

Newsletter of the ARSV



NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Below is the official announcement from the secretary for the AGM to be held on 11th November at 2:00 pm at the gardens Club House. Following the AGM business there will be presentations and open discussions of the many changes on-going and proposed for the gardens and their expansion. This is an important time to come along and be part of the Rhododendron gardens' future as it heads towards botanic gardens status. You will have received nomination and proxy forms either as an attachment to the same email by which you received this newsletter or in the envelope you received it in.

Please consider nominating yourself or someone for one of the office bearer or committee positions. We are very keen that our Society thrives and we always need new souls to maintain the energy and drive.

We really need your help. Just fill out the nomination form and send it back to the secretary.

The Annual General Meeting of the Australian Rhododendron Society, Victorian Branch Inc. (A5896Z), will be held on Saturday, 11 November 2017, at the Club House National Rhododendron Gardens, Olinda-Monbulk Road, Olinda (Melway Ref: 66 J7), commencing at 2:00 pm. (see adjacent map)

The business of the meeting shall be:

- to confirm the Minutes of the 57th Annual General Meeting held on 12 November 2016;
- to receive from the Committee reports upon the transactions of the Branch during the last Financial year;
- to elect Officers of the Branch, and three (3) Ordinary Members of the Committee;
- to receive and consider the Statements of Income and Expenditure and Assets and Liabilities for the last Financial Year;
- to elect an Auditor;
- to conduct such other business of which notice is given in accordance with the Branch Rules.

All positions of officers of the Branch, i.e., President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer, fall vacant under Rule 55 and are to be filled by election.

Three positions, numbers 4, 5 and 6, of ordinary Committee Members fall vacant by rotation, each for a two-year term in accordance with Rule 44. Retiring Officers and Ordinary Members of Committee are eligible to stand for re-election.

Following business there will be light refreshments and a presentation and discussion of on going and proposed works for the gardens and their expansion.

Nominations, on the attached form, close with the Secretary, ARS, Vic Branch, P.O. Box 296, Olinda, Victoria, 3788, or by email to vichodo@gmail.com by 5.00pm on Friday 3rd November 2017.

A copy of the "Rules of the Australian Rhododendron Society - Victorian Branch Incorporated (A5896Z)" including the "Statement of Purposes", may be obtained from the Secretary.

Michael Hare
 Secretary



Final reminder for renewal of Subscriptions for 2017/18
PLEASE RENEW NOW

***R. periclymenoides* (see last page)**



www.flickr.com/photos/nicholas_t

Committee							
John O'Hara	President	johnohara@optusnet.com.au	03 9593 1323	Simon Begg		simonwbegg@gmail.com	03 9728 4466
Andrew Rouse	Vice-President	awrouse@bigpond.com	0424 750 406	Francis Crome	Newsletter editor	francis@crome.net.au	0417 730 291
Michael Hare	Secretary	vichodo@gmail.com	0405 403 607	Dan Macleod		dan.macleod@parks.vic.gov.au	0400 594 319
Prue Crome	Treasurer	prue@crome.net.au	0419 659 741	Alex Pottage		niceplants53@gmail.com	03 5786 1595
Graham Price		lithic01@bigpond.net.au	0409 639 448	Walter Lobbezoo	Librarian	wlobbezoo@parks.vic.gov.au	03 9751 1704

Rhododendron in focus: *Rhododendron leucaspis*

Subsection Boothia

This is found in S.E. Tibet at 2400 to 3000 metres, growing on cliff faces and grassy banks, sometimes epiphytic. We have several old plants in the main rockery, which put on an impressive display in early spring. The flowers are white with chocolate-brown anthers and a reddish-brown calyx. (see photo). On looking through Cox's "Encyclopedia of Rhododendron Species" I was surprised to find that the related species, *boothii*, *chrysodoron*, *megeratum*, and *sulfureum* are found to grow as epiphytes, on rocks, trees and cliffs. Unfortunately we have been planting these species in the rockery without much success and the reason is now obvious; they all require an open, fast-draining soil mixture suitable for epiphytes. It should not be difficult to arrange this within the rockery.

Which reminds me of the old adage "If all else fails, read the instructions"

Alan Kepert



ARSV –Rolling Calendar of activities for October and November 2017

The Committee has put together a rolling calendar so you can see what activities are taking place at the Rhododendron Gardens Olinda. We need help with all of these so PLEASE CHOOSE AN ACTIVITY AND COME ALONG. Contact the secretary or the treasurer. Weekends are an option if interest is shown.

	Garden	Nursery	Vireya House	Plant sales, meetings
October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moorland refurbishment • Australian Asiatic hybrid bed refurbishment • Collect cuttings for propagation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check and clean watering system and filter weekly • Upgrade watering system in large shadehouse • Sort and set aside plants for disposal, sale and planting-out (species and hybrids) • Set up benches for NQ collection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check and clean/replace misting filter • Check watering coverage • Put up shade cloth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ferny Creek show
November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plant Hunt and inventory (bed based) • Australian Asiatic hybrid bed refurbishment • Collect cuttings for propagation • Fertilise /Confidor? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check and clean watering system and filter weekly • Upgrade watering system in vireya tunnel • Replace perlite in propagating glasshouse and disinfect/clean out 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vireya House inventory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ARS-Vic AGM and 'plant fair'

Companion animal – Red Panda

The Red Panda (*Ailurus fulgens*) is a small carnivore weighing 3 - 6 kg that inhabits the montane bamboo and Rhododendron forests at 1500-4800 m in the Himalayas and Hengduan mountains from Sikkim through Nepal, northern India and Myanmar to Yunnan, Tibet and Sichuan. It seems to prefer areas of dense shrubbery, fallen logs and tree stumps. Although technically a carnivore, it is vegetarian and bamboo leaves form the bulk of its diet. This bamboo specialisation is a trait it shares with its namesake the Giant Panda. The Red Panda and Giant Panda were once thought to be closely related but it is now considered that the latter is in fact a bear (Ursidae), albeit in its own subfamily (Ailuropodinae). The Red Panda, on the other hand, appears to be unique and has its own family (Ailuridae).

Bamboo is low in nutrients and mostly indigestible fibre, the sort of diet that ruminants cope with by having big teeth and specialised stomachs. Bamboo leaves make up over 80% of the Red Panda's diet but, although it has big teeth, it has an ordinary gut, which can only extract about one quarter of the nutrients from bamboo. They have to eat a lot and food passes through quickly.

In winter they have to spend up to 13 hours a day foraging for bamboo when other foods such as insects, leaves and fruit are not so available and they can lose up to 15 percent of their body weight. To cope with this lack of nutrition in winter they can slow their metabolism, which is normally very low anyway, a bit like sloths. Finally, thick insulating fur covers their entire body, including the soles of their feet.

They occupy small home ranges of 1-4 km² and don't move much within it – just a few hundred metres a day. They are good climbers and have the habit of descending trees headfirst. Melbourne Zoo has this species on display.



Rhododendron Anne Teese



This is a beautiful Australian hybrid between *R. ciliicalyx* and *R. formosum* that deserves to be more widely planted. It bears abundant blossoms, which have a superb perfume, and has attractive red papery bark. This specimen is in the garden of Prue Crome, Kallista.

Upcoming events

Thursday September 14th to Tuesday October 10th

Tesselaar's 64th 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 14th and 15th 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 14th and 15th Cranbourne Friends Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria- spring plant sale at the Botanic Gardens Cranbourne. 10:00- 4:00 both days. Entry free. Plant list available 1 week prior to sale. www.rbgfrienscranbourne.org.au

Saturday and Sunday October 21st and 22nd Melbourne Friends Royal Botanic Gardens spring plant sale at the Botanic Gardens Melbourne. 10:00- 4:00 both days. Entry \$15. Plant list available on line 1 week prior to sale. Contact 03 9650 6398 or friends@frbgmelb.org.au. Birdwood Ave, South Yarra opposite the shrine MW2F K12.

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

Sunday November 5th Iris Society of Australia (Victorian Region Inc.) - Main Show. 11:00 to 4:00 at Mount Waverley Community Centre 47 Miller Crescent, Mount Waverley. Adults \$6.00 and Children free.

Rhododendrons in swamps

Swamplands are not habitats that we in Australia generally associate with Rhododendrons, however the USA has a range of species of deciduous azaleas that can survive or even prefer swamplands. The best known is *R. viscosum*, which we know of as Swamp Azalea or Swamp Honeysuckle, but in the USA seems to be more commonly called Clammy Azalea. Synonyms for *R. viscosum* are numerous and include *Azalea serrulata*, *A. viscosa*, *R. coryi*, *R. oblongifolium*, *R. nitidum*, *R. serrulatum*, *R. viscosum* var. *aemulans*, *R. viscosum* var. *glaucum*, *R. viscosum* var. *montanum*, *R. viscosum* var. *nitidum*, *R. viscosum* var. *serrulatum*, and *R. viscosum* var. *tomentosum*

R. viscosum is a deciduous shrub growing to 4 m wide but only 1-2 m tall. Leaves are lustrous green on both sides, medium sized, 3.5 - 9 x 1.5 - 4 cm and arranged at the end of branches. They turn orange to maroon in autumn before falling. The flowers are white, with a lavender tube, 3 - 4 cm long with 5 narrow spreading lobes. The 5 stamens extend well beyond the flower. They are beautifully scented with a slight lemony fragrance. The flowers of this deciduous azalea appear after the leaves. It is called Clammy Azalea because of its very sticky corolla. It occurs in the eastern USA from Maine to Florida in a range of habitats including montane forest. It's ability to grow in or along swamps is its speciality but other Rhododendrons of this section (Pentanthera subsection Pentanthera) also grow or at least can survive in these wet habitats – these include *R. arborescens*, *R. prinophyllum*, *R. periclymenoides*, *R. canescens* and *R. atlanticum*.

R. arborescens is a white flowered wetland species from Pennsylvania to Alabama that can be found in a range of habitats including swamps. It differs from *R. viscosum* in having smooth branches and twigs.

R. prinophyllum is a hairy leaved shrub to 3 m high with pink flowers that have a fragrance like cloves. It grows in swampy, wet areas like bogs, thickets and along streams but also occurs in drier habitats like rocky woods. It has a wide but scattered distribution from Quebec to Arkansas and Virginia to Oklahoma. It's swamp habitats appear to be more sphagnum bogs than wooded swamps.

R. periclymenoides (= *R. nudiflorum*) is a sparse shrub, growing up to 3 m high with interesting white to pink flowers with the stamens being up to 3 times longer than the ovary. It grows from Vermont to Alabama and Georgia. It generally prefers moist wooded areas but is known to grow in and along swamps and wetland areas.

R. canescens (Piedmont Azalea, Southern Pinxter Azalea or Wild Azalea) is a tall shrub (to 6 m tall) with pink flowers native to northeast North Carolina, north Tennessee, southeastern Kentucky, southern Illinois, eastern Oklahoma, the peninsula of Florida, and southeast Texas. It grows in swamps, pocosins (bogs with sandy peat soil and woody shrubs) and savannahs.

R. atlanticum (Dwarf Azalea) is a low shrub up to 1.5 m high from the coastal plain from Georgia to Delaware. It can be found up to 300 km away from the coast and occurs in both dry and wet habitats. These plants can spread by rhizomes. The flowers have a musky fragrance and are white to light pink and glandular, like *R. viscosum*. The pinkish red glands form a line onto each petal tip.

Deciduous azaleas are not the only Rhododendrons that can survive or even thrive in swamps and boggy places. *R. columbianum* (Section Rhododendron, Subsection Ledum), which has now been shown by genetics to be a species not a hybrid, is a species of bogs and swamps and many New Guinea vireyas occur in tropical upland peat bogs.

Most of these species can be found in the rockery garden at the Rhododendron Gardens, Olinda. Check out the Vireya House for New Guinea vireyas.



R. viscosum photo by Elvert Barnes <https://www.flickr.com/photos/perspective/7715674922>