

October 2024

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Newsletter of the ARSV



65th Annual General Meeting at 2pm on 2nd of November

Emma Moysey, ARSV Secretary

ARSV 65th Annual General Meeting is open to all members. This will include a visit to Australian Cloud Forest Garden, ARSV new facilities, plant sales and a BBQ lunch.

Garden visits – Virginia Heywood’s Garden and Bogle Arboretum 16th of November

John O’Hara, ARSV President

ARSV members are invited to tour two gardens in the Yarra Valley, Victoria.

The first is Virginia Heywood’s garden, which was featured on a recent episode of Gardening Australia and a suitable description of this garden was given in the previous edition of our newsletter, so I won’t expand on that here. We will start at 10:00am. Heywood House is located at 50 Linwood Road, Seville, Victoria. This will include a tour of Virginia Heywood’s garden. BYO lunch. A BBQ will be available for use.

The second is Geoff Bogle’s Arboretum, which has recently been transferred to me to look after, expand and develop before hopefully being moved to a trust for its long term preservation and maintenance. We will start at 1:30pm. Geoff Bogle Arboretum is located at 770 Gembrook Launching Place Road, Hoddles Creek, Victoria. This will include a tour.

Geoff’s Arboretum is a remarkable example of what can be achieved when a dedicated effort over a great length of time combines with the right conditions and perfect timing. Geoff lived on a one hundred acre farm in the rich soiled rolling hills of the Yarra Valley in Victoria. The climate is friendly, with good rainfall all year and no severe frosts.

He started collecting, mostly conifers and oaks, at a time when nurseries such as Coolwyn Conifers and Ron Radford in Tasmania were very active in importing conifers, when Bill Funk at Dunkeld was importing oaks and when the Teese brothers at Yamina and John Emery at Raraflora were importing maples and other choice rare plants. The period from about 1970 to the early 2000s was a very good time to be a plant collector in Australia. The nurseries were active, the quarantine not too restrictive and business was profitable enough to encourage the importation of rare plant beauties. Indeed, ARSV operated a quarantine glasshouse for the importation of rhododendron varieties during this time, something that is now not possible.

Geoff’s collection grew steadily, he kept records of what he had and labelled every plant. His close friendship with the big importing nurserymen meant any new introduction found its way to his farm. This continued up to his death early this year by which time his collection had grown to about 4500 taxa. The collection is now world class in terms of conifers (1700 different cultivars) and oaks (230), is a fine collection of maples and a very good collection rare plants across many genera. Many of the plants growing at Geoff’s were never propagated commercially, some being very rare indeed.

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The Bogle Arboretum, as we are now calling this collection, is an important plant legacy with much that is interesting and beautiful, it is however, in the main, a collectors garden with the emphasis being on the individual plants. There is much work to do over the next few years to try to improve the landscape and make the garden more appealing to a wider audience.

Here are some examples of plants at Bogle Arboretum.



Cercis canadensis 'Covey' lavender twist



Taxodium mucronulatum 'Pendula'

ARSV Trip to Emu Valley Rhododendron Gardens, Tasmania 11th & 12th December

By Andrew Rouse, ARSV Vice President

ARSV is planning a two day visit to Emu Valley Rhododendron Gardens (EVRG) near Burnie, Tasmania. This is another trip undertaken by ARSV as part of a cutting exchange between our two organisations.

Travel cost and accommodation is the responsibility of each member however, depending on the number of members, we plan to hire transportation to facilitate travel between the airport, accommodation and EVRG.

If you have any questions, please contact Andrew Rouse on 0424 750 406 or by email to awrouse@bigpond.com

As we mentioned in our April 2023 newsletter, in March 2023, ARSV members Rob Hatcher, Ray Weeks, John O'Hara and I visited EVRG to collect rhododendron cuttings for the collection at the Dandenong Ranges Botanic Gardens (DRBG). With it now very challenging to import plants into the country, it is all the more important to record what we have in our collections and to safeguard them in cultivation by spreading them around botanic gardens. Maurie Kupsch, the honorary Curator at EVRG, has over many years, built up an excellent collection of rhododendron species, so the impetus for that trip and this planned trip is to collect and establish at DRBG the rhododendron species currently only held at EVRG.

Formal opening of the Australian Cloud Forest Collection (Garden)

By Andrew Rouse, ARSV Vice President

On the 23rd of August, at an event held at the Dandenong Ranges Botanic Gardens, the Australian Cloud Forest Collection was formally opened by Daniella De Martino, the State member for Monbulk. The event was an opportunity to acknowledge the partners, organisations and individuals who had helped make the garden a reality. There were representatives from Parks Victoria, the Australian Rhododendron Society Victoria Branch, Andrea Proctor Landscapes, Warrandale Industries, Cranbourne Botanic Gardens and the Ian Potter Foundation.

Andrea Proctor spoke about the design and how she sought to emulate the rocky outcrops that are a distinctive feature of the tropical Queensland mountaintops from where the plants in the garden were collected. After formally opening the garden, the ARSV presented Daniella de Martino with a potted specimen of *R. viriosum* for her own garden.

The Collection is the culmination of 14 years work dating back to about 2010 when ARSV first sought to recollect *R. viriosum* and *R. lochiaie* from the mountain-tops in North Queensland, which subsequently became a reality with our partnership with the Australian Tropical Herbarium and other organisations through the Tropical Mountain Plan Science Project (or TroMPS for short).

Around 350 plants from about 40 species from the tropical mountain-tops of North Queensland were planted out in May this year. The plants are settling in well, and as we head into warmer weather we're starting to see lots of new growth.

ARSV has made a considerable investment into the Collection. Over the coming years, we plan to support Parks Victoria with maintaining the Collection, including propagating additional or replacement plants, weeding the beds, and distributing cuttings to other Botanic Gardens.

If you'd like to join the ARSV Tuesday Group who work at the Dandenong Ranges Botanic Gardens each Tuesday morning, please get in touch with a Committee member (see contact list in this newsletter).



The Triflora Rhododendrons: Pick a colour, any colour.

By Neil Shirley, ARSV member

The subsection of the scaly Lepidote rhododendrons called Triflora, is a group of about two dozen small to medium sized shrubs. This is one of the subsections which is currently expanding as the Chinese botanise their hills for themselves and find new treasures. The plants have small sometimes aromatic lanceolate leaves with a dusting of scales. The shape of the plant tends to be relatively narrow in most cases and takes well to pruning. Triflora's are tough and drought tolerant (for rhododendrons) and generally come from drier parts of Bhutan through to western China and the islands of southern Japan. As a group, they have a tendency at least in my garden, to continue to grow into summer while conditions are relatively benign. They grow on after other species have decided to settle in for a good summer sulk. The plants also have a degree of sun tolerance again, "for a rhododendron".

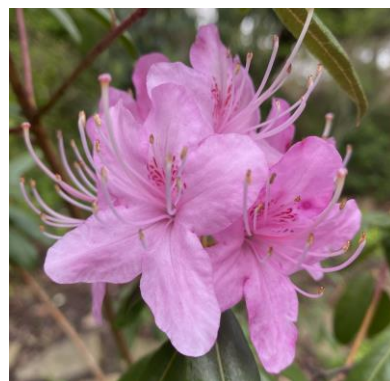
Many of the species and hybrids are familiar to us.



R. augustinii

The blue flowered *R. augustinii* and its progeny like *R. Blue Diamond* are widely planted. The yellow flowering Japanese species *R. keiskei* and its dwarf selection "Yaku fairy" have been in Australia for many years. Both *R. yunnanense* and *R. davidsonianum* are well-known and renowned for delicate pink flowers produced in great abundance. The pale pink or lilac flowered species *R. zaleucum* -meaning "very white" is a bit of a surprise with its flashy white waxy leaf undersides, a feature not found otherwise in the subsection. *R. oreotrephes* is a bit of a charmer, it can have dramatic blue green new leaves and abundantly produced pink or rose flowers and even yellow apparently, in the wild. This species is thought to be related to the beautiful Cinnibarina section and its position in the genus may be reassessed by zealous botanists.

As a rule, however, other Triflora's are rather similar and perhaps somewhat undistinguished when not in flower but the flowers are beautiful and a little unusual. These rhododendrons have flowers of blue, yellow or red/pink. Most, maybe all other rhododendron subsections have flowers with only two of these options, not all three. This restriction of colour palette is seen in a lot of different plant groups. We don't see blue roses or red irises (outside of eBay!). Flower colour is determined by the presence, absence or combinations of two separate classes of biomolecules. Anthocyanins provide orange to purple through to blue hues and carotenoids provide yellows.



R. davidsonianum



R. lutescens

Rhododendron augustinii, particularly in the FCC form, shows some of the best blue flowers in the genus. The blue anthocyanins are derived from the delphinidin type anthocyanin. Guess where the name comes from. *R. concinnum*, particularly the pseudoyanthinum variant has intense rosy-purple flowers which comes from cyanidin type anthocyanin. There are quite a few yellow flowering Triflora's with *R. lutescens* perhaps the best. Here, there are no anthocyanins and the yellow carotenoids shine through. If all these colourful delights fail to attract, perhaps shiny bronzy new growth might seal the deal. All in all, these rhodos are a tough, drought and sun tolerant group with attractive sometimes aromatic new growth, masses of colourful flowers and an extended growing season.

What's not to love? Next time you have a less than A grade spot in the garden, perhaps consider planting a Triflora species or hybrid. All you have to do is pick a colour, any colour!