



New Propagation Glasshouse for Dandenong Ranges Botanic Garden

By John O'Hara, ARSV President

The photograph accompanying this article shows the new glasshouse built at Olinda by the Australian Rhododendron Society. This glasshouse will be used as a propagation facility in addition to the existing glasshouse. It is intended to address what we have found to be shortcomings with the existing glasshouse. Specifically, the faults with the existing glasshouse are that the misting system leaves the plant material perpetually too wet, the perlite heat beds harbour pests which pass from one year's propagating material on to the next, poor humidity control and no air movement.

The new glasshouse will have electronic humidity control which will control relative humidity to within a range of 10%RH, humidity will be provided by a high pressure fogging system. It will contain two 3.6 x 0.9 metre benches with heating foils (insulated beneath), so pots can be placed directly on the heated foil surface. A number of small electric fans along the walls will gently circulate air within the enclosed glasshouse.



The glasshouse (3 x 4m), its erection, equipping it with furniture and the environmental control system have all been paid for by the Australian Rhododendron Society Victorian Branch at a total cost of about \$30k. It will allow us to propagate a very wide range of plants for the Dandenong Ranges Botanic Garden, for sale to the members and the public, as well as for use by members for their personal plant propagation needs.

Committee						
John O'Hara	President	johnohara@optusnet.com.au	0444 552 212	Peter Grose	peter.j.grose@gmail.com	0488 773 577
Andrew Rouse	Vice-President	awrouse@bigpond.com	0424 750 406	Ray Weeks	rayweeks@optusnet.com.au	0408 351 934
Emma Moysey	Secretary	emmamoysey@bigpond.com	0422 231 924	Alex Pottage	niceplants53@gmail.com	03 5786 1595
Prue Crome	Treasurer	prue@crome.net.au	0419 659 741	Wendy Weaver	Wewombat22@yahoo.com.au	03 9728 5248
Richard Florey	Newsletter/Memberships	richarddflorey@gmail.com	0402 412 123			
Walter Lobbezoo	Librarian	wlobbezoo@parks.vic.gov.au	03 9751 1704			

2023 Rhododendron Journal

By Andrew Rouse, ARSV Vice President



I have compiled the 2023 Volume 62 Rhododendron Journal for our members, and it is a bumper edition of over 80 pages of great information from Australian rhododendron organisations and a number of past articles.

The Rhododendron Journal is an annual volume that is included in your membership.

It went to print in March and has since been posted to members.

Front cover: *Rhododendron* 'Kiritsubo Ramster', one of the Wilson 50 rhododendrons.

Plant Collectors Expo – 9th and 10th of March 2024 - Cancelled

By Richard Florey, ARSV Newsletter Editor

The Ferny Creek Horticultural Society cancelled its 18th annual Plant Collectors Expo for Saturday 9th and Sunday 10th of March due to the potential threat of bushfire in the area. Given the weekend was forecast for temperatures in the high 30s and with many visitors about, this was seen as a potential high risk.

The next expo is scheduled for March 2025 and will be mentioned in the February 2025 newsletter.

Why not the species?

By Dr. Noel Sullivan, ARSV Rhododendron Journal Volume 38, 1998

A species is, by definition, a term to denote a group of closely-allied individuals. In turn, these will breed true but with minor variation. The species we have in collections were chosen originally in the wild as herbarium material and later classified by taxonomists as new species or a form of an existing species. If available, seed was sent back with this dried material, but now with air transport live plants may be exported. Mankind, as a collector, strives to own the "better form" of whatever that possession may be. Discovering and bringing back new plant material has never been easy, in that you go when the plants are in flower and hope to collect some seed not yet dispersed from last year's seed capsule; or you go when the seed is ripe, recognise the plant by its foliage and hope that the flowers are at least of average quality. It is likely that a superior foliage and flowering form of that species does occur in the wild. Although it has the same genetic makeup as the forms in cultivation, how many expeditions might it take to locate?

For those who do not wish to travel afar, there is another method of exploration. Self-pollinate one, or cross-pollinate any two, of the forms of a species that are in cultivation and grow on as many seedlings as possible, to exploit the genetic possibilities of that species. I have done this on a number of occasions and it can be very rewarding. I had two selected forms of *R. polyandrum* 'Pink Trumpets' and a good yellow. Cross-pollinated they produced a wide range including a pure white, white with green basal blotch, white with pink basal blotch, deep pink with a darker basal blotch, and yellow with darker basal blotch. Grown together as a group they demonstrate that they are a "family", and not just clones. *R. polyandrum* has now been relieved of its specific status and becomes *R. maddenii*, but shown to be a very distinct variant.

At the 1988 Wollongong Conference, Dr Fang showed slides of *R. irroratum* in the wild, and I was surprised at the high percentage of yellow forms. I soon acquired a good yellow form, and crossed that with the named form 'Polkadot' and with a pink form. The resulting seedlings have shown the wide spectrum of this species in nature. I find this much easier than collecting in Sichuan, and they are still the species. The aim is to show the diversity within a species.

Why not try it? You could be pleasantly surprised!

Native Rhododendrons: Talk to Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne on establishing a conservation collection at the Dandenong Ranges Botanic Gardens.

6pm – 7pm Tuesday 16th of April 2024

By Andrew Rouse, ARSV Vice President

With funding from the Australian Rhododendron Society (Vic Branch), the Ian Potter Foundation and the support of traditional owners, the Australian Tropical Herbarium led a series of botanical expeditions to tropical north Queensland to collect living specimens of Australia's two native rhododendron species. Andrew Rouse, Vice-President of the Australian Rhododendron Society (Vic), has been fortunate to participate in many of these expeditions and will provide an overview of these challenging botanising tours. Andrew will also talk to us about the good work being done to ensure Australia has a well-documented and genetically diverse collection of native rhododendron plants, all of which are now thriving in the Dandenong Ranges Botanic Garden.

Mueller Hall (entry via Oak Lawn Gate), Refreshments from 5.30pm, Friends \$20 Non-members \$30
Online bookings essential at:

<https://rbgfriendsmelbourne.tidyhq.com/public/schedule/events/58630-native-rhododendrons-talking-at-mueller-hall-with-andrew-rouse/carts/new>

Update: Cloud Forest Garden at the Dandenong Ranges Botanic Gardens

By Andrew Rouse, ARSV Vice President

The Cloud Forest Garden landscaping is close to completion, with irrigation and mulch application the final tasks to be completed by the contractors. The Cloud Forest Garden will be the public display of the North Queensland mountain-top endemic plants collected by the ARS and other partners in the Tropical Mountain Plant Science Project (TroMPS). Andrea Proctor Landscapes has designed the garden to include rocky outcrops that mimic the habitat of *R. viriosum* and *R. lochiaie* in the wild. Visitors will walk through large rocks cleaved in two with the rhododendrons featuring prominently on island beds and areas close to the path.



In addition to the rhododendrons, the nursery at Dandenong Ranges Botanic Gardens is holding about 40 species of other North Queensland mountain-top endemics collected by the TroMPS partners.



The ARS Tuesday Group have been busy preparing the North Queensland plants, currently held in pots in the nursery, for planting out. There are about 240 specimens of *R. viriosum* and *R. lochiaie*, grown as cuttings from the original specimens collected on the 10 mountain-tops targeted by the TroMPS partners. In addition to the rhododendrons, the Cloud Forest Garden will contain specimens of other North Queensland mountain-top endemics collected by the TroMPS partners. In all, about 40 other species are awaiting planting out, including *Agathis robusta*, *Flindersia oppositifolia*, *Eucryphia wilkei*, *Cryptocarya bellendenkerana*, *Leptospermum woornooran* and *Micromyrtus delicata*. The planting out is planned for mid-autumn, with a launch sometime in Winter.

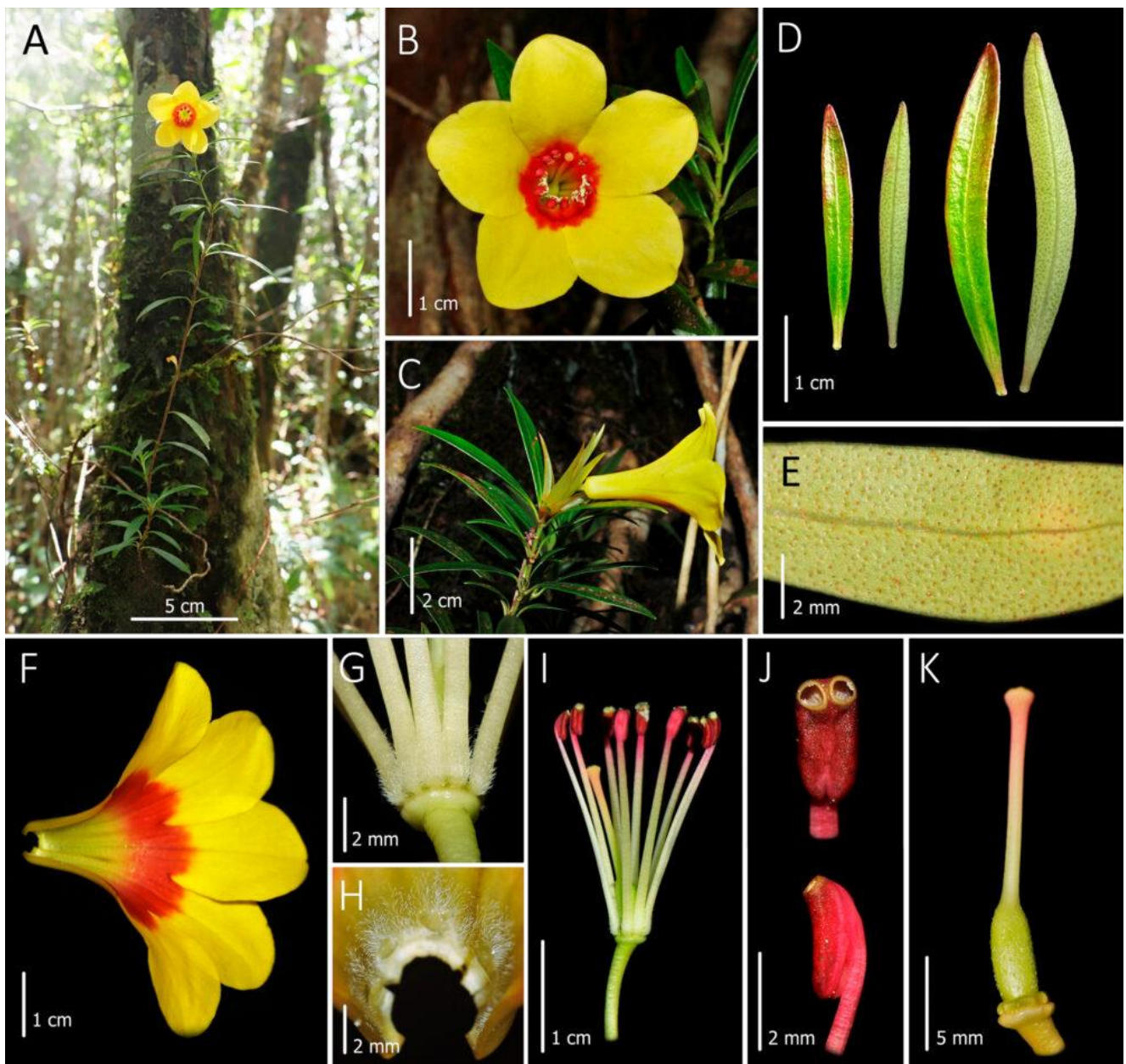
Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria scientist names new rhododendron species

By Francesca Beddie, Australian Garden History Society, November 2023

A botanist at Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria, Dr Alastair Robinson, has described a beautiful new species of plant, *Rhododendron astrophorum*, a slender, canopy-growing epiphyte found only in the montane moss forests of a single mountain range on the island of Palawan (Philippines).

This plant was first documented in 2015 during an expedition led by Dr Robinson to the Victoria-Anepahan Mountain Range in central Palawan. A herbarium collection was subsequently made in June 2022 by Filipino botanists working with the Philippine Taxonomic Initiative and Palawan State University, finally allowing the team to name the plant in a new scientific paper, which is available online: <https://lnkd.in/gzTwF-jR>

Rhododendron astrophorum demonstrates well the close biological affinities that exist between Palawan and Borneo, two islands that have been connected in the past by land bridges. Recent findings highlight the importance of further biodiversity research across the island, as well as the urgent need for conservation actions that safeguard this biologically diverse area.



SOURCE: MEDIA RELEASE FROM THE ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS VICTORIA

<https://www.gardenhistorysociety.org.au/2023/11/royal-botanic-gardens-victoria-scientist-names-new-rhododendron-species/>