

August 2019

Rhodo News

Newsletter 421

EV RG



Official Newsletter of the
Emu Valley Rhododendron Garden Inc

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A Garden First?



Rhododendron magniflorum was only discovered in 1988. Unless someone can reliably say otherwise, we believe ours is the first ever flowering in a western garden! Whilst we are proud of our role as a tourist attraction for north-west Tasmania, we continue to take seriously our role as a sanctuary and museum of the rhododendron genus. See Maurie's article on page 5.

Calendar

Sunday 18th August Social Meeting EV RG 2pm	Saturday 24th August Wedding Fair EV RG 10am to 3pm	Sunday 8th September AGM & Social Meeting EV RG 1pm	Saturday 14th September Flower Season Opening
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See us at: emuvalleyrhodo.com



General Manager's Report

The 2019 Annual General Meeting will be held on Sunday 8 September starting at 1pm. I know it is an often used saying but honestly 'how time flies'. It does not seem a year has gone by. Before we know it the Australian Rhododendron Society Conference will be with us. (November 2020!)

At last year's AGM each committee presented a report and this seemed very popular. We will be doing the same this year.

Emu Valley's Board consists of a minimum of three and up to six Directors. Presently there are five Board Members – Chairperson Ant

Dry, Deputy Chairperson Graeme McShane and Directors Steve Green, Juanita Wood and John Englund. Of the Directors the following have completed two terms:- Ant Dry / Graeme McShane / Steve Green. All three have expressed their desire to continue as Board Members of Emu Valley Rhododendron Garden. Personally, I fully support their nominations as I believe all have a passion for the garden and assist/volunteer in activities not related to that of a Director.

Applications for Directors can be received up until Thursday 29 August. Applicants need to be nominated and seconded and sign an acceptance of nomination. Applications must be completed on the appropriate form, which can be obtained by either contacting the office or myself. Late applications cannot be accepted. Should further applications be received every effort will be made to advise members prior to the meeting.

Members who cannot attend the AGM may vote via proxy by nominating either the Chairperson or other member to vote on his or her behalf. Proxy forms can also be obtained by contacting the office or myself.

As in the past, this year's meeting will see the appointment of members to the various committees and a decision made for the 2020/2021 membership fees. I cannot stress too strongly that having vibrant committees is so important to the management of Emu Valley.

Please, if you are a relative new member do not think that you should not put your hand up for a committee. If you want any information about the various committees please feel free to contact me (I would never try and twist anyone's arm).

This year's AGM will be followed by the monthly social meeting. So come along, hear what is happening with your garden and enjoy a drink and afternoon tea.

Cruise Ship Season

Now for some real arm twisting — we are very short of volunteers for the cruise ships. I am trying to organise rosters so as not to burn volunteers out. There are all sorts of tasks such as traffic control, meet and greet, money collection for garden tours, Tea Room help and taking tours around. It is honestly a lot of fun and not scary. Want more information or simply want to have a go! Just call or email me.

Membership

Thank you to all members for your continued support. Membership fees are one of the main revenue sources. We will endeavour to get the membership cards out as soon as possible but please let us know if you have not received yours. Also when paying by bank transfer it is best to include a surname and/or the invoice number. If you paid via Bendigo bank please give the office a call as we have received one payment that we cannot trace. Another also — if you have changed your postal address since last year please also contact the office as we have a couple of 'Return to Sender' (good name for a song?). Also, also, also – if you happen to be receiving the news letter via email and posted as well please let us know if we can stop the latter. Geoff geoffreywood@me.com 0427 722060

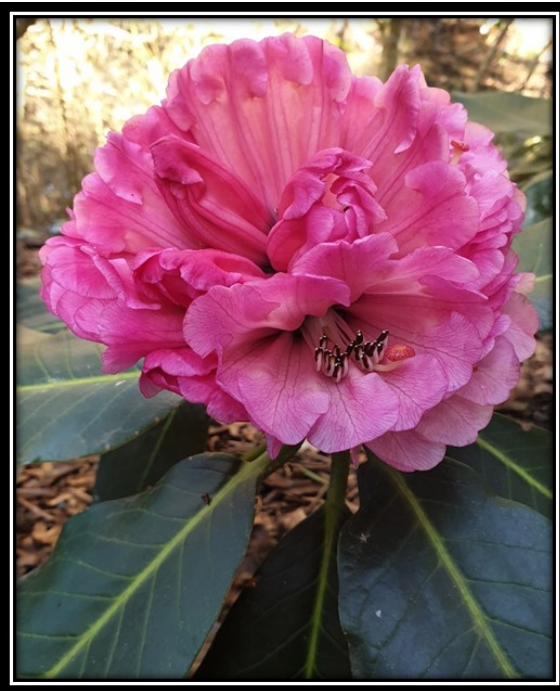
Welcome

A warm winter welcome to new members Ally Gill & David Olden, Bevan & Erica McCaskie and Max & Kathy Jones.

Around the Garden

While the weather has been a 'true Tassie Winter' so far even with the amount of rain that we have had, the volunteers have still been showing up and achieving so much around the Garden preparing for our busy season. We have made much needed progress with the weed situation (and in reality, ALL gardens have weeds some just choose not to accept it) and with the focus that we have had concentrating manually targeting blackberry and also yellow iris (*Iris pseudacorus*- pretty to look at but a real pest) these past few months, I can honestly say this effort has been worth every scratch and soggy sock! More areas to weed obviously, but it's hardly been the time to spray, manually has been the only way. Thank you to those few on this monotonous yet rewarding task.

Our big leaf rhododendrons have started to colour up and are a real picture already! Lets hope that we don't get many big frosts like we did last year as it ruins the overall look by turning such delicate coloured petals into a mushy brown appearance instantly. Big leaf rhodos really do intrigue me. The overall size of these trees are just breathtaking and we have a whole gully of them plus the rest! A single flower truss is easily the size of a dinner plate ranging anywhere from 12 to 30 individual flowers that make up this truss. The leaves can measure up to 37cm long and can have indumentum (soft/hairy covering underneath the leaf) and/or tomentum (dense hair covering often found on the upper surface of the leaf). Some people often mention this and say that the plants must be sick but in fact this is part of their genes and is what I believe makes these rhododendrons even more special to look at, with or without flowers.



Rhododendron 'Terry Shadbolt' is now flowering on the top side of the Olympus Bridge.

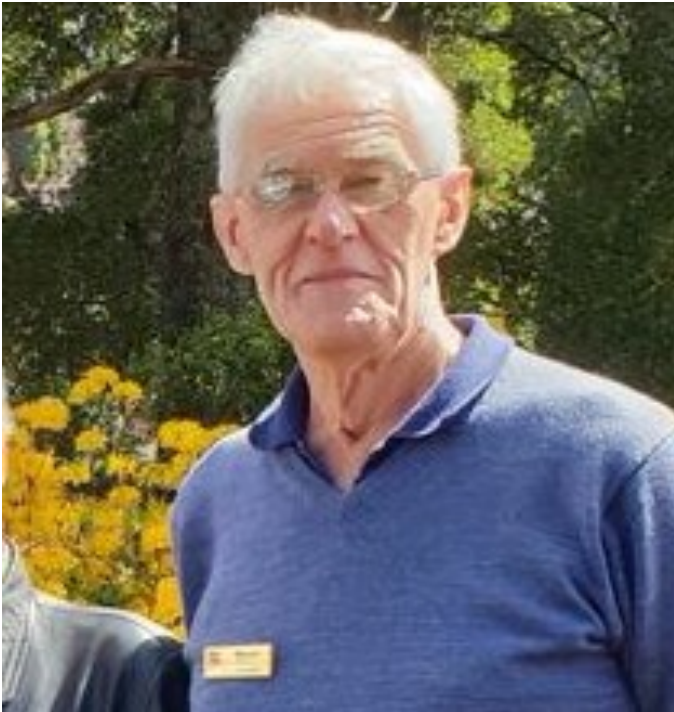
- We are trying a new form of gravel for our pathways as the blue metal we have been using is slippery underfoot, especially on the slightly steeper areas of the garden. All things going well, it will last longer and be a lot safer for our visitors, especially in the wedding season when we have a lot of high-heeled shoes walking these tracks.
 - We have had a bit of a tidy up around our main gazebo area. There has been the removal of several rhododendrons that were blocking the view of the water fountain from inside the gazebo. We chipped these on the spot and used it as mulch. The plan is to now replant but with a lower growing variety. Rhododendron 'Sheer Magic' has been selected to fill this gap.
 - The plant sales area has been given a good hose down and I am now working on stock to refill the shelves and have ready for our official opening day of September 14.
 - I went for a short walk through the vireyas last week and took more photos than I had expected to so if you are looking for a relaxing place to spend an hour or 3, grab your camera and come exploring. The colours are amazing, so much to enjoy even if it is Winter.
- Happy Gardening, *Neet*

Tea Room Opening

Our tea room re-opened on August 5th. If you can help (even in a very small way!), please let us know. It is a great fundraiser for us and a much-appreciated service to visitors. We show you what to do!

Legends of the Garden

Maurie Kupsch—Curator 1991 to present



ANT: What's the origin of the name Kupsch?

MAURIE: Its German or Prussian. My grandfather, Frederick was born 100 years before I came along, so I didn't get to meet him, but he fled his birth country in 1870 and settled on a property near Cygnet. My father was one of 9 children that he and his wife Charlotte produced.

I was born at home on the apple orchard my parents owned in Franklin.

ANT: How did you get to come up to the North West Coast?

MAURIE: After I served my 8 years as a fitter and turner with the Zinc company in Hobart, I got fed up with being inside so we came up this way and went on to a dairy farm up at Rocky Cape.

We had that farm for about 12 years and then my Uncle Herbert, who had some money in it, wanted to get out so we sold out. Mum and Dad went back to Hobart and I stayed in Burnie.

I met Pam and we settled down and got married. This coming year will be our 50th anniversary. We bought 3.8 acres up Mooreville Road and built up there. Pam stayed at work for 5 years and that paid the property off.

ANT: What did you do once you'd left the farm?

MAURIE: I went back into fitting and turning again, at Webb's Welding Works. I used to pistol shoot with one of the Webb brothers. They wanted to buy a small engineering business and asked me to operate the machinery. I

spent 29 years there. I'd have liked to have been outside, but I ended up inside!

ANT: You used to shoot? How did that start?

MAURIE: I grew up with guns used by my father and uncle—.22 cartridges were my playthings and then at 8 years old I owned my first rifle - a single shot Bell. I started work at 16 at the Zinc Company and there met up with target shooters and joined various clubs—big bore and small bore rifles, clay pigeon and pistol shooting and in 1966-67 I was State rapid fire pistol champion.

I've been State small bore rifle champion too.

ANT: How did you meet Pam?

MAURIE: I used to be a member of the Wynyard Camera Club. Pam's father [Mr Garratt] was the manager of a camera shop. I used to go there to get film and to talk to Mr Garratt about cameras. He invited me to go back to their place to show my photos to his wife and son and daughter.

ANT: Tell me about your children.

MAURIE: Nick did well at school, Ridgley Primary, Parklands High, Hellyer College and on to University in Hobart graduating as a biologist, invited to go further with his studies but no, he became keen to travel instead. He visited many places and was always able to find work but the main places were Taiwan teaching English and learning Mandarin (10 years there) and onto Saudi Arabia teaching university students English. It was in Taiwan that he was able to procure the authentic tiles used for the Chinese pavilion. He is currently in South Vietnam and where next? Who knows? Charlotte went to university and graduated with honours as a teacher. She's taught at Acton and Devonport Primary. She has two children, Fletcher and Maya.

ANT: How did rhododendrons come into your life?

MAURIE: On the property in Franklin there used to be quite a number of rhododendrons, and I got interested in them having different flowers. When we moved to Burnie, we started growing native plants and then we put in deciduous trees. In 1976 Bob Malone started the rhododendron society and our next door neighbour invited us to the first meeting at the Forth Hotel. We've virtually been to every meeting since. At the meetings we would talk about finding a spot where could display rhodos to the general public. Hilary [O'Rourke] said he had 30 acres that the council wouldn't let him sub-divide. Hilary, Noel Sullivan and myself walked in across the paddocks. It was covered with silver wattles, manferns and blackberries. We

decided it would be quite a nice spot to build a garden.

ANT: Who decided how to lay it out?

MAURIE: A joint decision between Hilary, Noel and myself. Hilary's eldest son Stephen had access to a bulldozer to push a track in. Once that was in, if we needed money, Bob Sadler would take off his hat and go around members at the meeting for what they could contribute. He became quite famous for this. That's how we raised money to have the bulldozer to come in again and build the dams and lay the rest of the roads.

ANT: How did you become the Curator of the garden?

MAURIE: Well, poor Hilary and Noel had to put up with this younger, very keen upstart putting in his pennyworth, so much, so that Noel finally said "You'd better take over as Curator!" He then put up with me for another 10 years before he retired.

ANT: Who designed and built the pavilions and bridges and so on?

MAURIE: I designed, and then helped build with a number of very keen builders. The main gazebo is based on a Tibetan yurt. The American pavilion is based on a pavilion from the film "Gone with the Wind". The covered walkway is based on a picture of a causeway going across a lake on a calendar from Honda Motorcycles. The steel work was designed, built and assembled locally. As far as the Chinese pavilion (The Maurie Kupsch Pavilion) goes, I'd

wanted to build a Chinese pavilion for a long time, and from pictures, I knew what they looked like from the outside, but not from the inside. In 2005 we went to Japan for a rhodo conference and while we were there, we went to a "friendship garden" and there we saw the pavilion I wanted. I clambered up and took a million photographs, came home and showed the fellows. "No way" they all said. I took the photos and scaled them down.

ANT: But that's the job of a draughtsman.

MAURIE: As part of my 5 year apprenticeship the last six months were spent in the draughting office.

ANT: If you had your life again, would you do anything different?

MAURIE: I don't think I'd bother with the dairy farm, because I found that with only one hand that was a bit taxing at times. My headmaster told me that with my disability I needed to become an office worker, but I was only interested in using my hands. It's not difficult, but I have noticed out of the corner of my eye, people watching to see how I do things.

ANT: It was a birth defect?

MAURIE: The doctors told Mum and Dad that it may have been the toxic sprays they used to put on the apple orchard. No proper protection in those days—just a handkerchief. Who knows?

These interviews are collated by Ant Dry and edited by Katie O'Rourke



Rhododendron magniflorum

In 2010 we were fortunate to receive a packet of seed of *R. magniflorum* NN0959, a new to cultivation rhododendron species in Subsection Fortunea. These along with other seeds were sown in July of that year and soon germinated and slowly grew into nice robust plants and by the time of potting into 150mm pots we had 15 healthy plants.

Rhododendron magniflorum was first discovered and described by Chinese botanist W.K.Hu, in 1988. It grows into small trees 4-6 m tall with oblong leaves 22-25 wide x 7.5-8.8 cm.long, both surfaces glabrous, flowers are

tubular funnel-shaped, creamy white with a smudge of greenish yellow in the throat. In October of 2018 flower buds appeared on 11 of the 13 plants and in late January flowered which is quite late at Emu Valley.

The collector of these seeds Jens Nielsen wrote "Anew to cultivation introduction of what could be one of the most interesting and rarest Fortunea. Judging from the type description, from 1988, this could be one of the largest flowered *Rhododendron* with flowers 10cm long in truss of 12-14 flowers and could well become threatened in its natural habitat by cutting or fire. Will probably be a late flowering plant." He seems to be right with the late flowering bit anyway.

We grow these plants in the Guizhou section of the garden. *Maurie*



These close-ups show the leaves and flower buds, and hairy stem.



A bevy of the belles at our Thank-You to Audrey. The guest of honour is front and centre.

The Emu Valley Rhododendron Garden is proudly sponsored by:



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