

Rhododendrons South Australia

Australian Rhododendron Society Inc. South Australian Branch

Issue 77 – March 2014

A New Year of Meetings

Autumn is now upon us and our monthly member meetings are about to recommence.

This year the Executive Committee has been actively recruiting a variety of interesting and diverse speakers for our monthly meetings, as well as investigating interesting options for field trips. So it looks like another year of stellar activities to stimulate members on quest of growing rhododendrons.

Stay tuned to the Newsletter or Website for confirmation of speakers and events.

March Meeting

Our first meeting for 2014 will be held on Wednesday the 19th of March 19th at the Crafers Hall.

Starting at 7.45pm the guest speaker will be Bill Antel, well known to many club members. Bill and his wife Sue have the beautiful garden in Aldgate and Antel Irrigation.

We are sure that this will be both an informative and entertaining talk as Bill regales us with 'Tales of Irrigation'.

**bring a plate for supper, and don't
forget to bring something for the
trading table**

Coming Events

Rare Plant Show - April 5th & 6th at Tessellars Bulb Farm in The Dandenongs.

There will be an extensive display of rare bulbs and plants. The Victorian branch of the Rhododendron society will have a large display of Vireyas for sale.

The show will be hosted by Stephen Ryan who, this year, will deliver the Grant memorial lecture.

Enfield Plant Show April 12th & 13th Enfield Community Centre 540 Regency Rd. Enfield.

This is an excellent show, with displays of Tuberous begonias, African Violets, Streptocarpus, Orchids and many other plants. Get there early as the plants are in great demand.

International Rhododendron Conference 20-24 October 2014 Dunedin - New Zealand

Join the NZRA in celebrating its 70th Anniversary with internationally famous gardens visits, local and renowned international speakers, species and NZ hybrid rhododendrons, plus pre and post-conference tours of 4-6 days.

<http://www.rhododendron.org.nz/>

November 2013 Meeting

"it was so last year!!!"

Rob Hatcher gave a summary of the National Council meeting and the remainder of the meeting was taken up by members' blooms. We had a wonderful array of blooms from various members' gardens, which proved to be an informative enlightening and entertaining evening.



Grant Memorial Lecture

Stephen Ryan of Dicksonia Rare Plants at Mt Macedon has been booked to deliver our lecture in August this year. Stephen's biography describes his early years when he worked in his father's nursery and at the same time he joined the Mt Macedon Horticultural Society. At the age of 19 he was President of the group and he still is. He was the top apprentice in a course on gardening and turf management and as a result was awarded scholarships to New Zealand and the UK. On return to Australia he ran the family nursery until in 1980 he started the nationally recognised Dicksonia Rare Plants and he has been a passionate plant collector ever since.

Stephen has travelled worldwide and published three books on rare plants, while his nursery holds the national collection of Cornus, Sambuccus and Acanthus.

In 2001, the Royal Horticultural Society of Victoria awarded him the J.P. Fawcner Gold medal for distinguished service to horticulture.

Stephen should prove to be a very entertaining and informative speaker. Please advertise this opportunity amongst your family and gardening friends.



What's in the Nurseries?

A visit to Bunnings, Mile End, earlier this week revealed some stunning new azaleas. One in particular was a Nuccio cultivar called Crown Jewel. My immediate reaction was that it was a Satsuki form as the flower had solid blocks of colour but on consulting "Dr. Google" this was found not to be the case. It appears to be an exceptionally vigorous grower and Richard immediately took some cuttings.

Bunnings had a small range of other new azaleas - all very healthy and with lots of potential cutting material.

Littlehampton nursery had some large rhododendrons but the prices were quite high.

Bronwyn

Tissue Culture

After a promising start last year, infections proved impossible to overcome and are preparing to and the work was suspended in the winter. At the beginning of 2014 it was restarted with some modifications to procedure and we now seem to be having some success. After two months we have tissue growing in culture and we are about to embark on the multiplication phase.

Richard & Milton



Bird of the Month

Red-browed Finch

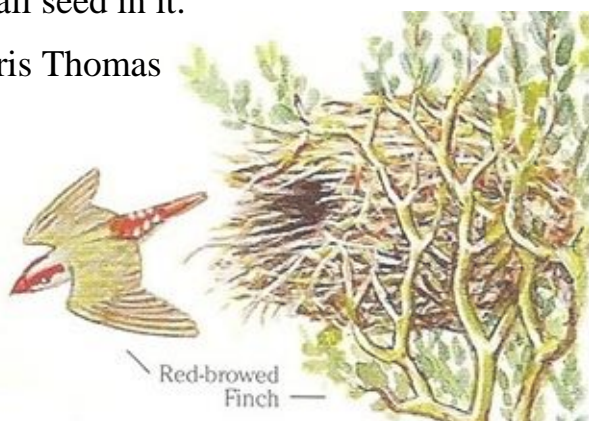


Neochmia temporalis

Perhaps the most common bird in our hills gardens. Usually in small groups or flocks of 20 or more.

Very easily attracted to a seed feeder, with small seed in it.

Chris Thomas



Blue Banded Bees- They really do exist!

Last year we had a presentation by Katja Hogendoorn on native bees. One species was of particular interest. She mentioned that the Blue banded bee played a significant role in the pollination of tomatoes. I had never seen them in the garden and planted my tomatoes as usual, not expecting anything different from previous years. To my amazement when the plants began to flower I heard this low whirring sound and upon investigation discovered a large but very beautiful Blue Banded bee moving between the flowers. Unfortunately, they were difficult to photograph but the evidence of their activity has been outstanding as I have a huge crop of tomatoes.



Amegilla cingulata

I have since hung a bee hotel in a nearby tree and planted some lavenders to attract them. I do hope they stay around as they are the most beautiful insect I have seen.

Bronwyn



By Bill Voight

Culture Notes

"What you should be doing with your rhodies and garden this March"

As we survey the scars of our recent heat waves, there are some important observations to be made. The rhododendrons that were least affected by the 'burst of Hell' were -:

"Ponticum", "Sir Robert Peel", "President Roosevelt", "Mrs Leak" and "Lucidum".



Mrs Leak



President Roosevelt



Lucidum



Sir Robert Peel

Sasanqua and hybrid camellias suffered less than japonicas. Although "Great Eastern", "The Czar, and "Lady Loch" showed little burning.

Now is a good time to consider how to provide for the next summer, perhaps with the options of relocating, or providing shade using larger trees or some form of shade cloth.

Autumn is the time when mildew often ruins the foliage of deciduous azaleas, spoiling the chances of the delightful autumn colour. If the foliage is still a healthy green spraying with a fungicide will protect the leaves from unsightly mildew



Mildew

The smaller native birds such as Eastern Spinebills, Crescent Honeyeaters and New Holland Honeyeaters love to feed on the tubular flowers of correas, penstemons, phygelius, lobelia laxiflora, ericas and zauschenaria. They are also attracted to largest drops to larger shrubs- proteas, banksias, hakeas and kangaroo paws. Including some of these plants in your garden will encourage these friends. As well as feeding on pollen and nectar they will consume large numbers of insects. A bird bath suspended high in a shady tree is one way of ensuring cats don't prey on our feathered friends.

For winter colour and flowers for the house, plant Iceland poppies, sweet peas, anemones and stocks now. Sweet peas should be planted before St Patrick's Day.

Autumn Neutrog Order

A reminder to all members that we have the opportunity to order Neutrog products in Autumn and Spring. Peter Wiadrowski has kindly agreed to accept the delivery and arrangements will be the same as last year. I hope that order forms will be available at the next meeting but I believe they can also be accessed on Neutrog's web site.

Bronwyn



From the Propagating Bench

February and March are ideal times for propagating Azaleas and Rhododendrons. Use Milton's "box method" for success.

Consult Milton, Robert, or Richard if you need some help.





Milton Bowman

Librarian's Report

Summer has officially ended and we have survived without bushfire in the district. We did get a lot of hot and dry weather and as February rolled on I got thoroughly disheartened with endless watering that seemed to do no good at all. Plants would be drooping, but watering would only perk them up for a day and then they would droop again.

On the 13th it started to rain and over the next 2 days 86mm fell at Forest Lodge and the garden transformed over the next week. It is funny how the memories of the heat disappear as the grass greens up.

By the time that we have our next meeting I will have reorganised the library books by placing the reference books together in one section and the more general interest garden books in another. This will I think make it a little easier to find in particular the reference books, and in general make the library more user friendly.

Readers will be aware that I tend to favour the internet for finding information, but during the summer whilst uncluttering various cupboards I discovered a book that had been hidden away for many years. It is called "A PRACTICAL TREATISE ON TREE CULTURE IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA" by J. E. Brown, dated 1881. This was an official publication of the Forest Board Office and the board members consisted of Goyder [chair], Finniss, Barber, Schomburgk, and McEwin. This was indeed an eminent board.

My point in mentioning this is that the information, and many of the ideas in the book, are still very relevant today. As an example, do not plant out in hot and sunny weather because the plants will have a high mortality. Instead, plant in autumn after the rains have reliably started. This means late April in South Australia. Other advice on the method of planting and the care of nursery purchases is relevant today, and if I had followed it, there may be a few more survivors at Forest Lodge.

The idea is to keep on reading, keep on learning, and by the time that we are 90, we might be competent gardeners. In the mean time we will have a lot of fun.

Happy Reading

Milton



EUCALYPTUS ROSTRATA. (Red Gum.)
A SPECIMEN FROM NATURE IN WERRABARA FOREST.

Book Front Page

FYI : This book is available on the internet at the link below, Dave.

http://www.pir.sa.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0014/61502/Tree_Culture_in_South_Australia_2nd_Edition.pdf

By the Way (BTW in modern vernacular)

As the passion for rhododendrons increases one starts to notice them everywhere. I was recently watching Agatha Christie's *Poirot "Dead Man's Folly"* (ABC Sunday February 22nd) and I could not help but note the stunning display of rhododendrons as a backdrop in a number of scenes. This piqued my curiosity as to where it had been filmed, so I asked the question of 'Google'. It was in fact filmed at Agatha Christie's summer home 'Greenway House' Devon. This is now a National Trust property and to quote from the National Trust website



"Greenway's romantic woodland garden is renowned for its spring flowers - from camellias to rhododendrons, as well as swathes of spring bulbs".

Forty minute guided tours of the garden are conducted whenever the house is open.

Yet another place to visit in the pursuit of rhododendrons!

Michelle



Rhodos at Nairne Part 2 – Clay and Rock



Before – Last Summer



and After – This Summer

Recruitment Drive

**bring a friend, bring a plate,
and don't forget something for
the trading table**

The Executive Committee wishes to engage in a concerted effort to recruit new members and in that vein we have nominated April as a 'bring a friend' to our social meeting.

If you have a friend whom you would like to bring to the March meeting do feel free



In our November 2013 newsletter Chris Thomas shared his and Tania's gardening experience after having moved to Nairne.

"A new house on a bare block, 600 square meters total. Clay and rock – lots of wind – at least 10 inches less rain than previously at Crafers."

Chris has shared these photos with us as a quick update, hopefully he will have more for us in future issues.



Bloom of the Month – Arthur's choice