

February 2020

Rhodo News

Newsletter 426



Official Newsletter of the
Emu Valley Rhododendron Garden Inc

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Internationally acclaimed Singaporean Harpist Katrina Tan will be performing at Emu Valley Rhododendron Garden on Wednesday 11 March starting at 2 pm. See inside for details.

Calendar

Sunday 16th February

Social Meeting
At EVRG 2pm

Monday 9th March

Social Meeting at STEAMFEST
Leave From EVRG 930am

Wed 11th March

Harp Concert
At EVRG at 2pm

See us at: emuvalleyrhodo.com

General Manager's Report

Welcome to 2020, Emu Valley Rhododendron Garden style! It was a pretty crazy and hectic end to 2019 and the first month of 2020 has not changed much. Cruise ships, functions and a busy tearoom certainly has kept everyone busy and it was not helped by a flooded building (upstairs & downstairs)! I know I sound like a broken record but it never ceases to amaze me how we keep going.



Let's start with December 19 when most of the building was flooded. From all reports Chairperson Ant Dry looked in his element with the mop in hand! Seriously it is a credit to everyone involved who spent the night helping clean up and the professional cleaning company, Burnie-based Master Blaster, were fantastic not only on the night but for more than a week ensuring everything was dried out.

To top it off, the Tea Room was open for business the next morning and our Catering Team got over the line with a luncheon. Thank goodness for insurance coverage.

As previously mentioned we trialled keeping the Tea Room open through the Christmas / New Year period. In previous years the garden was open and we relied on visitors doing the right thing by putting entry money into the donation box. For the same period last year we collected just over \$700. This year we averaged this amount each day. Thank you Chris for organising the roster.

The Cruise Ships seem to just keep 'on coming'. It has been pretty hectic and there is still two months to go for this season. Please, volunteers are still needed in all sorts of roles.

Welcome

A big welcome to Sophie Clements who is our new Administration Officer. Some members would have already met her as she has been volunteering as a guide for the past few months. Sophie loves the garden and said how wonderful it is to made feel so welcome.

Insurance Coverage and Sponsorship

A lot of work has been undertaken over the past year to ensure that Emu Valley has its insurance needs covered. To this effect Armstrong's Insurance Brokers were selected to manage our various policies. A flow on from this is that Armstrong's have come on board as a sponsor.

Armstrong's assist our garden in a direct manner and if any member would like a competitive quote (Australia wide) for their personal or business insurance all you need to do is contact them and mention your connection with Emu Valley Rhododendron Garden.

Methods of contact being:-

Paul Armstrong —

Email paul@armstrongs.net.au

Mobile: 0497 094 319 Phone: (03) 6331 5455 Fax: (03) 6331 5488

Hopefully we will have Paul as a guest speaker at one of our social meetings.

Cheers, Geoff geoffreywood@me.com 0427 722060

Welcome

A warm welcome to new members Marey Maycock & Ian Matheson, Vicki Vernon, Stephen & Patricia Lewis, Heather Ebbott, the Brendan O'Rourke family, Carl Jackman & Jessica Murray, Madonna Matthews & Paul Brown, Anne & Russell Durnford, and Michael Powell.

One of our resident echidnas, photographed January 20th



*The old faithful**The new beast*

I hope everyone has had a nice start to the New Year and ready for many exciting times ahead for 2020.

We have had a nice drop of rain which has come in handy just to refresh everything and add a bit of a top up in the lakes which are on the low side. For those that may not be aware, all of our watering around the garden comes from the water in the lakes which are all spring fed. We have had to reduce the amount of watering because of the low water levels but things are still getting a drink and are being looked after the best way that we know how. We have applied a seaweed solution to the foliage of most plants which improves the fight against disease and pests as well as strengthens and encourages resistance to stress conditions such as heat and dry conditions. It also acts as a soil conditioner.

We have started bale carting, just a small load to begin but many more ute loads to go. The first 200 have already been put around the plants by our team of wonderful volunteers and they are already itching for more. We also have a new addition to add to our collection of tools and equipment for making work a little easier around here..... on the left is our new gadget, the Cormidi 50. It is to replace the three wheel go-go mobile that has been here longer than the garden. It was time to upgrade and put the old girl to rest. Still yet to come up with a name for it but it travels at a snails pace (which is all we need it to do here at the garden), it's on rubber tracks so won't rip up our pathways, easy to use, can carry up to a 500kg load, hydraulic lift so tips with ease and you can ride on it too. A lot of research went into this before the purchase and it is just what we were looking for.

I'm going to finish it there this month as I have been given the 'hurry up' because they are waiting on me to put the newsletter together, oops!

Enjoy what is left of summer and happy gardening. Neet ☺

Social Meeting Plan for March 9th

Instead of the March Sunday social meeting, a trip is planned to the Sheffield Steam Fest on Monday 9 March. *Steam Fest is not just about traction engines, it is a showcase of the history of Tasmanian agriculture. From a threshing machine that took 18 men to operate to a rock crusher that helped build the North-West's first roads.* From all reports it is a fun day with all sorts of attractions including a mini train and stall holders. Entry fee into the site is \$15. We will be running our bus and ask for a gold coin donation to cover fuel. The idea is to leave the garden at 9.30 on the Monday with the bus and some members will have their cars available also. To ascertain numbers in order to arrange transport please either text or call Marilyn (0439 386 009) or Pete on (0428 103 520)

Harp Concert EVRG March 11th

Internationally acclaimed Singaporean Harpist Katryna Tan will be performing at Emu Valley Garden on Wednesday 11 March starting at 2 pm. **Members \$25 & Non Members \$30.** Ways to book your ticket are:

1. Direct Deposit — Commonwealth Bank
Account Name - Emu Valley Rhododendron Garden
BSB — 067400
Account Number — 28047242
Please, as the reference put Harp Concert (or HC) and your name
2. Coming into the garden and paying by credit card, cash or cheque — Tea Room volunteers will record your payment
3. Posting a cheque to Emu Valley — PO Box U33, Upper Burnie 7320
You will not require a ticket as on the day there will be a station at the entry to have your name ticked off.

Legends of the Garden—Ray & Ethel Tavner



Both Ray and Ethel Tavner are life members of the Garden. Ray was President of the North West Tasmania Branch of the Australian Rhododendron Society for four years and of the Emu Valley Rhododendron Society for two years.

ANT: Where were you born?

RAY: Ferntree Gully Victoria. In 1941 we moved up to Gippsland, and I lived there until I came to Tasmania. I was no good in school, I left in Grade 7. When I was 14, I went out to work. The farmer I worked for was a hard taskmaster. He had 60 cows to milk and when it was spud season we had to be in the paddock when the sun was coming up, and we worked there until it was too dark to see the spuds. We'd come back, have tea, milk the cows again and go to bed. I was getting £5 a week and they were taking £3 off me

for board. I came to Tasmania just before I turned 21 on 19 January 1960, for 2 months holiday, and I'm still here. I briefly worked at the Jones Jam Factory and went to work on a building site. I didn't know nothing about building. I got shifted up to Launceston. There my brother-in-law went to a dance, met two girls and said he was taking them to the dance next week. I said, "I'd better come along." That's where me and Ethel met.

ETHEL: It was me and my sister. I was born in Burnie, and grew up in Stanley, and we'd just gone up to Launceston for a few weeks.

RAY: We went out for about three months and then I went back to Victoria.

ETHEL: I wrote him a "Dear John" letter (laughs).

RAY: So I came back, and I thought "bugger this", so I just tagged along.

ETHEL: I paid my own way and I thought I could do whatever I pleased. Just went along for the ride.

RAY: Anyways, we were married in 1963, and we lived in Launceston while I built us a house out at Perth. We lived in Perth for a while, then we came up here to live because there was all this work up the coast here. At that time, we had a company in Launceston called DKT Construction, (Dickerson, Kitto and Tavner). In 1982 when Bob Hawke got in, my partner and I had just done a sub-division in Launceston and we was building units and houses on it and suddenly, the interest rate went from about 14% to 23%. They'd floated the dollar, you see, and we couldn't handle it. So, we lost everything. It was the lowest point of my life.

Eventually we bought our place on Allens Road. Lived there for 31 years. It was a bare paddock went we got there. Started building in the September and moved in February the next year

ANT: How did you get involved with the Rhodo Garden?

ETHEL: My twin sister was in the rhododendron society, so we started going around gardens with them.

RAY: We joined the rhododendron society back about '79 I think. In '81 we walked down through the bush and onto the knoll where the big gazebo is and there was old Mr [Vincent] Pease, Maurie [Kupsch], Hilary [O'Rourke]. They said "we're gonna build a garden here". We said, "Oh, okay". Didn't dream it would ever come to what it is now. In 1987 the bicentenary was coming up and they got a grant to build the bottom piece of the building, so Noel Burley and myself, Maurie and a few others got in there. I put a few days in there through the week just to get it going. The footing around that, you wouldn't believe it is about 4-foot-wide by about 2 foot deep. The day we poured it all, the trucks were there about 11 o'clock, but the pump only arrived at one o'clock. The concrete had just been turning around in the bowl, it got pretty warm and as soon as it hit the deck it went off, that's why if you walk over that floor at the bottom you can feel yourself going up and down. By then there was just me and Hilary there to pull the screeds out and get it finished and whirlybird it. I was that tired that night I could hardly get in the truck to drive home. It nearly killed me, and I was only in my early 40s!

ANT: You did a lot of building at the Garden

RAY: We did the covered bridge in 2001 I think it was. Noel Burley, Maurie and myself. Talk about health and safety – the scaffolding we had back then was 4x2! No safety harnesses. Took over 12 months to build. Then we built the Japanese teahouse.

We wanted to build a tea and meeting room on our slab. I phoned Senator Richard Colbeck. I knew him pretty well. I was Chairman of Master Builders when he was doing his training. I phoned him in his office. I told the receptionist he was a friend of mine, and she said, "they all say that?" I told him we needed money to build up at the Garden. He came up to the garden and met the board, Terry Shadbolt, Noel Burley, Maurie. He asked, "how much do you want?". I pulled a figure out the air, "oh, a couple of hundred thousand would be nice". There was an election coming up. John Howard got back in and we got our money.

We extended the slab, employed two blokes and Noel, Maurie and I all worked on it. We put the roof on ourselves too – took all day. It turned out a bloody nice building. I'm pretty proud of it. We did have a couple of incidents. We had scaffolding on four wheels, and we had a ladder leant up against it. We were putting up the beams, and when Charlie got up the ladder, it pushed the scaffold. He came down that ladder so fast he didn't even touch the rungs!

ANT: Tell me about your farm on Allens Road

ETHEL: We had a reasonable big garden. We put a little dam in. We had a spring. That watered all the grapes and the garden. We reared cattle. It was just a hobby farm.

RAY: In about '95 I got some cuttings from the owner of a vineyard near Nook. Borrowed a tractor and ripper and planted 750 vines. Built up to 1,000. We got grapes a couple of years later. People from the garden would come and help us pick. I'd put on a BBQ for them and gave them all a bottle of wine to go away with. It was a really good social thing. Then we pressed the grapes and made wine. The best year we got 1,800 kg of grapes. Made quite a few dozen bottles. I made a really good red wine.

ANT: Do you have time for hobbies?

RAY: Not hobbies, but after I had my quadruple bypass, we joined Heartbeat; a group raising money for cardiac parts at the hospitals and after a year I took over as president. We finished it up in July because we couldn't get office bearers. We raised about fifty grand. We made \$1,000 to \$1,400 per year just collecting aluminum cans.

ANT: You retire early.

RAY: I got a detached retina and had to have my eye removed. That's when I retired. I was 57.

ANT: Can you imagine life without the garden?

RAY: No. I started going there when I was 43, and I'm now in my eighties. So, it's almost half my life. I love it. I love going up there, and I love these ships coming in coz I meet people. It's a labour of love. Still is. I can still take people around in a car, but I can't walk around anymore.

ETHEL: He put more time down at the Garden than he did at our own place.

ANT: Tell me about your children

ETHEL: Our eldest Terry, just turned 54. He has arthritis really bad, been in hospital with it. He has two kids. Janette is 52. She's got two kids too, and Neville is 51 and he's a carpenter. He has one child and they foster children.

ANT: You must get a real feeling of achievement with the garden.

RAY: Yes, but all those people at the garden every step of the way they were all part of it. The people that have passed away wouldn't believe what's happened to the garden. I'm just pleased to have been a part of it. I wouldn't change it a bit.

ANT: What's your philosophy of life?

RAY: I'm not religious, but I like to do for people what I'd like done for me. I would always bend over backwards for people who gave me a good go.

Cigarettes are a Danger to Our Garden

The dry weather we are experiencing has highlighted how vulnerable Emu Valley is to nature. The automated irrigation system to part of the garden has been successful and our Horticulture Team are looking at ways to further protect us from climate change.

Fire is also a real risk and although Mother Nature plays a big part, unfortunately so do people. Of late there seem to be more cigarette butts found that have just been thrown or dropped. It might only take one lighted butt in the wrong place!!!

Stricter adherence to smoking restrictions will now be enforced and along with the Board of Directors the Management Team will decide on what changes to our policy may be required.



R. yunnanense

Rhododendron yunnanense was discovered by Abbe Delavay in April 1883 at Houang-li-pin, western Yunnan. More discoveries were to follow ranging from north-west Yunnan to north-east Upper Burma, south-east Tibet and south-west Sichuan, with each of these areas showing slight variations in plant size, flower shape and colour. The colour can be white, pale pink, pale purplish-pink, deep rose, lavender or blue-lavender with deep-crimson through to deep-green spots.

Western gardeners were to enjoy this species after Delavay introduced it to Paris in 1889 followed by many other collectors including Forrest, Rock and Kingdon-Ward who found it growing in conifer forests, open rocky meadows and on rocky slopes.

At Emu Valley we grow many of these colour variations with this pale pink form with deep crimson spots growing on the right-hand side of the path joining Yunnan to Japan near the large plant of Magnolia delavayi in Yunnan. When you find these plants you will see the typically semi weeping growth habit of some forms.

Maurie

The Emu Valley Rhododendron Garden is proudly sponsored by:



Emu Valley Rhododendron Garden Inc.
PO Box U33 Upper Burnie, Tasmania 7320