

# Newsletter of the ARSV



## Renewal of Subscriptions for 2018/19

Renewals are now due for 2018/19. For those who only receive the newsletter by post the renewal form is included with this newsletter. If you get the email version, with or without the printed version, the renewal form has been emailed to you already.

Life members, honorary members and those paid through 2018/19 will not receive a renewal form but could you inform the newsletter editor if your contact details have changed.

**PLEASE RENEW NOW**

## Upcoming events

**Saturday June 16<sup>th</sup>.** RHS Victoria Gardeners Day Out. 9.30 am – 4:00 pm. Deakin University, Burwood Campus. There are going to be many stalls with rare and unusual plants and presentations by Jane Edmanson, Stephen Ryan and Atila Kapitany. Entrance is ??\$15. <http://www.rhsv.org.au/>. Last year this event attracted 400 gardeners who could attend talks as well as purchase plants.

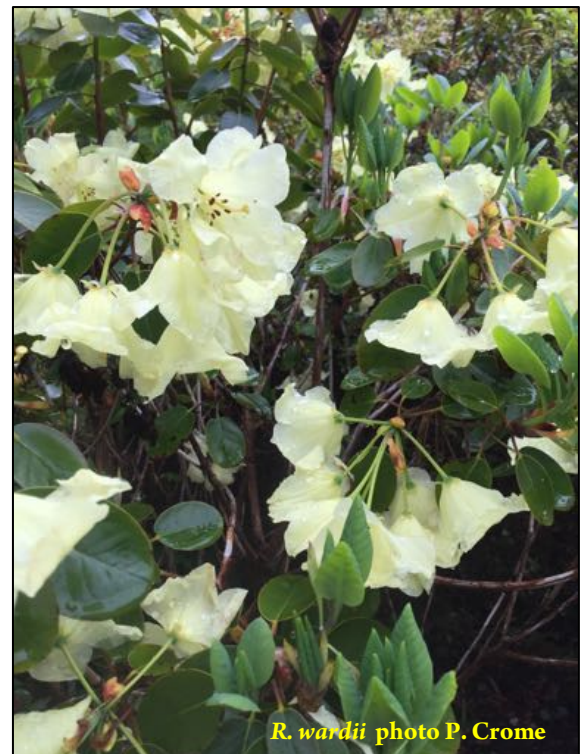
**Saturday July 21<sup>st</sup>.** Cranbourne Friends Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria- Winter Plant Sale. 10:00 am to 4:00 pm Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne. Cranbourne. In the Australian garden next to the kiosk. <http://rbgfrienscranbourne.org.au/event/growing-friends-plant-sale-2/>

## Rhododendron wilkei flowering



*R. wilkei*, a vireya species from Palawan, Philippines has flowered for the first time for Andrew Rouse. Raised from seed, it has taken five years to flower with a sole flower on the largest plant held. The species is proving to be slow growing and is only 25cm after five years. The species is similar to *R. acrophilum* except that the flower is orange-red in *R. wilkei*. Please contact Andrew (awrouse@bigpond.com) if you'd like cuttings of this species.

## Pollination - see back page



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## Rhododendron in focus: *Rhododendron johnstoneanum*

Subsection Maddenia.

The Maddenia species are probably the most reliable rhododendrons for our local suburban climate. They come from relatively low altitudes in the Himalayas and are susceptible to frost in Europe, but I have never seen frost damage in the Eastern suburbs or the Dandenongs. They are best grown in well-drained soil with partial shade in the afternoon but are generally easy to grow and disease-free. *R. johnstoneanum* comes from Manipur and NE India at 1800 to 3000 metres in open scrubland or forest margins. The leaves are bristly and densely scaly, and the flowers are creamy yellow with a deeper throat. We have several mature plants in the main rockery, and many more in the Maddenia Walk area. (See Photo).

Alan Kepert



## *R. lochiaie* and *R. viriosum* collection at DRBG



About half of the specimens of *R. viriosum* and *R. lochiaie* collected as cuttings on the mountaintops of north Queensland have been set out on a dedicated bench in the nursery at the Dandenong Ranges Botanic Gardens. The bench will allow the ARS Members maintaining the collection to keep tabs on numbers held, and in time, make observations and measurements on the vegetative and flowering characteristics of the plants. This data can then be compared with the results of the genetic analysis to be undertaken by Plant and Food Research NZ.

On the expedition to Mt Finnigan, companion plants were also collected, and the Society has managed to successfully propagate some of these. Growing particularly well are *Zieria robertsii* and *Hibbertia scandens*.

The Society is currently focusing on propagating cuttings to ensure we have back-up material. In the coming 1-2 years, a dedicated north Queensland bed will be established at the DRBG to display specimens of *R. lochiaie*, *R. viriosum* and their companion plants.

## The Global Rhododendron Conservation Consortium 16 – 19 April 2018

ARSV has been active in developing a society role in Rhododendron conservation and is focussed on ensuring we do not lose from Australian collections the many species that are becoming threatened in the wild world-wide. A major step was made in that direction when Tex Moon from Parks Victoria (photo below 1st on left) was invited to the global Rhododendron consortium meeting this year. The following is Tex's report on the workshop.

April this year I was lucky enough to be invited to a workshop held in Upperville, Virginia, USA. The aim of the workshop was to develop a methodology for the conservation of Rhododendron taxa using a global consortium approach. The workshop was sponsored and hosted by the Oak Springs Garden Foundation, Upperville Virginia and was facilitated by Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI). It brought together representatives from around the world who manage significant Rhododendron collections and also representatives from 'centres of diversity' of Rhododendron (including India, Nepal, China, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea).

The outcome of the workshop is a global network approach to:

- avoid all Rhododendron taxon extinctions through integrated conservation (*ex situ* and *in situ* conservation) and
- to improve the conservation status of rare and threatened Rhododendron taxa in their countries of origin.

My role in representing the Dandenong Ranges Botanic Garden (DRBG), ARSV and Parks Victoria (PV) at this consortium was to promote the work that we are already doing in this area and to also outline the interest DRBG has in playing an active role in this consortium. We have optimum growing conditions for many taxa of Rhododendrons and space to add to our collection. DRG's role will be helping with the planning and facilitating swaps of plant material between other collections and our own, purely an *ex situ* conservation role.

More personally, the workshop provided a significant professional development opportunity and a meaningful networking opportunity for Parks Victoria and the newly re-named Dandenong Ranges Botanic Garden, to interact with other Botanic Garden industry leaders. It also recognised the global significance of the plant collection within Dandenong Ranges Botanic Garden and will provide techniques and practices to ensure its ongoing conservation. Additionally, it provided a valuable opportunity to assess the work we are doing within the Botanic Gardens industry and more importantly identify the opportunities for improvement and how we can better operate as a Botanic Garden with a focus on species conservation.

**Terence Moon, Ranger Team Leader, Dandenong Ranges Gardens, Parks Victoria.**





## More on pollination



Black backed Sibia. Photo -by Dave Curtis  
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/davethebird/16459031890/>



Fire-tailed sunbird. Photo by Tom Tarrant  
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/aviceda/35937475944/>

Research in the Cangshan National Nature Reserve and Laojunshan Nature Reserve in Yunnan has demonstrated the importance of bird pollination for a range of *Rhododendrons*. By caging inflorescences to exclude birds and measuring visit rates of birds and insects on 15 species of *Rhododendrons* it was found that seed set in *R. beesianum*, *R. clementina*, *R. cyanocarpum*, *R. delavayi*, *R. lacteum*, *R. neriiflorum*, *R. oreotrephe*, *R. rex* and *R. wardii* was reduced by up to 60% if birds were excluded. For *R. sinogrande* the reduction was 90%. This is interesting in view of the fact that most visits to these species was done by insects. There was no or only a tiny reduction in pollination for caged *R. microphyton*, *R. racemosum*, *R. simsii*, *R. trichocladum* and *R. virgatum* indicating insect pollination was adequate for these species.

The researchers noted that birds visited very earlier in the morning and much less during the day, so bird visitation will often be missed, and birds can be active at low temperatures when insects are not. A range of birds visited including those pictured here The Fire-tailed Sunbird and Black backed Sibia.

Other interesting pollinators elsewhere are butterflies which transfer the pollen of *R. calendulaceum* in the USA with their wings.

Zhi-Huan Huang, Yun-Peng Song & Shuang-Quan Huang. 2017. Evidence for passerine bird pollination in *Rhododendron* species. *AOB Plants*. <https://academic.oup.com/aobpla/article-abstract/9/6/plx062/4609399>.



*R. rex* ssp? *fictolacteum* in Yunnan. Photo P. Crome