

Newsletter of the ARSV



Welcome to our new editor

Hi all, this will be my last newsletter as I am stepping aside after nearly six years as newsletter editor. I would like to welcome Richard Florey who has taken over as newsletter editor. He and wife Jane live in Gippsland and this newsletter gives an introduction and a brief overview of their lovely property. Richard will also be taking over membership management soon.

Francis Crome

Rhododendron “emasculum”



One of my favourite rhododendrons is *R. “emasculum”* (Seed parent *ciliatum* x Pollen parent *dauricum*). It stands at 3m tall and receives a good trim back to 2m every couple of years and is planted close to the lounge room window for spectacular viewing for around three weeks. It is the earliest of all the spring rhododendrons to flower. It is petite with its small but broad funnel-shaped and unmarked pale purple flowers to the front and vivid reddish-purple to the back, a lepidote with brown scaling, and has no stamens. It has one to three flowers held in each truss. The leaves are elliptic and glossy dark green, and as a shrub, has an upright, open and twiggy growth habit. Around the time I first learnt how to propagate rhododendron cuttings at an Australian Rhododendron Society workshop held at the DRBG, I also heard that the *R. “emasculum”* at the George Tindale Memorial Gardens had died, and I was then informed by a member of that garden that it was Ruth Tindale’s favourite rhododendron. I took on my first challenge to propagate eight cuttings, of which I later donated four to the garden. During the Covid-19 lockdown restriction, it was taken to a member’s home be nurtured. At the time of writing this, I have not yet heard about their growth success, whilst two of mine did not survive, the other two are growing well.

Richard Florey, ARSV Newsletter Editor

Alert – Sudden oak death disease

For the last couple of years there has been growing concern in the US and Europe about the spread of the fungal disease “sudden oak death” caused by *Phytophthora ramorum*. This fungus affects a wide variety of trees and shrubs, including nut trees, and is causing considerable damage in nurseries and natural woodlands. It can infect Rhododendrons, Camellias and many other garden plants. So far it is known from North and South America, Europe, New Zealand and Vietnam. It is not known in Australia yet but as a society we urge members to be aware. It is a serious threat to forests, gardens and agriculture.

The symptoms on trees are trunk cankers, brown or black discoloured outer bark and/or ‘bleeding’ sap. On shrubs, leaf blight — dark brown spots or blotches spreading across the leaf, which may drop, and shoots become blackened with or without foliage attached. If you see any plants like this please report it to your state agriculture department.



Photo from Tennessee Dept of Agriculture

For Victoria: <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/pests-diseases-weeds/plant/sudden-oak-death>

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Active members report

Last weekend the society had its plant sale at Ferny Creek. It was exactly 12 months since we had our last sale. The weather on the weekend was perfect and we saw many familiar faces.

Prior to the sale we organised labels to go on the pots as well as the push labels. The information made it easy for members to access as well as for the customers. The plants were in very good shape despite the lockdown and members not being able to repot six months prior. This year we sold more species rhododendrons than before and the interest shown in these plants was very satisfying as in the past these were often overlooked for the hybrids.

The hybrids still proved to be popular and this year the favourite colour was purple and we sold the collection of "Polarnachts". The pinks and reds were also bought and people also asked for fragrant rhododendrons of which we had a few. There were Vireyas also and we sold a few of those as well with the fragrant ones going first. It was a great effort and members were generous with their time. The Ferny Creek Horticultural Society is always supporting us with this key sale. They provided an ideal site for our plants to be highly visible.

Our next tasks are sorting out the Hachman hybrids off the benches to put aside for planting out in the gardens in the Hachman bed. We have a good selection of those so they will help fill in any gaps. Prue Crome has spoken with the South Australia branch who are keen to purchase Australian Hybrids for their collection and their members. This will provide much needed space on the benches for the new plants from our propagating house. Bench space in both shade houses has been very tight. We are continuing to re pot plants on the bench and there has been some late propagation. All going well we expect to have a plant sale at the gardens sometime in September.

Alex Pottage, Propagation Coordinator

Rhododendron in focus: *Rhododendron luteiflorum*

Subsection Glauca

This is one of our stars in the main rockery. It grows to less than one metre high and is covered in bright yellow flowers in early October (see photo). It comes from upper Burma (Myanmar) at around 3000 metres in thickets and exposed ridges. This is a seriously high altitude by Australian standards (Mt. Kosciuszko is only 2200 metres) , but it seems to do well at Olinda provided it receives enough water in summer. It was introduced into cultivation by Frank Kingdon-Ward in 1953.

Alan Kepert



New vireyas flowering

La Nina has given us a cooler and wetter summer than usual in Melbourne and my garden has never looked so lush and green for this time of the year. Amongst the plants to flower this summer are:

Andrew Rouse



R. vanvuureonii. Collected by Lyn Craven on Puncak Padeha, Sulawesi in 2002 as #123, and subsequently identified as *R. vanvuureonii*. Flowers open as white flushed to violet then quickly faded to white. Plant is very wiry and leggy and best grown in a pot.



R. wilkiei. Only known from a small area on Thumb Peak, Palawan, this dainty, slow growing species flowered for me the first time five years ago and has flowered annually every late summer.



R. herzogii. We received this when Lyn Craven's collection was kindly donated to the Society by Kirsty Craven. It has a light pink tube and is one of the best forms of *R. herzogii* I've seen. I grow it in a hanging basket so it has lots of well-ventilated space.



R. x psammogenes var. *inundatum*. Formerly known as *R. inundatum*, Frederic Danet re-classified this as a natural hybrid of *R. herzogii* and *R. macgregoriae*. Found in the Baliem Valley, West Papua, we have plants from a couple of collections, however there is some doubt as to whether we have plants that are entirely consistent with the type material. In any regard, it is a lovely plant in full flower and one I've used repeatedly in crosses and is one of the parents in *R. Vicky Griffith*.

Members gardens - Richard and Jane Florey of “Tarradise”

Tarradise Gardens is a 1.5- acre exotic garden from a bygone era high up in the Strzelecki Ranges in Gippsland Victoria. A place we welcome the public and garden groups to explore, particularly in autumn and spring. Located in Balook within the Tarra Bulga National Park, it sits on a ridge at an altitude of 650m, and has an average annual rainfall of 1700mm, occasional snowfall, and a 16kms line of sight to the Bass Coast. It has an identical climate to the Otway Ranges National Park with its wet sclerophyll rainforest, and that of Wilsons Promontory.

The history of the Strzelecki Ranges dates back to the late 1800's with logging and sawmilling, but the area became known as the Heartbreak Hills as climate and terrain made farming and logging difficult. All but a few properties of the that era remain as places of interest. The garden was established in the 1980s with a large variety of exotic trees and plants and was showcased to local gardening groups. As well as a wide range of mature rhododendrons, conifers, maples, camelias, hydrangeas and azaleas, there are trees such as Tulip Tree, Blue Atlas Cedar, Mexican Slate Pine, Alaskan Sitka Spruce, Copper Beech, Silver Birch, Mt Fuji Double Cherry Blossom, Magnolias, Chinese Dawn Redwood, Liquid Amber and Claret Ash. There are over 30 varieties of rhododendrons, maples and hydrangeas, along with hundreds of other autumnal and flowering plants. In 2005, we purchased the property adding much infrastructure and many plants, then opened the gardens in 2012 to the general public bi-annually and to garden groups at any time. Our visits to the DRBG helped us identify many of our trees, but we are yet to identify the rhododendrons. Read more about the history, the gardens and plant list and bookings, open days, and our pictorial story 'A Little Piece of Tarradise' written for Gippsland Lifestyle Magazine on our website www.tarradise.com or follow us on Facebook.

