



Rhododendrons South Australia

Australian Rhododendron Society Inc. South Australian Branch

Issue 132 – April 2020

President's Message

We are currently living through an era where days can feel like weeks and weeks can feel like months. It feels like an eternity since our propagation day just a couple of months ago, and the thought of doing anything like that under our current circumstances would now be unconscionable.

Just a month ago we were looking forward to welcoming everyone to our first meeting of the year, and after the last minute decision to cancel, the situation rapidly evolved to a realisation that it would not have been possible anyway with the introduction of social distancing rules severely limiting numbers of participants at a gathering. We are now facing the prospect of no meetings or events being conducted for at least the foreseeable future and probably not until Spring at the earliest. Consequently, the executive committee have been working away in the background (via emails and phone calls) to consider what may be possible in the foreseeable future and how best to maintain effective and efficient communication channels within the Society.

The monthly newsletter will become our primary means of communication and connectivity. As with most newsletters representing a group or society much value and interest can be found with a broader range of contributors and articles so this is a call out to you, our membership, to do your bit to help keep the newsletter interesting and informative over the coming months. Suggestions could include a plant or product review, a garden visit, a success story (or failure) from your gardening experience, a photo of a beautiful or interesting bloom or plant, etc. You may have a question or dilemma that could be put to one of our knowledgeable members. We hope to hear from you and look forward to sharing our experiences during this challenging time of physical isolation.

Autumn in our gardens



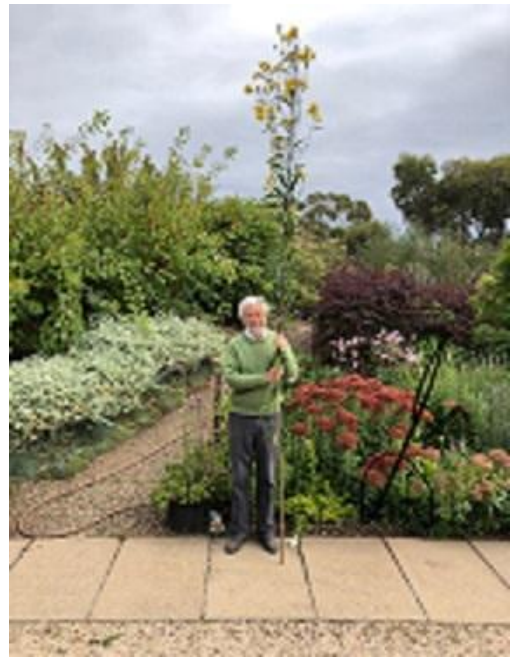
Vireya rhododendron



Tuberous begonia Moulin Rouge - good basket specimen



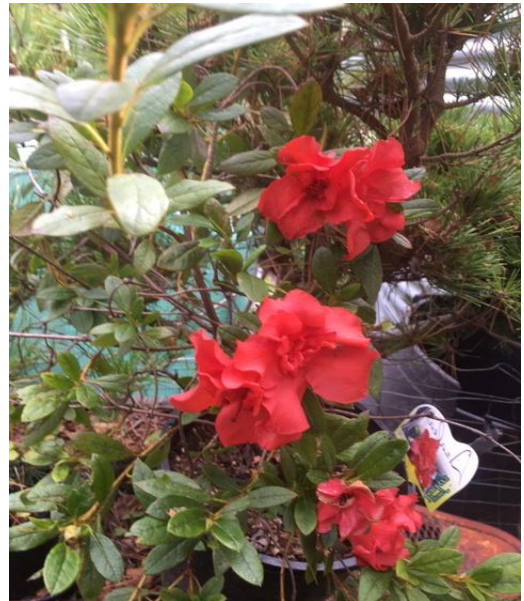
Aphid control- Ladybird larvae



Success with seed!
John Woodburn with his giant sunflower



Azalea Duc de Rohan has quite a few flowers brightening our isolation



Autumn embers from the Encore range



This Encore Azalea shows similar traits to Satsuki having variation in patterning on the same plant



Aldi raised beds with Spring onions generated from bulbs after using the tops in cooking.



A range of basket Tuberosa begonias



Woodland cyclamen from seed - 4 year old



Woodland cyclamen



Autumn species Crocus from seed

Coping with Covid19



“Social Distancing” in action

Make your own Sanitiser and add the appropriate tranquiliser!



Next Meeting

There will not be any meetings until further notice.

Bloom of the Month – Vireya Vladimir Bukovsky





From the Propagating bench *by Richard Illman*

Self-isolation provides a multitude of opportunities for getting all the gardening tasks done that we have been avoiding.

First and foremost it is time to check your cutting box to see that there is moisture available and to remove any plants that have failed. These are usually indicated by leaves that fall off when gently touched or when the cutting has showed signs of going black. Discard these plants.

Cutting boxes should also be placed where they will receive some filtered light.

Those members who attended the propagation workshop on raising woodland cyclamen should now be seeing some signs of seed germination. They require no particular attention except a sunny position and occasional water if not provided by nature.

The latest innovations for propagating boxes.

Andrew Waterman has developed an improved version for supporting individual cups in our propagating boxes. This uses 2 sections of Corflute glued together with holes of a suitable size cut in it. The 2 sheets of Corflute are self-supporting in the box. This method uses the clear plastic cups, so successfully employed by Nataliya and has the added benefit of requiring less cutting medium.



Barb Mynhart has been successfully promoting the growth of rooted cuttings of *Vireya* rhododendrons using the clear cups inside a hot box that she has made out of two foam Broccoli boxes joined together. The increased height allows plenty of room for the *Vireyas* to grow while being at a desirable temperature.

After an informative workshop on growing seeds in hot boxes at the Illmans' some weeks ago now, I came home inspired to experiment with my recalcitrant vireya cuttings. I had propagated them in March 2019 and although they had developed some roots they were not putting on any leaf growth. I felt they were sulking as a result of the early autumnal weather, with the cooler temperatures since the end of January.

I decided to experiment with my hot box to see if I could speed up the growth of my vireyas.

Firstly, for this particular purpose, I prepared my hot box (which Kevin had made some time ago) to suit the plants in their propagating cups. I needed to raise the sides so that the light in the lid of the box did not overheat or burn the foliage. This was easily done by cutting off the bottom of a polystyrene box and duct taping it onto the top of my existing box (see photos below).

*Cheers
Barbara*



Richard has modified a hot box to provide bottom heat to accelerate the rooting of cuttings during the colder months. The light is inserted through the side of the box as opposed to the top and holes are cut in the lid to accommodate pots containing cuttings. The pots of cuttings are covered with the top half of a PET bottle and the caps are left off to allow air movement.



Seed Propagation

ARS Seed

The propagation group has purchased a variety of American rhododendron seed through the ARS (American Rhododendron Society) seed distribution offer. The collection includes some Hybrid, Species and Deciduous Azalea seed. Richard has sown the seed and several members who have hot boxes have agreed to act as custodians of the seed. Some of the Deciduous azalea seed has germinated and hopefully we will be able to grow it on and distribute to interested members. This is the only way that we may be able to acquire new varieties of rhododendrons in Australia, so keep your fingers crossed for their success.

Begonia Seed

Begonia boliviensis (Santa Cruz sunset) has set a copious amount of seed and this has germinated very well in the hot box. Members who may be interested in growing this spectacular pendulous begonia are invited to register their interest with Richard so that they can be contacted, when plants are available next season.



Help stock our Pot Luck Stall

We are entering a period of the year when it is possible to propagate many plants that have performed well in our gardens. It would be very helpful if members could consider propagating plants for donating to the pot luck stall when we return to normal meetings.

Here are some suggestions for plants that could be propagated:

Hard wood cuttings taken in winter.

Hydrangeas, Fuschias, Philadelphus, Berberis, Flowering currant, Wigelia, Viburnum, Rose and apple root stock.

Don't forget the possibility of seed propagation (see recommended seed suppliers in previous article).

Librarian's Report *by Ann & David Matison*

Unfortunately everyone is currently in lock down – including your librarians and your library. That means to there is no library report this month. The librarians have been in hibernation in their garden at Aldgate. We are amongst the most fortunate of people having such an amazing place to while away the time. Life could be very much worse, especially given the beautiful Autumn weather we have been having and of course the rain. The only thing to make it better would be to see our family and friends, but that is not going to happen for a while.

So what have we been doing? As some of you may know we have a big vegetable garden and this year we have had a big tomato crop so job number one has been preserving or what I call squirreling, preparing for the Winter. Then all of the Summer crops have to be pulled out in preparation for the Winter crops. Some of which have already gone in.

Unfortunately every animal and bird known in the Hills have found our fruit trees. Even the nets don't dissuade them; they just eat their way through. So the second job has been repairing nets and taking them off.

Thinking of pests we have a walnut tree that, after years of waiting, wanted to give us a bumper crop this year. Foiled again. The cockatoos found it and overnight stripped it bare.

I just hope that it was the black cockatoos that we see regularly in our pine trees. If it was I don't feel so bad because they would have lost a lot of food on Kangaroo Island after the fires.

Thinking of pests, rabbits have arrived. After twelve years free of them they have found us again. Where is the local fox when we need it? They have kept us rabbit free for all of that time.

Then of course that rain was the perfect opportunity to fertilise. David always complains that I have too much in the shed. Now there is a lot less fertiliser. Just as well the Neutrog order has just gone in.

Lastly for now the azaleas have gone berserk. We should have taken cuttings. I wonder if it is too late now? They have produced quite a few flowers. Looking out the window and seeing their cheerful flowers is enough to make anyone happy. I wish I knew their names because I would recommend the ones we have to all members.

I'm sorry that I don't have any suggestions for Rhododendron books for you to read, but there are plenty of other books so keep reading and gardening.

Ann



A Member's Story – Daphne & Denis Chandler *by Daphne Chandler*

Denis and I moved back to the hills after living in the Riverland for 7 years. Two years have gone by now and we started a small garden here at Oakbank. Our previous garden in the hills at Aldgate was roughly 2 acres, the garden at Ramco was a similar size but very challenging. When we left Aldgate we took a semi-trailer load of our garden treasures of 30 plus years, of which we created a garden that won 5 yearly awards for the best garden in the district. Yes, we successfully grew Rhodies in that climate by creating micro climates and several oases. People couldn't believe the plants that we grew up there.

Then when we returned to Oakbank along came another load of our treasures to this very small garden, mainly potted plants, cuttings and seeds. Denis worked hard to make his mark and design here and it only lasted 2 months when he became very ill and passed away. The rest was up to me. Determined to soldier on I created a very heavily built up somewhat of a hanging walled garden, filled with all our treasures. Rhododendrons, azaleas, clematis, many species of primula, alpines and mainly exotica. Many plants have also come in the form of cuttings and generous gifts from Bill Voigt and others from the Society, [dear friends of like-minded green thumbs]..

I am a seedaholic and I admit it, over the years I have brought into this world a plethora of amazing plants to share and enjoy, always mesmerised by the wonder of nature and the ability of a small spec the size of a sesame seed that can grow into so much beauty that relies on me to nurture and sustain it to fruition. This garden here at Oakbank is my refuge now, it gets me out of bed each day, to tend and feed and nurture it so it can survive just like we have to in these very formidable times...it is a virus, it has to be eradicated, just like the many plant diseases we gardeners have contended with in our own perennial plots. Cheers, Daphne Chandler.



RECENT GARDENING *by Milton Bowman*

We find ourselves socially isolating but in a strange way this has not been all that difficult to this point. We communicate with friends and family by telephone and emails and friends walk by and we chat whilst keeping the prescribed distance apart. There is more time to talk together and to have cups of tea and coffee, and there is time to reflect and to think about the changes that we all will be making in the future. It will be interesting to see how our standards of hygiene will change, and it may be that public facilities will improve. Anyone who has visited the Steamroller Park with kids or grandkids would be aware of the state of the public toilets on a weekend. The smell and the sight of toilets that are blocked and filthy is unacceptable and I suspect and hope that it will not be tolerated in the future. We might become more like Singapore.



Back to gardening. We are living in 2 places now, and we have 2 gardens that we care for. Forest Lodge gardens are mature and the borders look fantastic. We planted a number of *Hydrangea strigosa* and these are now in full bloom.

The flower head is huge and they are spectacular. I have tried to propagate them but my initial effort failed completely when every cutting rotted. I did try again with more recent shoots that were smaller and now they have rotted too. Looks like hardwood cuttings in winter are the way to go. Meanwhile cuttings of fuchsia, salvia, and philadelphus are under way.

The new garden has many treasures and we are getting to know what is in it. Kristina is thrilled with the number and variety of azaleas and with the types

of dogwood and maples that are hiding in the beds.

I am removing some weed trees that have self-seeded over the years. The pile of vegetation is growing and a day with the mulcher is looming. I have no doubt that when the oaks, beech, and liquidambar drop their leaves that we will have a huge pile to compost which will be recycled back onto the garden beds. The rhododendrons will love it!

This week we have dug over a bed near the gazebo and have planted out a mass of cliveas that we have had growing from seed, and that generous friends have donated. That particular area is now looking very good. There is something about lush dark green foliage that is irresistible and I am fond of both agapanthas and cliveas; great landscape plants.



There is a tree in the front garden that has turned a deep and vibrant red, and we spent some time and consulted widely trying to work out what it is. Rob Hatcher provided the breakthrough when he suggested *Nyssa sinensis*, and whilst it is a *Nyssa* it is probably *N. sylvatica* which is much more common. *Nyssas* are so called *Tupellos*, and this one is native to the southern states of USA. It is a small to medium tree and is renowned for the autumn foliage.

The combination of both gardens is keeping us busy physically and mentally and whilst we miss the closer contact with our friends time is flying by.

WE hope that everyone stays healthy and are looking forward to returning to more normal times.

Cheers

Milton and Kristina



Notice Board

Visit to Raywood Nursery

The visit to Raywood Nursery at Deep Creek proposed in the March newsletter has been cancelled due to Covid19 restrictions.

Prepare for Spring

Now that many of us have time to plan for a colourful display in our gardens in Spring and Summer it is well worth looking at online seed suppliers and placing orders. If you have built a hot box you are well set up for raising seed very successfully. Many of the companies Richard and I use are Lambleys, Swallowtail seeds, BT World seeds and many others. Many have good vegetable seed as well as annuals and perennials. All you need to do is "Google".

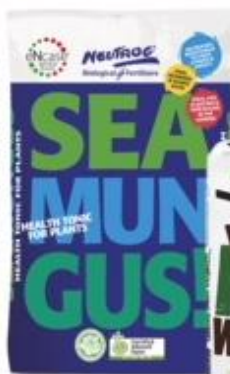
Neutrog orders

Neutrog orders have been submitted and will be delivered to Andrew & Olivera Waterman's home. Members will be notified when the orders are delivered and arrangements will be made with individual members about when to collect their order. Social distancing regulations will be required.



Feed & protect in winter for a head start in... Spring!

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