



Rhododendrons South Australia

Australian Rhododendron Society Inc. South Australian Branch

Issue 123 - April 2019

President's Message

I am rather excited about some of the events and opportunities that have recently been organised and that we can look forward to in the very near future. When you read this, we will be about to embark on our exclusive early morning tour of Tupelo Grove Nursery near Mylor. Shortly to follow will be our April meeting with guest speaker, Dr Uwe Stroehler who heads up Research and Development at Neutrog.

We are lucky to have the convenience of a nursery like Tupelo Grove in our neighbourhood which exclusively sells South Australian propagated plants and is enthusiastically endorsed by a number of our members. The proprietors are Ian and Robyn Powell who are both very experienced in the horticulture industry and are very passionate about what they do. It should be an enlightening and interesting tour as well as an opportunity to make some plant purchases.

In recent years we, as a society, have developed a formal association with Neutrog enjoying its obvious benefits, one being the opportunity to learn from the expertise of Dr Uwe Stroehler who has a highly scientific based knowledge of plant and soil health. He addresses our group about every 2 years and his last talk, which was enthusiastically received, was about soil microbes and the vital role they play in soil health.

New members, in particular should look forward to these events and the learning experiences that they will provide. To borrow from a Mediterranean Garden Society newsletter a very apt quote from Helen Mirren, "Gardening is learning, learning, learning. That's the fun of them. You're always learning". It's great to have these opportunities to learn some more!

Next Meeting

This will be held at the RSL Hall Stirling on Tuesday, April 16th at 8pm. Our guest speaker Dr Uwe Stroehler who is involved in research & development of new Neutrog products.

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

Last Meeting

Raffle winner

Sue Beckoff



Bloom of the Month – Vireya Brilliantine

This is an outstanding example of a Vireya. Its habit lends itself to basket culture as its form is quite pendulous. Even though it is more challenging to propagate than other Vireyas it is well worth trying.



Southern Boobook

Ninox novaeseelandiae



The Southern Boobook is the smallest and most common owl in Australia. Like other owl species, the Southern Boobook is nocturnal, emitting a distinctive boo-book or mopoke call. A mellow, musical call and the call carry quite a distance. The sound carries far and may be repeated monotonously, often a pair calling in duet back and forth.

This bird is classified as common and sedentary. Found in the Adelaide metropolitan area and throughout the Hills.

Commonly heard at night time but uncommon to see. If you hear them calling it is not too hard to call them up calling through cupped hands.

Roosts during the day in thick foliage or a tree hollow. It feeds on insects and mice.

Notes on Rhododendron Propagation

Collecting cuttings

The best time in Adelaide is in late summer and early autumn. Our club's cutting day is held each year in late February / early March.

Cuttings are ideally taken in the cool of the morning. Take the tips of this year's growth so that the cutting is green, flexible and non-woody, looking for reasonably straight lengths of approximately 8 to 10 cm, preferably without a flower bud.

Preparing the propagation box and medium

Use a clear plastic box with a clear tightly fitting lid. The box should have wheels to allow easier relocation and perfect drainage. The boxes used on cutting day were 53 cm by 38 cm by 31 cm with 16 holes melted into the base.

The propagation medium comprises 1 part fine peat to 3 parts coarse perlite (see below for suppliers), both thoroughly pre-moistened before mixing. This medium is suitable for propagation of virtually any plant. Fill the box to about 10 cm.

Preparing the cuttings

The best tool for these tasks is a pair of sterilised flower snips but normal secateurs are also suitable. Snip out flower buds if present (larger and wider than growth buds). Trim of leaves, leaving 3 or 4 at the top. Cut off about half at a slight angle to reduce transpiration loss. Pare off about 2 cm of the fine outer layer of stem at the bottom end – some prefer to take a shorter paring on the other side as well.

Planting the cuttings

EITHER plant directly into the medium OR plant into small clear plastic picnic cups with holes in the base created by a heated metal bolt, then embed the cups into perlite in the box (this method allows easy inspection for root development and less root disturbance when potted on).

Dip each cutting in liquid rooting hormone. Some members prefer to make a hole in the mix with a pencil before inserting the hormone-dipped cutting. Place the cutting with the lower leaf just above the level of the mix. Firm down with the index and middle fingers of both hands. 20 cuttings may be planted in a box of this size in a grid of 4 X5 different species with a white plastic nametag at the end of each row. Water evenly and thoroughly and clip the lid on firmly.

Care of the cuttings

Keep the box in a relatively warm place in the garden over the winter such on pavers or against a sun-warmed wall. Some light is required, either dappled or morning sunshine, provided that the leaves do not scorch or bake. Check that there is always condensation under the lid as an indicator of the required high humidity. Water if necessary. Remove any fallen leaves to avoid disease. The cuttings may be encouraged with very dilute seaweed-based tonic after 5-6 weeks, then every 2 weeks.

It is possible to check for root growth by observing the outside of the box or by gently pulling on the plant to check for resistance, or by lifting the plastic cups out if using that method. Alternatively, just wait for signs of new leaf growth, likely to occur in September or October.

Potting on

When growth is established, the plants need to be placed into pots with a suitably low pH potting mix such as an azalea/camellia mix or Jiffy blueberry mix (see below). Extra appropriate slow-release fertiliser and Seamungus may be incorporated. The plants will also respond to foliar spray with Tupelo Mediterranean fertilizer (see below).

Planting

Prepare soil well to ensure excellent drainage as rhododendrons will not tolerate “wet feet”. Clay needs to be broken down with sand, gypsum and compost. Rapid Raiser and Seamungus are good additives. A low pH is highly desirable and may be achieved with the addition of coarse peat which has a pH 4.5(see below), oak leaves and pine needles. Spraying with a molasses solution will encourage beneficial soil micro-organisms.

Some species of rhododendrons grow well in 3-5 hours of direct sunshine each day provided they are well watered and fertilized. Other species prefer a woodland environment. Wiltnot or Droughtshield sprays reduce transpiration loss hence considerably improve the ability of plants to withstand hot weather. Ensure good watering for 2 days before predicted hot days. If planting out a root bound plant, take it out of the pot, soak in dilute Seasol and gently tease out the roots.

Suppliers

Garden City Plastics in Wingfield 1300 095 098 for

1 Coarse perlite (code PERLC1) in 100L bag (Bunning’s perlite is too fine).

2 Jiffy’s blueberry mix in 70 L bag

3 Jiffy’s coarse peat in 300 L bale (for soil usage)

Note: It is useful to mention to club’s name so they can check our account to ensure the correct materials are purchased.

Smoult’s Mobile Horticultural Supplies based in Kersbrook 0408 864 802

For fine peat (used in propagation medium) Note: Phillip Smoult will deliver for a small fee, reduce to nil for orders over \$50.

Tupelo Nursery near Mylor

For Tupelo Mediterranean mix as above, an incredible variety of plants and a wealth of knowledge and friendly advice.

Notes compiled by Ann Williams with many thanks to the committee of the SA Rhododendron Society for the wonderful cutting day and talks by the illustrious Nataliya Popova, Barbara Mynhart, Richard Illman and Milton Bowman at the following meeting.

Start Saving –The 2020 Conference is on the Way!

In fact there are a number of conferences that may interest members.

The first is the 75th conference of the American Rhododendron Society (ARS)- Portland- Vancouver Chapter

American Rhododendron Society

75th Anniversary

20/20
VISION



Looking forward, reflecting back

Portland-Vancouver, April 29-May 3, 2020

You're invited to the celebration!



World-renowned Keynote Speakers

Kenneth Cox • Jens Nielsen • Steve Hootman
Lionel de Rothschild • Steve Krebs • Valerie Sosa

**Tours to the Northwest's
Outstanding Gardens & Nurseries**

New Zealand Conference

This will take place in Timaru in the South Island at the beginning of November 2020. The Australian Rhododendron Society is working closely with our New Zealand counterparts to plan this conference and to share the main presenter, David Millais, who is a renowned rhododendron nurseryman.

If previous New Zealand conferences are anything to go by this will be a very worthwhile event and will precede our own contribution which will take place in Tasmania in the week following the Timaru convention.

There appears to be quite a lot of interest in these conferences from many of the Germans, Dutch, Swedes, Danes and Americans who attended the German/Scandinavian conference in 2018, so it would be wonderful if many Australian rhododendron enthusiasts were able to attend.

Not only are these gatherings educational but the social networking that occurs is invaluable and it is also an opportunity to gain access to some of the best private gardens in the world!

Plants You May Not Know - two forms of Oxalis

These spectacular forms of Oxalis are very showy, sun-loving and Non-Invasive!

They put on a wonderful show in autumn and should have a place in everyone's garden.



Many other species of Oxalis make a display at different times of the year.



Tales from Forest Lodge by Milton Bowman



This is really becoming a bad summer and autumn. Whilst it has not been excessively hot it has been very dry with only 20.5mm of rain over March. The garden areas that are not irrigated regularly are looking very stressed and large trees have dropped limbs without too much in the way of wind.

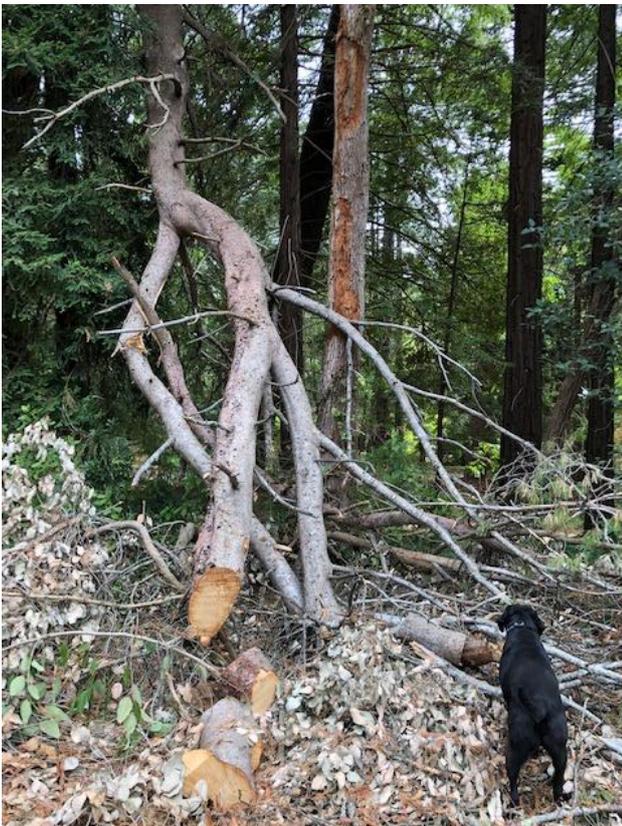
Today is a hot and windy day, and I have heard a limb fall near the house this morning. I guess that there will be a lot of cleaning up to be done over the next week. However the mild days have been pleasant living, we are still having meals on the verandah and the heating has not been used much as yet.

The new garden borders continue to grow and prosper and the variety of flowers have been a boon to the bees and too many other insects. The only problem at the moment is the Lace Bug on the azaleas and it has been necessary to spot spray many of those plants.

The deciduous trees are starting to colour up and I hope that this means that the season will really change and that we will get some soaking rains in the near future. 'Till then, keep watering!

Milton Bowman

Milton's 4-legged supervisor looks a little unsure about how to proceed



Black Hollyhock in bloom in the border garden



Notice Board

Reminder about the Garden visit to Tupelo Grove Nursery.

Sunday 14th April at 8.45 am

104 Bradbury Road, Mylor

Ian Powell has generously made time to have the Rhododendron Society members visit Tupelo Grove where he will talk to us about the nursery and the plants that they propagate and sell. This nursery has been innovative with their water and energy use, and they have developed fertilising techniques that are suited both to a nursery situation and to the home garden. The range of plants is extensive and the nursery will open to the public after Ian's presentation.

Coffee and tea lovers may like to bring along a thermos and a chair, and Lianne Healey has kindly offered to have BYO morning tea in her garden Copperwaite at the end of Rostrevor Road just past St Katherine School after the Tupelo Grove visit.

Milton Bowman

Sect. SA ARS

Neutrog Autumn Orders

The Neutrog order has been sent and members will be notified when the order arrives at the Mount Lofty Botanic Gardens.



Minutes of March 2019 Meeting

Minutes of SA ARS meeting March 19th 2019 at Stirling RSL

Present 39 members

Apologies: D Matison, David Cullum, R and J Hatcher, O Waterman, D Chandler, V Popov, P and M Samson.

Minutes of the last meeting had been circulated, accepted by meeting.

BUSINESS ARISING.

B Illman raised the matter of the cost of the National Journal and the cost of the recent issue. This has had a major effect on SA ARS finances. J Jenkinson (National president) replied saying that at the last national meeting that it was felt that all members should have a hard copy and hoped that it could be included as part of the branch National levy. The next meeting is in April and the matter will be clarified then. He asked for contributions to the journal from members. B Illman requested that journal decision be shared with branches. J Jenkinson then mentioned planning for the 2020 conference at Emu Valley to follow on from the New Zealand conference and possibly use the same key speaker.

Christmas lunch, all went well, many thanks to I and R Wall for providing a wonderful venue and to B Mynhart for the table decorations. Adelaide Hills Spit Roast provided the food which was excellent.

Cutting Day had been successful, thanks to the band of helpers who attended MLBG to collect cuttings, to R Hatcher for arranging the opening of the gardens, to K and M Bowman for providing the venue and especial thanks to R and B Illman for the preparation and organising the day.

A Matison reported that the Society is now a member of the American Rhododendron Society and that their journal will be in the library in the future.

LIBRARIAN'S REPORT

Noted the membership of the American Rhododendron Society and the journal being in the library in future. The exact chapter of the ARS to be allocated in the near future. The diversity of books in the library was described, most garden topics are covered.

TREASURER'S REPORT

The cost of the national journal has had a significant effect on the working account, as has the cost of Christmas function and the new computer thus the working account balance has fallen from \$8815 to \$5355 at the end of Feb. 2019.

Treasurer moved accept, T Thomas seconded and the meeting voted accept.

NEW BUSINESS

Conferences upcoming. National conference at Emu Valley Oct 2020, following the NZ conference and guest speaker is David Millais, a noted UK Nurseryman. The American RS conference is in Portland /Vancouver in April/May 2020.

Neutrog orders to be in and paid for by the end of March, delivery will be to MLBG and details will be notified by B Illman. Please keep a record of your order.

Speakers for 2019 Dr Uwe Stroehrer from Neutrog to be the April speaker, J Jenkinson re history of rhododendrons in SA, R Hatcher and S Kingdon re history of MLBG, K H re native bees Sept. Grant memorial with J Foggarty, probably Sept 6th, bloom night in Oct. / Nov. and Christmas lunch at R Gilbert's.

Plant sale October (13th?) to have more blooms for sale and T Thomas suggested that we try for better plants from our suppliers. Some were battered last year.

C Thomas asked those in need of a name tag order them from him and he will prepare same.

Raffle drawn by Meg Prince and won by S Beckoff, an example of Fireman Jeff.

Meeting closed at 8.50pm and followed by a presentation by N Popova, B Mynhart, R Illman, and M Bowman aspects of rhododendron propagation and care.

