

# Newsletter of the ARSV



## Subscriptions for 2017/18

For those who haven't renewed could you do so now.

**PLEASE RENEW NOW.**

## Refurbishment of the Propagation area

The propagation area is where the Society grows plants for planting out at the NRG Olinda and for sales. Over the years it has become overcrowded, plant quality was compromised and room was needed for expansion. Over the past few months the Tuesday group has been rationalising the area, determining what species and hybrids were priorities for propagation to maintain the collection and to plant out in the gardens. We also need to propagate good plants for sale and make room for the plants being propagated from the NQ expeditions. Eight new benches have been purchased and the plants are still undergoing rigorous sorting.



Deciding whether to pot up or plant out.



The new benches and plants being sorted for sale and planting.

## Upcoming events

**Saturday and Sunday August 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>** Camellias Vic & Waverley Garden Club will be holding their annual Camellia & Garden Show Saturday 1:00 to 5:00 and Sunday 10:00 to 4.30 at Mount Waverley Community Centre 47 Miller Crescent, Mount Waverley. Entry - Adults \$5.00 and Children free.

**Friday to Sunday August 25<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup>** The Orchid Societies Council of Victoria (OSCOV) have their Melbourne Orchid Spectacular from 9:00 to 4:00 daily at Boxhall Pavilion, KCC Park (State Dog Centre), 655 Westernport Highway, Skye 3977. Entry is \$10 and children free. (<http://www.oscov.asn.au/oscovshw.htm>).

**Saturday and Sunday September 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>** Ferny Creek Horticultural Society's Spring Show 100 Hilton Road, Sassafras. 12:00 to 4:00 Saturday and 10:00 to 4:00 Sunday. Entry \$5. <http://fchs.org.au/events/>

**Thursday September 14<sup>th</sup> to Tuesday October 10<sup>th</sup>** Tesselaar's 64<sup>th</sup> tulip festival will take place 9:00 to 5:00 daily over three weeks this spring at The Tulip Farm, 357 Monbulk Rd, Silvan, Victoria. Check the website for the many events within their large program. <http://tulipfestival.com.au/>

**Saturday and Sunday October 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>** Mount Macedon & District Horticultural Society's 2017 garden Lovers Fair. Bolobak, 370 Mt Macedon Road, Macedon, Vic 3440. Entry \$10.00 Children free. <https://www.mountmacedonhorticulture.org.au/2016-garden-lovers-fair>

**Saturday and Sunday October 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>** Baw Baw Garden and Home Expo. 10:00 to 5:00 Saturday and 10:00 to 3:00 Sunday at Lardner Park, 155 Burnt Store Road, Lardner 3820 Adults \$10.00 and Children free. <http://www.bawbawshire.vic.gov.au/Events-Calendar/Baw-Baw-Garden-and-Home-Expo>.

**Saturday and Sunday October 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>** Cactus and Succulent Society of Australia's show. 10:00 to 5:00 Saturday and 10:00 to 3:00 Sunday at Mount Waverley Community Centre 47 Miller Crescent, Mount Waverley. Adults \$7.00 and Children free.

**Saturday and Sunday October 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>** Ferny Creek Horticultural Society's Flower Festival 100 Hilton Road, Sassafras. 12:00 to 4:00 Saturday and 10:00 to 4:00 Sunday. Entry \$5. <http://fchs.org.au/events/>

### Committee

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## Rhododendron in focus: *Rhododendron xanthostephanum*

Subsection Tephropepla

This species comes from Tibet, Yunnan, and upper Burma at 1500 to 4000 metres. The name simply means yellow garland. This is an ideal species for the rockery with small bright yellow flowers on a compact bush. The National Rhododendron Gardens (NRG) at Olinda has several of these in the main rockery and the moorland which flower in October. In Britain this is regarded as a “tender species”, only suited to warmer and milder areas. On a recent visit to Wales, I was therefore surprised to find this growing on a rocky outcrop at Portmerion, and flowering profusely, only 100 metres from the Irish Sea. My own attempts at growing this species at Ringwood East were not successful and I would suggest you try its hybrid “Saffron Queen” (*burmanicum* x *xanthostephanum*), as an easier alternative.

**Alan Kepert**



### Olinda Garden Annex

Parks Victoria staff with some financial assistance from the ARSV has erected a new boundary fence in the old disused golf course land. The new boundary expands the NRG Olinda by about 6 hectares and provides enough space to allow several major improvements to be undertaken. Some of the improvements such as better access, more parking and safer work facilities have been sort by the ARSV for decades and their implementation will make a major difference to both the visitor numbers and the feel of the gardens.

The extra space will house a re-located office and nursery thus freeing up the land currently used by them for a much bigger car-park and will enable access to that car-park from Olinda-Monbulk Rd.

The sheds and works areas will be re-located away from the public access areas, making it safer for the public and less problematic for staff and volunteers.

The new garden area will allow for the capture of water run-off from the sports oval and greater water storage - increasingly becoming an issue as our summers become drier.

The new garden area will be planted out as an endangered species and rhododendron conservation garden, with the emphasis being to plant in substantial numbers some of the plant species listed in the Rhododendron Red List. This will form a significant feature of the NRG Olinda as it progresses into a Botanic Garden.

Some of our members will have noticed that the erecting of the fence has not passed without a good deal of negative comment, particularly in the local media. Those commenting are mostly ignorant of the purpose to which the land will be used and are pushing an agenda entirely in their self-interest. The Garden expansion is supported by the management of Parks Victoria and by the local member of State Parliament.

## Introducing Enkianthus

A recent email from Roy Bilbie in Queensland concerning the renaming the NRG Olinda prompted your newsletter editor to remember that members have a broad interest in plants beyond Rhododendrons. In fact, collectively, members have a huge horticultural and botanical knowledge. The NRG at Olinda has a broad collection of temperate plants beside Rhododendrons and it has now become the repository of the Melbourne Botanic Gardens Chinese collection.

I do not know what the NRG will be renamed eventually but I thought it would be a good idea to cover some other interesting plant groups at the NRG Olinda on an occasional basis, like the companion animal articles. So today we have a brief look at the genus *Enkianthus*.

*Enkianthus* is another ericaceous genus and is related to *Gaultheria* and *Vaccinium* but in its own subfamily. They are small deciduous trees or shrubs and regarded as the most “primitive” of the Ericaceae. There are perhaps 13 species, although some say up to 17. Up to 32 names are synonyms.

*Enkianthus* means “pregnant flowers” and refers to the swollen shape of the flowers, which are borne in pendulous racemes. The seeds are borne in dry capsules rather than fleshy berries. The leaves are generally toothed and whorled. They occur from the eastern Himalayas (northern India and across northern Myanmar) to northern Vietnam and up into northern China, Japan and Taiwan. *Enkianthus* are well worth growing and need to be treated like most ericaceous plants – they like well-drained acidic soils but are susceptible to sunburn. The NRG at Olinda has 5 species and a variety as follows.

*E. campanulatus* is a species from Japan and possibly the commonest species in cultivation. NRG Olinda also has a white form of *E. campanulatus*, possibly *f. albiflorus*.

*E. deflexus* is a wide ranging species from China, Himalayan India, Sikkim, Nepal, Bhutan and northern Myanmar that can grow up to 5 m tall and in the wild has “superb” autumn colours.

*E. chinensis* comes from central and southern China, has striped yellow orange and red flowers and, again, lovely autumn colours.

*E. perulatus* is another Japanese endemic; the flowers appear before the leaves and it is very common in cultivation.

*E. quinqueflorus* is a small evergreen shrub (to 2 m high) with very large pearly pink translucent flowers up to 1 cm wide and lovely pink bracts, from China and north Vietnam.



## The Kurume Bowl

The Kurume bowl at NRG Olinda is one of the most famous parts of the gardens. It provides a tranquil year round retreat and a spectacular vision when the azaleas are flowering. Originally the bowl was designed as four tiers of azaleas producing the bowl effect but over the years the Kurume bowl has become tired and overgrown, growth of the azaleas has been unchecked and the original layered design of the bowl has been lost. Rabbits have formed warrens under the azaleas and it is time for a refurbishment. Parks Victoria and ARSV have been having discussions about what to do and over the next year or two the bowl will be cleaned up, the azaleas pruned and brought back to good condition and the original four-tier structure restored. So, if on your visit to the gardens you see us or parks staff working away in the bowl, have no fears, it is all an effort to restore it to its original glory. If you didn't know already Kurumes have an interesting history.

"Kurume azalea" is a horticultural name for evergreen azaleas bred in Kurume, Fukuoka, in northern Kyushu, characterized by small to medium sized flowers with bright colours and numerous flowers covering the whole plant. They are sometimes referred to as *Rhododendron obtusum* Planch. They were named after the Kurume feudal family by their originator and clan retainer, presumably a samurai, Motozo Sakamoto (1786-1854) about 170 years ago. They were derived from natural hybrids between *R. kaempferi* and *R. kiusianum* found on Mt. Kirishima, Kyushu, the purple flowered *R. kiusianum* growing on the mountain tops and the red flowered *R. kaempferi* around the mountain's base. The breeding of Kurume azaleas has also involved *R. saatense*, *R. macrosepalum* and *R. ripense*.

They were originally developed as indoor bonsai and were bred for pinkish long-lasting flowers that reflected brilliantly under the weak light condition indoors. You may have noticed how the Kurume bowl glows on cloudy days. By the late 1700's, over 300 cultivars were officially recorded and new azaleas were often announced in the same way as sumo wrestlers, indicating the appeal these plants had to the public.



The Kurume bowl then.



The Kurume bowl now – dead patches in the azaleas, lace bug, weeds.

Commercial growing of Kurumes has declined and many cultivars are disappearing. At present, two official organizations lead Kurume azalea breeding and conservation in Japan- the Kurume Research Station of the Kyushu Okinawa Agricultural Research Centre and the Kurume-shi World Azalea Center founded by Kurume City.

Interestingly other hybrids from Mt Kirishima were used for breeding stock in Edo (Tokyo) long before the Kurumes were developed. These resulted in the "Edo Kirishima" azaleas. These particular azaleas form the basis of a tourist industry in the Noto district of Ishikawa prefecture, a small district on a northern peninsula of Honshu.

While old Edo-kirishima azaleas are now rare in most of Japan, this district boasts 286 plants over 100 years old. Records show that Edo-kirishima azaleas occurred in Noto prior to 1738. They have their own name - "Noto- kirishimatsutsuji".

At the NRG Olinda azaleas are prone to lace bug and in Japan a growth disorder is often reported involving severe leaf yellowing and death. This is due to excess nitrate which can be poisonous to azaleas. Apparently nitrate nitrogen should not exceed 75% of total nitrogen for azaleas.

Akihide Okamoto, Masataka Yamashita and Yuji Kajitani. 2007. Breeding and Production of Kurume Azaleas (*Rhododendron obtusum* Planch.). *Floriculture and Ornamental Biotechnology* 1: 30-33.

Yuji Kurashige and Nobuo Kobayashi. 2009. Investigation of Old Edo-Kirishima Azalea Specimens in the Noto District, Ishikawa Prefecture. *Hort. Res. (Japan)* 8: 267-271.