

Newsletter of the ARSV



Australia Cloud Forest Collection (ACFC)

The Garden formerly known as The Far North Queensland Mountaintop Garden – by Tex Moon

‘The Australian Cloud Forest Collection’, is the name that has been agreed upon for the new garden to be constructed at the Dandenong Ranges Botanic Garden. The progress of this project is paneled by members of ARSV, Parks Victoria and Andrea Proctor Landscapes. Located directly above the lake, in the recently annexed area, the garden will focus heavily on the native Rhododendrons along with other collected threatened species from the northern peaks.

Final design and documentation have been completed by Andrea Proctor Landscapes (APL) and after many delays due to lock downs, storms etc. we hope to be ready to start construction within the next two months (construction lags due to current situation might again delay this). Final planting lists are yet to be completed. However, we will progress with earthworks and hard landscaping whilst finalising these lists.

The following excerpt from APL’s “design intent” provides a lovely description of the proposed landscape:

“The design for the garden which hosts this important collection is inspired by the landscape of the Far North Queensland mountains’ granite peaks. A meandering path will lead into the garden from two directions flanked by local granite boulders, gradually becoming more twisted before entering the main garden between two large, freestanding boulders, topped with rhododendrons and other lithophytic (rock growing) plants. In the centre of this space will be a sprawling boulder folly, with large rocks surrounded by and covered with ornate, rock growing species such as native orchids, ferns and the *Rhododendron* species. This will sit in the centre of an open void, with carefully framed views outwards towards the ornamental lake, reminiscent of the Queensland mountain tops. Surrounding this flat area will be garden beds supported by rock boulders, and densely planted with rhododendrons and other structural plants. Carved wooden seats using reclaimed timber will provide a spot to stop and enjoy the planting, and sawn rocks with plants growing between will provide gentle, plant focused sculptural elements”.



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Membership Reminder - ARSV Annual Membership Renewals 2021-2022

Richard Florey, Membership Manager



Again, thank you to our members who have paid their annual membership renewals, but also for the generous donations made to enable our ongoing efforts at the Dandenong Ranges Botanic Garden. A reminder to everyone that the annual membership renewals are due prior to 31st of August 2021. The ARSV membership form was included with the June newsletter. The ARSV communicate to members via the website, social media and hard copy publications. Please let us know your preferred method of receiving information whether via post or email. The ARSV Newsletter is published bi-monthly with news and activities, items of local interest and the calendar of forthcoming activities. Event dates are on the website as well as in the newsletter. The ARS national journal, *The Rhododendron*, is published yearly as a high-quality colour publication featuring articles on the genus from contributors throughout Australia and overseas. It is sent to members and released at a later date on the website.

ARSV Plant Sale Saturday 2nd October 2021 postponed



Whilst there is continued interest in our rhododendrons and vireyas at past bi-annual plant sales at the Dandenong Ranges Botanic Garden (DRBG), unfortunately due to Covid-19 restrictions in force, this sale has been postponed until further notice. Keep an eye out for an update.

Event reminder - 2021 Virtual ARS Fall Conference 23rd and 24th October

“Fall into Gardening” is hosted by the Mount Arrowsmith Rhododendron Society and the Nanaimo Rhododendron Society in partnership with the Vancouver Island Master Gardeners Association. This is a free event to all participants however, to receive the link and other background talk information, you are asked to register with Mailchimp at <https://mailchi.mp/9151e79e2a98/fall-conference-2021>

ARSV 62nd Annual General Meeting Sunday 27th November 2021 at 2:00pm

The Australian Rhododendron Society, Victorian Branch will be holding its 62nd Annual General Meeting at their workshop located at the Dandenong Ranges Botanic Garden. However, its timing may be subjected to a Covid-19 and may be held online via Zoom, so keep an eye out for any change. All members are invited to attend and participate in election nominations and discussion on general business. The meeting will be followed by an afternoon tea. Enclosed with this newsletter edition are the meeting agenda including previous minutes and office bearer and committee nomination form, as well as a proxy nomination form if you wish to make a nomination but are unable to attend.

The American Rhododendron Society (ARS) – Sudden loss of Harold Greer

The ARS published in its ‘R&A News’ July-August 2021 of the sudden and immeasurable loss of Harold Greer on the 8th of August. It was of great sadness and shock to everyone in the ARS and the entire horticultural community of Harold who was an icon and looked up to as the ultimate authoritative. Harold worked with rhododendrons and azaleas since early childhood and he had a depth of knowledge that few could match. Harold was the consummate nurseryman, renowned author, celebrated hybridizer, phenomenal photographer, entertaining speaker and a great friend. He willingly shared his knowledge, photographs and expertise worldwide. He will be missed more than we can possibly comprehend at this time. The ARS sent its sincere condolences to his wife Nancy, members of his family and to all who knew and admired him.

Rhododendron stories from Robert Gourlay, Mongarlowe Valley, New South Wales

My association with growing Australian native rhododendrons started in the early 1980's after a visit to Arnold Teese's nursery in Victoria. Arnold sold to me five *R. viriosum* and five *Agapetes*. Since that time, I have propagated from cuttings and seeds off these plants.



In the early 1990's I met Lyn Craven, who at that time was working on the taxonomy of *R. lochiaie* and proposing a newly described *R. notiale* (curved corolla). Then one day Lyn rang me to say he had finished his work on *notiale* and asked if I could take over his collection of Rhododendrons.



Fortunately, this is how I acquired the curved corolla, along with various hybrid colours of *R. viriosum* (i.e., various shades of pink and salmon).

Early this year (2021), I was amazed to find in my shade house what looked like a yellow version of *R. viriosum* or a hybrid. I can only assume that this plant came from Lyn's collection. The plant was in a small pot hidden for decades among other *viriosum* and *lochiae* plants, and yet it had stretched out a long stem into the light and produced amazing yellow flowers. I am aware from a paper by Dr. R.M. Withers (ARS Vol.32, 1992) about sightings (*unqualified observers*) of white and yellow *R. viriosum*.



However, I am assured by many people that there has been no *official sighting* of these colours in the natural habitats of *viriosum* and *lochiae*. When I inquired about the yellow version of the Rhododendron in my shade house, Kaye Gordon informed me that John Kenyon from NZ undertook crosses with *R. viriosum*, and perhaps the origin of the yellow flower could be a Kenyon hybrid variety.

During the past 2 years, Kaye and Neil Puddey have introduced me to the world of vireyas, and their variations in flower form and colours.

ARSV members Andrew Rouse and Neil Puddey conveyed to Robert some time ago it was extremely unlikely that there is a genuine yellow form of *R. viriosum* or *lochiae* given the dominance of red colouring and suspect it is a hybrid from Lyn's collection.