

December 2019

# Rhodo News

Newsletter 425

evrg



Official Newsletter of the

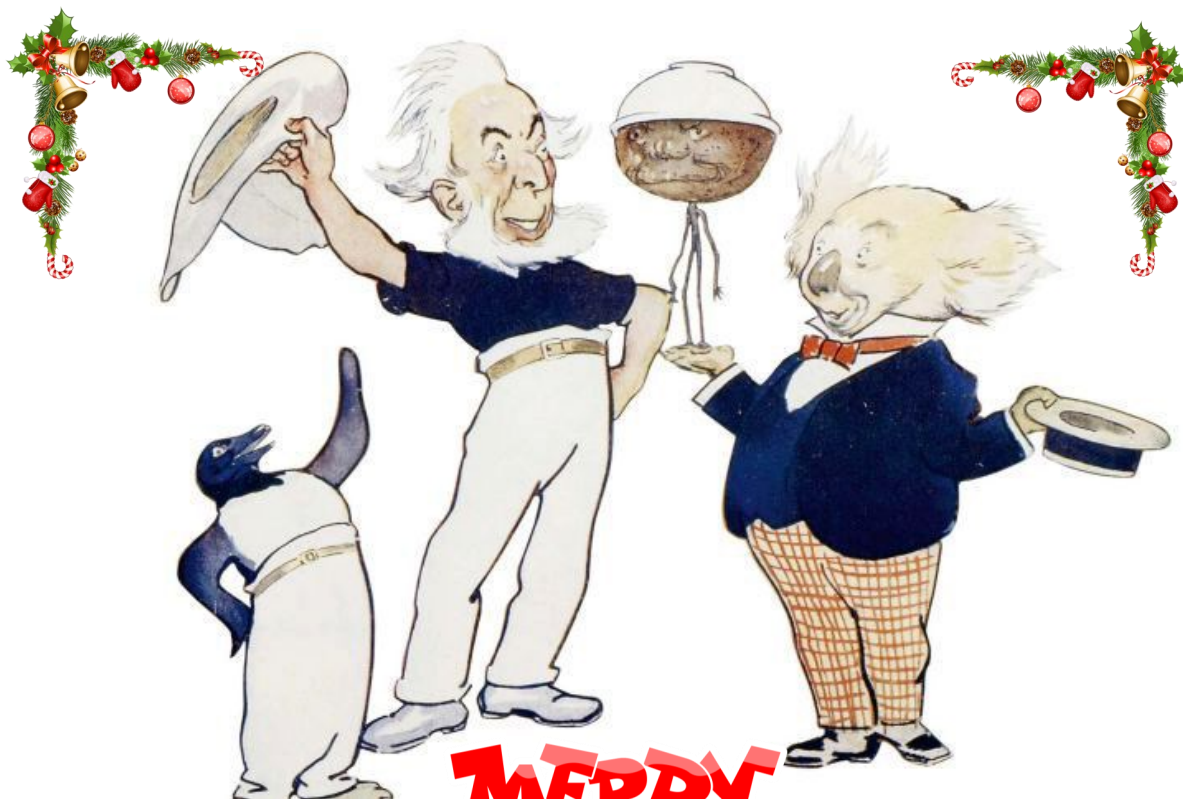
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# MERRY CHRISTMAS

*And eat plenty of puddin'- say Bill Barnacle and Bunyip Bluegum*

### Calendar

Sunday 8th December  
Meeting & Smorgasbord  
Begins at 4pm

No Social Meeting  
or newsletter  
in January

Saturday 11th January  
Burnie Street  
Arts Festival

Wed 11 March  
International  
Harp Concert @ EVRG

See us at: [emuvalleyrhodo.com](http://emuvalleyrhodo.com)

## General Manager's Report



Each month Nigel Burch, our newsletter editor extraordinaire, sends out a reminder for items and each month I grapple with what my part should be. I try and make it interesting and there is always so much that could be included. If there is anything you would like to see in the newsletter either as a once off or on some regular basis please email me with details.

Being contacted over the past month by so many members from around Australia and overseas has given me a real buzz. Your suggestions and words of encouragement are very much appreciated. With the Cruise Ship season under way (39 visits) and all the other bookings we are still short of volunteers in all areas but the burden has eased slightly. Thank you to Trixie Duncan, Marilyn van Druten and John Englund, who came with me to the Burnie Council information session for potential volunteers. We followed this up with a morning at Emu Valley at which 14 people expressed interest in volunteering at our garden in various areas. Christine Cooke's Tea Room roster has had a few gaps filled, but still looks like a pin cushion.

Well as this newsletter nears printing the Australian Rhododendron Society's AGM will have come and gone, members Catherine Jones and Pete Stratford (thanks for the buckets Pete) will have recorded radio advertising with Coastal FM to encourage more visitors during the summer months and arrangements made for Emu Valley to be represented at the 'Burnie Street Art Festival' on Saturday 11 January.

Keep on reading and to everyone, be it in Western Australia, New Zealand or wherever I hope you have a happy, joyous and above all safe Christmas.

### 1) Tea Room Opening Days

This Christmas /New Year, with the exception of Christmas Day, the Tea Room will not be closing as in the past. Thankyou to Christine and her team for giving this a go. Should there be anyone who normally does not work in the tea room but can help out during this time (serving/meet and greet/cleaning up etc) please yell out. It does not have to be for a whole day—just whatever you can spare.

### 2) Conference 2020

Two of our Canadian members are not only planning on coming to the Australian Rhododendron Conference (5/6/7 November) but would like to volunteer in the garden for two or three weeks prior!!!! To be able to do this they will need assistance with accommodation. If anyone can help with this for all or part of the time please contact Geoff to discuss.



Cheers, Geoff [geoffreywood@me.com](mailto:geoffreywood@me.com) 0427 722060

Next Cruise Ships **HELP**— December 3 / 12 / 15 / 23 / 28 / 30 **PLEASE**  
January 3 / 4 / 10 / 11 / 17 / 20 / 26 / 27 / 30



*It might be summer but we thought you might like to see this photo. It is one that will be in the next Australian Rhododendron Society Newsletter!*

## Welcome

A warm welcome to new members Felicity & Philippa Stanton, and Elaine & Mark Martin.



## Around the Garden

It has been a busy time of the year here for us and the weather has been very disappointing, not really working in our favour as far as spraying is concerned (just ask my Dad..... I hear from him every second day about it).

We had one week of lovely mild and warm weather then since then it's been, cold, damp and wet off and on. Speaking of the weather, I would like to make mention of the concerning whispers about a disease known as petal blight.

**What is it I hear you say?** Well it's extremely common and most upsetting if and when it occurs, as it ruins the overall look of the flower that you have waited so long to enjoy. It is a fungal disease, for which spores are wind-blown. Flowers first show small spots which appear water-soaked then turn into a slimy grey/brown mess. **Why does this occur?** This disease usually occurs during moist weather at flowering time especially if accompanied by warmth and poor air circulation and over crowding of plants. **How to control this?** A fungal spray is needed as soon as the buds begin to show signs of colour and again in a weeks time. We use '*mancozeb plus*' and we have sprayed twice here at the garden in our vireya section as well as the deciduous azaleas. Avoid overhead watering (obviously we can't control Mother Nature) and steer clear of dense planting if possible and overdoing the shade. Remove all damaged flowers and destroy.



I have heard it mentioned that it is on the rhododendrons, but from what I have seen, the garden is still looking gorgeous and from the comments we had here at the beginning of the week from a very knowledgeable and well known celebrity, it's not petal blight that he is concerned with, more to the point, the lack of plant labels in the garden. One of our volunteers has been putting pen to paper, photographing and identifying what she can for several months now. It's a slow old process but Mary McConnell is determined to make a dent! Good on you Mary, and thank you.

On my adventures walking around the garden, I just had to take a photo of the wisteria at the beginning of our Japanese garden (*Wisteria floribunda*). It sure has been putting on quite a spectacular display again for us this year, it never lets us down.

Have a fantastic Christmas everyone, stay safe and happy gardening! *Neet*

## Social Meeting Report for November 19<sup>th</sup>

Along with the usual bits'n'pieces that are discussed, there were some interesting suggestions for proposed trips that may appeal to our members as a social outing. So too were a couple of names suggested for guest speakers. These are very much appreciated and if any others are forthcoming that would be great. Hopefully during the coming year we can put some of these suggestions into action.

John Englund spoke to our group about a product known as "BIO CHAR". This can be produced from any waste "woody" product from the garden etc. The benefits of this material are numerous as it contains nutrients for plant growth, soil conditioning, stock food additive, and so on. It also is environmentally friendly in as much as it locks up carbon thereby reducing the amount being released into our atmosphere. Perhaps our garden may look further into the use of this material, although it may not be cost effective for us to produce our own. I understand that this is being given consideration by other members. Thank you John, for a very interesting presentation.

The flower voting was a close race with Ethel Tavner taking top honours for her vireya, while Melvie Moore just squeezed into high points with a selection of sweet peas. Winning the raffle, Ray Tavner took home the world's only piece of *Acacia melanoxalin* with cones on it. It also had candles, so some outside interference is suspected.

It is now almost twenty years since the hysteria surrounding the millennium change over. How times flies! It is also only a year away from Emu Valley marking a special year in 2021. Yes, the "old lady" turns forty! What can we do to mark that event? *Pete.*



## *R. sinogrande*

If well grown *R. sinogrande* will produce the largest, most spectacular leaves of the entire rhododendron genus, the flowers are not too shabby either being large enough to overflow a large dinner plate with up to 30+ creamy- white to pale yellow flowers each with a crimson blotch. Of course with leaves this large (from 300-600 mm in length and up to 250 mm wide) it needs to be planted in a sheltered area where the wind cannot destroy these majestic leaves.

George Forrest first discovered this magnificent plant in 1912 growing on the Shweli-Salwin Divide west Yunnan while other collectors reported that some plants stood more than 14 meters high in Assam. Also found to be growing in Tibet and Upper-Burma, *R. sinogrande* was introduced to western gardens by Forrest in 1912 followed by many other collectors, flowering for the first time in May 1919. Usually large-leaf rhododendrons can take many more years than that to reach flowering age.

The plant we were growing in a sheltered site in the Yunnan section has turned out not to be the true *sinogrande* but another hybrid. I know of others growing in private gardens which are true species, the picture is of one of these. *Maurie*

*The Emu Valley Rhododendron Garden is proudly sponsored by:*



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