



The Rhododendron

Volume 62

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The *Rhododendron*

Official Journal of Australian Rhododendron organisations

2024

Volume 62

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Front Cover: *Coming!*

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Editorial

ANDREW ROUSE

In pulling together this year's journal, I trawled back through previous issues to realise that this is my ninth year as Editor of this journal. How time flies!

The highlight of 2023 was the Rhododendron Conference, Rhododendron Conservation Down Under, hosted by Emu Valley Rhododendron Gardens in October. It was lovely to return to EVRG and to catch up with rhododendron enthusiasts from around the country and overseas and to hear about projects being undertaken to help conserve rhododendron species and hybrids. A special thank you Geoff Wood, Ant Dry, Nicole Maxwell, Maurie Kupsch and the rest of the team at EVRG for hosting the conference and making us all so welcome.

As Editor I'm on the look out for stories from our members. This year, we hear from Mary McConnell, a volunteer at EVRG and a regular visitor to Japan, who writes about the azaleas at Nezu Shrine in Tokyo. Her article is accompanied by stunning photographs of the azaleas in full flower.

At the Dandenong Ranges Botanic Gardens (DRBG) there is a Wilson's 50 azalea bed. There has been considerable discussion amongst the regular Tuesday Group volunteers regarding which of the 50 azaleas we have in the collection, and how we would go about identifying more of them. So it is most pleasing to hear from Polly Cooke, a former Secretary of the Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group at the Royal Horticultural Society, who since 1983 has researched the Wilson 50 azaleas with the aim of confidently identifying those still held in cultivation in the UK. Her expertise will help DRBG and Ferny Creek Horticultural Society (which also holds some Wilsons 50 plants) with identifying more of the plants we hold.

In 2002, Lyn Craven, CSIRO botanist and ARS member, led an expedition to the Toraja region of Sulawesi where he collected vireyas that were subsequently established in cultivation in Canberra, and then on his death, kindly donated to DRBG by Kirsty Craven. One species in particular – *R. torajaense* – discovered and described by Lyn, is proving to be very popular amongst visitors to the vireya house at DRBG, with its masses of pure white flowers. In this issue, we hear from Wendy Mustaqim and his colleagues who have botanised in the Mamasa region of south-west Sulawesi and provide a report of their expeditions, findings as well as emerging threats to vireya populations.

During the Rhododendron Conference we visited the garden of Ian and Jenny Chalk on Tasmania's north coast. Here Ian has developed an amazing

vireya collection with the plants growing in full sun for much of the day. On reading reports that *R. zoelleri* can grow at sea level, Ian has planted a specimen in his garden within 50 metres of the ocean. Ian and I got chatting about all things *R. zoelleri* so decided to pull together an article on the introduction of this species to Australia, what *R. zoelleri* provenances we still have, and Ian's sea-level trial of the species.

Two of our number are acknowledged for their contribution to our organisations and gardens. In the 2024 New Year's Honours, David Stanton received an Order of Australia for his contribution to the Illawarra Rhododendron and Rainforest Gardens. David has volunteered at the gardens since its inception in 1969 and ensured the gardens ongoing viability since that time. At the ARS-Vic AGM, Tom Noonan was awarded Life Membership in recognition of his contribution to the Society and the DRBG through managing the *Rhododendron* database over many years.

As always, I'd welcome feedback on the articles in the journal and invite suggestions for future contributions. The journal is for the benefit of our membership so as your Editor, I'm keen to ensure that we are providing the articles you want to read. ❀

Reports – Australian Rhododendron Groups

Blue Mountains Rhododendron Society Inc.

The Campbell Rhododendron Garden is a Crown Land reserve. The Garden covers 17 hectares or 42 acres and includes 7.3 hectares or 18 acres reserved for planting and 9.7 hectares or 24 acres retained as natural bushland in line with our constitution. In February 2022 Blue Mountains Rhododendron Society (BMRS) was appointed by Department of Crown Lands to be managers of the Campbell Rhododendron Garden. This obliges us to submit an annual report and maintain a comprehensive governance system.

As part of this reporting requirement we have introduced three subcommittees – a Garden Sub-Committee focussing on horticultural elements of the Gardens, a Project Sub-Committee focussing on engineering elements of the Gardens, and an Administration Sub-Committee focussing on Crown Lands requirements, OH&S (occupational health and safety) and other administrative matters. The aim is to ensure we meet our legal requirements and that we are all clear on our processes.

Early in 2023, due to a meltdown of a component of our electrical system during our critical fundraising period, we were forced to do a major upgrade to the electricity supply system. Although an unexpected cost, this has upgraded our aged system to meet our needs in the future. We have introduced an online payment system for donations at the entry and plan to introduce a members card with a chip that can be read to confirm membership, give selected access, and enable volunteer sign in for insurance purposes. Our Administration Sub-Committee is applying for grants to cover some of our biggest expenses and to improve security including automated opening and closing of the entry gates and toilets.

Our greatest expenses remain weed management, tree management and repairs to paths and waterways after the years of heavy rain and flooding in the Garden.

Spring Welcome Weeks is our main fundraising period, running from the end of September through October to the first weekend of November. It was very successful this year, probably due to the combination of such wet previous years and early warmth causing extra good flowering. It was a pleasure to welcome so many enthusiastic visitors, especially those to visit every year, and to hear their complimentary feedback. Our stalwart Monday volunteers barely skipped a beat through the year, battling on in rain and cold.

During October we were filmed by Gardening Australia who were seriously impressed with our gardens and loved the whole principle of it being completely managed by volunteers. The show will go to air next year – hopefully just before we begin 2024 Spring Welcome Weeks.

We are piloting a new initiative this year to try to gain a greater share of Easter/Autumn visitors to the Blue Mountains. We have agreed with Rotary to hold the Gnome Festival on the Saturday and Sunday of the Easter weekend (March 30–31) rather than during the Spring Welcome Weeks. Although we cannot guarantee timing of autumn colours, it will be a chance to showcase a different part of our beautiful gardens including Maple Walk, to give prominence to the Gnome Festival and hopefully to increase revenue.

Emu Valley Rhododendron Garden

Our biggest challenge at the Garden continues to be our lack of technical expertise. 42 years ago, when the garden was started there were half a dozen passionate rhododendron growers, driven by their love of the genus, with vast experience and knowledge of the genus. Their knowledge and expertise is what created what we now have.

This band of growers has been severely depleted. The remaining experts are Maurie Kupsch, who in his own words wishes he could “turn [his] energy levels back 20 years”, and Neet Lowry, who, while excellent at what she does, cannot replace the expertise of six, and who additionally has never professed to be an expert on rhododendrons. We have a large band of very keen volunteers who love the garden and who put in many hours to keep it beautiful and pristine, but not one of them would claim to be an expert in the genus.

This is an important collection for plants that we care for, and we cannot allow it to disappear through lack of expertise.

The Memorandum of Understanding between ourselves and the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens remains in place, and one of our board members, Mr David Reid, is the Horticultural Coordinator of those Gardens. We are continually expanding this relationship, in order to secure the required level of technical expertise.

As part of this process the Director of the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens, along with David Reid, is to visit the Garden later this year to begin the process of evaluating exactly what we have to offer them, and to see how they can assist us.

During the last financial year, we finalised three capital projects:

1. We placed a shipping container outside the function room to act as storage for our excess furniture. This has given us the ability to have a cleaner and bigger function room. Luckily it arrived painted in a colour that perfectly matched our existing building.
2. We completely revamped our plant sales area, and this has resulted in a huge growth in plant sales and has provided us with an eye-popping new entrance to the Garden.

3. We have refurbished the tearoom. This was squeezed in between the end of the cruise ship season and the opening of the Garden for spring and went like a well-planned military operation.

As a result of these changes, and the interest the public has shown in our refurbished premises, we have had a huge increase in the volume of visitors.

Our highly respected and incredibly hard-working General Manager, Geoff Wood retired in April, at the end the cruise ship season. He served in the position of General Manager for over eight years. During his tenure, the Garden moved from being a small operation driven by the whims of the members, to being a fully-fledged commercial operation, well respected as part of the commercial fabric of the city.

As an indication of his value, his role is now being shared by three people.

To fill the gap left by Geoff, and as a result of the changes brought about by the renovations, we have employed additional staff. We have a new Volunteer Co-ordinator and a new Café Manager. Additionally, I have stepped forward as the Acting General Manager, and I've not spent as much time at one place since I ended formal employment!

The Australian Rhododendron Society Annual conference was held at the Garden from Friday 13th October through Sunday 15th and was a great success.

It was a prestigious event. It was opened by the Premier, The Honourable Jeremy Rockliff, and the closing dinner was attended by the Mayor, Teeny Brumby. We are definitely on the world rhododendron map!

Andrew Rouse, ARS Organising Committee, in an email to me wrote,

“I've had very positive feedback from delegates, and on behalf of the ARS and the delegates, I'd like to thank you and the EVRG members and volunteers for all the work that made the conference such a success. It has been a great pleasure working with you over this year with the planning of the conference, and Nicole, a particular thank you for everything you have done to ensure a successful event.

It's abundantly clear that the members and volunteers are devoted to the garden they have created, and I hope that the conference will help to reinforce the importance of the collection and contribute to a bright future for the garden.”

Once again, thanks to both Geoff Wood and Nicole Maxwell for initiating and co-ordinating this in conjunction with the ARS.

The Garden continues to exude magic. It is a visually stunning, the volunteers are warm and friendly, and the whole place oozes a charm that is hard to find anywhere else.

Ant Dry, Chairperson and Acting General Manager

Illawarra Rhododendron and Rainforest Gardens

Hello from the Illawarra Rhododendron and Rainforest Gardens (IRRG) and thank you all for making us so welcome. My wife Vicki, who has taken on the IRRG Secretary's role, and I have been able to visit botanic gardens at Olinda, Emu Valley, Mt Tamborine and Mt Cootha, and Andrew Rouse, Roy Bilby and Neil Puddey's home gardens over the last twelve months or so. We appreciate the openness that you have shown in assisting us. I would particularly like to thank Andrew Rouse for his help and his encouragement and for his work on the ARS Memorandum of Understanding which we signed at the Australian Rhododendron Society conference in Burnie, Tasmania, in October 2023.

At my first committee meeting as President of the IRRG Chair in October 2022, I outlined some of the priorities I saw for our committee, and I'd like to take this opportunity to update you on progress in the last seventeen months.

1. To increase our volunteer numbers so we can share the workload and get more things done.



The azalea garden, Illawarra Rhododendron and Rainforest Gardens.

At our AGM in October 2022, we had eight volunteers attend. At the 2023 AGM we had eighteen. Our total number of members has increased from 44 to 65 and the number of regular volunteers has also risen. We now have around thirty active volunteers. We've achieved these increases by making people more aware of the Gardens through traditional written media, ABC community announcements, social media, mainly Facebook and Instagram, by establishing a website, establishing a bush regeneration group for the rainforest section of the gardens, and inviting the Wollongong Camellia Society back.

We still need more volunteers and we are planning a volunteer recruitment blitz of local communities over March, April and May 2024

2. To increase our income (or decrease our costs) as many of the things we need to do are expensive and beyond our past budgets.

We have been working on trying to make it easier to pay when visitors come to the Gardens. We estimate that between 30–50% of visitors do not pay the honorary entrance fee and we hope making it easier for them to pay will increase the number that do pay. In addition to cash, we have now made it possible for people to pay via bank transfers, via a QR code that allows people to pay by credit card, Google Pay and Apple Pay or, if we have volunteers at the gate, via a tap on our square reader.

We tested these payments methods successfully over the June 2023 long weekend and during our Spring Festival trial in September 2023. We learned a lot and had a great time talking to our visitors finding out what they liked or what they thought needed improving. As a result of the September trial our income rose 500% against our average monthly gate takings. Our revenue for weddings and functions continues to rise, however it still has a long way to go before it returns to pre-Covid levels. We have also been lucky to pick up a few small grants.

3. To develop plans that better define our vision, purpose, and aims, and build strategies, and programs that will allow us to achieve these.

We've still got a way to go here. I'm happy to report we have agreed on our vision, and we have worked through a SWOT analysis to identify our Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. Our Vision is to be an internationally recognised garden noted for our rhododendrons, particularly vireyas, and our endangered Illawarra rainforest.

4. To make sure we have the necessary records and procedures to show we are accountable and transparent.

We've worked through issues around volunteer and visitor health and safety, developed a risk management framework, ranked tree risks in the Gardens and started to remove high risk trees. We now have a volunteer attendance recording book and a hazardous chemical register. We are working on decision making

procedures and other governance policies and procedures to make sure we can meet our obligations under our constitution, our lease, the ATO, NSW Fair Trading, and ACNC requirements as an Incorporated NFP company.

3. *To build our communications, engagement, and marketing capabilities to attract more visitors.*

We've changed our name to better reflect our gardens. We are now called the Illawarra Rhododendron and Rainforest Gardens.

We have developed a new logo development, new email addresses, and a website.

We are posting more on Facebook and Instagram and our numbers on both platforms are rising.

We have created new brochures and located them with tourism and other businesses in the Illawarra/Wollongong region.

We have utilized the local ABC community announcements during the year.

Vicki and I have been visiting other rhododendron gardens across Australia rebuilding and making new contacts.

In addition to the above priorities, we have started to document the history of our Gardens and we are attempting to identify and catalogue the plants we have.

This year we will be continuing our work on the above priorities as well as; holding a Spring Festival in September 2024 where money raised will be put towards installing disabled toilets and improving disable access to the gardens, revise our constitution and apply for Deductable Gift Recipient status with the Tax Office, start to plan a new irrigation system for when the dry returns, develop and implement plans for the redevelopment and planting of vireyas in garden beds on Ponticum and Log Hills and build a deer exclusion fence on the outer perimeter.

As you can see there has been a lot going on but there is still much to do.

Thanks again for everyone's support.

Bruce M Christie, President

South Australian Rhododendron Society

Over the last year the number of members attending monthly meetings has stayed regularly at thirty-five with over forty at meetings held during daylight saving months. Before Covid 19 most members met over supper and the pot-luck stall. During the uncertain times, when meetings were able to be held, suppers were stopped but plants were still for sale. The pot-luck stall, which is at every meeting, is stocked with plants grown by members, Richard and Bronwyn Illman being the largest contributors. Rhododendrons and their companion plants were much discussed as they were being snapped up by members.

In late 2022, as the threat of Covid was diminishing but not over, other gatherings were allowed such as visits in October to the following gardens: St. Vigean's and Linwood, where rhododendrons were in bloom. The next week the garden of Emily and Chris Giles was open. Each garden is distinct in its own way; St Vigean's for old rhododendrons, Linwood for a large variety of newer and hard to find rhodos and the Giles's garden which is quite large, is a work in progress and has many fine plants. None of these gardens are far from each other but their individual aspects and microclimates make each one different.

In November 2022, for the first time in two years, the Society could enjoy the Christmas function in the beautiful garden of members Stavroula Raptis and Martin Hamilton-Smith. Unfortunately the very wet, cold spring and early summer weather meant that most of the rhododendrons had flowered but there were still enough blooms for everyone to enjoy. Richard Illman had made and donated a clematis stand to be raffled on the day.

It was nearly three months before everyone met again in February 2023 for propagating day at St Vigean's. Thanks to Jeff and Jill Jenkins for the use of their property, and thanks to Richard Illman for guiding new members in the art of propagating. These will be our new plants for future sales, raffles and pot-luck. Thanks must go to the SA Botanic Gardens for allowing a few members to take cuttings from the Whibley collection and also to those members who donated cuttings from their gardens.

Everyone met again in March for Picnic in the Paddock which was held in the garden of one of the newer members. David's property has well established trees, now with high canopies, which give the right amount of light for understory plantings of rhododendrons, azaleas and many other plants, all of which, have been recently added to the large sloping block. It was a delight to visit and experienced members had much to discuss with David about his venture.

An underlying theme for this year's speakers was their 'garden path' and at last we heard from Michael Harvey, Director of the Botanic Gardens and State Herbarium whose journey seems to be about making a garden, museum or project accessible and desirable to its visitors. Our member Henry Hancock spoke about his passion for vireyas developed through many visits to his uncle and cousin. Matt Coulter of Mount Lofty Botanic Gardens told us about his favourite Scandinavian gardens while Oliver Graham spoke of the influence of Canada and Japan on his work. From Phil Davill we heard about the difficulties of weather prediction before computers; Greg Lawrence spoke about hippeastrums while Louise Silver and Alan Horsfall gave us pruning information. Each meeting we have heard something interesting. Not all speakers were confident giving talks to larger groups but nonetheless we have always been left with something to think about.

Covid gave us a challenge: how to keep the Society cohesive and vibrant.

Members rose to that challenge and attended the different events and I think they were encouraged to socialise and become better acquainted with each other and their gardens and to share knowledge.

The Society's next challenge is to promote the propagation and planting of new rhododendrons in South Australia.

I have enjoyed the busy three years as President.

Olivera Waterman, President

Tasmanian Rhododendron and Rare Plants Group

Quite a busy and varied year was enjoyed by members.

We commenced the year with increasing our stock of plants using cuttings from our gardens. We learned that plants have different methods of forming roots – some at the end of the stem while others form roots along the stem itself. Teabags were shown to be a good method of raising plants with cutting's roots formed in the bag being able to be potted up with little disturbance to the roots.

We visited a variety of gardens from small, newly planted to larger established ones. Each of the gardens visited were varied in construction and particular interest of the owner. This has reinforced the concept of how planning is so important in the early stages of creating gardens and how each person reflects their personal ideas into their garden.

A three-day outing to gardens in the north of Tasmania was enjoyed by all who attended. We returned home full of fresh ideas and plants gleaned from nurseries visited.

A presentation by Ken Gillanders on Wyoming and Colorado, including the Mount Helen's eruption, was enjoyed by members in June.

Social occasions are always an important aspect of our group with mid-year and Christmas luncheons being times for sharing good food and conversations.

Our small group would not be able to continue without the support of all members, especially Peter, our newsletter editor, whose health issues have not deterred him from putting together reports each month.

We look forward to continuing enjoying and learning from participating in our garden group.

Karina Harris, President

Tamborine Mountain Regional Botanic Garden

What an eventful year it has been with torrential rain, storms and high humidity. Even in these conditions the rhododendrons have thrived. However, new under-planting of perennials have not been doing so well due to the drenching the area has received recently but gardening is always an ongoing project, satisfying and rewarding.

Once again local rhododendron enthusiast Roy Bilby has donated a vireya (*R. rarilepidotum*) and some hostas. Unfortunately, the giant snails in the area have enjoyed the hostas' juicy leaves so it is back to the drawing board to find some plants that like full shade and are tough.

I have taken a few cuttings during the year and have had good results, so these are being gradually added to the Garden. This activity takes quite a while to do so it is usually put on the back burner as there are always many other jobs to attend to such as pruning, weeding and fertilizing. It is extremely rewarding to see the cuttings sprout new leaves and grow big enough to plant out.

A trip to Toowoomba was worthwhile as I managed to select a few new rhododendrons for the Garden. These included 'Madame Dourmier', 'Petronella' and 'Purple Splendor', among others. There are always some plants flowering each month but with more plants being planted hopefully the display will be even more resplendent.

The different varieties of azaleas put on a good show this year, some flowering in both autumn and spring, some for the first time since I have been working in this garden. Many new azaleas have been planted as there are many areas that need refreshing with more vibrant colours.

We had visitors from Tasmania who advised applying a little fertilizer and soil conditioner often so this is being tried. If photos of their rhodies are anything to go by, this is good advice. With all the rain that we have had I can't see it being detrimental at all as a lot of nutrients would be leaching out of the soil with all the wet. They also advised that all rhododendrons should be kept pruned as they become leggy and unattractive which I entirely agree with, and from what I have seen over the past year or two, the flowers seem more prolific.

We haven't been able to get to the Gardens since mid-December because of the destructive storm on Christmas night. I have no idea what damage has been done so I am a little apprehensive as to what I will find and am sure that whatever is left in the area can once again be returned to an attractive, restful and interesting place over time.

Debi Marshall, volunteer

Australian Rhododendron Society Victorian branch

The 2022/2023 year saw the physical commencement of the ground work for the North Queensland bed, now referred to as the Australian Cloud Forest Collection (ACFC). This important piece of landscaping and botanically significant gardening at the Dandenong Ranges Botanic Garden, Olinda, is the culmination of more than a decade of work by members of the ARS. It will be the most significant physical and public expression of the project initiated by Simon Begg in 2010, a project that grew and evolved into the major multi-participant venture known as the Tropical Mountain Plant Science (TroMPs) project. This project was shortlisted for this year's Eureka Science Prize for botany, a big feather in the cap of all participants and great kudos for the ARS. The ACFC garden has now progressed to the point where rocks, paths and beds are going in and after some settling we should start planting out a few hundred *R. lochiae* and *R. viriosum* plants grown from plants collected by the ARS as part of TroMPs from various mountaintops across the cloud forests around Cairns in far north Queensland. Rare and endangered plant species, other than rhododendrons, also collected as part of TroMPs will also be planted in the garden as part of an ex-situ conservation collection. The garden will be open to ARS members probably in late autumn and to the public by spring next year.

The refurbishment of the nursery has continued this year with the renovated shade houses showing signs of producing better plants from propagated material. A second glass house and equipment for propagation has been bought and will soon be setup. It is expected that the improved humidity control and better growing conditions afforded by this new glass house will result in the ability to grow a greater range of plant genera and species. I will remind members that these facilities are bought with ARS funds and it is a benefit of membership that members can use them for propagation of plants for their own use.

One of our propagation projects, started this year, began with a group of four ARS members flying to Tasmania to collect cuttings of *Rhododendron* species growing in the Emu Valley Rhododendron Garden. The intention of this exercise was to both increase the range of species, of known provenance growing in our garden at Olinda and also to provide a back-up collection of plants that are very rare in Australia. The collecting was a great success, thanks mainly to the very kind support and enormous efforts of Maurie Kupsch and Mary McConnell at Emu Valley. If possible we would like this collaboration to continue, grow and eventually head towards a national collection, spread across several gardens to provide security of those species held in Australia.

October saw the ARS Rhododendron Conference held at Emu Valley, a day of presentations and a second day of garden visits. A handful of Victorians attended this most enjoyable meeting which concentrated on a theme of conservation and sharing of plant material in order to preserve what is held within the country.

A personal note: I was lucky enough to be able to join what was probably the last of the TroMPs plant collecting trips into the mountain rainforests of far north Queensland. This involved representatives from Cranbourne and National Botanic Gardens, as well as Stuart Warboys from the Australian Tropical Herbarium, collecting rare species for introduction into cultivation. This was an opportunity to explore way off-track locations with extraordinarily knowledgeable botanists. Just another benefit of being an ARS member.

John O'Hara, President



PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARY O'CONNELL

A visit to Nezu Shrine in Tokyo during azalea flowering season

MARY McCONNELL

Before I even start talking about Nezu Shrine (Jinja) I need to confess that I am one of those people who have a chronic case of Japan addiction. When I first travelled there for a work conference in 1998, I did not particularly expect to enjoy the country. Instead, I found myself intrigued by the mix of old and new, beautiful and ugly, the excellent food, friendly people and the sense of order, resulting in a trip to Japan becoming an annual event (until both Australia and Japan closed their borders). In the first years we did all the major attractions, mixed with exploring more remote rural areas and a lot of walking. Over the years friends have been made and now trips to Japan are focused on catching up with friends, visiting odd corners of the country and walking.

In May of 2019, blissfully unaware that I would not be back for four years, I planned a trip which included a couple of “don’t touch”, and definitely “stay





on the path” type of garden. In contrast, Shinto shrines rarely have a formal garden, but often have a natural setting with beautiful big old trees. Shinto, or “the way of the gods” is often described, correctly or otherwise, as the indigenous religion of Japan. It is closely associated with Japanese values, ways of thinking and national identity. Many Japanese identify as both Buddhist and Shinto and do not see any conflict in this. There are innumerable gods in Shinto, but connectedness with nature is central.

The first Nezu shrine was built over 1900 years ago only a short distance from the location of the current shrine. The current shrine site had previously been the estate of a member of the Tokugawa shogunate family. When his son became the 6th shogun Ienobu, he dedicated his estate to the Nezu Shrine with many of the shrine buildings being completed by 1706. While it was still a residential estate and before it became a shrine precinct, Kirishima azaleas were transplanted from Tatebayashi, north of Tokyo. Tatebayashi is still famous for its azaleas and also has an annual azalea festival. The azaleas were planted on the hill that slopes down to the shrine precinct and there are now approximately 3,000 plants with 100 varieties in an area of approximately 6, 500 square metres.

It is impossible to describe the mass of colour, but fortunately photographs have done that for me. What is striking is that most of the plants have been









pruned to shape, but still allowed to be covered in flowers. Restraint is an important characteristic in Japan and this seems to often be applied to azaleas in formal gardens which are often pruned so that there are only low numbers of flowers on each plant. So, it is a pleasure to see a hillside of azaleas where restraint is definitely not an issue. Only occasional plants had visible labels, all in Japanese. Those I photographed were ‘Fuji’, ‘Kerama’ and Kurume azaleas named ‘Kirin’, ‘Suzaku; (a vermilion bird god that ruled over southern heavens) and ‘Oi no Mezame’ (awakening of old age).

I do recommend that if you are in Tokyo in April, visit Nezu Shrine. It is easy to access by public transport and there is much to see at the shrine in addition to the hillside of azaleas. Like many shrines, it is an oasis of peace and greenery in a very densely populated city. Perhaps one of the aspects of Japan that I enjoy the most is finding these places, especially when you are not looking for them. Although the Nezu Shrine website (<https://nedujinja.or.jp/>) is only in Japanese, you will have no trouble finding information and beautiful photographs on other websites such as Exploring Old Tokyo (<https://old-tokyo.info/nezu-shrine/>) or Tokyo Tourists (<https://tokyotourists.com/nezu-shrine/>). I think that next time I am in Japan in spring, I might also take a trip up to Tatebayashi (<http://www.utyututuji.jp/world/en.html>) to enjoy yet another “tsutsuji matsuri”. And of course, at that time of year, you might just find a beautiful display in a place that is not all famous, but which is all the more enjoyable for being unexpected. ❀



Tom Noonan

Life Membership of the Australian Rhododendron Society Victorian Branch

JOHN O'HARA

At the AGM of the ARS-Vic, a motion was unanimously passed to elect Tom Noonan as a Life Member of the Society.

Tom joined the ARS-Vic and began attending the Tuesday working group at The National Rhododendron Gardens (now Dandenong Ranges Botanic Gardens) when he retired from Telstra, some 26 years ago. When he joined, it was a time when the Victorian branch was dominated by rhododendron heavy weights including Bill Taylor, Murray McAlister and Ken Cathy. Fortunately for both the Society and the Rhododendron Garden at Olinda, Tom saw that he could make his most significant contribution by developing a record of the plants in the garden. Spending his own time learning how to use Microsoft Access proficiently, he quickly found a key role developing, updating and maintaining the Rhododendron database, something we still use to this day.

The plant label hunting expeditions in the Garden to source the data for the database have become legend amongst the members of the Tuesday working group. Tom's mammoth effort has provided documentation on the

species or hybrid and the location of the plant for the vast majority of rhododendrons in the Garden and makes the collection the valuable asset that it is today. Tom's database is the foundation which so much work now taking place in the Garden is based and while he is not engaged in these tasks, he has found himself taking on much of the technical support for all our plant labelling and nursery irrigation.

Tom's diligence, thoughtfulness, dry sense of humour and polite gentle manner are key components to making the Tuesday working group such a successful and pleasant activity. ❁



Exploring for Rhododendron outside the conservation area in Mamasa, southwest Sulawesi

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Summary

Nine species of *Rhododendron* have been reported from Mamasa, with eight of them found during the two recent expeditions in 2019 and 2023. Seven species are endemic to Sulawesi with one of them, *R. tjiasmantoi*, only recently published. Further locales of *Rhododendron vanvuurenii* are reported after finding this species in 2019 not far from the type locality. The habitats of *Rhododendron* in Mamasa are being threatened by habitat conversion for agriculture, road expansion, and forest extraction, as well as the invasion of the alien *Pinus merkusii*. Initiated by local enthusiasts, cultivation of *Rhododendron* in Mamasa has been successfully initiated with cuttings of *R. seranicum*.

Introduction

The mountainous region of Mamasa (Figure 1) is located in the southwestern part of Sulawesi. It is an area that administratively belongs to Mamasa Regency, Sulawesi Barat Province. It is an interesting and under-sampled area in terms of botany where many plant species have been recently described (e.g. Utami and Wiriadinata et al. 2010, Ardiyani & Poulsen 2019, Ardi & Thomas 2020, Hutabarat et al. 2022, Mustaqim & Ardi 2021). One of them is *Rhododendron tjiasmantoi* (Hutabarat et al. 2022), in which the story behind it is presented below. It is not surprising since much of Mamasa is intact forest on rugged, mountainous terrain that is suitable habitat for *Rhododendron*. Nearly a quarter of a century ago, the type specimen of the small-leaved Sulawesi endemic *Rhododendron monodii* was collected from Mount Mambuliling (2873 m asl), one of the most iconic summits in Mamasa (Argent 2015).

Since 2018, some explorations were undertaken to collect and to collaborate with the local plant conservation enthusiasts to start an ex-situ cultivation. Routine botanical explorations were done including two scientific trips in 2019 and 2023. Some new findings were successfully published since then from those fieldwork, including the description of the new species *R. tjiasmantoi* (Hutabarat et al. 2022) and an extended distribution record of two species, *Rhododendron seranicum* and *Rhododendron torajaense* (Mustaqim et al. 2022). These findings were made in 2019 and led us to schedule additional surveys for 2023. In this paper, we presented a history of *Rhododendron* explorations in Mamasa Region, including the historical trip made in the first half of 20th century.



Figure 1 The mountainous regions of southern Mamasa, west of Nosu, show the undulating mountainous terrain which is a potential habitat for *Rhododendron*. The forest is categorized as mid - to upper montane forest.

Historical Explorations and Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia

In the early 20th Century, two botanists journeyed to Mamasa and gathered *Rhododendron* specimens. The first was Louis van Vuuren, a Dutch botanist who conducted collecting in the region around 1912 to 1914. Among his collections from Mamasa was a new species named after him, the endemic *R. vanvuurenii* which was collected from Messawa [=Kp. Masawa, Polewali] by Noerkas (Exp. van Vuuren 491). Then in 1937, a second expedition to Mamasa was undertaken by Monod de Froideville on which he collected on Mount Mambuliling at 2700 m asl a specimen of a Sulawesi endemic later described as *R. monodii* (Monod de Froideville 120). These, apparently, the only efforts made by botanists to scientifically collect the *Rhododendron* species in Mamasa area in that time.

In early 2000s, a group of researchers from Indonesia Institute of Science (now National Research and Innovation Agency), conducted an exploration to Mount Mambuliling (Figure 2). At least 8 specimens of *Rhododendron* were collected during this expedition. All specimens were collected in Mount Gandang Dewata National Park and published in a book entitled *Ekspedisi Sulawesi Barat: Flora, Fauna, dan Mikroorganisme Gandangdewata* (Achmadi et al. (2018). Some of them were identified as *R. vanvuurenii* and *R. malayanum*. Among the collected *R. vanvuurenii* specimens, there were individuals that apparently displayed white flowers and appeared to be very similar to *R. bloembergenii*?. Argent (2015) also mentioned that white-flowered material of *R. vanvuurenii* are actually *R. bloembergenii*. Meanwhile, the specimens they identify as *R. malayanum* are likely to be an error and should be placed in *R. celebicum*, as both species are very different in corolla shape and the scale of abaxial leaf surfaces (see page 19 for the photographs). Our team has not been able to access all material and so have been unable to verify the identity of all specimens.



Figure 2 View of Mount Mambuliling from Tondok Bakaru Village, Mamasa.

The 2019 and 2023 explorations

Since the Monod de Froideville’s exploration, there were no expeditions that collected *Rhododendron* in Mamasa regions until 2019. During the 2019 exploration, several species were collected, including *R. celebicum*, *R. tjiasmantoi*, *R. torajaense*, *R. seranicum*, and *R. zollingeri*. In Mustaqim et al. (2022), all orange-flowered materials from Mamasa were identified as *R. seranicum*. However, it turns out that one of the specimens is actually *R. vanvuurenii*. This brings the total number of species found during the 2019 expedition to five. Later, in 2023, we conducted further fieldwork and found additional records of three species, *R. bloembergenii*, *R. malayanum*, and *R. radians*. These two expeditions were done outside the nationally protected areas – with the Gandang Dewata National Park being one of the closest protected areas to Mamasa located to the north (Figure 3).

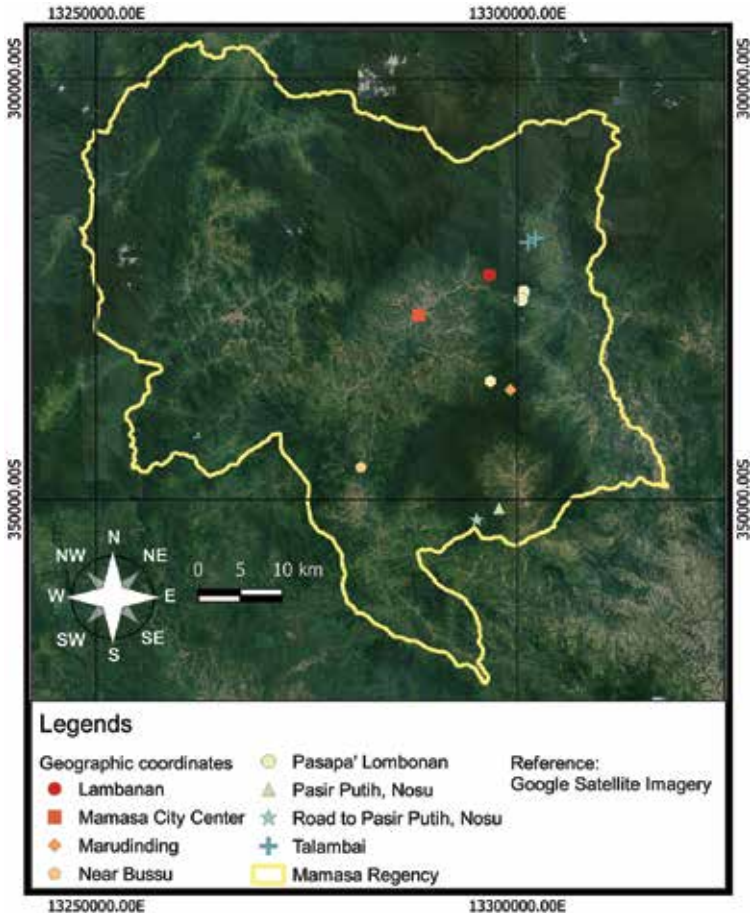


Figure 3
Rhododendron exploration sites in Mamasa in 2019 and 2023.

Some discoveries from the 2019 exploration were already published in the work led by the first author (Mustaqim et al. 2022), which included two records of geographic range extension for *R. seranicum* and *R. torajaense*. Many locations in Mamasa that have never been visited by botanists were targeted, resulting in geographic range extensions for two species and their first recorded collection in the Mamasa area. During this period, we collected *Rhododendron* specimens from at least four areas. The first was Pasapa' Lombonan, followed by Talambai, Bussu in Mesakada Village, and near city center of Mamasa.

Pasapa' Lombonan is a mountain ridge crossed by provincial road from Mamasa to Toraja Forest (Figure 4). This area ranges in elevation from 1700 to 2100 m asl, with the vegetation classified as mid – to upper montane forest. Among the *Rhododendron* species present, *Rhododendron celebicum*, a Sulawesi endemic species, stands out as the first species encountered in several areas (Figure 5). It can be recognized among other Mamasa species by its erect and branched habits, leaves arranged in loose pseudo-whorls usually on red petiole, and flowers having purple-pink to red corolla. Another species is the widespread *R. zollingeri*, it often seeds along the roadsides, forming almost pure stand in landslides (Figure 6 & 7). This species has orange-red flowers with a scaly and tubular corolla. From this area, we then moved to north of Pasapa' Lombonan, to the isolated village of Talambai.



Figure 4 Pasapa' Lombonan is a mountain ridge area of an elevation nearly 2000 m asl inhabited by at least four species of *Rhododendron*.



Figure 5 The Sulawesi endemic *Rhododendron celebicum* from Pasapa' Lombonan.



Figure 6 Flowering twigs of *Rhododendron zollingeri* from Pasapa' Lombonan.



Figure 7 The flowers of *Rhododendron zollingeri* from Pasapa' Lombonan.

Talambai is accessible by riding a motorcycle on a very narrow trail, which takes approximately 3 to 4 hours from the provincial roads (Figures 8–11). During our exploration, we rented both a motorcycle and a driver, known as “ojek” in Indonesia. Speeding along slippery trails on an undulating terrain, we encountered many red form of *R. celebicum* as we ascend towards Talambai. However, we saved further observations for the return journey. Since a roundtrip drive was not feasible, we spent a night in a Talambai Village, before commencing our collecting on the second day.



Figure 8 Road to Talambai with vegetation surrounded already invaded by *Pinus merkusii*. Note the ojek driver with red jacket.



Figure 9 Check point after the first climbing to Talambai. Note the mountainous range of Mount Gandang Dewata National Park behind.



Figure 10 The isolated Village of Talambai having several forest remnants which are important habitat for some species of *Rhododendron*.



Figure 11 Mid-montane vegetation of the remnant forest in Talambai where the recently described *Rhododendron tjiasmantoi* was found for the first time.



Figure 12 Leaves and flower buds of *Rhododendron tjiasmantoi* from Talambai Village.



Figure 13 Flowers of *Rhododendron tjiasmantoi* from Talambai, Mamasa.

On the following day, we halted at an isolated forest fragment and stumbled upon a pink-flowered rhododendron. At that time, we collected specimens, provisionally identifying them as *R. celebicum*. Later on, we encountered several large, felled trees with small and beautiful pink flowers scattered among the dry leaves and branches. We collected the herbarium specimens of these plants and continued our journey back to Mamasa, where we collected specimens of the previously spotted *R. celebicum* (Figures 14–16). Our attention drawn to the pink-flowered specimens which we encountered only twice during the fieldwork trip.

Following the Talambai exploration, we continued collecting in various areas. Our first was in Bussu, within Mesakada village, where we found *Rhododendron vanvuurenii* growing on a slope near the main provincial roads. Initially, this material was classified by Mustaqim et al. (2022) as *R. seranicum*. However, further investigation led us to conclude that the specimen is actually *R. vanvuurenii* (Figure 17 & 18). When it flowers, *R. vanvuurenii* can be easily distinguished from *R. seranicum* by its dark anthers – whereas *R. seranicum* has cream-coloured anthers. The corolla lobes of *R. seranicum* are deeper compared to *R. vanvuurenii*. These plants were located not far from the type location of the species in Messawa, i.e. 10 km of the northern border of Messawa.



Figure 14 Flowers of *Rhododendron celebicum* from road to Talambai Village.



Figure 15 Red-flowered form of *Rhododendron celebicum* found in Talambai.



Figure 16 The flowers of red form *Rhododendron celebicum*.



Figure 17 *Rhododendron vanvuureonii* found in Busu in Mesakada Village, Sumarorong.



Figure 18 Another view of *Rhododendron vanvuureonii* flowers with dark anther can be used to recognize it from the similar *Rhododendron seranicum*.

The 2019 fieldwork trip ended with the collection of true *R. seranicum* and *R. torajaense* on a slope next to the road in the center of Mamasa City. The *R. seranicum* collected (Figure 19 & 20) expanded the distribution of the species at that time to Mamasa (Mustaqim et al. 2022). This geographical range extension also applies to *R. torajaense*, with this collection some distance from the type locality for the species in Batutumonga near Mount Sesean, Toraja Highland (Argent 2015).

Following the initial expedition, the first author (WAM) examined the specimens of pink-flowered plants from Talambai, and led to the conclusion that both specimens are for a new species, described as *R. tjiasmantoi* (Hutabarat et al. 2022) – see Figures 12 and 13. At the time of publication, it was considered as a species threatened by human activities. i.e. the type specimen was collected from plant growing on a chopped tree and the surrounding habitats are cleared forest used for agricultural purpose.



Figure 19 Living plant of *Rhododendron seranicum* close to the center of Mamasa City. Note the electrical cable on the left.



Figure 20 Flowers of *Rhododendron seranicum* captured near the center of Mamasa City.

Exploration in 2023

The exploration, at the beginning of 2023, commenced in a vast expanse of forest that thrive in sandy soils, excluding quartzite. Our primary objective was to reach a site named as Pasir Putih, identified as an area with a significant presence of white sands according to AS. Pasir Putih is located in the Nosu subdistrict, in the southeastern part of Mamasa Regency. It is located in the east of Messawa, where Lous van Vuuren collected *R. vanvuureonii*.

During our expedition, we successfully documented a new locality in Sulawesi for the white-flowered *Rhododendron radians* (Figure 21 to 24). This species was discovered on a summit ridge within a disturbed habitat. It is a much-branched erect shrub of c. 3 m tall, possessing more or less sessile leaves, and flowers with slender white tubular corolla. Prior to the discovery, *R. radians* had been recorded in several areas in Sulawesi, primarily in the northern arms, i.e. Minahassa and Mount Sojol area, mountains on the west of Bone Gulf including Latimojong Range, and also mountains around Makassar (Limbung) (Argent 2015). The populations in Latimojong Range, particularly around Mount Sinadji, represent the closest known population to those discovered in Nosu.



Figure 21 The many-branched *Rhododendron radians* from Nosu.



Figure 22 Andre Sambokaraeng (AS), the second author, holding *Rhododendron radicans* in Nosu.



Figure 23 Perulate bracts of *Rhododendron radians*.



Figure 24 Flowers of *Rhododendron radians* in Nosu.

After concluding our exploration in Nosu, the team proceeded to the summit area of Pasapa' Lombonan, where we observed a population of the fragrant-flowered *R. bloembergenii* (Figures 26 & 27). This species is characterized by its large leaf size, fragrant flowers with long tubular corolla with spreading branches, as well as the presence of hairs in the ovary (see Argent 2015). The species was found growing as an epiphytic shrub on a summit at c. 1920 m asl (Figure 25). There, at least three individual plants were observed. One of them was in flower and we successfully collected material. In addition, we also documented the possible pollination by flower flies from genus *Platycheirus* who visited the flowers of this species for a rather long time (Figure 28).



Figure 25
Mossy
forest of the
probably
transition
from mid-
to upper
montane
forest in
Pasapa'
Lombonan.

In Pasapa' Lombonan, we also sought to record possible additional populations of *R. tjiasmantoi* (Figure 30). The limited information encouraged us to explore deeper for this species. Our effort resulted in the discovery of additional individuals of this species in Pasapa' Lombonan, just beside the provincial road from Mamasa to Toraja (see map). During the time of exploration in July 2023, we have been informed that this road will be developed and the species is nearly 100 percent gone due to the excavation of the habitat. A serious effort to rescue the possibly affected populations is desperately needed.

Right: Figure 26 Living plant of *Rhododendron bloembergenii*, a species endemic to Sulawesi.



Below: Figure 27 Closer look of *Rhododendron bloembergenii* inflorescence.





Figure 28 A *Platychirus* fly visiting the flowers of *Rhododendron bloembergenii*.



Figure 29 Fruits of *Rhododendron bloembergenii* from Pasapa' Lombonan.



Figure 30 Fruits of *Rhododendron tjiasmantoi* from Pasapa' Lombonan.

Our next destination in Pasapa' Lombonan, was Marudinding (Figure 31), an area with magnificent forests. The name itself aptly described the forest, as the temperature here is quite cold – local people told us that it is the coldest place in Mamasa. In Marudinding, the highest summit is about 2500 m asl, but our exploration only reached around 2100 m asl. We paid more attention to the undulating summit plateau, following the abandoned traditional trails used by the Torajanese and Mamasanese people to move from Toraja to Mamasa.

Our climb began in a village of Orobua Timur, a well-known starting point for entering Marudinding from Mamas. The village is situated at approximately 1400 m and ahead of us lay a steep climb of nearly 45 degrees. Close to the village we spotted *R. seranicum*, although unfortunately, it was not in bloom. As we proceeded along the trail, we encountered two species, the first *R. torajaense* and the widespread *R. zollingeri*. These were flourishing amidst the mid-montane forest, also rich in orchids and the beautiful pitcher plant, *Nepenthes maxima* (Figure 39). The climb took us about two hours plus some time for collecting some plant specimens.



Figure 31 Mountain complex with Marudinding located in the central part. The left summits belong to Kepa Summit area.



Figure 32 Forest in Marudinding at an elevation around 2200 m asl.

At the elevation of around 2200 m asl, the mountain ridge was reached (Figure 32). The forest composition had noticeably changed, as marked by the abundant presence of tree ferns, which likely belong to the genus *Alsophila*. Surprisingly, there were not many rhododendron plants growing in this area, as it appears to be too cold for the *Mamasa* species which typically have broad leaves.

AS proposed we walk to the center of the undulating mountain plateau, the central part of Marudinding complex. Here, at an elevation of 2100 m asl, we stopped at a low forest just beside what looked like cleared and abandoned land (Figure 33). In this area, we searched for some hours and found three species, *R. bloembergenii*, *R. celebicum* and *R. malayanum*, the latter a species widespread across SE Asia. Sulawesi is the easternmost geographic range of *R. malayanum* and the species is readily recognizable by the overlapping scale in the lower surfaces of the leaves and purple-magenta corolla (Figures 34 & 35). To our knowledge, the trip is the first to explore for rhododendrons in this mountain complex.



Figure 33 The team preparing to clean area for camping with part of the magnificent and underexplored forest of Marudinding behind.



Figure 34 The very distinctive perulate bud of *Rhododendron malayanum* inflorescence in Marudinding.



Figure 35 The flowers of *Rhododendron malayanum* in Marudinding.

We also explored other parts of Mamasa, including along the road divide from Mamasa to Mamudju. Close to Malao, we found some rhododendrons that could be either *R. seranicum* or *R. vanvuurenii*. We have no time to investigate the materials due to access and limited time available. The population was found in an elevation around 1100 to 1200 m asl.

The last *Rhododendron* collecting trip was undertaken in heath forest close to Rambusaratu village, one of the oldest inhabited villages near Mamasa (Figure 38). The location itself is almost at the border of Mount Gandang Dewata National Park. In this place, some plants of *R. torajaense* (Figures 36 & 37) were seen. With these additional discoveries, *R. torajaense* appears to be quite common in Mamasa.



Figure 36 Flowers of *Rhododendron torajaense* from the forest entrance in Orobua Timur, the road to Marudinding.



Figure 37 Ovary and style of *Rhododendron torajaense* captured from near the city center of Mamasa.



Figure 38 Heath forest in Rambusaratu Village, north of Mamasa.



Figure 39 *Nepenthes maxima*, an eastern Malesia widespread quite common in Mamasa. This one was discovered from Lambanan heath forest.

Threats – habitat conversion and Merkus’ pine invasion

Some of the rhododendrons we found in Mamasa were growing on recently cleared lands or exposed slopes caused by landslides. Others were found growing in heavily disturbed habitats (Figures 41–43). Whilst rhododendrons can grow on disturbed sites, land clearing is a serious threat to rhododendron populations and especially the Sulawesi endemic and rare species like *R. tjiasmantoi*. Much of the vegetation in Mamasa mountains have undergone severe disturbance with clearing leading to a change in vegetation composition that increases the risk of forest fire. Forest fire has greatly changed the vegetation composition of many parts in Mamasa. The shrubland are prone to forest fire and burnt areas are subsequently invaded by *P. merkusii*. The invasion of *P. merkusii* (Figure 44) in many areas supplants the habitat of native species, including *R. seranicum*, *R. torajaense*, and *R. zollingeri*.



Figure 40 The cleared vegetation for agricultural purposes in Talambai (2019).



Figure 41 Fires we recorded along the way to Talambai. This forest is habitat for two endemics *Rhododendron celebicum* and *Rhododendron tjiasmantoi*.



Figure 42 Timber extraction along the road to Talambai will threaten the epiphytic population of *Rhododendron tjiasmantoi*.



Figure 43 An ongoing road expansion will threaten at least three species of *Rhododendron*, i.e. *R. celebicum*, *R. tjiasmantoi*, and *R. zollingeri*. The construction is still in the lower part of Pasapa' Lombonan and is expected to be finished before mid-2024.



Figure 44 Invasion of *Pinus merkusii* in disturbed habitats in many places of Mamasa. This mountainous terrain is the typical habitat for *R. seranicum*, *R. torajaense* and *R. vanvuurenii* and some *R. zollingeri*.

Past connection of Rhododendron and local people

Amelia, Andre's wife, told us that flowers of some species were collected and eaten by children in the past. It is interesting that rhododendron flowers are edible. We haven't tried to eat them as we only heard this at the end of the exploration. According to the local people, the white rhododendron species are all named as 'dangan-dangan', as was also mentioned in Achmadi et al. (2018).

Cultivation of Rhododendron seranicum

Since the 2019, AS has successfully grown *R. seranicum* from cutting and for the first time, this species is being grown locally and has recently flowered in his garden in Mamasa (Figure 45). *R. seranicum* is from Sulawesi and Maluku, and has good horticultural potential. There are two varieties of this species, and Mamasa plants belong to the typical variety. The long term program will be a Rhododendron or Ericaceae garden which will be maintained as a conservatory under the plant cultivation group, KTH Botani Gandang Dewata, under the supervision of Sulawesi Barat Provincial Natural Resource and Conservation Agency, Ministry of Environmental and Forestry, Indonesia. ❀



Figure 45 Second author AS with *Rhododendron seranicum* cultivated in his garden in Mamasa. The plant was grown from cutting and without additional root inducing hormone applied.

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Forms of Rhododendron zoelleri extant in cultivation in Australia and notes on growing R. zoelleri at sea level in Tasmania

IAN CHALK & ANDREW ROUSE

In 2018, Ian Chalk moved to Sulphur Creek on the north coast of Tasmania and established a garden within 100m of the ocean (Bass Strait). Ian planted out numerous vireyas, and on reading in Argent (2007) Van Royen's (1984) account of *R. zoelleri* "growing on a slope about 3ft (1m) above sea level, regularly sprayed by seawater", decided to plant a specimen of *R. zoelleri* at the closest spot in his garden to the ocean.

The authors have been regularly corresponding about vireyas and particularly their prospects in Ian's garden given its proximity to the ocean and potential for exposure to salty sea breezes. It also prompted this review; what forms of *R. zoelleri* do we still have in Australia, and at what altitude were they collected? Do we still have low altitude forms in cultivation?



Figure 1 *R. zoelleri* Michael Black form

Forms of R. zoelleri extant in cultivation in Australia

The 1960s and 1970s saw 11 introductions of *R. zoelleri* to Australia from across New Guinea, with articles in this journal – Withers (1991) and Clancy (1993) – providing details of these introductions.

Arthur Headlam (1980) published an article in the *Journal of the American Rhododendron Society* (Vol. 34 No.3) that sheds light on the forms of *R. zoelleri* in cultivation at that time. He states that there “are presently several forms of *R. zoelleri* in cultivation in Australia, amongst which are the West Irian form, a form from Goodenough Island raised and named *R. zoelleri* ‘Island Sunset’ by the late Don Stanton, a form raised from seed of ‘Island Sunset’ by Brian Clancy, which is almost indistinguishable from the original, and a form collected by the late Michael Black, which has proved to be easy to grow and flower. This form was collected near the village of Aregenang where *R. zoelleri* was growing in a colony in grassland and thin bush, alongside a track in a layer of humus overlaying limestone, where thousands of seedlings grew amongst the mossy tufts in half shade.”



Figure 2 An original plant of *R. zoelleri* Michael Black form growing in the garden of the late Dr John Rouse.

Collector	Location	Date	Comments
Unknown	Goodenough Island, PNG.	Early-mid 1960s (?)	Altitude of collection is unknown. Highest point on Goodenough Island is over 2000m. Held at Dandenong Ranges Botanic Gardens
Michael Black	Areganan, near Mindik, PNG. These villages are ~1400m. above sea level.	1968	Widely distributed in the 1970s, excellent form of the species. Likely to be one of the forms extensively used in hybridising. Held at the Dandenong Ranges Botanic Gardens and elsewhere (Figures 1 & 2).
Unknown	Baliem Valley, West Papua.	Unknown	Specimens held at the Dandenong Ranges Botanic Gardens are labelled as from the Baliem Valley. Has not been observed in flower. Baliem Valley is ~1300m, so not a low altitude form.
Prof. H. Sleumer (?)	Wardori River, 1350m, West Papua (?).	1962	Specimen held by Ray Weeks and received from Tom Lelliott in about 1969 (Figure 3). Thought to be a plant grown from seed originally received by Brian Clancy from Prof. Sleumer. For further details on this introduction, see Clancy (1993).
Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Held by Andrew Rouse. Plants ex John Rouse collection, original source unknown but different from those listed above. Possibly an intra-species cross?

Table 1 Forms of *R. zoelleri* extant in cultivation in Australia



Figure 3 *R. zoelleri* in Ray Week's collection. Received in about 1969 and possibly grown from seed collected by Prof. H Sleumer in Arfak Mountains, West Papua, 1962



Figure 4 Ian Chalk planting *R. zoelleri* in his front garden within 50m of the ocean.

In preparing this article, Australian vireya enthusiasts were asked to provide information on forms of *R. zoelleri* they hold, and this was used to prepare an updated list (Table 1). It is apparent that many of the forms of *R. zoelleri* listed in Withers (1991) and Clancy (1993) are no longer in cultivation, or cannot be identified due to lack of provenance information on their label.

Of interest to vireya enthusiasts and hybridisers is heat tolerant plants, so forms of species collected from lower, and therefore hotter environments are desirable parent plants. Whilst *R. zoelleri* has been widely used in hybridising in Australia, there is scant information on which forms of *R. zoelleri* were used and whether they were low (below 500m) forms.

Of the forms of *R. zoelleri* still in cultivation, the Michael Black and the two forms from West Papua (Baliem Valley and Arfak Mountains) were collected at about 1300–1400m so cannot be considered low altitude forms. We have no information about the altitude the Goodenough Island form was collected, so it is possible it is a low altitude form; it was widely used in hybridising, initially by Don Stanton who registered *R. 'Island Sunset'*, a selected form of *R. zoelleri* grown from seed wild collected on Goodenough Island.

Notes on growing *R. zoelleri* at sea level, Tasmania

Having read van Royen's account in *Argent of R. zoelleri* growing at sea level, in April 2023, Ian planted a specimen of *R. zoelleri* in his front garden at Sulphur Creek, northern Tasmania (Figure 4). His front garden is within 50m of the high tide mark and exposed to sea breezes and mist.

This is a five year test to evaluate whether *R. zoelleri* will grow in conditions where it will be exposed to salty air. To date it is growing well and comparable in growth and vigour to the plants in the main vireya bed that is 100m from the ocean.

The horticultural advice for vireyas, and all rhododendrons for the matter, is to avoid growing them in saline conditions. There are a few vireya species that grow at, or close to sea level, including *R. zoelleri*, *R. longiflorum* and *R. javanicum* ssp. *brookeanum* that are described as growing epiphytically in mangrove forests and cliffs. Here you'd expect to be exposed to some salty air though possibly the well drained conditions minimise any salt build up around their roots.

Amongst vireya enthusiasts in Australia, Ian's garden is the closest to the ocean we are aware of, and so the progress of his *R. zoelleri* and other vireyas in his garden provide useful guidance on how well vireyas can be grown when exposed to salty sea breezes. ☘

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Rhododendrons Down Under: Australian Rhododendron Conference 2023

ROBERT HATCHER

This Conference, held at Emu Valley Rhododendron Garden in Burnie Tasmania, is the final conference held under the banner of the Australian Rhododendron Society Incorporated due to that body being formally wound up at the end of 2022. The programme ran over three days from Friday the 13th to Sunday the 15th of October.

The underlying reason for the Conference was to present the work undertaken in partnership with the Australian Tropical Herbarium (James Cook University) Cairns and Massey University in New Zealand on the Australian Rhododendron species and Tropical Mountain Plants of Far North Queensland and work out future ways to conserve *Rhododendron* species and cultivars in Australia.

Friday was a get to know the garden and registration with a Cocktail event before going off to find dinner in Burnie.

The Conference was formally opened on the Saturday by the Tamanians



Figure 1 Hon. Jeremy Rockcliff, Premier of Tasmania, Maurice Kupsch, EVRG Curator, Leonie Hiscutt, Member for Montgomery and Seamus O'brien, Conference keynote speaker.



Above: Figure 2 Maurice Kupsch leading a tour of the gardens.



Left: Figure 3 Seamus O'Brien, Head Gardener, Killmacurragh and conference keynote speaker.



Figure 4 John O'Hara (ARS–Vic), Ant Dry (EVRG), Bruce Christie (Illawarra Rhododendron and Rainforest Gardens) and Rob Hatcher (ARS–SA) following signing of a MoU between these organisations.

Premier, the Hon. Jeremy Rockliff and the local State MP Leonie Hiscutt was also in attendance.

There were delegates from South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland and Tasmania; Canada was represented also and there were presenters from Queensland, New Zealand and Ireland.

We were privileged to have Seamus O'Brien, Head Gardener at Killmacurragh, part of the Glasnevin Botanic Gardens, as keynote speaker (and after dinner speaker on the Sunday evening). For the keynote address he presented on the Moores of Glasnevin and the introductions of *Rhododendron* species to Ireland by these two giants of Irish horticulture and the significance of these introductions to gardens all over the British Isles and indeed the world.

The presentation on the collecting of the Tropical Mountain Plants of Far North Queensland was given by Stuart Worboys of the Australian Tropical Herbarium. What an amazing outcome this project has achieved so far (and the work continues) with the funding from the Ian Potter Foundation and the partnership with Dr Sue Gardiner, Plant and Food Research New Zealand who presented on the results of the molecular analysis she conducted that supports recognition of two Australian native rhododendron species – *Rhododendron lochiaie* and *R. viriosum* and the several geographic forms of *R. viriosum* that could be regarded as sub clines. Andrew Rouse, representing the ARS, concluded this session with a presentation on the ex situ collection of these two species now held at the Dandenong Ranges Botanic Gardens and plans for their display in a Cloud Forest Garden.

Dr Marion MacKay and Andrew Brooker spoke on the New Zealand



Figure 5 Ian Chalk amongst the vireyas in his garden.



Figure 6 Bob Cherry (left) and conference delegates, in his nursery.

project of conserving *Rhododendron* species in several locations and how it could be a useful template for conserving rhododendrons in Australia.

The closing of the main programme of presentations was a panel discussion with the representatives from each of the state areas represented giving an overview of what is the state of play as far as *Rhododendron* growing in the areas is concerned.

A memorandum of understanding from those bodies interested in continuing dialogue and cooperation going forward was signed before formal proceedings closed.

The second day's programme consisted of garden visits: Ian and Jenny Chalk's garden at Sulphur Creek and then Bob and Derelie Cherry's garden at Gawler. Ian's garden displays an amazing array of vireya rhododendrons growing in full sun about 100 metres away from the local seashore.

In his retirement, Bob Cherry has created an amazing garden and a nursery that is more than a hobby. He is still hybridising tuberous begonias and trying to get back to old fashioned carnations.

The final part of the weekend's proceedings was the closing dinner prepared by the Emu Valley Rhododendron Garden's own catering team. Burnie Mayor Ms Teeny Brumby gave a pre-dinner speech to us all and thanked us all for visiting Burnie. Seamus O'Brien entertained us with his talk "In the Footsteps of Joseph Hooker".

While this was in one sense a swan song of conferences under the auspices of the Australian Rhododendron Society National Council one would hope we will have some similar events in the future through the groups signed up to the Memorandum of Understanding.

Special thanks to the members and volunteers at Emu Valley Rhododendron Gardens for hosting an excellent conference. ❀



Figure 7 Jeff Jenkinson, ARS-SA giving a vote of thanks to EVRG staff and volunteers.



Figure 1 *R. 'Kirin'*.



Figure 2 *R. kaempferi*.

The Wilson 50 Azaleas in the United Kingdom

POLLY COOKE

A Brief History of the Wilson 50 Azaleas

Evergreen azaleas are in the subgenus *Tsutsusi*, section *Tsutsusi*, formerly *Obtusum* subseries and almost all of these species azaleas originate from Japan. Many of these species azaleas are not fully hardy in Northern Europe and much of the USA. There are also naturally occurring hybrid evergreen azaleas found in Japan (*R.* × ‘*Obtusum*’) including the Wilson 50, that are hardy in parts of Europe and the USA.

The Wilson 50 azaleas are a collection of Japanese evergreen azaleas selected by the British plant hunter Ernest Wilson during his second visit to Japan in 1918. Wilson had first visited Japan in 1914 and saw Kirishima azaleas flowering in a garden in Hatogaya, near Tokyo and he was captivated by them. In early May 1918 Wilson visited the azalea nurseries in Kurume on the island of Kyushu. He was accompanied by Mr Suzuki of the Yokohama Nursery Company on both occasions. They settled on the Akashi Nursery as the best one to provide a collection for the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University, Wilson’s employer.

Mr Akashi had two hundred and fifty varieties of azalea to choose from, so selection was difficult. After his visit, Wilson wrote to Professor Sargent, Director of the Arnold Arboretum, that he had selected the best forty-three and had made notes and taken photographs. He concluded his letter by saying they were going back to Tokyo to tour the nurseries in that area. (Wilson, E.H. Letter dated May 13th 1918, to Professor C.S. Sargent, Director of the Arnold Arboretum).

Wilson writes in *A Monograph of Azaleas* (Wilson and Rehder, 1921):
“In the garden of Mr Akashi I selected and obtained a double set of the undermentioned fifty varieties of these azaleas which I consider the best, and these safely reached the Arnold Arboretum on April 24 1919. The names are those of the originator, Akashi, and therefore authentic. The plants will be propagated and distributed under these names ...”

The hose-in-hose characteristic is omitted from the list of fifty for both *R.* ‘Takasago’ and *R.* ‘Kirin’ (Figure 1), but this is included on the previous page of the monograph where Wilson gives details of the best six. Earlier in his monograph Wilson mentions *R.* ‘Yayehiryu’ (no.39) and also comments that the brilliant red flowered ‘Hinodegiri’ (no.42) is no longer grown at Kurume but

is abundant in Tokyo and Osaka gardens. The catalogue for the Akashi nursery for 1917–18 does not list either of these azaleas nor is *R.* ‘Osaraku seedling’ (no.49) listed. Wilson says forty-three azaleas in his letter but lists fifty azaleas in his monograph (Table 1, below), all said to be from the Akashi Nursery.

1 Seikai white, hose-in-hose	24 Kiritsubo rosy mauve
2 Kureno Yuki* white, hose-in-hose	25 Omoine pale lavender
3 Shin Seikai creamy white, hose-in-hose	26 Oinō Mezame deep rose-colour
4 Yorozuyo white	27 Katsura No Hana rose-colour
5 Nani Wagata white, suffused with salmon pink	28 Shin Utena pale salmon
6 Tancho flesh-colour, hose-in-hose	29 Kumo No Uye* pure salmon
7 Hachika Tsugi white, suffused with lavender	30 Benifude salmon
8 Irohayama white, margined pale lavender	31 Suga No Ito pure pink
9 Hoō white, tinged with pink	32 Kasane Kagaribi dull salmon-red
10 Suiyōhi flesh-colour	33 Tsuta Momiji bright red
11 Takasago* pale pink, hose-in-hose	34 Suetsumu crimson
12 Kasumi Gaseki pale pink	35 Fudesute Yama light red
13 Bijinsui pale pink	36 Ima Shōjō bright red, hose-in-hose
14 Asagasumi rose pink, hose-in-hose	37 Rashō Mon scarlet
15 Kimigayo pink	38 Waka Kayede red
16 Azuma Kagami* deep pink, hose-in-hose	39 Yayehiryu bright scarlet, hose-in-hose
17 Osaraku white, suffused and margined with lavender	40 Kurai No Himo* carmine, hose-in-hose
18 Otome blush pink	41 Agemaki carmine
19 Aya Kammuri rose-colour	42 Hinodegiri bright crimson
20 Shintoke No Hagasane rose, shading to pink, hose-in-hose	43 Aioi colour of almond-blossoms, hose-in-hose
21 Saotome rose-colour	44 Sakura Tsukasa rosy mauve
22 Kirin* deep rose, shading to silvery rose	45 Tama No Utena pale salmon
23 Tamafuyo white, striped peach-colour	46 Goshō Zakura white, striped peach-colour
	47 Ukamuse vermilion, hose-in-hose
	48 Hinode No Taka crimson
	49 Osaraku Seedling white, suffused and margined with lavender
	50 Hana Asobi red

Table 1 The Wilson 50 Azaleas.

Wilson requested that Mr Sawano and Mr Akashi, two leading azalea experts, select the best six azaleas from the collection of fifty. These are marked * in the list.

Throughout his monograph Wilson refers to all of these azaleas as 'Kurume azaleas' but is that correct? Well, the answer is yes and no! Their absolute origin is Mount Kirishima, the collective name for a group of volcanic peaks on the Japanese Island of Kyushu. They are natural hybrids of the species evergreen azaleas *R. kaempferi* (Figure 2) and *R. kiusianum* found growing in the volcanic ash above the tree line. In Japan however, there is a regional distinction. Edo Kirishima azaleas were developed in the Tokyo region from these natural hybrids earlier than Kurume azaleas. Later breeding in Kurume from the natural hybrids may also have involved crossing with other azaleas such as *R. sataense* and Ryukyuu azaleas, derived from *R. macrosepalum* and *R. ripense* (Okamoto, et al., 2007).

Wilson showed his Kurume azaleas at the Massachusetts Horticultural Society Show in March 1920, eleven months after their arrival in Boston. However, only forty-nine azaleas were shown. *R.* 'Yayehiryu' (no.39) and *R.* 'Hinodegiri' (no.42) were both missing from his display and *Rhododendron* 'Kocho No Mai' was included as number 49 (Massachusetts Horticultural Society, 1921). This azalea, *R.* 'Kocho No Mai', also known as *R.* 'Amoenum', was first introduced to the UK via China in 1850, by Robert Fortune. Both *R.* 'Yayehiryu' and *R.* 'Hinodegiri' are regarded as Edo Kirishima azaleas, while *R.* 'Kocho No Mai' is a Kurume azalea.

Herbarium specimens of Wilson's Azalea Collection were taken for the Arnold Arboretum and the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew on 23rd March 1920, the day before the Show opened, except for *R.* 'Takasago' which is dated three days later, 26th March 1920. Imagine the chaos of trying to take herbarium specimens and stage your exhibits for a show on the same day. The dates have been verified using digital images of the original herbarium specimens. Neither set of herbarium specimens is complete for the fifty azaleas but *R.* 'Yayehiryu' (Figure 3) also known as *R.* 'Yayegiri' is present in both.

There are differences in numbering and different numbers of azaleas given by Wilson as collected from Mr Akashi's nursery. Then the herbarium specimens show that Wilson actually collected fifty-three azaleas. The three not given in the list of fifty are: *R.* 'Kocho No Mai' (no.52), *R.* 'Hatsugiri' (no.53) and *R.* 'Kirishima' which is number 38 and puts the listed numbering out by one. Both *R.* 'Hatsugiri' and *R.* 'Kirishima' are regarded as Edo Kirishima azaleas. So, everything is a bit muddled right at the very beginning.

Looking at the list versus the herbarium sheets, number 7 is shown only on the Kew herbarium specimens, labelled as *R.* 'Hatsukatsugi'. This is a pink azalea with short stamens and is completely different than the one Wilson describes as white suffused with lavender for *R.* 'Hachika Tsugi' (no.7). In Japan, *R.* 'Hachika Tsugi' is not known as the name for an azalea. (Personal correspondence: Kasahara & Okamoto). It is acknowledged in Japan that

Wilson's descriptions of white, striped peach-colour, for both *R.* 'Tamafuyo' (no.23) and *R.* 'Gosho Zakura' (no.46) are correct for the UK, even though they differ from the pink-flowered azaleas with those names in Japan.

Two complete sets of the Wilson 50 azaleas were sent to the UK. One was sent to J.C. Williams at Caerhays in Cornwall and the second set went to J.B. Stevenson at Tower Court in Berkshire. They arrived in the UK during the early 1920s. There was also a collection of thirty of the fifty azaleas, purchased at the Chelsea Flower Show in 1920 from the Yokohama Nursery Company. Lionel de Rothschild bought them for his new garden at Exbury in the New Forest. This part collection was ordered to include the best six as selected by the Japanese experts. We know from Mrs de Rothschild's diary that the azaleas were planted around the ponds and were flowering in 1923 (Cooke, 2021). Perhaps these Wilson 50 azaleas were the first to arrive in the UK?



Figure 3 *R.* 'Yayehiru'.

Finding the Wilson 50 Azaleas in the UK

All of that happened a long time ago, so what of the Wilson 50 azalea collection today? There are no records available at Caerhays or Exbury from the 1920s. Tower Court was sold in the early 1960s following the death of J.B. Stevenson in 1950, although part of the original garden still survives. Only the collection of twenty-three Wilson 50 azaleas assembled by the Hardy Family at Sandling Park in Kent during the 1930s has records. Most other large collections are post World War II. Caerhays and Tower Court contributed to a complete Wilson 50 collection at RHS Garden Wisley in the late 1940s and the Curator, Francis Hanger, showed them at the Chelsea Flower Show in 1958. Alas, the collection at RHS Wisley is now depleted. J.B. Stevenson contributed a complete collection of the Wilson 50 to the Kurume Punchbowl in Windsor Great Park immediately after the war. Their experience has been that only thirty-eight of the fifty azaleas were likely to survive in the British climate (Anderson, 2023). The collection at The Isabella Plantation was started during the 1980s by Jane Braham who discovered a sufficient number to achieve National Collection status from Plant Heritage.

My search for the Wilson 50 azaleas spans about 40 years, beginning in 1983 just after Barry and I had moved house. I found an azalea in our new garden labelled as 'Kirin'. I soon discovered that it was a Wilson 50 azalea but I didn't know what that meant! Between 1983 and 2013 I tried to research the Wilson 50 azaleas and find more of them for the garden. Few nurseries grew them and stock availability was poor. By the end of 2013 I found myself with a large collection of books and fifteen azaleas, sold to me as part of the Wilson 50, the names were correct and the flowers matched Wilson's descriptions. I couldn't find any more. Was this the end of the road? Barry and I continued to visit numerous gardens that had some of the Wilson 50 azaleas, including Sandling Park, the Savill and Valley Gardens at Windsor, the Isabella Plantation in Richmond Park (Figures 4 & 5) and Leonardslee in Sussex.

A friend arranged an introduction to Jo Scrivener, Assistant Park Manager of Richmond Park, with responsibility for the Isabella Plantation and the National Collection of Wilson 50. As soon as we met Jo, we all 'clicked'. Each year since then, we have visited the Isabella Plantation every week during the flowering season and assisted Jo with the annual stock check and record keeping of the Wilson 50 azaleas they hold. After a few years we were stuck again, we were confident in naming most of the azaleas but a few had question marks over them that we simply couldn't resolve.

I asked Jo if he could get the herbarium specimens in digital form. Jo asked both Kew and the Arnold Arboretum if we could have copies. After a while we received the Kew specimens via the RHS, eight herbarium sheets with five



Figure 4 Young Wilson 50 azaleas in one of the nursery beds at the Isabella Plantation.



Figure 5 The Still Pond at the Isabella Plantation.

or six specimens per sheet, total forty-six specimens of the Wilson 50. Michael Dossman, Curator of the Arnold Arboretum, insisted they hadn't got any. Undeterred, we kept asking and it clearly bothered Michael too. Eventually he found them incorrectly filed (since 1920?). They were immediately digitised and sent over, one azalea per sheet but the collection is not complete, only forty-five specimens of the Wilson 50. The digitised images are a real game changer and combined with support and photos from Dr Okamoto of the Kurume Azalea Centre in Japan we have a much clearer picture of what to look for.



Figure 6 R. 'Aioi'

We have found a number of errors and omissions/additions for hose-in-hose characteristics from Wilson's original list. It also gives us a good idea of flower size. The arrival of these digital images coincided with the beginning of the Covid pandemic and lockdown, so there was plenty of time to look at our enlarged collection at home and make comparisons.

The first unravelling of the 'muddle' came from Dr Okamoto and his photographs. There are no herbarium specimens for *R.* 'Aioi' (no.43) (Figure 6) or *R.* 'Osaraku Seedling' (no.49) but what we knew as those azaleas matched the photos from Japan. Then Dr Okamoto told us what we knew as *R.* 'Tsuta Momiji' (no.33) was in fact *R.* 'Waka Kayede' (no.38); this was verified by checking with the herbarium specimens, where *R.* 'Tsuta Momiji' is shown to be hose-in-hose; our azalea had single red flowers that were an exact match for size and shape with *R.* 'Waka Kayede'. Spurred on by this the herbarium specimens were all examined again even more closely. This examination showed that the azalea we knew as *R.* 'Ukamuse' (no.47) had flowers that were far too large and was also hose-in-hose. The real *R.* 'Ukamuse' is a small single vermillion flower. Then there was the lonely azalea that I remembered, growing in a very shaded place at RHS Garden, Wisley, just labelled as 'Rhododendron'. It bothered me so much that I asked for cuttings and was allowed to take them.

This azalea was confirmed by Dr Okamoto as *R.* ‘Suga no Ito’ (no.31) after I sent photos and floral dimensions to him. That changed things again for us, as the flower colour was slightly different when grown in less shade and matched what we knew as *R.* ‘Saotome’ (no.21). These findings haven’t increased the number of azaleas in the National Collection, they are simply re-arranged!

The herbarium specimens show that the azalea we knew as *R.* ‘Kasane Kagaribi’ (no.32) with vibrant salmon single flowers is wrong; *R.* ‘Kasane Kagaribi’ has small hose-in-hose flowers. What we all know as ‘Kiritsubo’ (no.24) (Figure 7) also appears to be wrong, as the flowers are too small. We differ in opinion with Japan over *R.* ‘Asagasumi’ (no.14), *R.* ‘Aya Kammuri’ (no.19) and *R.* ‘Benifude’ (no.30) over the colour of the flowers and for *R.* ‘Yaye Hiryu’ over the shape of the flower and the number of stamens.

In 2021 Jo, Barry and I began an ongoing collaboration with Exbury Gardens to look for Wilson 50 azaleas around the ponds. Exbury has possibly got the best part-collection of Wilson 50 in the UK. Flowers were brought home to study and cuttings taken later in the year so that we could propagate and see them regularly, especially when in flower. Charles Williams kindly sent many photos in 2022 and also a selection of cuttings that we requested, based on the photos, from the gardens at the Caerhays Estate. Some of these have already flowered and look very promising as Wilson 50 azaleas. In 2023, we were able to visit both Exbury and the Kurume Punchbowl in Windsor Great Park. The Punchbowl was cut back in 2017 to allow for regeneration of the azaleas and is still closed to the public but we were allowed in during the flowering season and again to take cuttings later in the year. What have we found so far?

Comparing flowering azaleas from Exbury and at Windsor, we are confident that we have now found *R.* ‘Kasane Kagaribi’ (Figure 8) and *R.* ‘Ukamuse’ (Figure 9). Photographs have been used for this but there’s nothing to beat bringing a flower home and comparing it directly with azaleas propagated from cuttings and the herbarium specimens. We hope we have finally found *R.* ‘Takasago’ (no.11) at Exbury. The flower colour is pale pink which rapidly fades to nearly white, the shape and floral characteristics match the herbarium specimens and most important of all the central part of the petals of the outer corolla are hairy almost from tip to the base. This is the only one of the hose-in-hose Wilson 50 azaleas that is so hairy. We also hope to confirm *R.* ‘Fudesute Yama’ (no.35) (Figure 10) from Exbury, as this is the only single flowered red azalea in the collection that has small petaloids on some of the stamens. Others under scrutiny are: from Exbury, possibles for *R.* ‘Hoo’ (no.9), *R.* ‘Osaraku’ (no.17), *R.* ‘Shin Utena’ (no.28) and *R.* ‘Agemaki’ (no.41); from Caerhays, possibles for *R.* ‘Saotome’ (no.21), *R.* ‘Kiritsubo’ (no.24), *R.* ‘Sakura Tsukasa’ (no.44) and *R.* ‘Tama no Utena’ (no.45). We have cuttings taken in August 2023 from Exbury for *R.* ‘Bijinsui’ (no 10);



Figure 7 R. 'Kiritsubo Ramster'.



Figure 8 *R.* 'Kasane Kagaribi', Windsor Great Park.



Figure 9 *R.* 'Ukamuse'.

from Windsor for *R.* 'Tsuta Momiji' (no.33) and from both gardens for *R.* 'Shin Seikai' (no.3) and *R.* 'Suetsumu' (no.34).

In the UK the first of the Wilson 50 azaleas to flower is *R.* 'Kirin' closely followed by *R.* 'Waka Kayede'. The remainder are a few weeks behind with peak flowering at the beginning of May. Experience has shown that *R.* 'Kureno Yuki' (no.2) is semi-deciduous. Older azaleas of *R.* 'Kureno Yuki' can be recognised at a distance from their bare silvery stems. *R.* 'Waka Kayede'



Figure 10 *R.* 'Fudesute Yama'.



Figure 11 *R.* 'Waka Kayede' autumn colour.

(Figure 11) can give terrific autumn leaf colour but not necessarily every year. The well-known UK Nurseryman James Russell noted that he thought it unlikely that *R.* 'Kurai No Himo' (no.40) would be sufficiently hardy to endure in the UK. The National Collection has several mature plants of *R.* 'Kurai No Himo' (Figure 12) that have been growing outdoors for many years. Barry has recently planted the azalea shown in the above photograph in our garden. This is azalea is now four years old and we hope it will survive



Figure 12 *R.* 'Kurai No Himo'.

the sub-zero overnight temperatures experienced in Surrey in January 2024.

What does the future hold? Seamus O'Brien, who visited you in Australia in 2023, has offered to look into any Wilson 50 in Ireland. In 2024 we will concentrate on some of the pink and salmon variants that we need to confirm or find. None of us knows what Wilson meant by white striped peach for either *R.* 'Tamafuyo' or *R.* 'Gosho Zakura'. We have a contender, with good provenance for *R.* 'Gosho Zakura' but the colour of the stripes is questionable. We do have the herbarium specimens for *R.* 'Tamafuyo' which has quite small flowers, so perhaps there is some hope. In the meantime, we will all be busy especially once the Wilson 50 azaleas and their possibles and probables flower.

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The co-operation and encouragement received from the following deserve grateful thanks:

The Arnold Arboretum Library and Archive
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 The Crown Estate, Valley Gardens
 The World Azalea Center in Kurume
 Exbury Gardens
 Caerhays Estate

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- Kasahara, M. Head Gardener, Riverhill, former Head Gardener Ramster Gardens
- Okamoto, A. Associate Director of the World Azalea Center, Kurume, Japan

About the author

Polly Cooke was Secretary of the Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group 2017–2022. Her interest in evergreen azaleas, and the Wilson 50 in particular, began in 1983. She gardens in Surrey with her husband Barry. Polly and Barry collaborate with the Isabella Plantation for the Wilson 50 azaleas.

New Registrations 2022–2023

LESLEY EATON

The following is a listing of registrations submitted by the Australian Rhododendron Society plant registrar and approved by the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) during the year 2022/2023.

Colour numbers refer to the RHS Colour Chart. Accompanying colour names are taken from *A Contribution Towards Standardization of Colour Names in Horticulture*, R.D. Huse and K.L. Kelly, edited D.H. Voss (1984).

Abbreviations used:

- H hybridized by
- G grown to first flower
- S selected by
- N named by
- I introduced by
- R registered by

Included in the description are broad colour definitions after the RHS Colour Chart numbers. This will enable members without access to the chart to have some idea of the colour of the flower.

For information on registration and registration forms, please contact Lesley Eaton, lesley.eaton@bigpond.com

‘Jane Simpson’ Vireya hybrid of $\{(R. \textit{macgregoriae} \times R. \textit{rubineiflorum}) \times (R. \textit{rubineiflorum} \times R. \textit{pauciflorum})\} \times R. \textit{rousei}$. H: A. Rouse (2011). G: A Rouse (2018). N & R: A Rouse (2021). Truss: open truss consisting of (2)3–4 tubular campanulate flowers. Corolla: 22–26mm long by 25–30mm wide. Lobes: 5, slightly wavy. Buds: pale green with tips of bracts pale brown. Corolla inside: base of tube pale pink (62C), remainder of tube and lobes white. Corolla outside: base of tube pale pink (62C) remainder of tube and lobes white. Leaves: elliptic 10–22mm long by 4–8mm wide, margins entire, upper surface glossy green. Height: 25cm × 25cm after 12 years. Small multi-branched dwarf rhododendron, floriferous (once per year), flowers on long pinky-red pedicels, sharply angled at junction with flower, anthers red-brown. No scent. Named in honour of the hybridiser’s cousin.



Above and below: R. 'Jane Simpson' (see opposite page).



The Australian Rhododendron Society Inc.

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Australian Rhododendron organisations and gardens

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Australian Rhododendron Society South Australian Branch

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TASMANIA

Emu Valley Rhododendron Garden **www.emuvalleyrhodo.com.au**

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Administration Officer	Ms Sophia Clements	enquiries@evrg.com.au

Tasmanian Rhododendron and Rare Plants Group

President	Karina Harris	telozea44@gmail.com
Secretary	Gill Fitzgerald	gillfitzgerald@gmail.com

VICTORIA

Australian Rhododendron Victorian Branch

President	Mr John O'Hara	johnohara@optusnet.com.au
Secretary	Mr Michael Hare	vicrhodo@gmail.com

NEW SOUTH WALES

Blue Mountains Rhododendron Society **www.rhodogarden.com.au**

President	Dr Anna Macintyre	president@rhodogarden.org.au
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QUEENSLAND

Tamborine Mountain Botanic Gardens **www.tmbotanicgardens.org.au**

President	Mr Greg Ingold	president@tmbotgardens.org.au
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