

June 2023

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Newsletter of the ARSV



President's Report June 2023

John O'Hara, ARSV President

The recent activities of the ARSV have been mainly confined to work at Olinda. The new shade house and refurbished old shade house have shown early signs of greatly improved plant growth on our nursery stock. The improved light intensity appears to have led to greater growth of side shoots which will lead to denser better shaped plants. Andrew Rouse, Ray Weeks and others have worked hard at tidying up the Vireya House with the plants looking better than they have in years. The Tuesday group at Olinda is slowly getting bigger with lunchtime at times being a bit of a crush in the tearoom.

There is plenty of interesting work still to do at Olinda and Tuesday's are always full of great discussions. So, if you want to see what we do or want to use the ARSV's propagation facilities or even if you just want to grab an unusual plant or two then come along any Tuesday morning to the tearoom at the Dandenong Ranges Botanic Garden, the fire is always warm and cosy. There are still committee positions free if a member wants to be more involved or keen to help direct what the ARSV do, just contact me or any other committee member. It is not onerous.

Also, don't forget the Rhododendron Conference at Emu Valley Rhododendron Gardens in October. This will be a great way to connect with likeminded enthusiasts and to see a great garden. The full details for this conference are again included in the newsletter as it was in April. A separate invitation will be emailed with the newsletter. Members who do not use email will be contacted to determine how they can receive the invitation as it contains hyperlinks to ticket sales, itinerary, directions and accommodation.

In this edition, we revisit an article written by Ian Wallace for an earlier ARSV Journal about things that go chomp in the night.

ARSV Annual Membership Renewals 2023-2024

Richard Florey, Membership Manager



For paid memberships, it is that time of year again for annual membership renewals. The ARSV domestic and overseas membership forms are included in this newsletter edition. 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, email or both.

The ARSV Newsletter is published bi-monthly with news and activities, items of local interest and any 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.

Committee						
John O'Hara	President	johnohara@optusnet.com.au	0444 552 212	Graham Price	lithic01@bigpond.com	0409 639 448
Andrew Rouse	Vice-President	awrouse@bigpond.com	0424 750 406	Peter Grose	pgrose@bigpond.com	0488 773 577
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Prue Crome	Treasurer	prue@crome.net.au	0419 659 741	Ray Weeks	rayweeks@optusnet.com.au	0408 351 934
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ARSV Conference Emu Valley Rhododendron Gardens 13th to 15th October 2023

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.

Mount Lewis Revisited 2023

John O'Hara, ARSV President

In 2012, I was part of a group of nine ARS members that headed off to far north Queensland (FNQ) in search of Australia's native rhododendrons. This expedition, driven largely by the now late Simon Begg, was the start of the highly successful ARS North Queensland project. This small project has now morphed into the TROMPs project involving the ARS, the Australian Tropical Herbarium (ATH) and several of Australia's largest botanical gardens in studies and conservation of endangered cloud forest species. Amongst the sites visited in 2012 was a rock ledge at the top of Mount Lewis. The enthusiasm and thrill shown by Simon on seeing his first native rhododendron in the wild at this site was a great joy to experience.

In April this year, I, along with my daughter Kate, were lucky enough to be included to tour some cloud forest regions of FNQ, collecting plants for both Australian National Botanic Garden (Canberra) and Cranbourne Botanic Garden (Melbourne). The tour collected plants on Mount Bartle Frere, Mount Emerald (a somewhat drier mountain near Tolga) and Mount Lewis.



The Mount Lewis visit was spread across two days. Day one visiting sites at the top of the mountain including the site the ARS visited in 2012 and day two trekking through trackless rainforest to a site rarely, if ever, visited an hour and half from the road to a rock outcrop. It was pleasing to see that the site visited in 2012, now known in local botanical circles as Rhododendron Rock, appears unaltered. The site is covered with as many rhododendrons and orchids as it had eleven years ago and despite the number of visits by naturalists and botanist, that we know of, there is still no clearly worn track to the rock. The second day's site was an exposed rockface with an aspect similar in altitude and direction to that of Rhododendron Rock. The presence of highly collected plants such as small orchids and tassel ferns and the undisturbed moss covering the rock indicated that this site was rarely visited. It was interesting that the plant community here looked much the same as Rhododendron Rock but the place of rhododendrons was taken by *paphia meiniana* and the *leptospermum wooroonoonan* was replaced by *leptospermum neglecta*, not a single rhododendron was found.

Despite the very wet and leachy treks, Kate and I were very grateful that ATH encouraged our involvement and that we could be a part of this very interesting piece of botanical work. One downside though was that on the return leg of the second Mount Lewis walk, our leader Sturt Warboys from ATH, had a serious fall and injured four ribs. But not to worry, as a few weeks later he was off doing plant surveys on some Barrier Reef islands. Tough work!



The author on Mount Lewis picked *R. viriosum* and *paphia meiniana* at Rhododendron Rock for the owners of Wetherby Station, at the base of the mountain, who had not seen our rhododendron flower.

Lunch on Mount Lewis (second site) with Kate O'Hara (white shirt) and Kathryn Scobie (Australian National Botanic Gardens)

Member's article – Things that go chomp in the night

Ian Wallace, ARSV Member (original ARSV Journal contribution)

Most gardeners who grow the odd Rhododendron, would hesitate if asked to list the worst pest that affects their plants, then perhaps suggest Red Spider. These are often the cause of silvery leaves, particularly with Azaleas but there is a host of other nasties hiding in the shrubbery.

LACE BUG

Let's begin with Lace Bugs, with a ten day breeding cycle, the population of these little horrors can explode into plague proportions very rapidly. Affected leaves display the same silvery appearance as Red Spider but the adults can easily be seen under the leaves. They are a very slow moving creature about 3mm in length, having a single black dot on their transparent delta shaped wings. The larvae do the damage by sucking the sap from the leaf.



Lace Bug on an Azalea

RED SPIDER

Red Spider use the same method but are much smaller. Both can be controlled by using a systemic insecticide[e.g.] Confidor, sprayed as soon as [OR BEFORE] damage is apparent. In general, plants with indumentum (a covering of fine hairs or bristles) are resistant to sucking insects but not to caterpillars or weevils. Some gardeners will grow a control plant such as Rhododendron Cilpinense which is most susceptible, to indicate the time to spray. Plants in shady dry positions seem to suffer the most from the above. A word of warning...spraying with pesticide should only be used as a last resort, as there always will be collateral damage to beneficial insects which prey on the offending ones. Also, only spray on calm days and wear protective gear, lest you finish up as a casualty, remember exposure can be cumulative.

WEEVIL and other chompers

The presence of the afore mentioned weevil is indicated by clipped outer leaves, this is not that tragic in itself, although unsightly, it's the greedy grubs under the ground eating the roots which are weakening the plant. Confidor tablets buried around the base of plants will fix this problem.

Some rhododendrons are affected by leaf girdler moth larvae which is hard to detect until it has bored a hole in the stem and the sawdust is suspended in a web bag on the stem. These can be killed by pushing a thin wire into the hole but often it is easier to cut the stem off.

Caterpillars from white cabbage butterfly enjoy eating the new growth on Triflorums. It is often easier to squash these when new leaves are seen to be joined at the top.

There are a few other insects which cause minor damage such as leaf hopper and thrips but we are relatively lucky in Victoria so far. Of much greater concern, are water mould fungi which can be devastating to many plants including rhododendrons. Armillaria [Honey Fungus] with its orange yellow fruiting bodies can cover hundreds of hectares and Phytophthora cinnamoni, spores of which can travel in water are insidiously invading parks and gardens the world over. They are symbiotic with some trees and believed to have been spread by earth moving machinery which had worked in former orchards. Treatment for this condition is not readily available, most affected plants die. However, it has been found that mulch, good drainage and dry conditions can delay or offset the impact of these diseases. It is also worth mentioning that Rhododendron leaves are quite toxic and even goats will not recover if they eat a considerable amount of them.

AUSTRALIAN RHODODENDRON SOCIETY VICTORIAN BRANCH, Inc. (ABN 70 723 138 385) (A5896Z)

Membership Registrar: PO Box 296, Olinda, Victoria 3788, AUSTRALIA

Telephone: 0402 412 123, Email: richarddflorey@gmail.com

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL - July 2023 to June 2024

Dear Member. It is now time, before 30th of June 2023, for renewal of your membership of the ARSV for 2023-2024. Please complete the form below and return it to the Membership Registrar.

1. FILL IN THE AMOUNT TO BE REMITTED

Name:	Amount Due	Amount Remitted
Membership Subscription for 2023-2024	\$35.00	\$35.00
Donation		\$
TOTAL		\$

2. METHOD OF PAYMENT Please tick the relevant box.

Option 1: Bank Transfer

Account Name: AUSTRALIAN RHODODENDRON SOCIETY VICTORIAN BRANCH

BSB: 633 000 Account Number: 165938945

IMPORTANT: Please put your name as the reference or description in the on-line payment so we know who it is from.

OPTION 2: Payment by Credit Card - VISA and MasterCard Only

EXPIRY DATE (mm/yy)/.....

CARD TYPE (Please tick): VISA MasterCard

NAME ON CARD: CCV

CARD NUMBER:

Your name if different from the name on the card: Signature:

OPTION 3: Cheque or Money Order

Please make payable to "Australian Rhododendron Society, Victorian Branch Inc." and include it with this renewal form. **Ensure you include your name somewhere (eg. on the back) to identify who you are.**

3. MEMBER CONTACT DETAILS

Name:	
Postal Address:	
Residential Address (Optional):	
E-Mail:	
Mobile Phone:	
Home Phone:	

4. DONATIONS

If you have made a donation to the ARSV you can specify what it should be used for. Amount or Proportion

	Amount or Proportion
1. Materials for benches, shade cloth, propagation, etc. for the propagation area.	
2. To help develop a conservation area in the garden expansion area (old Olinda Golf Course).	
3. To assist in building an extension to The Vireya House.	
4. Unspecified.	

The ARSV Newsletter will be posted and Emailed to all members. Tick this box ONLY if you **DO NOT** want it posted.

All ARSV Members will receive a printed copy of the annual journal "The Rhododendron".

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Membership Registrar: PO Box 296, Olinda, Victoria 3788, AUSTRALIA

Telephone: +61 402 412 123, Email: richarddflorey@gmail.com

OVERSEAS MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL - July 2023 to June 2024

Dear Member. It is now time, before 30th of June 2023, for renewal of your membership of the ARSV for 2023-2024. Please complete the form below and return it to the Membership Registrar.

1. FILL IN THE AMOUNT (Australian Dollars) TO BE REMITTED

Name:	Amount Due	Amount Remitted
Ordinary Membership Subscription for 2023 – 2024	\$50.00	\$50.00
Donation		\$
TOTAL		\$

2. METHOD OF PAYMENT Please tick the relevant box.

OPTION 1: Payment by Credit Card - VISA and MasterCard Only

EXPIRY DATE (mm/yy)/.....

CARD TYPE (Please tick): VISA MasterCard

NAME ON CARD: CCV

CARD NUMBER:

Your name if different from the name on the card: Signature:

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Name:	
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