

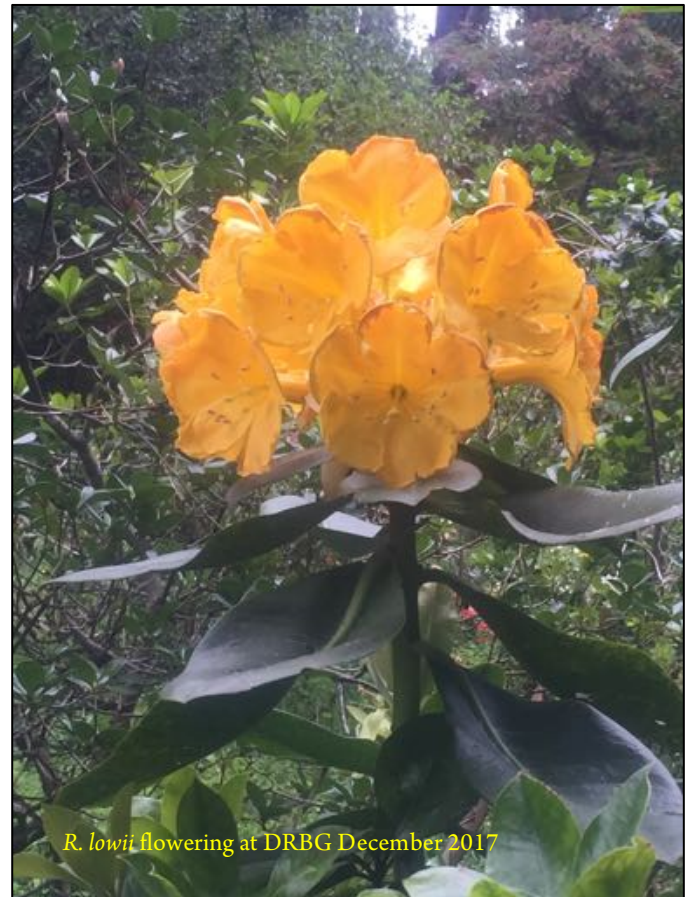
Newsletter of the ARSV



Flowering of *R. lowii* at the Dandenong Ranges Botanic Garden

Rhododendron lowii is one of the more peculiar and spectacular of the vireya rhododendrons. It is endemic to northern Sabah (Malaysian Borneo) on Mts Kinabalu, Trus Madi and Alab. Although it can form a small tree or large shrub but it usually occurs as a single stem or cane over 2 m high, at the end of which is the huge umbel of delicately scented yellow to orange flowers. The leaves are peculiar being very thick and large with the mid-rib thick and prominently raised towards the stem but not so in the latter half. The leaf itself is strangely bowl shaped. It occurs at high elevations (2700-3650 m) often in gullies but also on shrubby rocky ridges. Another species with big heads of somewhat smaller yellow flowers on these Bornean mountains is *R. retivenium*. It occurs on Mts Kinabalu and Alab, not apparently Trus Madi, but at lower elevations (2000 – 2700 m). The change over zone appears to be quite sharp. Dave Goheen and Frank Mossman of the American Rhododendron Society, on their expedition to Sabah in 1980 say “At 8,000 ft., only *R. retivenium* could be seen; at 8,200 ft., we encountered the first plants of *R. lowii*.” (Goheen, D. and Mossman, F. 1983. *Rhododendron Collecting on Mt. Kinabalu*. Journal American Rhododendron Society 37(1).

We have plants of both species at the DRBG but this may be the first time *R. lowii* has flowered for us. It is very slow growing here at Olinda.



R. lowii flowering at DRBG December 2017



R. lowii flowering at DRBG December 2017



R. retivenium Photo by A. Rouse

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Alan Walker

We regret to inform our members that one of our life members, Alan Walker, passed away on 29th January 2018. Alan grew up in East Melbourne, and when he and Gwen married in 1958 they moved to Warrandyte. His admiration of the rhododendrons growing in a neighbour's garden kindled his interest in these plants which led him to join the ARSV. Throughout the late 1970's Alan participated in many of the Society's activities, such as the general meetings in Camberwell, the Rhododendron Flower Shows at the then National Rhododendron Gardens in Olinda and as a volunteer working in the Gardens, which at that time were controlled and maintained by the Society.

After he retired in 1982 Alan gave more of his time and effort to the Society spending up to three days a week at Olinda as a volunteer and serving as member of the Branch Committee and the Show Committee. Alan took every opportunity to promote rhododendrons and the Society and to this end he ran information/propagation sessions for the students at the Olinda Primary School. For his commitment to the Society and its aims he was made a Life Member in 2010.

In 2012 Alan and Gwen moved to Glengarry to be closer to their daughter's family and their grandchildren. We regret his passing and



Rhododendron in focus: *Rhododendron pachysanthum*



Subsection Maculifera.

This species comes from the mountains of Taiwan at around 3000 metres and is a relatively recent introduction (1972). It is considered to be one of the finest foliage plants in the rhododendron genus and the new growth is quite stunning. The leaves are initially covered with a soft beige tomentum which slowly fades to silver, and the undersides have a persistent chocolate-brown indumentum. The flowers are white, flushed pink with small red spots. (see photo).

We have two of these plants in the main rockery and another in the "Sensory Garden", and probably five more in the "Maddenia Walk" area. Fortunately it seems to strike reasonably well from cuttings.

This is not a plant for suburban gardens, but can be seen at its best in late September at Olinda.

Alan Kepert

Achievements at DRBG December 2017 - January 2018

Below is the rolling calendar of activities at DRBG for the next two months. 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.

Reporting on activities at DRBG during December 2017 and January 2018, the ARSV members have achieved a colossal amount, taken cuttings of lots of rhododendrons. Included in this seasons cuttings are, approximately 25 species of deciduous azalea both Asian and American. These plants are earmarked for the refurbishment of the Pentanthera and Tsutsui collection beds.

There has been a concerted effort to ensure the longevity of the Australian Asiatic Hybrid collection by taking cuttings of those plants identified as being good performers for pest and heat resistance as well as having good form and flowering habits. So far 50 have been propagated and we still have to locate another 20 in the DRBG beds. These will be propagated next season.

The sale benches are looking well stocked with lots of Asiatics and vireyas. To ensure continued stock, around 40 more rhododendrons, many of them Hachmann hybrids, have been propagated. This has been a very busy season and the propagation house is almost full (see photo showing Laurie Begg selecting cutting material).

The next few months will see the completion of the upgraded irrigation, switching to mains water to mitigate blocked filters, in the large shade house and overhaul of the rockery with Parks Victoria staff - weeding, labelling and mulching.

An ongoing job is inventory and labelling of rhododendrons. Tom Noonan does a fantastic job managing our extensive database which requires continual updating as plants die, new plants added and GPS locations recorded for rediscovered plants.

Our active work group would love to see more ARSV members at the gardens, just give us a call.

ARSV –Rolling Calendar of activities for February/March 2018

	Garden	Nursery	Vireya House	Meetings
On-Going	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rationalise/cull/pruning/mulching existing collection beds: Australian hybrids, Moorland, American Hybrids, Hachmann hybrids, Deciduous horseshoe, Vireya species, Vireya hybrids, Asiatic species - Neriflora, Triflora, Taliense, Maddenia. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check and clean watering system/coverage and filter weekly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pruning, weeding. 	
February 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare for Rockery overhaul with Parks staff-spray, mulch stock piles, paint stakes to mark unlabelled plants. Overhaul planned for 20th-27th February. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inventory all stock plants Pot up plants for Tesselaars sale. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss solar system function. Plan irrigation upgrade. 	
March 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss conservation gardens for golf course annex. Complete inventory and labelling of vireya hybrids in golf course bank bed. Prepare for vireya hybrid garden overhaul. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upgrade watering system in vireya tunnel. Inventory of Australian Asiatic hybrids for planting out in the species bed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check watering coverage. Pest-disease check: trigger for spraying. Upgrade watering system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tesselaars 14th – 15th April.



Upcoming events

Saturday 24th and Sunday 25th February 10:00 – 16:00 Saturday and 10:00 – 15:00 Sunday. Melbourne Begonia Society Show. Moorabbin Senior Citizens Hall. 964 Nepean Hwy Moorabbin. Admission \$3.00, children Free. Contact Janeen 9579 1697 or Marilyn 9758 6642.
http://begoniasmelb.org.au/coming_events.html

Saturday 24th and Sunday 25th February State Dahlia Show. 12:30 17:00 Saturday and 10:00 – 15:30 Sunday. Mt Waverley Youth Centre, 45 Miller Cres Mt Waverley. Admission \$5.00, pensioners \$2.00, children Free.
Contact 0419 221 200 or <http://dahliasaustralia.org.au>

Saturday 10th and Sunday 11th March Ferny Creek Plant Collectors Sale. 10 am to 4 pm each day. 100 Hilton Road, Sassafras. \$5 entry (U14 free). www.fchs.org.au

Wednesday 21st to Sunday 25th March Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show. 9 am to 5 pm each day. Tickets on sale now via the website. The show includes exhibitors from China and Japan.
<http://melbflowershow.com.au>

NQ Project Update – companion plants

As indicated in the last newsletter work is progressing with the Australian Tropical Herbarium (ATH) for the next phase of the project. If this phase goes ahead the many other endemic plants on the NQ mountaintops will be surveyed and propagation material collected. This material will be used to ensure survival of these species should climate change irrevocably change their montane niches. The long-term aim for these “companion plants”, together with the vireyas already propagated, is that they be a permanent ark for the montane plant community of Queensland’s tropics at Dandenong Ranges Botanic Garden and the intent is that they be displayed in a “NQ mountaintop bed” - reproducing the communities on these mountains.

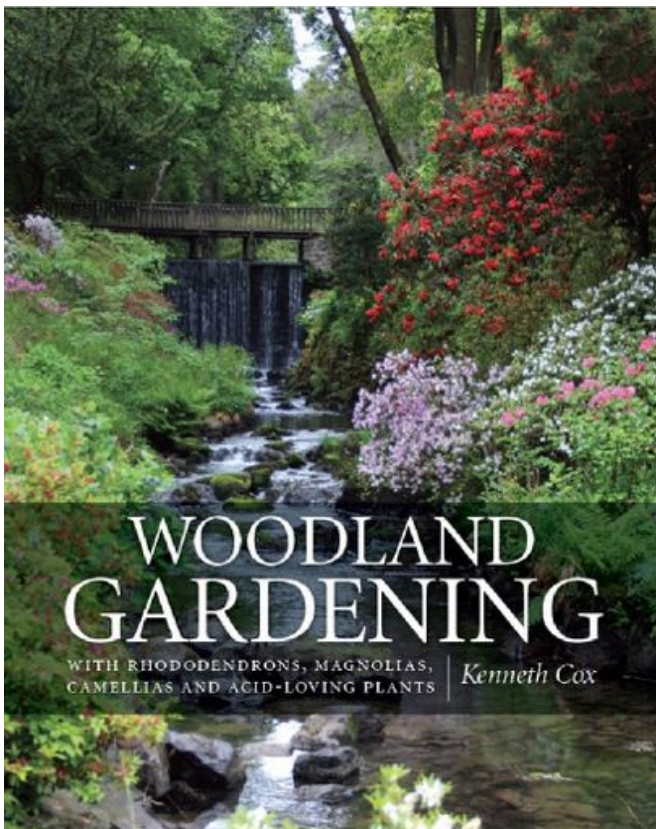
To our knowledge, propagation of these other species has not been attempted before and some will be difficult. ATH and ARSV brought back test material of several species from Mt Finnegan, both endemic and more common, which has been propagated by Andrew Rouse with encouraging results. He has produced healthy rooted cuttings of *Zieria robertsii*, *Eurmyrtus metrosideros*, *Paphia meiniana*, *Phaleria* sp. and *Hibbertia scandens*. Cuttings of *Tasmannia* sp. and *Quintina* sp. have rooted but are unlikely to survive, however, *Gonocarpus* sp., *Acromanthus spathaceus* and *Cryptocarya* sp. did not strike.

As yet DRBG does not have the specialist facilities and experience to strike some of these more recalcitrant species and it may be that other botanic gardens may become involved. We do not know if this next phase will be successful in getting funding nor the exact role, if any, ARS may play, so fingers crossed.

Andrew Rouse



New book by Ken Cox available in Australia



Most of us will have heard of Ken Cox of Glendoick Gardens, famous for his numerous books including *The Encyclopaedia of Rhododendron Species*. Ken, with contributions from Steve Hootman, director of the Rhododendron Species Botanic Garden, in the USA, has just produced another beautiful full colour book –

Woodland Gardening - Landscaping with Rhododendrons, Azaleas, Magnolias and Camellias.

The book weighs in at over 2 kg and has 560 full colour photographs documenting the best woodland gardens in the world, including Longwood Gardens, Bremen Rhododendron Park, Pukeiti and Emu Valley, and the best practice from the world’s best woodland gardeners.

Topics include history of woodland gardening, inspirational woodland gardens from around the world, design and features of woodland gardens, climate, planting, maintenance, restoration, challenges, inspirational planting ideas, the best plants etc.

The book is due for publication in April and is not yet available on line. It is being distributed in Australia by Peribo Pty Limited who have informed us that it will be available, as a minimum, at Readings in Carlton, Jeffreys in Malvern and Dr B’s Bookstore in Trentham from about April. It can be pre-ordered at Dymocks. RRP may be about \$90.

The book can be viewed online at the Glendoick website:

<https://www.glendoick.com/Woodland-Gardening-Kenneth-Cox>