



Rhododendrons South Australia

Australian Rhododendron Society Inc. South Australian Branch

Issue 108 - July 2017

President's message

Society members may have come along to the recent meeting with a certain level of curiosity as to what another presentation by a Neutrog representative might entail! However, I think it reasonably safe to say that we found biologist and microbiologist, Dr Uwe Stroehrer, a rather affable and engaging speaker.

Uwe chose to enlighten our group on the importance of the activities of soil microbes (primarily bacteria and fungi) in contributing to the health of our soil environments, and in turn our precious plants. His was a rather scientific presentation which gave our brain cells some not unwelcome intellectual stimulation, and resulted in those present gaining increased understanding of



the importance of the interaction between plant root systems and microbes in improving nutrient uptake from the soil. Yet again we received instruction on the value of the fungal hyphae networks in our soil environment, in fact stimulating ideas for enhancing the success of plant propagation could involve the use of root balls with the precious fungal hyphae incorporated.

Uwe answered questions and stayed for supper and ongoing interaction with members. He seemed genuinely interested in engaging with a bunch of rhododendron enthusiasts, also distributing Neutrog samples to those present. No need for disappointment as there are remaining samples for those who were unable to attend yet another great SAARS meeting at the Crafers Hall!

The raffle of Rhododendron Eldorado was won by Henry Hancock.



A very happy raffle winner – Henry Hancock



Philip presenting an early rhododendron – Margaret Dunn

Next Meeting

This will be held at the Crafers Hall on Wednesday, July, 19th at 8pm. Our guest speakers will be Belinda Cullum and Henry Hancock. Belinda will speak about her recent trip to Bhutan and Henry will describe his excursion to Northern Queensland.

A reminder that subscriptions are due so please pay Peter Wiadrowski at the July meeting.

Bloom of the Month – Rhododendron Winter Beauty



Rhododendron Winter Beauty



From the Propagating bench *by Richard Illman*

It is an opportune time to check your Rhododendron cutting box. Our resident expert, Nataliya, has noticed that some of the varieties have already struck and grown enough roots to need potting on. The things you need to check are whether the cuttings still have sufficient water and light. If your boxes were originally placed in a well lit location they may now be in shade, so move the boxes to a sheltered, but bright area. The cuttings may also benefit from a foliage spray with dilute seasoil or seamungus.

Plants that have lost their leaves should be removed from the box and discarded.

If you notice that plants have started to grow you can successfully pot them on into a free draining, acid potting mix and to reduce the chance of dehydration place a cut-down, clear plastic drink bottle on top.

As mentioned in the last newsletter it is time to take cuttings of hardwood plants and even though members may not wish to have them for themselves they would be appreciated for the pot luck stall or our annual plant sale.

If you have made a “hot box” for raising seed or promoting the root growth on cuttings it is an ideal time to get your summer annuals, or vegetable seeds sown. Contact Richard if you would like to know more about building a “hot box”.



The Month Ahead *by Bill Voigt*

With most of the colourful autumn foliage now fallen to the ground, colour in the garden can be supplied by sasanqua camellias and two old favourite winter flowering plants.

Bergenia, a hardy perennial with large leaves and bright pink flowers suitable for picking, and Iris

unguicularis (once known as stylosa) with blue flowers that last well in water if picked just before they open. There is a wonderful display of this iris along old Mt Barker road in Stirling, between Pepper avenue and Gould road. Because the foliage has been trimmed back the flowers are very visible. Bergenia makes an excellent ground cover, but in very exposed conditions the foliage will suffer sunburn during very hot days. The variety “Silberlight” has white flowers, well worth adding to any plant collection



Once the leaves of deciduous trees and shrubs have fallen, the tracery of the branches can be appreciated. A close inspection will reveal the branches, both great and small, that should be removed to maintain a well balanced shape. Flowering Crab apples, Cherries and some plums are budded onto a vigorous stock. Often suckers of the stock plant appear below the graft. These are easy to find when the trees are bare. Tall weeping specimens need to have the trunk kept free of any side shoots which can weaken the canopy. Many desirable Grevilleas, once hard to grow, are now grafted onto the silky oak (*Grevillea robusta*) to provide beautiful weeping or upright shrubs. As with the deciduous trees, any growth emerging along the stem should be removed. There are some handsome examples of Grevilleas grafted in this way at the exit of Bunnings, Mt barker.

We have had a very dry start to winter, with a little relief in recent days, but there are dry spots to be found, particularly under evergreen trees. Don't be afraid to water the garden in winter.

Larkspur seedlings planted now will provide colour in late spring. If you wish to "blue" your Hydrangeas apply some alum (Alum magnesium sulphate) after pruning. Be sure to water in well.

Various species of deciduous azaleas are found in China, Asia Minor and North America. From these some magnificent hybrids have been produced. Deciduous azaleas are usually referred to as Mollis azaleas. As well as having brilliant autumn foliage, the flowers of yellow, orange, red, pink and white usually carry a strong perfume.

"Brazil" – a tangerine orange

"Klondyke"- a bright yellow

"Anthony Koster"- is golden yellow

"Dr. Reichenbach" – is salmon orange

"Homebush"- has double rose-pink flowers



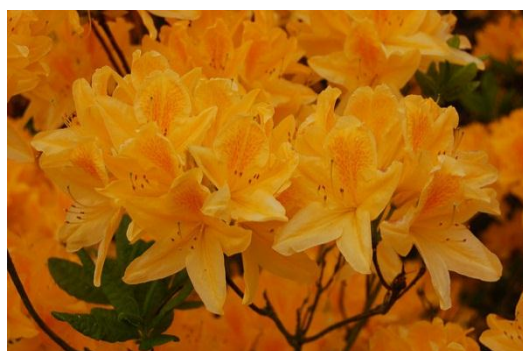
A species with bright yellow flowers and colourful autumn foliage is " *Luteum*". Very strongly scented.

These plants need some sun to produce flowers but avoid sights that are exposed to hot, afternoon sun.

Being stoloniferous, (i.e. shooting from the base) the older plants

often have some old wood that can be removed from the base of the plant. New growths emerge from the same place.

Now that the shortest day has passed, we can look forward to more hours of daylight.



"Anthony Koster"

New Holland Honeyeater *Phylidonyris novaehollandia*



The New Holland Honeyeater is one of Australia's most energetic birds. Fueled up on high-energy nectar taken from the flowers of banksias, eucalypts, grevilleas and other trees and shrubs, they are always active and pugnacious. Whether they are dashing in pursuit of a flying insect or chasing other honeyeaters away, the New Holland Honeyeater is seldom seen sitting still. One of their more unusual activities is to conduct 'Corroborrees', where up to a dozen birds congregate and noisily display together, fluttering their wings.

The New Holland Honeyeater is one of the most common honeyeaters and is found statewide south of Port Augusta. It can be locally migratory or nomadic. It is bold and noisy with sharp alarm calls. It has a white eye, which probably no other honeyeaters have. They are recorded (from banding) to live to up to 15 years. Also from (banding) we know that they can travel up to 170 kilometers.

In the Adelaide Hills it can be the most common bird seen on birding outings

Librarian's Report by Ann & David Matison

I have spent a lot of time this month reading what must be the ultimate history of the Rhododendron. The book is "Tales of the Rose Tree" by Jane Brown Published in 2003.

The name of the book may be unusual for a book about rhododendrons, but as the author explains the plant was named by Linnaeus from the Greek Rhodon rose and Dendron tree hence rhododendron. This is just one of the many interesting facts that I have learnt.

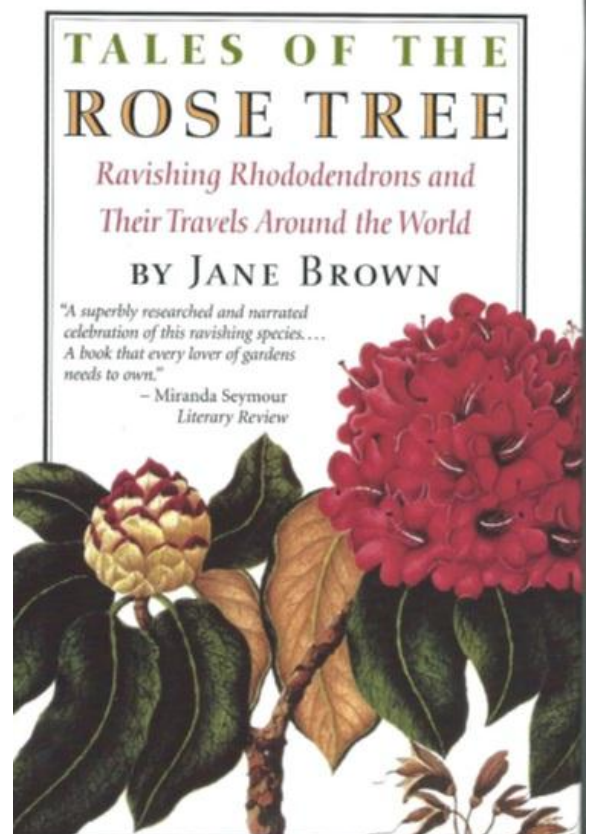
The book is full of tales of plant hunters, for example the American Quaker John Bartram (1699-1777) who collected seeds and a few plants from his American horticultural explorations, packed them in his Bartram boxes and sold them to Peter Collinson who distributed them to some of the great gardens of England. Bartram was responsible for importing into England many American plants for the first time.

The author has researched her subject thoroughly. As she talks about the plant hunters, garden owners, gardeners and nurserymen that have influenced the growing, hybridisation and spread of the plants she has stories to tell about many of the characters involved with this amazing family of plants.

As you can imagine there are many stories of Botanic Gardens, Arboretums and stately gardens. I was impressed by that of Exbury, thought to be one of the best examples of rhododendron gardens in England. Lionel Rothschild started the garden in 1922. On his 200 acre property he had 2 acres of green houses, a 100 foot long tropical house for his vireyas, 60 gardeners and 15 greenhouse men. What you could do before the War if you had money. Rothschild himself hybridised many of the rhododendrons. During the war the property was used by the army and it wasn't until 1940 that the family took it back. It is now open to the public like so many of England's stately gardens.

Two plants that receive special mention are Pink Pearl and Ponticum. Pink pearl being the first of the commercially successful hybrids. Ponticum was one of the first Rhododendrons to be introduced into England and became popular because it was so hardy and could be used for developing hybrids. However the colour became unpopular and it is thought that some, now considered weeds, are Ponticum hybrids that have reverted back to type.

The book is 273 pages long, plus extensive notes and a very good index. I could go on about the many famous people who turn up for example the Waterer Family and their nursery, the Hookers – father and son, the extensive Mangles family and their contribution. The search for plants in the Himalayas, China, Sabah and Northern Australia. Then there is the research done on the medicinal properties, notwithstanding that many of the plants are poisonous.



If you are interested in this quite intense book, read it, but don't expect to skim through. I for one know much more about the rhododendron family's fascinating history than I did before.

Thank you to Phillip and Miriam for their donation to the Library of "Rhododendrons" by Gerd Krüssman, Director of the Botanical Gardens in Dortmund-Brunninghausen.

Tales from Forest Lodge *by Milton Bowman*



I am always amazed by our weather, the changes that occur from year to year and month to month really do keep you on your toes. June has been mild and dry, with little in the way of wind and this has allowed some trees to hold their leaves longer than normal, and a little warmer and this has kept plants like azaleas growing into winter. It certainly has been dry with only 21mm for the

month compared with over 200mm last year, and this has forced me to water pot plants to keep them alive.

Forest Lodge is gradually developing a rabbit colony and they have taken a liking to the Italian parsley and the young poppies, taking them off at the ground whilst leaving the sour sobs and stinging nettles untouched. I would do something about them if Kristina had not named them, but eventually there will be so many of them that she will run out of names.

Some of the Camellias are now flowering and many are on the verge of doing so. The Luculias are in full flower. They have a beautiful perfume and are a delight to have.

July is now in full swing and it is pleasing to see some genuine Hills Weather. It has been cold, windy, and we have already had 100mm of rain. Our gardens need more of this! Time to get out and winter prune, clear paths, and finish cutting the hedges.

Cheers

Milton



Bruce- The latest addition to the
"Bowman family"



Luculia in full bloom at Forest Lodge

Rhodo Knowledge

FRAGRANCE IN RHODODENDRON HYBRIDS by *Peter Cameron* Dunedin, New Zealand

“...As most rhododendron species are temperate or even tropical plants - this applies particularly to fragrant species - one important quality to incorporate in hybridizing would be to induce greater hardiness. Much work has been done to this end in Britain, Europe, USA, and Canada (see "The Hardest Rhododendrons," Dunedin Rhododendron Group Bulletin, No. 18, 1990, p. 84). To us in Australasia, with our milder temperate climate, the need for hardiness does not seem very pressing. Other qualities to foster might include:

- In plant performance: toughness, toleration of sun and heat, wind tolerance, disease resistance;
- In foliage: larger or more attractive leaves, very good indumentum, compactness of foliage and plant;
- In flowers: colour, size, texture, lasting quality, and fragrance..." [Read full article](#)

Notice Board

Subscriptions

Reminder from our Treasurer- subscriptions are due. Please pay annual subs at the July meeting.

Conferences

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

Maple grafting workshop

Members who have indicated interest in the Maple grafting workshop will be contacted by e-mail when the date is finalised. Details of materials to bring will also be included.

AGM of National Council

at Emu Valley, Tasmania – November 5th- members are encouraged to attend the AGM. It is a perfect time to visit Tasmania with many outstanding gardens and historical sites to see.

