



Emu Valley Rhododendron Gardens – Rhododendron cuttings collection trip

By Andrew Rouse, ARSV Vice President

On the 8th to 10th of March, ARSV members Rob Hatcher, Ray Weeks, John O’Hara and I, took a trip to Emu Valley Rhododendron Gardens (EVRG), near Burnie in northern Tasmania. The trip was to collect rhododendron cuttings for the collection at the Dandenong Ranges Botanic Gardens (DRBG). With it now very challenging to import plants into the country, it is all the more important to record what we have in our collections and to safeguard them in cultivation by spreading them around botanic gardens. Maurie Kupsch, the honorary Curator at EVRG, has over many years, built up an excellent collection of rhododendron species, so the impetus for this trip was to collect and establish at DRBG the rhododendron species currently only held at EVRG. We had a most enjoyable two days at EVRG, and on behalf of the Society, a big thank you to Geoff Wood, Maurie Kupsch and Mary McConnell for supporting our trip, their generosity and hospitality. The trip was a huge success, with cuttings of about 50 rhododendron species collected and now in the Society’s propagating facility at DRBG.



We also visited ARS member Ian Chalk’s garden near Burnie. Ian is growing vireyas in full sun within a few hundred metres of Bass Strait! They are some of the healthiest vireyas I’ve seen, and a reminder of the sunlight requirements to grow vireyas well. Ian kindly introduced us to Bob Cherry, the former owner of Paradise Nurseries in NSW, who has ‘retired’ to northern Tasmania. Bob and Derelie have created a beautiful garden in the hills behind Devonport and have established a nursery where they are selling a wide range of plants. We were fortunate to see the tuberous begonias in full flower.

Ian also gave us a tour of the Tasmanian Arboretum, also near Devonport, where the collection of Wollemi pines planted en-masse in a natural setting is a ‘must-see’!



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ARSV Conference Emu Valley Rhododendron Gardens 13th to 15th October 2023

By Andrew Rouse, ARSV Vice President

Further to our recent cuttings collection trip to Emu Valley Rhododendron Gardens, it also provided an opportunity to discuss with the team at EVRG the plans for this year's ARSV Conference being held there in October 2023, and to scout for potential gardens for the conference delegates to visit. For our members, here is an update on the planning for the conference. This update will also be an ongoing article in the June, August and October newsletters as a reminder of this important event.

The key note speaker and the speakers for the two technical sessions are confirmed, and in addition to these sessions there will be other speakers, garden tours etc.



The key note speaker is Seamus O'Brien, the Head Gardener at the National Botanic Gardens of Ireland, based at Killmacurragh House. Seamus is well known in horticultural (and Rhododendron) circles, he's a recipient of the Royal Horticultural Society's Gold Medal and has recently become a member of the Linnaean Society. Here's a link to a short video of Seamus talking about some of the rhododendrons at Killmacurragh.

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=442366376867394>

The first technical session speakers will summarise achievements of the 'North Queensland project'.

- Stuart Worboys, Australian Tropical Herbarium – project overview, partners, activities and achievements.
- Sue Gardiner, Plant and Food Research NZ – findings of the genetic analysis that supports formal classification of two species.
- Andrew Rouse, ARSV Vice President – ARSV's involvement, our North QLD living collection and the plans for the Cloud Forest Garden at Olinda.

The second technical session speakers will discuss the Ex-Situ conservation of rhododendron species and cultivars.

- Dr Marion MacKay, Senior Lecturer in Horticulture and Environmental Management, Massey University. Marion is on the Advisory Committee of the Global Conservation Consortium for rhododendrons and played a key role in the establishment of NZ's rhododendron conservation project.
- Andrew Brooker, Collection Officer, Pukeiti Gardens NZ. Andrew is the project manager for the NZ rhododendron conservation project.
- A facilitated panel session – the aim is to discuss the key learnings from the NZ project and how a similar initiative could be established in Australia. A driver for this is the increasing difficulty in bringing in new (or replacement) species/hybrids, thus shifting our focus to a coordinated approach to better managing what we have.

Finalising the program

The conference registration process is currently being finalised by the team at EVRG and will be circulated to members in the next newsletter and also uploaded onto the Society's website.

Seamus O'Brien will be in Melbourne from the 16th to 19th of October (Monday to Thursday) following the conference, and I would like to make best use of him. As such, I welcome suggestions from our members for engagements, such as talks, tours etc). But I also welcome any other comments or queries members have.

Member's article – Neil Shirley, Chafers, South Australia

By Richard Florey, ARSV Newsletter Editor

Neil Shirley, who became a Society member in June 2022, has written this article from a recent visit to Mount Lofty Botanic Garden in the Adelaide Hills suburb of Crafers, where Neil also resides. Neil has aptly titled his article "Who's On The Late Show" and included some wonderful rhododendron photos to share with everyone.

As a frequent walker around Mount Lofty Botanic Garden, I get to see the show all year round. In the rhododendron gully, the show started late and is only just finishing now in mid-February. Rhododendrons have the capacity to bloom from shall we say August, but which species will push the garden through to a glorious late summer performance?

There are four species that could, at least this year, be called summer flowering rhododendrons. When we are looking for some proper "Christmas cheer", consider *R. facetum* pictured here blooming in mid-January.

This species is akin to the more familiar *R. elliotii*, but flowers later in a similar unimpeachable solid red then when that's done, we see its party piece of donning hairy 'tan' new growth. Now in mid-February, growth has just started, hairiness awaits...

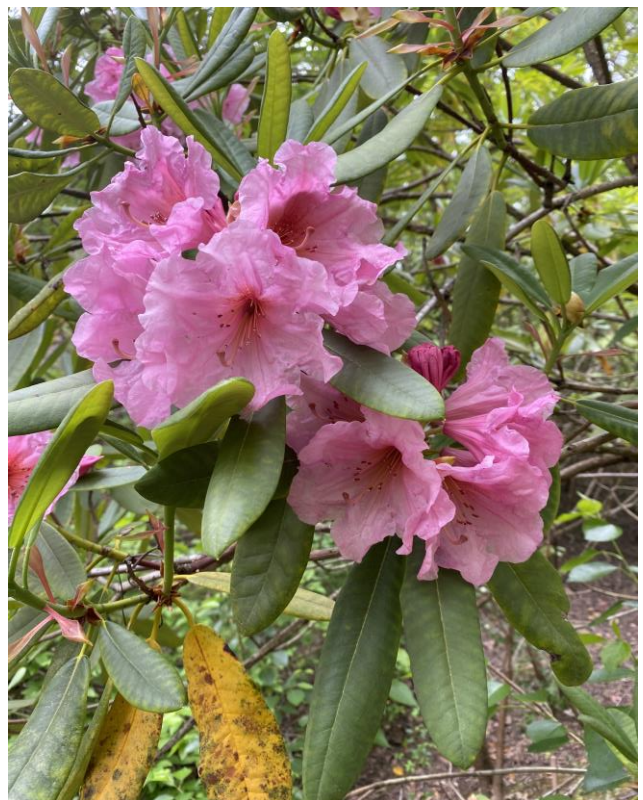
Some of the Fortunea series have a propensity to be "late bloomers". *R. glanduliferum* is a rare one, looking much like *R. fortunei* and this year it's pictured flowering in mid-January. *R. serotinum*, we expect might be late; the name means "occurring in late summer". Late for some! It has the ability to flower in very pale or medium shades of pink in, you guessed it, mid-January although it winked at me with its last farewell blooms today in mid-February.



R. facetum



R. glanduliferum



R. serotinum

The grand summer finale, here in the Adelaide hills, is brought to us by the one and only *R. auriculatum*.



It has its own series, last time I looked. Special princess or prince, much? It flowered in early February and I missed it at its best so the picture shows the flowers a little worse for wear. It has a robust “stand and deliver” sort of look and the buds have extremely long scales. It is not fazed by Adelaide heat (facing north) and has just finished growth for the year. It’s in a dry sunny spot and not a hair or tiara out of place.

We tend to plant and nurture our rhododendron gardens for the spring rush but perhaps when all the blousy screamers (!?) are finally quiet, we can find a spot for a few late flowering rhododendron species to cheer Santa up, if for no other reason.