



Rhododendrons South Australia

Australian Rhododendron Society Inc. South Australian Branch

Issue 110 - September 2017

President's Message

As Society members filed in through the Crafers Hall door on the night of the AGM it was going to be interesting to note whether the number of attendees would be greater or fewer than the absentees. It was a typical cold, wet and wintry Adelaide Hills night but I should not have been concerned as the chairs reliably filled with faithful familiar faces. The AGM was conducted uneventfully with reports submitted and the election of office bearers conducted, there being no changes in positions apart from it being a pleasure to welcome Olivera Waterman to the role of vice-president. Olivera has become an active member of our group since joining the Society and we look forward to her involvement on the committee.

After the matters of the AGM and regular meeting agenda we were entertained with a recount of Henry Hancock's recent botanical expedition to Mt Finnigan in far north Queensland. This was a trip a long time in the planning due to the requirement for a permit to explore and obtain specimens, but was finally able to be mounted under the guidance of a native land custodian. Henry was partnered with Andrew Rouse from the Victorian branch who has previously joined Rob Hatcher in 2016 on a similar expedition, but to different sites also in the region. Their objective was to locate and obtain plant material, in part for the purpose of propagation, from species *R. lochiaie* and *R. viriosum* which are two naturally occurring rhododendron species in Australia. Others in the group had different botanical quests but photographs proved that all were successful in their missions. In time to come we may get to enjoy the challenge of nurturing our very own *R. lochiaie*s and/or *R. viriosum*s sourced from this expedition! Thank you to Henry for generously and enthusiastically sharing his experiences.

Incidentally, Henry also shared his challenges with rhododendron care; not being a Hills resident he keeps his plants in pots and in the extremes of summer weather shelters them in the kitchen of his home! Now that's dedication for you!



The raffle winner was Miriam Sampson, taking home a nice specimen of Black Prince.



Our newly elected Vice-President Oliver Waterman showing an exceptionally fragrant specimen of Camellia Sensuous.



Rob Hatcher showcasing some of MLBG's prize blooms

Spring is here



Rhododendron Jeanette Clark started to bloom on September 1st. It is a strong plant with good foliage and tight trusses of lavender/pink. A worthy candidate to herald spring.

Rhododendron Elegans makes a fine show in early spring. It can grow into a large plant and appears very hardy in the Adelaide Hills.



Reticulata camellia, Happy Higo has spectacular blooms with very prominent stamens.

Next Meeting

This will be held at the Crafers Hall on Wednesday, September 20th at 8pm. We will host a panel of experts including our newsletter contributor, Bill Voigt to answer questions regarding garden problems.

At the August meeting there was a discussion concerning a change of venue and time for meetings. It was agreed that the venue for the November meeting would be

*The Petanque Clubrooms,
Stonehenge avenue (alongside Stirling Hospital)
on Tuesday, November, 21st at 7.45pm.*

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

Bring along samples of your dead /diseased plants and have the problem(s) identified.



Bloom of the Month – Vireya Dissilistellatum



This species Vireya was first collected in Sulawesi in 1994 by Lyn Craven. George Argent of Edinburgh Botanic gardens thinks it is a variation on *R. radians* but Andrew Rouse thinks there are sufficient differences to make it a separate species named *R. dissilistellatum*. It is very rare in cultivation, this being the 5th plant known to have flowered. Thank you to Dr Henry Hancock for sharing this lovely specimen with us.



From the Propagating bench *by Richard Illman*

Below average temperatures, icy winds and rain could not deter an enthusiastic group of members from attending the first maple grafting workshops offered in August. Four meetings were held and each attendee took home a grafted maple, some of which appeared to be like Christmas trees with numerous grafts on many of the branches.

These grafts should now be showing signs of growth with, hopefully, the small buds swelling. The strips of freezer bag designed to reduce dehydration can now be removed but the grafting tape should remain for

12 months.

Boxes of rhododendron cuttings should be checked regularly to ensure that they are not drying out or receiving too much light. They will benefit from a weekly application of dilute fertiliser and if they have shown signs of growth can be potted on. It is advisable after doing this that individual plants are further protected from dehydration by placing a cut off clear plastic drink bottle over the specimen.





The Month Ahead *by Bill Voigt*

If you have tree ferns (*Dicksonia Antarctica*) that have grown too tall, you can cut off the top section to the size you would prefer, and then plant that section in to the ground. The old stump can be cut into small logs, hollowed out, and used as containers for *Vireya Rhodos*, hairsfoot ferns (*Davallia*) or native epiphytic orchids such as *Dendrobiums* and *Cymbidiums*.

The usually acidic soils found here in the hills are suitable for most variety of *Ericas* which have the usual colour range of red, pink, white, or mauve. There are a few outstanding yellow forms available now. "Cavandishiana" has yellow tubular flowers, while "Golden Bells" is a variety in stock in nurseries now.

Apart from some deciduous azaleas, there aren't many scented shrubs in the rhodo family. Some of the exceptions are "Fragrantissimum", perhaps the most highly scented, "Countess of Haddington", "Mt Everest", "Sauve" and "Van Nes Sensation".

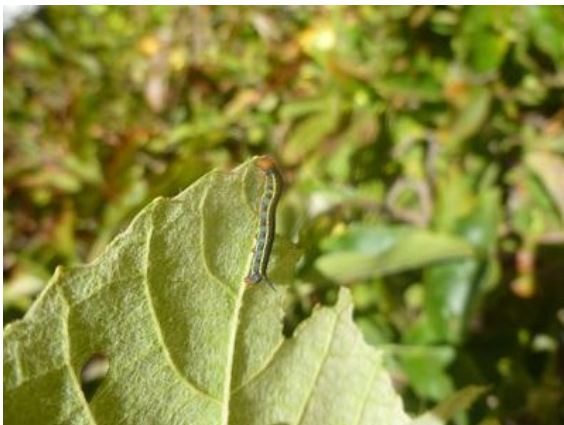
A beautiful early flowering red rhodo is "Unknown Warrior". At first it can be a straggly plant, which lends itself to layering, but it can be pruned into a tidy shape.

Problems to look for in Rhodos as the weather warms are-

Rust on undersides of *Vireya* leaves. A fungicide is needed.



Leaves close to the ground serrated by weevils- a systemic insecticide needed.



New growth on "Elizabeth", "Alison Johnstone", and any of the *Cinnabarinum* hybrids attacked by caterpillars- most insecticides effective.



Azaleas can be grown in hanging baskets and some suitable varieties are, "Red Wings", "Rose Queen", "Only one earth", "Christmas Cheer", "Pink Ruffles", "Red Ruffled", "Ballerina", and "Balsaminaeflora".

Satsuki azaleas do well in containers or hanging baskets.

They must be watered more regularly than container grown varieties.

Lateral and pendulous growth should be encouraged, while any more vertical shoots can be shortened.

With Winter officially behind us it is time to consider annuals for colour during the warmer months. As well as the ever popular petunias, flox, portulaca, cosmos, verbena and impatiens are easily grown. Bearded iris will be sending up new leaves and flowering stems so it is important to remove any old foliage that can harbour slugs and snails. Although we have had lots of rain don't neglect to keep container plants well watered. Mulching around mature Rhodos with well-rotted animal manure and /or well matured compost will help to suppress weeds and help to keep the roots cool and moist in summer.

Don't neglect visits to the Rhododendron valley in the MLBG from now on as the next three months will be the peak season for the Rhodos and azaleas to make their wonderful display of colour.



Zebra Finch

Taeniopygia guttata



The zebra finch (*Taeniopygia guttata*) is the most common [finch](#) of [Central Australia](#) and ranges over most of the continent, avoiding only the cool moist south and some areas of the tropical far north. It can also be found natively in [Indonesia](#) and [East Timor](#). The bird has been introduced to [Puerto Rico](#) and [Portugal](#).

Usually seen in pairs, large flocks at water: forages on ground; takes flying insects.

Habitat: near water, in mulga, spinifex, gibber; grasslands, open woodlands/shrub lands/scrubs, saltbush, crops, orchards, gardens.

Breeds: most months.

Nest: untidy, domed, of grass, twigs, and rootlets; lined with feathers, hollow branch, fence-post, termite mound, and tussock

Can be seen in Barossa Valley and Murray Bridge area. In Coober Pedy area flocks of 500 + can be seen on a bush or at water's edge.

Librarian's Report *by Ann & David Matison*

This month we thought that we would let our members know of some of the books that are in our Library Cupboard. The following list is of the books about Rhododendrons, Azaleas and Vireyas. We do have other books. These cover such topics as General Gardening, books relating to other plants and a few about plant hunters. We also have a collection of Journals and Newsletters which will not fit into our cupboards but we can make them available on request. Happy reading.

Rhododendrons in Horticulture and Science	Argent, George & McFarlane Marjory (Eds)
Rhododendrons of subgenus Vireya	Argent, George
History of Rhodo. Species Foundation	Barrett, Clarence
Tales of the Rose Tree	Brown, Jane
Growing Azaleas and Rhododendrons	Bryant, Geoff
Rhododendrons and Azaleas	Bryant, Geoff
Getting Started with Rhododendrons and Azaleas	Clarke, Harold
Rhododendrons and Azaleas a colour guide	Cox, Kenneth
Rhododendrons and Azaleas Hamlyn care manual	Cox, Kenneth
Rhododendrons and Azaleas Hamlyn care manual	Cox, Kenneth
Cox's Guide to Choosing Rhododendrons	Cox, Peter & Kenneth
Dwarf Rhododendrons	Cox, Peter
The Cultivation of Rhododendrons	Cox, Peter
The Larger Species of Rhododendrons	Cox, Peter
The Smaller Rhododendrons	Cox, Peter
Encyclopedia of Rhododendron Hybrids	Cox, Peter & Kenneth
The Encyclopedia of Rhododendron Species	Cox, Peter & Kenneth
Compendium of Rhododendron and Azalea Diseases	Coyler, Road
Hardy Rhododendron Species	Cullen, J
Azaleas	Fairweather, C
Making the Most of Rhododendrons and Azaleas	Fairweather, C
Growing Rhododendrons	Francis, R
Southern Living Azaleas	Galle, F.C.
Greer's Guide to Available Rhododendrons	Greer, Harold
Rhododendrons An illustrated guide to varieties, cultivation and care	Hawthorne, Lin
Vireyas - a Practical Gardening Guide	Kenyon and Walker
The Book of Rhododendrons	Kneller, M
Success with Rhododendrons and Azaleas	Kogel, A
Rhododendrons	Krüssman Gerd
The Rothschild Rhododendrons	Lucas-Phillips & Barber
Rhododendrons in the Landscape	Nelson, S
Rhododendrons and Azaleas in Australia	Price, G.P
Growing Rhododendrons - a Gardeners Guide	Pukelti
Success with Rhododendrons and Azaleas	Reiley, H.E.
Gardening with Rhododendrons	Richards, M
Rhododendron Hybrids - a Guide to origins	Salley, Homer & Greer
Rhododendron Hybrids 2nd Edition	Salley, Homer & Greer
Rhododendrons for California	Smith,Parker
Rhododendrons	Street, F
Rhododendron Portraits	van Gelderen & van Hoey Smith
How to Identify Rhodo and Azalea problems	Washington State University

Tales from Forest Lodge by Milton Bowman



Winter has continued here in the hills and the tanks are now full of water and the rain has been good. Temperatures have generally been cold with the occasional bright and warmer days, but there have been a lot of days when the maximum temperature has been 7 or 8C and the fog, wind, and rain has made for indoor days. Despite the fact that it is now spring we are not seeing much blue sky.

Total rainfall for August was 252 mm and already we have had 83mm this month. The year to September rainfall total is 754.5mm, which is quite good. The soil is now saturated and this helps set us up for summer. I have had to clean some of the gutters because the wind has blown tree debris into them and even those protected with mesh covers eventually block because the fine Abies and Picea needles get through the mesh.

The camellias keep on flowering and look great, with some of the young plants blooming for the first time. The first of the rhododendrons are now starting, John Waterer, Sir Robert Peel, and in the last day or two, Bibiani (see image below) has opened up. I really like the strong red flowers on the dark green foliage. It is a Lionel de Rothschild hybrid, likes only partial sun and is a good grower in the Adelaide Hills.

We are looking forward to spring days and many more rhododendrons blooming!



Notice Board

Spring orders from Neutrog

The spring order from Neutrog closes to members on September 20th. Order forms were distributed by e-mail earlier this month. Please complete your order form, pay Peter Wiadrowski and forward the completed form to Bronwyn (Richwyn@optusnet.com.au). Make sure that you keep a copy for yourself.



Pre- ordering of rhododendrons from Toolangi

Members were notified last week, via e-mail, of the rhododendrons available from Toolangi that could be purchased prior to the plant sale on Sunday, September 24th. Please notify Bronwyn prior to, or at the next meeting of the plants requested. The cost to members will be discussed at the September meeting. (last year they were \$25.00)

Plant Sale

Your Society needs you- at the plant sale

The annual plant sale occurs on Sunday, September 24th at the lower car park of MLBG. We need the assistance of all members and request that you nominate a time that you could provide support. There will be a roster available at the September meeting for members to complete, but if you are unable to attend please notify the Secretary (Milton Bowman) of the time you could be available. We need help early in the morning to move and set up plants, throughout the day to sell plants and at the end of the day to tidy up and return unsold plants to the nursery.

Before the plant sale-

Please let the society know what propagated plants you have available for sale. These would be plants propagated on the cutting day in 2016.

We need this information no later than the September meeting (September 20th) as our librarians are preparing photos of the propagated plants for sale. If you cannot make the meeting please supply this information (the earlier the better) to Ann or David Matison. You would also need to consider how the propagated plants will be delivered to the sale on September 24th.

