



# Rhododendrons South Australia

Australian Rhododendron Society Inc. South Australian Branch

Issue 109 -August 2017

## President's Message

This month's meeting is the AGM with the main objective being the election of office bearers for the next twelve months. Nominations for the positions of President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer can be received up to the time of the AGM, with nomination forms available on request, but to be perfectly honest this process tends to be less of a true election and more a process of negotiation. All of the office bearers are there because they are willing to do so and are prepared to make the commitment to fulfil the duties that their respective roles entail. Because this year's AGM is rapidly approaching it may not suit members to make hasty considerations for undertaking a role of greater responsibility within the Society at this time, but it's never too late to think about your skills and strengths and how you might be able to contribute more productively in the future.

**Bhutan Trip Presentation** After much agonising about the content of material for my Bhutan presentation, and in particular the number of photos in order to be able to provide a reasonable snapshot of our visit, I hope everyone found the talk interesting and entertaining. Bhutan is a fascinating and colourful nation with amazing culture and industry and populated with wonderful, friendly people, and for someone who has never travelled to what I would class as an "exotic" location before, I was quite enthralled. In particular, I was so excited to be able to witness Rhododendrons during their flowering season in a setting which is their natural provenance, and where it's possible to see hillsides covered in splotches of pink and red indicating the prolific representation of Rhododendrons in the natural vegetation. A trip to Bhutan in Spring is certainly a "bucket list" recommendation for all lovers of Rhododendrons!





Robyn shares her delight at winning the raffle with Jacki Hatcher. Robyn won Rhododendron Walloper.



Belinda's presentation on her trip to Bhutan.

## Next Meeting

This will be held at the Crafers Hall on Wednesday, August 16th at 8pm. It is the AGM of the society and our guest speaker will be Dr Henry Hancock who will address us on his recent trip to Northern Queensland.

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

## Spring is around the corner



The first of our Eranthus haemalis (The winter aconite) has just emerged. They were grown from seed acquired through the Scottish Rock Garden Society. Three others have germinated since this photo was taken.

Galanthus in all their glory ("tickle" them with a fine brush and they will set numerous seed.



A patch of species crocus in the rock garden.



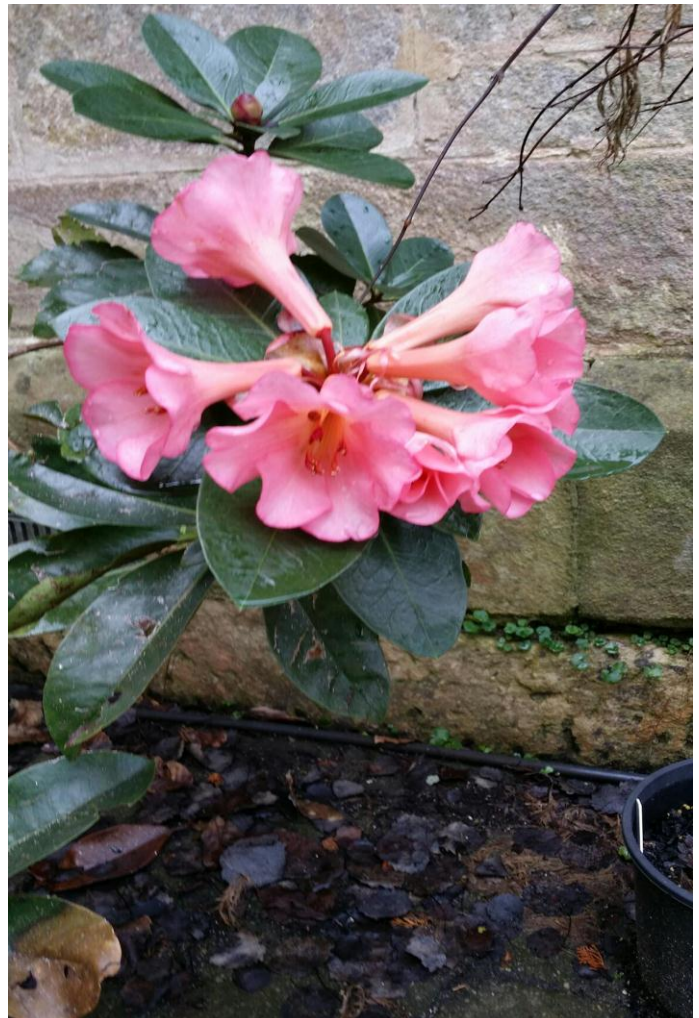
## Blooms of the Month – Vireya Highland Arabesque & Maurice Kupsch



Highland Arabesque was bred by Dr John Rouse from the Victorian branch. It was bred in 1983 and is a cross of orbiculatum X (lateum X aurigeranum). It is one of many Vireyas bred by John Rouse that carries the prefix “Highland”. Others in the series are Debutante, Fair, Peace, Pink Cloud, and White Jade.

### **Vireya Maurice Kupsch**

This spectacular Vireya, Maurice Kupsch, courtesy of Gill and Jeff Jenkinson, was bred at Emu Valley in Tasmania and is named after one of the members who has been responsible for many new Vireya introductions. The size of the flower is indicative of Vireyas bred with Vireyas Koneri, Laetum and Leucogigas.





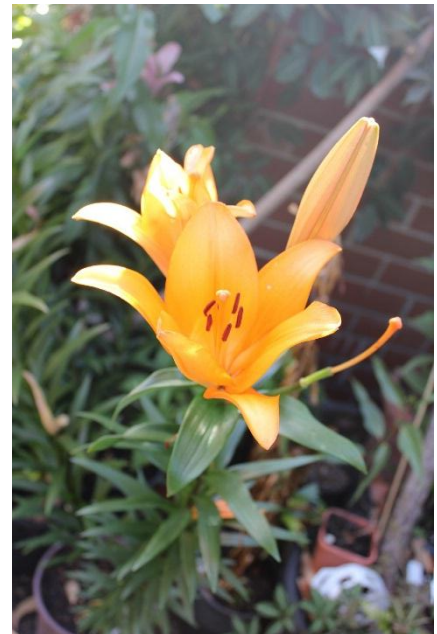
## From the Propagating Bench *by Richard Illman*

*Cutting boxes should be regularly checked for signs of growth in the cuttings and to ensure that they have sufficient moisture and light.*

If you had placed your boxes in a protected site after the propagation day they probably will now require more light to allow plant growth. Choose a site that provides good light but would not allow boxes to overheat. Check the moisture content of your box and if the mix is dry make sure that you dampen the mix. Cuttings may now be showing signs of growth and if so you can assist their growth by spraying weekly with a dilute solution of seasoil or suitable liquid fertiliser. If you prepared cuttings in individual pots, particularly clear ones, you may be able to see extensive root growth and it is possible to pot them up in acid potting mix. It is a good idea to place a cut down clear plastic drink bottle on top of the potted cutting to conserve moisture.

Seeds to sow this month - summer vegetables and annuals can be sown now. Tomato seeds germinate well if placed in individual small pots and started in a warm box (design mentioned in previous newsletters). Annuals like Delphiniums, Foxgloves and Larkspurs are all suitable to plant as seeds and will provide wonderful late spring and summer colour.

Liliums – if you have purchased a new supply of liliums it is worth checking the bulbs before planting to see if there are any scales that could be removed from the bulb. These scales need to be removed with a piece of the basal plate attached and can then be placed in a ziplock bag with moist peat. Check these by Christmas and by mid-summer they should be ready for potting on. This is a wonderful way to increase your liliium collection at no extra cost.

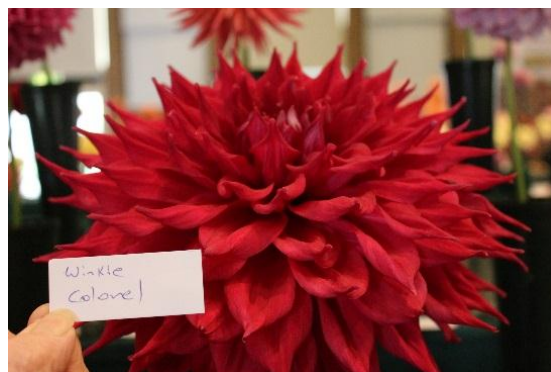


Lilium Honesty

### **Propagating from saved dahlia tubers**

\*Start tubers into growth in spring, either indoors or heated box.

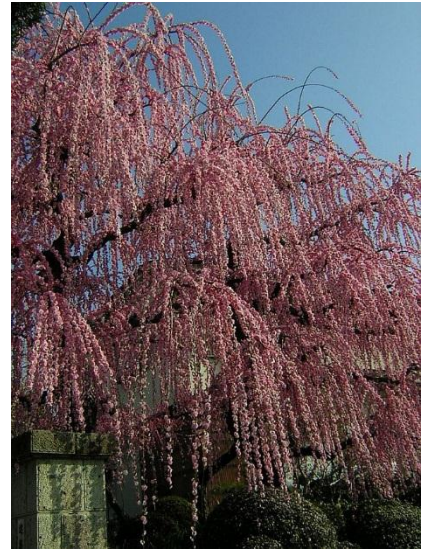
\*Take basal shoot cuttings from sprouting tubers. Dip into hormone rooting gel and plant in free draining cutting mix. Root in a warm box then pot into 9cm pots. Harden off before planting out.



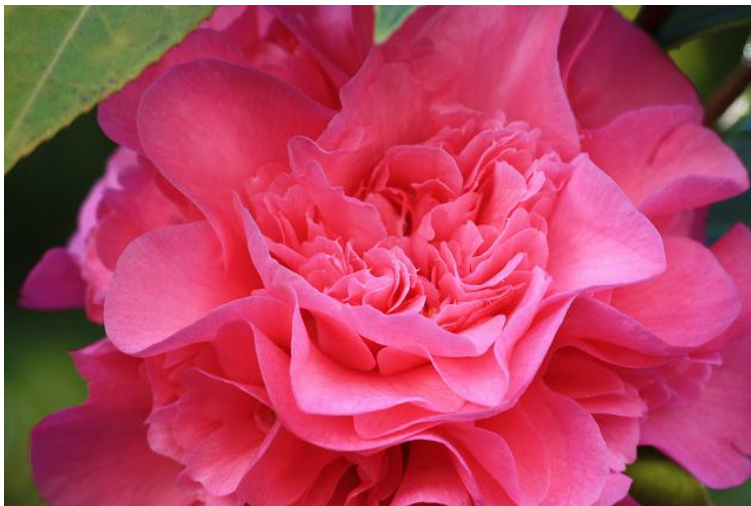


## The Month Ahead *by Bill Voigt*

After an unusually dry start to winter we are now experiencing a much wetter phase, so much so that there may be some low-lying areas that have become waterlogged. The first blossom trees to show their colour are the flowering almonds and Prunus mume, the flowering apricot. This small tree is often grown as a standard, with a weeping habit, it is a very welcome sight during the dreary days of July/August. Unfortunately, wet weather shortens the life of the flowers. The flowering quince, usually known as Japonica, blooms for a very long time and is not so affected by the weather conditions. As well as the more common red, there are white, pink and even double forms. Japonicas are very useful as a screen to hide untidy fences or sheds, especially when espaliered.



August is the month for the Taiwan cherry, *campanulata* to show its bell shaped rose-red flowers. Camellias are making a great display now. The "Czar", an old hardy favourite is carmine red with prominent stamens. Very similar, but lighter in colour is "Lady Clare". An outstanding camellia is "Tom Knudsen" a formal double to informal shape of dark red with deeper veining. Some species camellias make lovely container plants. "Salicifolia" has small white single flowers and long green leaves. "Lutchuensis" has single sweetly scented white flowers with bronze new foliage.



A *reticulata* hybrid that is very attractive is "Betty Ridley". It has strong upright growth and large formal double pink flowers.

The last of the roses should be pruned before mid August and fruit trees should be pruned now if not already done.

Yellow flowers seem to be the most attractive to bees, so apart from trees and shrubs, flowers such as Bidens, wallflowers and Californian poppies are much loved by bees.

The purple salvia, *Leucanthia*, has finished flowering now, so the old flowering stems should be cut off to allow the new growth to emerge. As well as the more commonly grown *Helebores orientalis*, there are now some very showy forms of *Hellebores sternii* hybrids available. The plants grow larger than *orientalis* with strong flowering stems. It is important that when the flowers have finished the old stem is removed because new growths arise from the base of the plant.

Dianthus, verbenas, and English daisies can be planted now for late spring colour.

Any new azaleas and rhododendrons purchased now can be sprayed with Confidor to ensure there is no Lace bug present. When planting out a little sulphur mixed with the soil and placed around the roots helps to prevent fungal infection and slightly acidifies the soil.

If you have anemones or Iceland poppies, don't neglect to remove the spent blooms, as this will prolong flowering. Daffodil buds and flowers can quickly be spoiled by slugs and snails so protect them by using baits or even coffee grounds.

This is the last month of winter (we hope).

## **Bird of the Month** *by Chris Thomas*

### **Australian White Ibis**

*Threskiornis molucca*



The Australian White Ibis is identified by its almost entirely white body plumage and black head and neck. The head is featherless and its black bill is long and down-curved. During the breeding season the small patch of skin on the under-surface of the wing changes from dull pink to dark scarlet. Adult birds have a tuft of cream plumes on the base of the neck.

It has become common in the Adelaide Plains and in the city parks. White Ibis populations have learnt to exploit artificial foods in urban environments and are becoming pests.

However, although Australian White Ibises are becoming more common in some settled areas, their abundance is decreasing in their natural range. Not to be confused with the Glossy Ibis and the Straw-necked Ibis.

Thanks to Bronwyn and Richard Illman the library now has two CDs celebrating The National Rhododendron Gardens at Olinda Victoria. The shorter of the two is a promotional video, which is interesting, but unfortunately the quality is not as good as it could be. The longer video tells the story of the history of the gardens and the quality is good.

In 1960 when virgin land became available in Olinda it was given to the National Rhododendron Society in Victoria by the Premier Henry Bolte on behalf of the Victorian Government. The land has been cleared and developed by volunteers with some help from a bush fire in 1962. The first fifty acres of the gardens was officially opened to the public in 1966.

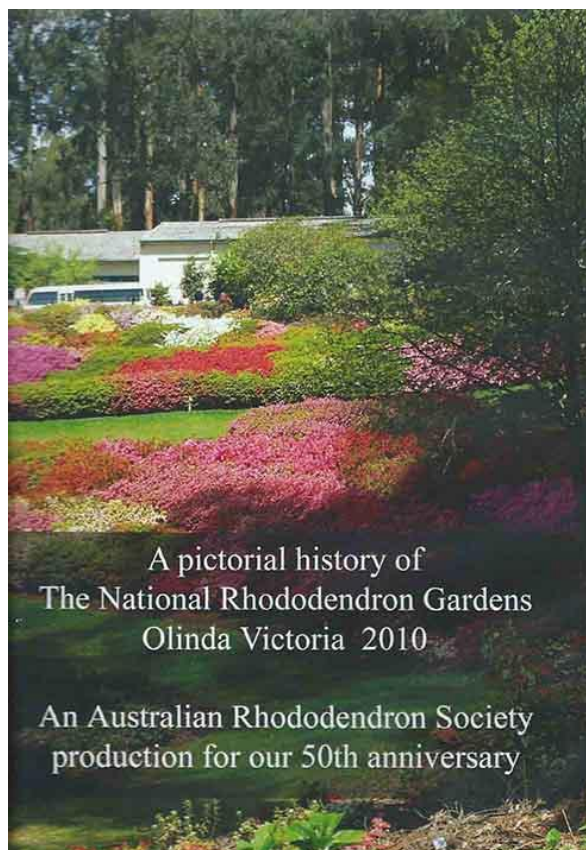
To prevent it from becoming a monoculture garden, many other cool climate plants have been dispersed among the rhododendrons and azaleas. I like the ingenuity of those early volunteers. They needed a meeting room and hall and were able to acquire a disused munitions building which was moved to Olinda and upgraded to the building that is still there today.

In 1973 the second fifty acres was developed. With the help of the Alpine Garden Society, The Daffodil Society and The Camelia Society the garden has grown and developed. It is watered from two dams, fed from springs; both of which not only supply water for the gardens in summer, but also make beautiful reflective pools and homes for fish, eels and many water birds.

The Park is now run by Parks Victoria and is a beautiful cool climate Botanic Garden.

We visited the Garden several years ago and loved its beauty and diversity, but realised that we saw very little of it. As can be imagined there is much to see. Not only the rhododendrons, azaleas, and virayas but camellias, bulbs, and a vast range of cool climate trees including conifers, beeches and maples. From the garden there is a magnificent view across the Yarra Valley to the Warburton Ranges.

As can be imagined, it changes from season to season. Whether you have visited the garden before or have yet to have that pleasure, watching this video is a very pleasant way to spend about forty minutes.



## Tales from Forest Lodge *by Milton Bowman*



Winter has at last happened and we have had cold days, an occasional storm, and some decent rain. The rain has been generally steady allowing the water to soak into the soil, and there has been little of the torrential and prolonged rain that we saw last year. As a consequence the gravel in the main drive has stayed in place and not migrated into Pine Street, which saves a lot of the time and effort needed to retrieve it. We have been getting those foggy, drizzly afternoons when it really is great being inside near the fire and enjoying good company, or a good book.

We have had approximately 200 mm this month, which makes up for the 20mm in June.

There are a few downsides to this, it gets harder to do the required garden maintenance and the number of blocked gutters and drains forces me out into the rain to clear them. The compensation though is to look at the camellias blooming and the rhododendron buds starting to swell as they approach flowering.

I have included a photo of Camden Pink, a rare 19th C Australian bred camellia, which is one of the dozen or so sports of *Aspasia Macarthur*, which include the well known Lady Loc.





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Reminder from our Treasurer- subscriptions are due.

### Neutrog matters



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The advertisement features a central image of a 20kg bag of Neutrog Sudden Impact for Lawns fertilizer. The bag is green and white, with the Neutrog logo at the top. It includes a testimonial from Graham Ross, Gardening Presenter, and a quote: "I personally recommend that all gardeners try this product." The bag also states "Covers up to 400m<sup>2</sup>" and "Specifically formulated organic based, granular premium lawn fertiliser". The background of the ad shows a green lawn with a white picket fence and a hedge.



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Home gardener

