



# *Rhododendrons South Australia*

Australian Rhododendron Society Inc. South Australian Branch

*Issue 140 - March 2021*

## **President's Musings**

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How nice it is to be back and, so far, have events move in our favour.

Cutting day was a real buzz as members caught up with each other and exchanged news and gossip. I know that I haven't seen some of you since October, which means most of the summer. One could be forgiven for thinking that the season has past us by except for that awful forty-eight hours in January when so many of you were threatened by fire, some of you more so than others, but still a frightening experience for all. Now let us look forward to more settled days and make the most of this early autumn to establish our gardens.

Hopefully the program we have for you this year will encourage, inspire, help or just confirm to you that you are doing the right thing for your plants.

One of the ways to expand knowledge is to simply have a conversation with another member. I have often come home after a meeting with so much information that my brain feels saturated and I know that I shan't retain it all.

Thank goodness there is always another meeting and that no question is too silly to ask as there is always a new or shy gardener who will want to know the answer.

We have three new members, talk to them and make them welcome and not just at one meeting. I remember Tania Thomas spending time with me at a couple of meetings thereby helping me feel less anxious about my gardening experiences.

New, and older, members please participate in as many activities as you can e.g. propagating, seed planting days and grafting. A great way to develop your skills and get to know your fellow members. The plan is to have a few more activities this year.

Your enthusiastic, hardworking Executive needs two more members.

Barb Mynhart, whose hard work for the Rhododendron Society was much appreciated, has, for personal reasons, resigned from the Society. Sue Beckoff, with the approval of the Executive has taken over as treasurer until the AGM in August.

Ann and David Matison, our informative and efficient librarians are also stepping away from their role. They have been in this position for a number of years and feel that it is time for someone else to take over. Being the club librarian is not an onerous task, so if you are interested please let one of the Committee know.

The Executive and I are looking forward to the March meeting as there is much to be excited about.  
We have plans for this year. Covid stay away!

Olivera

## **Cutting Day - February 13<sup>th</sup> - educational, social and great fun for all!**

An intrepid group of volunteers met at 8.30am at the MLBG in order to collect and prepare cuttings for the event. In excess of 600 cuttings were provided to a very enthusiastic group of participants. We welcomed the following new members and hope that their association with our society is a very rewarding one.

Lucie & Andy Price

Alan Remphrey

### *Thanks must go to*

Rob Hatcher and the Botanic Gardens for the opportunity to collect cuttings and Jeff & Gill Jenkinson for hosting the event at St Vigean's.

Volunteers who collected cuttings:

Barb Mynhart, Andrew & Olivera Waterman, Sue Beckoff, Bob Graham, Milton Bowman, Andy & Lucie Price, Rob Hatcher and Lisa Greenstreet.

### *A Special Thank you*

I would like to express a sincere thank you to all members who generously contributed plants for the pot luck sale and also to those who brought their wallets and bought so keenly. Overall, the day was very successful. A special thankyou to Rob Field who contributed a significant \$210 which he raised by selling his plants to friends and neighbours prior to Saturday.

Barb Mynhart







An enthusiastic group of propagators



New members Andy & Lucie Price



Congratulations Meg Prince – “Propagator of the Year”

## Next Meeting

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This will be held at the RSL Hall, Stirling, on Tuesday, March 16<sup>th</sup> at 8pm. Please come 10-15 minutes earlier to allow for purchasing raffle tickets and settling in for a **meeting start at 8pm without delays**.

Following on from the cutting day there will be a discussion by a panel of “expert members” including variations on the standard propagating procedures, new products available, potting on cuttings of rhododendrons, azaleas and Vireyas and finally transferring plants to the garden. This will be a very informative meeting, so bring your pen and paper and prepare your questions.

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*Please remember to bring something for the “pot Luck Stall”. Friends and new members are always welcome.*

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## Bloom of the Month – Vireya Great Scentsation

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## From the Propagating bench *by Richard Illman*

Following on from the cutting day, members should check their boxes to see if there is condensation on the lid. If not, you will need to give the plants a drink so that there is sufficient water to create a humid environment. Boxes should be placed in an area of the garden where they receive good light but not direct sun. Check the boxes occasionally over the next few months to ensure that they have humidity and light. If cuttings drop their leaves they will probably not strike and they can be discarded. Further information about dealing with the cuttings will appear in subsequent newsletters. As mentioned earlier, our March meeting will continue the theme of propagation with an emphasis on Azaleas, Vireyas and other plants that can be propagated at this time of year. I look forward to catching up with members at that meeting.

Richard Illman

## What's blooming this month



Woodland Cyclamen Hederifolia



Vireya Viriosum Bush Baby



Streptocarpus Inky Frills



Calibrachoa

## Knowledge Corner

The January edition of the RHS magazine "The garden", featured several articles dealing with Rhododendrons. The first, was written by rhododendron grower and nurseryman, David Rankin, who believes that gardeners who don't include these plants are missing out.

His main reasons are:

1. *Rhododendrons are a diverse group and can provide a long season of interest.*
2. *Rhododendrons do not only grow on acid soil.*
3. *Most rhododendrons are well behaved garden plants.*

The second reason was of great interest to me as I had always believed that acid soil was essential to their success.

Rhododendrons growing on soils with a pH greater than 7 usually display yellowing of leaves and poor growth (chlorosis), but there are numerous reports from travellers to China of plants thriving on limestone.



Rhododendron displaying signs of chlorosis

Experiments have shown that unhealthy cultivated plants suffer from a Manganese deficiency while those in the wild hold up to 50 times more Manganese in their leaves than those in cultivation. The suggestion is that plants grown in the wild drop leaves which form mulch and act as a slow release fertiliser as they decompose.

This idea has been tested by a grower in North Wales where 400 rhododendrons grow on thin soil in a limestone quarry. Initially they were chlorotic, but spraying with chelated Manganese corrected this and within weeks they were greener and eventually became chlorosis free. It was subsequently found that chelated Manganese was not essential and cheaper Manganese sulphate sufficed. Ten years on the North Wales garden is thriving with some plants more than 10m tall.

I am going to try Citrus food which contains Manganese.



### **The value of Rhododendrons at this time of the year.**

Rhododendrons have their peak flowering time from late winter through spring but many have interest at this time of the year due to their coloured indumentum (layers of fine hairs on the underside of leaves).



## Early Flowering Rhododendrons

The following are winter flowering rhododendrons:

R. Christmas Cheer

R. Cilpinense

R. Dauricum (mid-winter)

R. Praecox

R. Seta

Also don't forget the Vireya Rhododendrons, which can flower throughout the year as they originate in the cool tropics and don't display seasonal flowering.



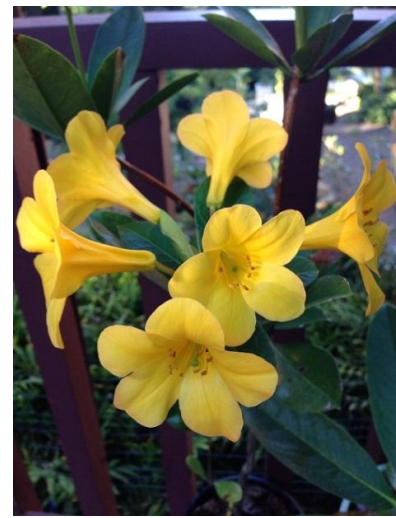
Rhododendron Seta



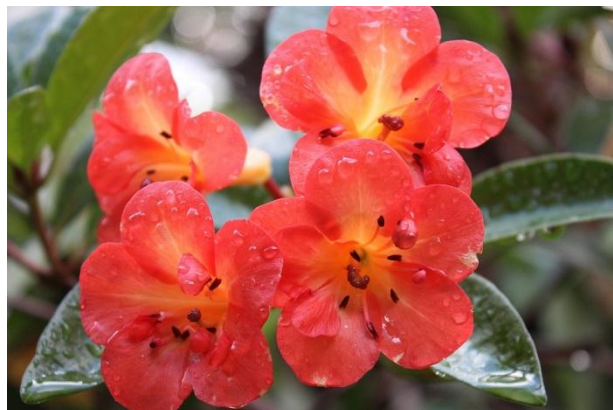
Rhododendron Christmas Cheer



Rhododendron Cilpinense



Vireya Rhododendron Laetum



Vireya Rhododendron



## Myriam Sampson's Garden in Spring 2020

Myriam Sampson has kindly provided photos of her (and Philip's in the past) garden taken in November 2020 for sharing with members via Newsletter. This represents a great opportunity to preview what Philip and Myriam have created by devoting their time and love for plants. Thank you, Myriam!







It is so long since we have been able to visit the Rhododendron Society Library. We have almost forgotten what it contains. However the American Rhododendron Society Journal arrived at the end of last year so I do have had something to read and report on.

As usual the Journal contains many very interesting articles the first of which is *Sichuan 2019*. This is a report of an expedition by the author John Roy Ballachulish from Scotland plus six German and one Chinese botanists. When I think of plant hunters I think of intrepid souls struggling through the undergrowth to find new plants. At the beginning of the article he comments on the development of the Chinese tourist industry allowing the explorers the luxury of new roads and cable cars ascending the best known mountain areas.

The article is illustrated by beautiful photographs of botanical specimens in situ. Another of the benefits of modern plant exploration. One almost wishes one could go on such an excursion until John Roy concludes and I quote "In conclusion this was a most enjoyable trip with so many good plants seen, mostly without the severe effort of walking long distances over rough terrain without the rain trickling down our back. However the downside was the noise and throngs of people at some of the sites."

The second article is about *Rhodoladies, with Emphasis on North America*. It points out that relatively few women have contributed directly to the knowledge and breeding of Rhododendrons. We found this quite long article very interesting and is again illustrated by many photos of both the ladies and the rhododendrons they are associated with.

*Rhododendrons for Beginners: The American Azaleas in Subgenus Hymenanthus, subsection Rhodora, and the Asian Azaleas in subgenera Hymenanthus, Azaleastrum* is the next article. The title mentions for beginners so I thought this is the one for me. However it does become quite technical, so although interesting we need to be more knowledgeable before we can class ourselves as beginners.

Finally *Rhododendron caucasicum Survey in Armenia for Conservation of the Species and its Habitats*. Armenia has only one rhododendron species, which has a particularly beautiful flower, but it is endangered. This article is a report of survey to assess the species conservation status plus the monitoring of its populations.

As can be seen there is a variety of interesting material to read about in the American Rhododendron Society Journal.

*We have notified the Rhododendron Society of SA that we will be standing down at the AGM. This obviously means that the Society will be looking for a new Librarian. Please think about volunteering. We have enjoyed the job immensely and it is definitely an excellent way to learn a lot more about Rhododendrons, Azaleas and Vireyas. We are very happy to help the new Librarian(s) as you fit into your new job.*

*Ann and David*



## **Notice Board**

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### **Garden Event to celebrate Summer's end**

Please keep the afternoon of March 21st free to join with fellow members at the home of Robyn & Ian Wall, Cricklewood Rd, Aldgate, to celebrate the end of summer. Details were supplied to members in a recent e-mail.

**RSVP by Monday, 15 March so we can place orders for the food.**



### **SA Landscape Festival in April 2021**

For one weekend only, the Master Landscapers of SA and Open Gardens SA open the gates to some of our state's most beautiful, professionally designed and built, privately owned gardens.

Visit a couple or see them all and make a weekend of it on **Sat 10<sup>th</sup> and Sun 11<sup>th</sup> April 2021**

View <https://sandscapefestival.com.au/> for more information about this unique event

### **Garden Visit – Raywood Nursery**

Following a very enjoyable visit in 2019 to Raywood nursery at Deep Creek it is proposed to go again in April this year. This would probably take place on **Sunday, 18<sup>th</sup> of April**. The nursery has picnic facilities available and their new season stock of deciduous trees should be available to purchase or order. An e-mail describing directions and time will be sent to members closer to the date.

### **New Zealand & Australian Conference 2021**

This conference had been advertised in our 2019 & 2020 newsletters but due to COVID-19 it was postponed to late October in 2021. At this stage details aren't available but as soon as they are we will inform members. Not only are these gatherings educational but the social networking that occurs is invaluable and it is also an opportunity to gain access to some of the best private gardens in the world! Details about the previously advertised Tasmanian conference to be held following the New Zealand event will also be supplied to members.

### **Getting ready for Annual Plant Sale**

It has been a few years since we started actively running Cutting Day event every summer. This year our annual plant sale will be held at Stirling Market – great exposure and lots of buyers – we need to make an impressive stall!

Members are asked to inform about plants they are contributing to the plant sale: variety (name if known), size, number. The focus is on rhododendrons, azaleas and companion plants. Please provide your information via email to [ARSrhodoSAnews@outlook.com](mailto:ARSrhodoSAnews@outlook.com) or speak with anyone on the Executive committee. Your contribution to the plant sale will be appreciated greatly.

### **Proposed Program 2021**

Please note that some dates and speakers are yet to be confirmed. Accurate details will be published in newsletters.

March	Rhododendron Propagation – Richard Illman (interactive discussion) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purpose</li> <li>• Process steps</li> <li>• General maintenance</li> <li>• Tips &amp; hints</li> <li>• Questions &amp; answers</li> </ul>
	Picnic in the paddock on 21 <sup>st</sup> March at Robyn and Ian Wall's garden
April	Fumio and Shinya Ueda – All about pruning: technics and demonstration
	Garden visit to Raywood nursery in Deep Creek on 18 <sup>th</sup> April – details to be provided
May	Chris Brodie – Weeds Botanist, State Herbarium
June	Richard Heathcote – Director at Carrick Hill, Historic House and Garden. Hallowed Turf
July	Andrew Black – Birds in the Adelaide Hills
August	Annual General Meeting (AGM)
September	Sarah Burchell – A pathway to Cleveland Nursery
	Annual plant sale at Stirling Market on 26th September - details to be provided
October	Blooms night
	David Whibley and his hybrid Rhododendrons – Jeff Jenkinson
November	Blooms night
	Conferences debrief – to be confirmed
December	Christmas Party



## Neutrog Orders - Changes

There has been a change to the way the Rhododendron Society will access Neutrog products.



Neutrog will contact members individually four times a year for a Summer, Autumn, Winter and Spring order.

Members will be asked to fill out an order form and pay Neutrog. The Society will still receive a royalty.

Members will also be responsible for collecting their own order. The most convenient pick up places, I think, would be Carrick Hill or Kanmantoo.

I'll explain more at the March meeting.

*Andrew Waterman*

