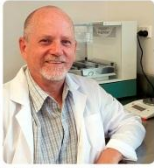
Members examine the microscopic evidence



A very happy raffle winner-Rob Field

Next Meeting

Research Scientist Dr Uwe Stroehler appointed to Neutrog



Australian owned biological fertiliser manufacturer, Neutrog Australia, has recently appointed research scientist, Dr Uwe Stroehler Ph.D., to head up its Research and Development team.

Announcing his permanent appointment, Neutrog Managing Director Angus Irwin said Dr Stroehler's background as a highly regarded scientist together with his expertise in molecular biology will allow Neutrog to continue to be at the forefront of biological fertiliser development.

"Innovation is central to Neutrog's strategic agenda and by employing a research

scientist with the right combination of knowledge, skills and curiosity, we will further strengthen our position as a leader in the development of biological fertilisers worldwide," Mr Irwin said.

Dr Stroehler will play a pivotal role at Neutrog, conducting field research and running trials on which to base further development of biological products that are able to pinpoint, extract and proliferate specific soil bacteria which are known for their roles in the soil such as unlocking phosphorus and fixing nitrogen.

Dr Stroehler's background encompasses Neutrog's manufacturing methodologies and processes, like batch and DNA testing of raw materials and finished products, providing customer reassurance by far exceeding mandatory safety standards.

Dr Stroehler has consulted to the company for the past ten years, initially during the concept stages of GOGO Juice (a liquid probiotic for soil). He's been involved in developing processes and technologies aimed at maximising the beneficial microbiology in all of Neutrog's fertiliser products.

Neutrog Australia Pty Ltd | 1800 65 66 44
info@neutrog.com.au | neutrog.com.au



This will be held at the Crafers Hall on Wednesday, June 21st at 8pm.

Our guest speaker will be Dr. Ewe Stroehler from Neutrog. Dr. Stroehler has recently been appointed to Neutrog to assist in the research and development of their products.

Please remember to bring a plate for supper and something for the "pot Luck Stall". Friends and new members are always welcome.

Bloom of the Month – Azalea Carnival Time



This is a beautiful, large, early flowering azalea. It is part of the "Carnival" series of azaleas, all of which are well worth growing. The series was developed by Nuccio who was also the breeder of many spectacular camellias.



From the Propagating bench *by Richard Illman*

Now is the time of the year when you can put your best foot forward to help your society by having a go at propagating hard wood cuttings. They are easy to do and success can mean that we have more plants available for the pot luck stall and the annual plant sale.

Which plants are suitable?

There are numerous plants that require pruning in winter that can provide cutting material, such as roses and hydrangeas. Similarly Fuschias, Salvia, Geraniums, Flowering Currant, Forsythia, Philadelphus, Plectranthus, Weigela, and Deutzia can all provide material. Plectranthus come in a variety of colours and are very useful autumn flowering shrubs.

Cuttings can be placed in the same cutting media as one uses for rhododendrons and azaleas or simply rowed out in the garden. Generally no rooting hormone is required nor do they need to be covered as they are prepared without leaves.



Other possibilities for future plants



Autumn crocus

Don't forget that you can also propagate some of the beautiful autumn flowering bulbs. I have mentioned many times the opportunity to propagate Nerines by taking the bulbils from the flower stem. These bulbils germinate easily when placed on a tray of moist peat and will provide many new plants for the enthusiastic gardener. Similarly, autumn crocus can be propagated by fertilising the flowers. This is easily done using a fine paint brush and transferring pollen from the anthers to the stigma of the flower.

The Month Ahead *by Bill Voigt*



New stocks of Rhodos are in the nurseries now and two old favourites with spectacular flowers are available in Stirling. These are; "Mrs J.G. Millais"- white flowers tinged pink with a large yellow flare-flushed red. Bears large trusses. "Mrs Tom Lewinsky" has lavender flowers fading to white with a brown-orange blotch. Large flowers that are very striking.

For those who prefer white flowers, the most favoured white, because of the quality of its blooms is "Loder's White". This is really a magnificent



Rhododendron Loder's White

rhodo. White Pearl is the hardiest of the white hybrids, with its pink buds developing into pure white flowers. It was often used in the past as a stock plant for hard to strike varieties such as the beautiful Kalimna.

A smaller rhodo with pure white flowers is "Helene Schiffner". This rhodo is quite hardy.

In the "Maddenii series, "Crassum" is a late blooming, very strongly scented plant, but as it is late flowering it needs a more sheltered position.

Very suitable for growing in a container is the species "Leucaspis". This semi-dwarf with hairy leaves has pure white flowers with black anthers. It requires good drainage.



Frank Galsworthy

Contrasting with the common pink, red, white and yellow Rhodos. are two very differently hued plants. "Frank Galsworthy" with dark purple blooms with yellow and white blotches and "Auguste van Geerte" with very distinctive magenta-lavender flowers- very sun tolerant.

Steep banks in gardens can be a problem as the soil can erode badly, and they are difficult to keep weed free.

There are some ground cover plants very suitable for covering such difficult areas.

Three varieties of cotoneaster that are useful for this coverage are "Conspicuous", "Dammeri" and Horizontalis.

"Helichrysum Argyrophyllum" with its silver foliage and yellow flowers is very hardy, easily grown from cuttings or layers and requires little water once established. I can supply plenty of cuttings of this plant for anyone who is interested.

Anemone corms planted early should be flowering now. If the spent flowers are removed to prevent the plants energy going into seed production, the flowers will be produced for a long period. Iceland poppies should be treated in the same way.

Roses are beginning to look untidy, but do not be in too much of a hurry to prune them. If pruned too early the new shoots can be damaged by frosts.

Protect emerging growths of bulbs, such as daffodils, from slugs and snails by using non-toxic snail and slug pellets.



Soon we will be past the shortest day and we can look forward to greater hours of daylight. Even during winter there are interesting happenings in the garden.

Bassian Thrush *Zoothera lunulata*



The Bassian Thrush is a secretive bird. Its plumage is mottled brown to olive-brown, heavily scalloped with black crescent-shaped bars on the back, rump and head. The paler underparts all have brown-black scalloping. It has a white eye-ring. In flight the Bassian Thrush shows a broad dark diagonal bar across the white underside of its wing. This species has also been referred to as White's Thrush, Ground Thrush, and Scaly Thrush.

A fairly rare bird these days in our Adelaide hills.

There are a couple of colonies in the Mount Lofty Botanic Gardens. The most likely place is the upper section of Fern Gully. Another breeding pair are up near Mount Lofty summit.

Seen in gardens in Birch Road.

I bit bigger than a blackbird, and usually seen on the forest floor. Female blackbirds can confuse.

More info about Bassian Thrush can be found on [Atlas of Living Australia](#)

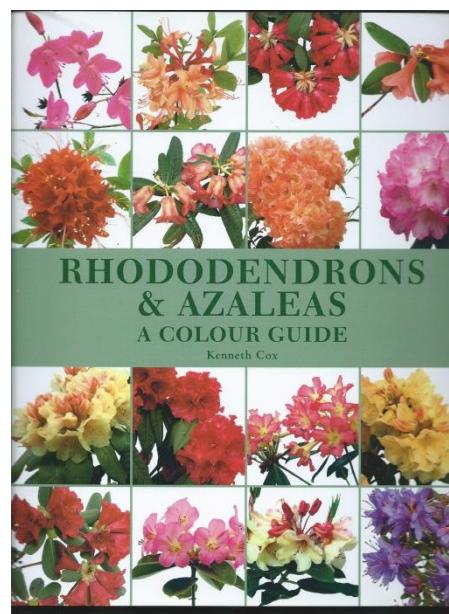
Librarian's Report by Ann & David Matison

From time to time books go missing from Libraries. Unfortunately this happened to one of our most popular books, Rhododendrons and Azaleas: A colour guide: by Kenneth Cox.

Fortunately the book was brought to our attention by one of our members and having discovered that it was missing we were able to replace it. It must be a popular publication because the original publication was in 2005 and our new copy was reprinted in 2015.

The book starts with a thirty page introduction to rhododendrons which includes subjects like cultivation, maintenance, problems along with buying and collecting.

The body of the book is a wonderful encyclopaedia of rhododendron varieties. This section is divided into subgenuses. Each section lists



the plants in alphabetic order and has a brief description of the plant and flower. Many of the flowers are illustrated with beautiful photos.

The book is an English publication, but many of the plants described are available in Australia.

It is an excellent reference book, both for information specific to a particular plant or for a breadth of information.

Kenneth Cox concludes with his rhododendron and azalea best lists. He does admit that the lists are subjective. I wonder what our best lists would look like for the plants that grow in South Australia?

Tales from Forest Lodge by Milton Bowman



We are now back in winter and the nights are long and cold. We have the fires burning most of the time now and the core of the house is gradually cooling. However, it is very comfortable in the living areas with the heaters going.

The garden is looking good and we have had another 84mm of rain, most of it in the last week of the month with one night registering 27mm. This has started to fill the tanks which stayed

half full right over the summer, the first time that this has happened in the last 15 years. My activities in the garden are mowing, hedge trimming, picking up the deciduous leaves and making compost heaps. We have planted out some winter vegies and will be putting in a number of trees over the next month. I try to replace lost trees as an investment for the future and as we lost 9 trees last winter there are 9 to go in this year.

Max Sye has done yet another out of season flowering and the photo is below. The tree dahlias are blooming as well. There are many fat buds on the rhododendrons down in the main garden, so it will be a good October.

Keep warm.

Milton



Historic Gardens – local & worldwide

This is a new section in our newsletter and will hopefully contain articles dealing with many of our local, historic gardens as well as including those gardens overseas or interstate that have a rich history. Our first garden to be featured is Lea gardens located outside the small village of Lea near Matlock, Derbyshire in the UK.

Please provide feedback to your editors about the suitability and value of this new inclusion.

Lea Gardens & John Marsden-Smedley

John Marsden-Smedley (1867-1959) was the local squire and owner of John Smedley Ltd, a manufacturer of fine woollen garments. In 1895 he rebuilt the farmhouse of Lea Green which is still used today as a residential and day care centre. The early gardens around the farmhouse reflected his great love of plants and the local area still owes much of its wooded nature to his planting of trees. He also trialled growing rhododendrons on different sections of his land and discovered one ideal position which had the desired sheltered environment for growing these plants.

In 1935, at the age of sixty-eight, and being inspired by visits to Bodnant and Exbury he decided to build his own rhododendron garden on his favoured site. Skilled craftsmen from his estate used the abundant stone littering the ground (originally an old quarry site dating to Roman times) to build paths and dry stone walls and soil from the estate was used to top up beds of sand.

John Marsden-Smedley then began his collection which included plants from the leading growers and breeders from the 1930s. During this period he collected some 350 varieties of specie and hybrid rhododendrons and azaleas in a two acre site. He continued developing Lea gardens up until his death at the age of 92 in 1959.

Fifty years of development and ownership by the Tye family then began. The gardens were opened to the public in 1960 and continue to be a source of inspiration to rhododendron lovers to this day.

There is a video on Youtube which describes the history of Lea Gardens since they were established in 1935. This was produced and narrated by Eileen Cooke, with additional narration by Jon Tye. Please click on the link to view it: [Youtube Video](#)



Notice Board

Conferences

New Zealand Conference: This will take place from October 27th-October 30th 2017, in Manawatu. Information can be obtained from the New Zealand Rhododendron Association Inc. Registration forms are available on the associations web site.

German Conference: The European chapters of the American Rhododendron Society will be hosting a conference in May, 2018. Information can be obtained from the ARS site. If members are interested in attending it would be advisable to join one of the chapters of the ARS as places are limited. Pre and post conference tours look worthwhile.

Maple grafting workshop

Expression of interest in participating in maple grafting workshop that will be held in late July or early August is still open to members. Please contact Bronwyn or Richard Illman to register for the workshop.

Masterclasses at Botanic Gardens

“Master Classes are specialist courses run by industry experts on relevant and current horticulture topics. They are a great opportunity to network with others with similar interests, extend your expertise and stay up to date with the latest techniques.

There are opportunities for people of all backgrounds at the Australian Centre of Horticultural Excellence, from those employed in a horticulture field, to those wanting to enter the industry to the home gardener wanting to extend their knowledge...” read more on [the website](#)

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| <p>Pruning for Fruit: Principles and Practices</p> <p><u>Dates:</u> Thursday 20 July <u>Time:</u> 9am to 3pm <u>Where:</u> The Orchard, Urrbrae Agricultural High School</p> | <p><i>Pruning is fundamental to getting the best from your fruit trees, it allows you to control the fruit’s size, shape and vigour. In this practical hands-on Masterclass, you will learn the pruning skills to maintain good fruit size, quality and quantity and to keep your fruit trees bearing fruit throughout their productive life.</i></p> |
| <p>Advanced Plant Propagation: Leaf and Root cuttings, Grafting and Budding</p> <p><u>Dates:</u> Thursday 10 August or Sunday 20 August <u>Time:</u> 10am to 3pm <u>Where:</u> Mount Lofty Botanic Garden</p> | <p><i>If you would like to learn advanced techniques of plant propagation, the Advanced Plant Propagation Masterclass is for you. An extension of the Plant Propagation Principles & Practices (not a pre-requisite), this class will dig deeper into propagation techniques for certain types of plants.</i></p> |
| <p>Behind the Blooms: magnolias, camellias and rhododendrons</p> <p><u>Date:</u> Sunday 27 August <u>Time:</u> 9am to 12:30pm <u>Where:</u> Mount Lofty Botanic Garden</p> | <p><i>This Masterclass will provide valuable information about the selection and maintenance of Camellias, Magnolias and Rhododendrons. Learn about these enthralling cool-climate flowering plants and experience their stunning diversity first-hand at Mount Lofty Botanic Garden’s iconic gullies.</i></p> |

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| <p>Demystifying Orchids</p> <p><u>Dates:</u> Sunday 3 September <u>Time:</u> 10am to 3pm <u>Where:</u> Mount Lofty Botanic Garden</p> | <p><i>Developing your own collection of orchids may be easier than you think. In this practical hands-on Masterclass propagating and growing orchids successfully will be demystified.</i></p> |
| <p>Unfurling the Inner Beauty of Ferns: Propagation Techniques</p> <p><u>Dates:</u> Thursday 26 October <u>Time:</u> 10am to 3pm <u>Where:</u> Mount Lofty Botanic Garden</p> | <p><i>In this advanced, hands-on Masterclass you will learn how to propagate ferns compatible with South Australia's climate using spore and vegetative techniques from the Botanic Gardens' expert and former Curator of Ferns.</i></p> |

Neutrog matters

Garden groundwork in Winter



Year round fertilising for year round health

Like humans and animals, plants require regular feeding throughout the year – at least once in each season.

Happy, healthy, well nourished plants are more resistant to pests, diseases, heat stress and frost.

WINTER

Lawns: Aerate lawns with a fork or lawn aerator now and remove broadleaf weeds like capeweed before they flower - you don't want to fertilise the weeds too! Then top dress your lawn with **Blade Runner** or **Seamungus Crumble** to help improve root growth over the winter period when leaf growth tends to be slower.

Flowering Plants: After pruning winter dormant plants such as roses and fruit trees, feed the root zone with an application of 100g of **Seamungus** per plant. This will help prepare the roots for the coming spring.

Move cymbidium orchids into a spot so they receive maximum sunlight and feed monthly with **Strike Back for Orchids**.

The cooler months are the best times to relocate plants or divide clumping perennials. Mix some **Seamungus** through the new planting site and water in with **GOGO Juice** to stimulate new root growth for good establishment.

Fruit Trees: Winter is a great time to plant bare rooted fruit trees and ornamentals. When digging the hole for planting, make sure the soil is turned and loosened to two spades depth. Then mix some **Seamungus** through the soil in the hole when planting and water in well with **GOGO Juice**.

Grapevines: Fertilise with **Sudden Impact for Roses** towards the end of July - this hit of potassium will help ensure an abundant crop.

Natives: Winter is a great time for planting natives. Use some **Seamungus** in the bottom of the planting hole to get them started, and water in with **GOGO Juice**. If you need some winter colour in the garden consider planting the colourful climber *Hardenbergia violacea* (commonly called Happy Wanderer) or flowering shrub *Alyogyne huegelii* (commonly called Native Hibiscus).

Vegetables & Herbs: Established asparagus fronds will be bright yellow in colour by now. Prune them back to ground level and generously apply 2-3 handfuls of **Rocket Fuel** per square metre over the soil. Then mulch well with pea straw or sugar cane and stand back for delicious asparagus spears appearing with the arrival of spring.

Plant strawberry runners in raised beds or pots now. They like a slightly acidic soil, so use **Seamungus** when planting and then feed with dose of **Kahoona** fertiliser at the start of spring.







