

Newsletter of the ARSV



Replacement of the shade houses at DRBG

John O’Hara, President

The first few stages of the ARS project to rebuild the nursery at Olinda have been completed. So far, the Tuesday working group have demolished the old, dilapidated timber shade house, had a new structure built to replace it and, with the help of Parks Victoria staff, have gravelled the floor.

We have also purchased 60 square metres of second-hand benches to fill the new space. Still to come for this project is the reinstalling of the irrigation system and to build a new propagation house with better humidity control.

The current facilities are good but once this project is completed we will have an excellent nursery, large enough for all our propagation needs.



Note: This shade house facility has been built with ARS money and is open for the use of members.

If you want to try your hand at propagating plants for your garden, we have the materials, equipment and the Tuesday group has vast experience and are happy to aid you, so you can fill your garden with a wide range of beautiful and interesting plants.



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ARSV 'gardens visit day' – 10:00am to 4:00pm Saturday 8th October 2022

By John O'Hara, President

A 'gardens visit day' is set for Saturday 8th of October from 10:00am to 4:00pm consisting of two gardens in the Dandenong Ranges south east of Melbourne. The first garden is 'Longacres', the former garden of painter Arthur Streeton, located at 15 Range Road, Olinda. The second garden is Prue Crome's garden, located at 24 Ridge Road, Kallista. We visited Prue's garden a few years back but it has developed beautifully and members will be interested to see the growth and change. In October it will be a great mass of flowers. We will be having a sausage sizzle as a light lunch and tea and coffee provided. BYO other beverages.

ARSV 63rd Annual General Meeting – 2:00pm Saturday 19th November 2022

The Australian Rhododendron Society, Victorian Branch will be holding its 63rd Annual General Meeting at their workshop located at the Dandenong Ranges Botanic Garden. 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 ARS are seeking members to become future committee members in various roles.

Seeking 'Wilson 50' Kurume Azaleas

By Richard Florey, Newsletter Editor

Ian Wallace, from the Ferny Creek Horticultural Society, is attempting to get the collection together for the society and is calling on our members to see if they have any in their gardens that they can contribute in some way.

If you are not aware of the collection or which azaleas are in the collection, here is some background information to read and link to the Caerhays Estate website where photographs of named azaleas can be found.

Home to a large range of azaleas, lies the Japanese inland city of Kurume on the island of Kyushu. Around 1918-1919, English plant hunter, Ernest Wilson collected and correctly labelled two sets of 50 azaleas from Mr Kijiro Akashi to take back to the Arnold Arboretum in Massachusetts, USA for propagation and distribution. Due to the difficulty of pronouncing their Japanese names, Wilson distributed them using a number system but later renamed them in English.

During that time, Wilson sent a set to JC Williams at Caerhays Estate in the UK, whom Wilson had a 20 year association with on plant hunting expeditions. One set was also sent to John Barr Stevenson at Tower Court located near Ascot, also in the UK, and whom was a gardening friend of King George VI and influential in the development of Valley Gardens. Stevenson agreed to provide stock plants of the Wilson 50, and when propagated, were planted at this garden.

Today, the only known surviving mature and named collections of most of the 'Wilson 50' are located at Punch Bowl and Valley Gardens at Windsor Great Park and Isabella Plantation in Richmond Park. Although Exbury Gardens has an older collection, it is not well documented. Apparently, the widow of John Stevenson remarried and took many of the collection with her to Tremeer in Cornwall.

In recent years, Trewidden Garden, located near Penzance in Cornwall, have also been establishing and rebuilding a collection.

References:

['Wilson 50' Kurume Azaleas and Caerhays | Caerhays Estate](#)
[Punch Bowl Valley Gardens, Windsor Great Park | PlantNetwork](#)

A quick guide to the identification of Rhododendrons as opposed to Azaleas

By Ian Wallace (original ARSV Journal contribution)

This article by Ian Wallace is a further read to Peter Valder's article 'When is a Rhododendron an Azalea' published in the ARSV August 2022 newsletter.

It is easy to buy into a "friendly discussion" over the relationship between Rhododendrons and Azaleas. This has been a contentious issue, between both avid gardeners and taxonomists for over 200 years. If we go back as far as Carolus Linnaeus, in 1753 he wrote in his *Species Plantarum* that Azaleas constituted a separate genus among the Heaths. It later was revealed that he had only viewed nine species of Rhododendrons, including two deciduous Rhododendrons from the U.S.A. He had never had the opportunity to examine the multitude of evergreen Azaleas from Eastern Asia. The term evergreen is in itself misleading, as most have dimorphic leaves [i.e.] that is, two sets of leaves, one set forming a long the branches as the flowers open and dropping off in the Autumn. These are not as substantial as the summer leaves and turn yellow before shedding, causing some gardeners unnecessary concern, unless of course, drought is also involved. **[more so with Kurumes.]** The summer leaves, which unfold in about November are thicker darker and more substantial, these are usually crowded at the tips of the branches and normally last until the following spring. In the case of Indica and similar species, they can last up to three years, unless affected by Lace Bug.

With the introduction of the evergreen species, the genus *Azalea* that Linnaeus had established was abolished and in 1834 Azaleas were relegated to the genus *Rhododendron* by George Don who was a Taxonomist, one of those who identify plants and like to neatly put them into orderly categories. Some Taxonomists are "splitters" and have tried to separate the Azaleas from the 800 plus known *Rhododendron* species back into a manageable group of 70 odd Azaleas. Incidentally, the genus *Rhododendron* is already divided into 43 subgenera, with constant changes being made with the benefit of D.N.A. My personal take on this, writing as a bemused enthusiast, is that unless you have the knowledge and the means to prove differently; the following is often useful.

Basics: Most large growing Rhododendrons with large leaves and huge flowers consisting of up to 20 plus florets, will never be mistaken for Azaleas. If the underside of the leaves is covered in a felty substance known as Indumentum, it's a Rhodo'. If the underside of the leaves is covered in small scales, it's a Rhodo'. If the number of stamens is 10 or more it's probably a Rhodo'. If the number of stamens is 5 or less it's most likely an Azalea. If the leaves and stems are to some degree hairy, it's probably an Azalea. [N.B.] Some large Rhodos do have hairs on the stems and foliage, [e.g.] the *Glischrum* series, which includes *R. crinigerum*, *R. recurvoides*, *R. spilotum*, *R. rude* and *R. glischrum*, all of which infrequently appear in members gardens.

There are indeed, many small, leafed Rhododendrons that at first glance, appear to be azaleas until closer examination proves otherwise. Most of the Lapponicum series fall into this category. There are also, quite a number of crosses between Rhodo's and Azaleas, some are quite good, such as *Glory of Littleworth*, which has magnificent white blooms with an orange throat. The foliage, however, is sub-standard, at Ferny Creek there's one located at the end of the bed near Wilson's 50. Deciduous Azaleas are native to the northern hemisphere where they experience cold winters and thus, some are not completely deciduous in Australia, [e.g.] *R. reticulatum*. There is little chance of these being mistaken for evergreen Rhododendrons.

Vireyas: In nature, these are strictly tropical by location and can often be found at height in rain forests as epiphytes, or clinging to rocky outcrops on mountain tops, with little obvious sustenance. They have only a minor resemblance to Asian Rhodo's but they are still Rhododendrons and definitely not Azaleas. Their foliage is often quite fleshy and easily bruised but they have the advantage of doing well in pots and flower at odd times. They can be treated as orchids but will expire if the temperature drops to - 5 deg C at which time, their stems will burst.

Member's garden – Richard and Jane Florey 'Tarradise Gardens' located in Balook, Gippsland, Victoria

By Richard Florey, Newsletter Editor



Rhododendron 'Christmas Cheer'.

This is one of our earliest Rhododendrons to fully bloom during a mild winter, usually from late winter to early spring. However, for most years, ours start to bloom from June. These photos were taken in our garden in August. In fact, it is the recipient of the prestigious 'Award of Garden Merit' of the Royal Horticultural Society.

Our garden is situated at 620m altitude where winter is longer and the cloud often very low, yet Christmas Cheer lights up those dullest of days putting on a remarkable display. They attract butterflies and various birds. We have a few dotted throughout the 1.5 acre garden, mostly on slopes and in part shade, thus moist, acidic, humus and well-drained soil.

Christmas Cheer is a medium-sized, dense, evergreen shrub bearing round trusses with up to eight open funnel-shaped flowers of around 50mm. The pink buds open to white-flushed flowers with darker pink stripes, then fading to a very pale pink, to almost white. They grow upwards of 1.5m tall and 1.8m wide. Annually, we remove spent flowers to encourage new growth.

Although we do have dogs and a cat, all parts of this rhododendron are poisonous if ingested, hence toxic to pets (including horses).

