



Rhododendrons South Australia

Australian Rhododendron Society Inc. South Australian Branch

Issue 111-October 2017

President's Message

The arrival of Spring heralds the peak season for the blooming of our rhododendrons along with so many other wonderful flowering events in our gardens. It also brings an end to our guest speaker presentations at our monthly meetings for the year, and allows the meetings to focus more on what our members enjoy sharing with the group. This began at the last meeting with our "expert panel" forum providing an opportunity for members to put forward their problems and questions with regard to successful rhododendron cultivation. This has proven to be a popular and helpful occasion highlighting the wealth of knowledge and expertise shared within our Society.

That cooperativeness was demonstrated again at our annual plant sale with a great turn out of helpers and Society propagated plants, despite the more challenging wintery conditions we were confronted with on the day. Customers keen enough to brave the conditions came along with a purpose to purchase rhododendron plants and this is what they did! As with last year the hardier hybrids sold out but the larger, fancier Toolangi plants definitely were tempting and helped to provide healthy sales. Thanks to all those who spared the time to assist on the day and beforehand, and also those who contributed to the welcome fortifying catering provisions.

To assist customers in making their plant selections at the sale, Ann Mattison has begun compiling a catalogue of rhododendron plant and bloom images. This catalogue proved to be most helpful on the day and has the potential to be in continual development as more images are added. While your rhododendrons are blooming in all their glory take photos and submit them so that this catalogue can become an even more useful resource



*Expert panel – Bill Voigt, Richard Illman & Milton Bowman
dealing with members challenging questions.*



Rob Field- Winner of Rhododendron Kallista



Philip presents some of the early spring blooms



Rob with a basket of beauties

Plant Sale 2017



Tania –all rugged up!

Where's my glass?



What are we going to do with all these plants?

Spring has sprung



Erythronium pink beauty

Umphaloides cappadoccia



Anemone coronaria

Rockery tulips



Australian Hybrid Rhododendrons at the National Rhododendron Gardens Olinda



Rhododendron Freckles Pink



Rhododendron Dunloe Tasha

Next Meeting

This will be held at the Crafers Hall on Wednesday, October, 18th at 8pm. It will be a blooms night so please bring examples of the rhododendrons in flower during October. ***We will be making a record of the blooms members bring so that ones of interest can be propagated. In order to facilitate this process please name your blooms and indicate their owner.***

**Please remember to bring a plate for supper and something for the “pot
Luck stall”**

Friends and new members are always welcome.

Advance Notice: 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.***



Blooms of the Month – *Rhododendron Winter Beauty and Robyn*



Rhododendron Winter Beauty



Rhododendron Robyn

Rhododendron Robyn- this is a Boulter's production from the 70's. This hybrid is a sister seedling with Winter Beauty. Winter Beauty is one of the earliest to flower and continues from July through to September.

We were attracted to a wonderful example of Robyn on a recent trip to the Olinda gardens where we also found a whole collection of early flowering Australian hybrids. It is hoped that we can seek the assistance of the Victorian society in obtaining plants of these spectacular Australian hybrids. We photographed more of the hybrids and they are represented in the section on spring in the garden.



From the Propagating bench *by Richard Illman*

As we are entering the growing season members should check their propagating boxes and apply a regular application of dilute liquid fertiliser. It is advisable to grow the cuttings on for a period to establish a good root system before potting the successful plants individually.

Those members who grafted maples this year should check the plants for signs of growth and particularly for the presence of aphids that can severely damage the new growth and destroy all your good work. An application of an insecticide such as confidor should control the problem. If you are averse to using a commercial insecticide then soap solution, made with a tablespoon of soap flakes dissolved in 5 litres of warm water will control them in the short term.

Flowering trees such as Elvins Prunus, Crab apples, Deutzia, Weigela and Philadelphus will provide a better display next year if pruned this year after flowering.

Soil temperatures are on the rise and now is the time to consider planting your summer vegetables.



Elvins Prunus

Crab apple Ionensis plena





The Month Ahead *by Bill Voigt*

October is the month when the majority of rhodos and azaleas are in full bloom. The best time to prune these plants is when the flowers have finished. With the larger leaved rhodos you should prune just above growth joints, but with the smaller leaved ones and azaleas you can prune anywhere along the stem.

Sometimes one branch or perhaps several will appear to die for no apparent reason. This dieback is caused by a fungus which has entered the branch through an injury to the bark. The best solution is to remove the affected branches, cutting below the discoloured dead wood. Be sure to disinfect your pruners between each cut.



Warmer weather can bring the fungus petal blight, affecting blooms very quickly. Spraying with a fungus such as Bayleton just as the buds burst will prevent the flowers from collapsing into a pulpy mess.

Plants in containers need attention now. Check to see if the roots have blocked the drainage holes and if so they need to be pruned back or the plant repotted into a larger container. Remember too, that the free draining soil found in potting mixtures dries out very quickly on warmer days so don't neglect to water regularly. Most rhodos grow best in semi-shaded positions under a high canopy of deciduous trees. However, there are some hardy varieties that will tolerate more sun including, Sir Robert Peel, President Roosevelt, White Pearl, various forms of Ponticum, most of the Wibley hybrids,

Jean Marie de Montague, and Auguste van Geert. Feeding time for Rhodos is just after flowering, but sparingly is the best advice as too much fertiliser can severely damage the roots.

Two dwarf shrubs in bloom now are, *Raphiolepis ovata* and *Raphiolepis delacourii*. The former has glossy rounded leaves and white flowers followed by black berries, whilst the latter has masses of bright pink flowers and narrower, softer leaves. Known as Indian Hawthorns these hardy plants are ideal for more exposed conditions and for forming a low hedge.



Dahlias can be planted now. If you have not lifted the tubers for a year or more it is best to dig the mass of tubers, divide them and replant smaller sections in fresh soil enriched with old cow manure. Lilliums are available now and can be planted in selected spots in the garden or containers.

Aphis are already appearing on roses. If there are but a few, these can be rubbed off with the fingers or squirted with the hose. Large infestations may require an insecticide but do not spray if you notice ladybirds present as their larvae prey on aphis.

As we move into warmer days, most succulents can be divided and cuttings taken. Don't neglect to keep the bird bath full for the smaller feathered friends. Enjoy the wonderful sights and scents of spring.

Red-capped Robin

Petroica goodenovii



A common sight in the drier parts of a lot of Australia. Locally out from Gawler, Lyndoch and from Monarto through the drier parts of the Mount Lofty Ranges.

Easily spotted as it sits on a vantage point; perhaps a branch 2 metres up from the ground. It flies down to ground to pick up insects and often flicks tail and wings to flush out insects on the ground. Often heard before being seen - a mixture of trills.

Nest: tiny cup of soft, shredded bark, grass, spiders' web, lichen; on fork, horizontal branch, 1-3 m high.

Eggs: 2-4; blue-green, grey-green; plentiful purple-brown flecks around middle.

Librarian's Report *by Ann & David Matison*

Recently, while ordering a book online, I happened upon a book 'Rhododendrons in India: Flora and Foliar Splendour of the Himalayan Flora'. On further investigation I found more books that we do not have in our collection. But don't get excited, only two have arrived. The first, "Rhododendron" by Richard Milne published in 2017 and mentioned at last meeting, is a densely written book of approximately 200 pages that I will read and report on soon.

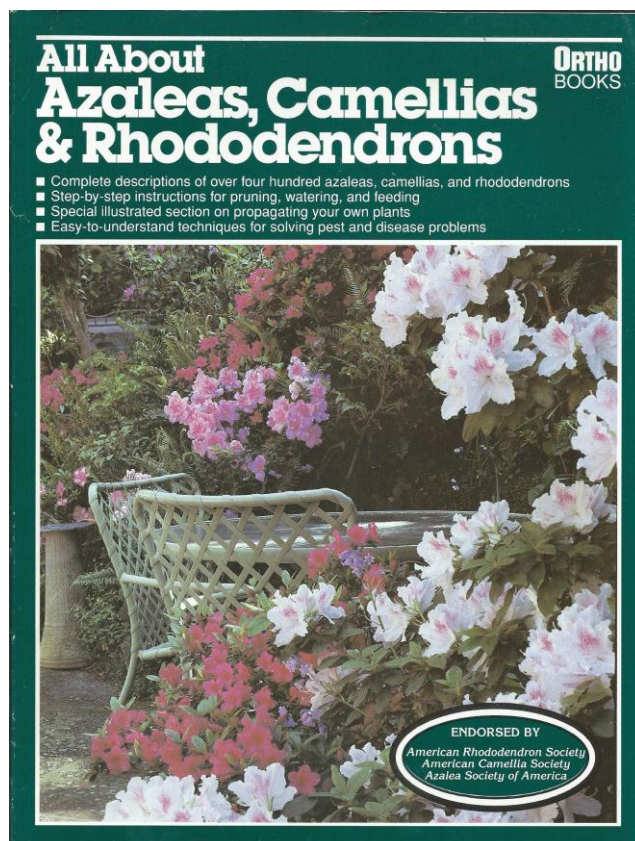
The other is a paperback named 'All About Azaleas, Camellias and Rhododendrons'. It is written specifically for the American market, but should be of interest to us. It starts with a brief introduction and even briefer history of those three plant families. There is an interesting section on landscaping. As we know, rhododendrons and azaleas grow best in an acidic soil preferably of pH 5-6 but here are guide lines to growing them in containers for those who do not have ideal conditions. There is a section on planting and propagating, along with very clear diagrams to help the novice. There is also a section about caring for the plants. The book finishes with a brief encyclopaedia of rhododendrons, azaleas and camellias, common in North America with beautiful illustrations of some flowers.

The book is attractively presented. There are good step-by-step diagrams and pictures to help with care and propagation and some lovely pictures to inspire the landscapers amongst us.

Unfortunately the book about Rhododendrons in India and another named 'American Azaleas' have failed to appear in our post box despite some email correspondence. Who knows, they might still materialise.

Please note that the Library cupboards will not be at the Petanque Club for our meeting on November, 21st.

Happy reading.



Tales from Forest Lodge *by Milton Bowman*



Spring has really happened this month and the garden really does transform as the deciduous trees develop their leaves and blossom. The crab apples are looking spectacular and the fruit trees are full of bees. This might be a good season for fruit.

We have been busy redeveloping the cottage garden near the house. It had become weed infested with a persistent grass, the salvia had been layering itself for a year or two, and the yellow alstromera with its tuberose roots had become a complete pest. Time for a makeover!

The cleanup was done with the little tractor which helped to rip out weeds and turn over the soil. The soil proved to be mainly clay and needed a good dose of gypsum and a heap of sand and compost, before planting out. This has been done, but of course there is still room for more plants and Kristina has her eyes open.

During the month there has been a modest but adequate rainfall of 125.5mm bringing us up to 880mm for the year to date. This compares to 1306mm this time last year.

The rhododendrons are blooming and there are still camellias in flower. We are waiting for the old Waterers to do their thing and they should start soon and go on flowering till mid December. Even Cynthia has not started to show signs of bursting yet, but should do so in the next week or so.

Lots to look forward to!

Cheers

Milton Bowman



Notice Board

Garden Visit

Lianne Healey has generously offered her garden for a member's garden visit on Sunday, October 22nd at 2pm. Lianne's garden (Copperwaite) is at the end of Rostrevor Rd. Stirling. Some parking is available inside the garden. Members visiting are requested to bring a plate for afternoon tea. Tea /coffee will be supplied.

MLBG Celebration

On November 5th, MLBG is celebrating its 40th anniversary and has offered our society the opportunity to have a display/stall. Members who are able to assist on the day are requested to notify our President, Belida Cullum at the next meeting.

Christmas Lunch

This function will be held at Sue and Bill Antel's garden in Aldgate on Sunday, December 3rd. More information will be provide in the November newsletter.

November Meeting

Don't forget the new venue for next month's meeting. The Petanque Club at the bottom of Stonehenge avenue, Stirling, will be a trial venue for the November meeting. The meeting commences at 8pm.

