

THE RHODODENDRON NEWSLETTER

JULY 2005

Published by the
Australian Rhododendron Society, Victorian Branch Inc. (A5896Z)
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VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

*All members will be saddened to learn of the recent death of Jean Whitelaw. Our thoughts are with husband Alex and daughters Margaret and Elizabeth and their grandchildren. Jean was a tireless contributor to the Society. She was always able to find an extra bloom or two of Vireya from within her heavily planted garden.

Alan Walker still recalls the days when he and Jean stirred a resident wombat into action in the first Vireya planting – so much so that the irritated beast promptly ploughed up a large section of their recent plantings by way of retaliation.

*The Vireya species bed is on the move for the third time. Thanks to the efforts of Alan and Walter who coordinated the move, and the efforts of the volunteer group, the species bed was moved to just below, and to the East of Serenity Point. The old location had become very over shaded, and was in a remote, seldom visited section of the garden.

*We had the recent experience of visiting Queensland, and finally causing the drought to break. Our Labrador caravan park received 585 mm of rainfall in 24 hours. Since we were at the back end of the park, slightly lower, we were treated to the spectacle of all the wheelie bins floating by. Many of the adjacent shops were flooded out, and our planned visits to Vireya growers of NSW and Q were deferred. “Drizzling one day, raining like mad the next?” Local people were pleased to see the rain, but rather wished for a more even spread.

Dr. Peter Fisher’s talk on climatic modeling will be of interest to all of us. This is Peter’s field of expertise. We will report fully on this next newsletter.

*Neil Puddey has gone “high tech”, and now has a web site: www.vireyaworldwide.net.au it is still under development, but includes a small photo gallery, and is well worth a look.

*Dr. Tony Dortimer, who owns “Ardudah”, probably the largest garden on Mt Macedon, has offered a visit to his garden, possibly late October, in exchange for a few plants. This garden has never been open to the public, and has a 50ft high specimen of giganteum. That alone, should be quite a sight. Watch for further information.

*President Bill is due back from his O/S tour at the end of the month, and no doubt looking to put his feet up for a while. We last heard from him in Scotland, but we understand he is currently in Scandinavia.

These are unsettling times to travel!

Murray McAlister

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VALE - JEAN WHITELAW (DANN) 6/9/1912 – 30/6/2005



Our Society has been saddened by the loss of a long term member and supporter of the genus Rhododendron, Jean Whitelaw.

Jean was an active and early member at the formation of the Australian Rhododendron Society. She was prominent at Field Days and the Shows held on the Olinda Football Ground and in the associated Hall.

Jean is survived by husband Alex , two daughters Margaret and Elizabeth and four grandchildren. Alex was deputy Registrar of Titles.

Alex has helped us with biographical details of Jeans early life. He met her first when she was 5 and he 15! Later they met at a boarding house in Castlemaine. They married in 1936 and moved to Wimba Avenue Kew where they lived for 67 years until Jean was taken ill in 2003.

Jean was educated at Firbank in Brighton then at Melbourne University where she obtained a number of exhibitions in Agricultural Science while a resident at Janet Clarke Hall. Jean was very highly thought of by teachers and lecturers and following her course worked at the university doing research into animal diseases.

Later she was the first bacteriologist at the Model Dairy in Kew and established the department that looked into the purification of milk from dairy herds, in association with veterinary scientists.

This resulted in huge benefits for the Model Dairy during World War two because the U.S.A. insisted that their armies, which were located around Australia, should receive pasteurised milk. Jean's expertise in this area led her to giving lectures and radio broadcasts about the dairy industry.

Jean grew and developed a special garden at Wimba Avenue featuring many Asiatic rhododendrons. In later years she specialised in the Vireya section. Jean was active on the Society Ladies Auxiliary Committee for many years, and as Secretary she helped keep the Society active.

Later she was invited to join the Committee of Management of the Olinda Rhododendron Garden to maintain and enhance the Garden. She became Secretary, of the Victorian Branch of the Society. Even in her 90th year she continued to travel to Olinda to work as a volunteer in the Garden - planting, potting and cultivating plants and generally enjoying the company of the other Tuesday volunteer enthusiasts.

Jean often addressed the General Meetings and was always willing to impart her knowledge of the genus to members and to enquiries from the public at Shows regarding the genus and the Society. Her dedication was recognised by the National Council of the Australian Rhododendron Society by their granting her of Life Membership.

When she and Alex moved from their Kew home she was anxious to save some of her much loved vireyas. A group of the Tuesday volunteers dug up many plants and relocated them to the National Rhododendron Gardens at her request where they are still thriving. Once she started something Jean liked to follow it through to completion and until her death she was most interested in keeping in touch with all the news from the N.R.G. and the Society.

Jean, you will be missed by many – thank you for your wonderful support and the knowledge you quietly shared.

Val Marshall, Marcia Begg

THE SPECIES COLUMN.

Rhododendron moupinense – Moupinensia Series.

Rhododendron moupinense is an attractive compact species which forms a mound less than one metre high. The heart-shaped leaves are an attractive bronze colour in spring and gradually turn to glossy green. It grows well at Olinda in semi-shade but would probably need shade-house conditions in Melbourne. According to Peter and Kenneth Cox, it dislikes excessive heat but is quite drought-resistant. (see 'Encyclopedia of Rhododendron Species')

Name:

From Moupin, a region in Western China.

Distribution:

Sichuan, Yunnan and Guizhou in China, generally as an epiphyte on trees, rocks, and cliffs (2000 to 3300 metres altitude).

Characteristics:

This species is easily identified by its small scaly leaves and compact growth. Two related species - *dendrocharis* and *petrocharis* - are not yet available in Australia.

Where to see these plants:

Over 90 of this species have been planted in the garden at Olinda but I suspect that at least half have died. There are about 20 plants growing well at the start of the Maddenia Walk on the bank, where they make an attractive show in early spring (September). There are two forms growing there – the white form flushed with pink, and *moupinense* Rubra which is heavily flushed and spotted with red.

Hybrids:

This species is an excellent parent but unfortunately not all of these hybrids are suitable for Melbourne. Suitable for the Dandenongs - Cilpinense, Olive, Bo-peep, Bric-a-brac, Pink Silk.

Suitable for Melbourne - Seta, Fine Feathers, *veitchianum* x *moupinense* (a promising unnamed hybrid), (*ciliicalyx* x *formosum*) x *moupinense* (a Jack O'Shannassy hybrid)

There is plenty of scope for hybridists to produce early, compact, and lace-bug resistant hybrids using *moupinense*.

Alan Keper.

VIREYA SPECIES COLUMN

R konori

Subsection Phaeovireya [The Rhododendron Handbook RHS 1998]

It is a very attractive species with handsome foliage and beautiful powerfully scented flowers, 3-12 per umbel more or less horizontally disposed. The corolla is white to pink, often marked with darker pink spots at the base of the lobes. It grows well in Olinda but needs dappled shade. In Melbourne it can also thrive but even more care might be needed with growing conditions.

As with all species there are good plants and the, occasional, magnificent specimen. The sample photographed [p] comes from John Kenyon's nursery on the Bay of Plenty, North Island of New Zealand 'Te Puna Cottage Gardens'. It, truly, is magnificent. It came, originally, from John Rouse in Melbourne. Hopefully John may strike some cuttings for our Society and we may be able to reintroduce it to Olinda.

Name

It was named by its discoverer Beccari 1878 after a Papuan deity, Konor.

Origin

In its native habitat, throughout New Guinea, it is a terrestrial or epiphytic shrub to 4m. In New Guinea it grows from 750 to 2,500m

Description

Young stems are at first densely brown- scaly, but later glabrescent. The leaves are large, 8-14 x 5-7.5, broadly elliptic or occasionally obovate, the apex obtusely pointed to rounded, the margin flat and entire,

the base broadly tapering. On top, the midrib is slightly raised at the base and impressed at the distal part, but strongly raised along its whole length underneath.

Varieties

R phaeocephalum, Sleumer, is now recognized as variety of *R konori*

Where to see these plants

There are numbers in pots at Olinda but not too many planted in the ground. Many members have them but not of the quality of John Kenyon's.

Hybrids

R konori is a popular parent. 'Great Scent-sation' [*konori x lochia* Graham Snell] and 'Great Coat' [*zoelleri x christiana* x *konori* Brian Clancy] are 2 that come to mind.

I have an unnamed seedling grown by Alan Raper thought to be a *konori x*

Simon Begg

GENERAL MEETINGS

July 2005

RHODODENDRON SPECIES & HYBRIDS SUITABLE FOR THE SUBURBS

Laurie Begg gave a talk on species and hybrids suitable for suburban and flatter country gardens. The following lists are of plants which are hardy and tried varieties. Colour, size and flowering times can all be influenced by many variables e.g. soil, climate, light, water availability, etc.

SPECIES	Colour	Size	Flowering
<i>aberconwayi</i>	White	Medium	Mid
<i>arboreum</i>	Red	Large	Early
<i>ciliicalyx</i>	Cream	Medium	Early
<i>crassum</i> (synonym of <i>R. maddenii</i>)	White	Medium	Late
<i>cubittii</i> (syn of <i>R. veitchianum</i>)	Cream	Medium	Mid
<i>decorum</i>	White	Large	Late
<i>discolor</i> (syn of <i>R. fortunei</i>)	White	Large	Late
<i>hanceanum</i>	Yellow	Small	Early
<i>burmanicum</i>	Cream	Small	Early
<i>lindleyi</i>	White	Medium	Mid
<i>morii</i>	White	Medium	Early
<i>ovatum</i>	Pink	Small	Late
<i>triflorum</i>	Mixed	Medium	Mid

HYBRIDS– YELLOW OR CREAM	Size	Flowering	HYBRIDS - WHITE	Size	Flowering
Eldorado	Small	early	Bric-a-brac	Small	Early
Fine Feathers	Small	mid	Boddaertianum	Large	Very early
Hotei	Medium	mid	Bronze Wing	Small	mid
Horizon Monarch	Medium	mid	Dot	Medium	mid
Karen Triplet	Medium	mid	Harry Tagg	Medium	early
Nancy Evans	Small	mid	Helene Schiffner	Medium	mid
Letty Edwards	Medium	mid	Fragrantissimum	Medium	mid
Mrs. Betty Robertson	Medium	mid	Mrs. A.T. de la Mare	Medium	mid
Saffron Queen	Small	mid	Mrs. Charles E. Pearson	Large	mid
Unique	Medium	early	Nestucca	Small	Early/mid
			Nobleanum Album	Medium	early
HYBRIDS - RED	Size	Flowering	Sapho	Medium	mid
Bibiani	Medium	early	Snow Lady	Small	early
C.B. van Nes	Medium	mid	Tyermanii	Medium	mid
Cornubia	Large	early			
Donvale reds	Medium	mid	HYBRIDS - PINK		
Earl of Athlone	Medium	mid	Albert Schweitzer	Medium	mid
Gill's Triumph	Large	early	Alice	Medium	mid
Ivery's Scarlet	Large	early	Antoon van Welie	Medium	mid
Jean Marie de Montagu	Medium	mid	Betty Wormald	Medium	mid
Lamplighter	Medium	mid	Chevalier Felix de Sauvage	Medium	early
Max Sye	Medium	early	Christmas Cheer	Medium	early
President Roosevelt	Medium	mid	Donvale Cheer	Medium	early
Toolangi Ruby	Medium	mid	Countess of Derby	Late	mid
Unknown Warrior	Medium	early	Cynthia	Medium	early
			Crestan (hybrids)	Medium	v.early
HYBRIDS – BLUES & MAUVES			Edith Boulter	Medium	early
Album Novum	Medium	Mid	Jeanette Clarke	Medium	mid
Blue Crown	Medium	Mid	Hardijzer Beauty	Small	mid
Blue Peter	Medium	Mid	Mrs Furnivall	Medium	mid
Colonel Coen	Medium	Mid	Mrs E.C.Stirling	Large	mid
Emasculum	Small	Early	Mrs C.B. van Nes	Medium	mid
Fastuosum Flore Pleno	Medium	Mid	Point Defiance	Medium	mid
Gomer Waterer	Medium	Late	Trude Webster	Medium	mid
Midnight	Medium	Mid			
Nightwatch	Medium	Mid			
Larneukk Sappho	Large	Mid			
Nicholas	Medium	Late			
Purple Splendour	Medium	Late			
Purple Emperor	Medium	Mid			
Van Nes Sensation	Large	mid			

Laurie Begg

VOLUNTEER GROUP

A lot has happened in the Gardens lately.

There has been some cleaning up in the forests— bark, branches, dead shrubs, etc. This is a never ending task.

Graham Price's vireyas have been planted and mulched. Unfortunately our much loved lyrebirds adore the loose ground and have dug up many of the smaller plants. The solution was the placing of many dead tree-fern fronds around the plants to discourage them from scratching. It appears to have worked.

The vireya species plantings are on the move again. This time they are being planted on the roadside bank near the Moorland. This is well under way. The previous site is becoming overgrown with Mountain Ash and a Magnolia, resulting in limited sun for the vireyas.

Bill McClure has done a lot of potting on of the seedlings in the glasshouse.

The shadehouses have been cleaned up and Hugh has achieved a great deal by moving pots and general tidying.

The Olinda school children have continued to put down cuttings including *Luculias* and *Rh. Calostratum* and *Daphne* seeds. Colin Livingstone brought a number of trays of vireyas for the school. We are looking forward to the time they will be potting on their own plants and taking them home.

Alan Walker

NEW ZEALAND IN JULY

A few weeks ago we made a last minute decision to spend 2 weeks in NZ visiting friends, gardens and nurseries.

Soon after arrival in Auckland our friends took us to the Eden Garden in Epsom. This was our second visit, a must see for garden enthusiasts. The vireyas are spectacular. All the vireyas are planted in tree fern logs (pongas) then into the ground. Many were in full flower in July – magnificent pink *leucogigas* x, *macgregoriae*, 'Jean Baptiste', 'Gardenia Odyssey', 'Saxon Glow' used as a hedge, 'Popcorn' which was 'Plant of the Week' and many more. As it is a converted quarry the sides are steep but well graded paths lead to wonderful views of the garden. The tea rooms are open every day and well supported by members and visitors. It is also a memorial garden with many plants and seats having a memorial plaque.

From Auckland we drove to Mt. Manganui at the Bay of Plenty where we stayed for a few days. The highlight there was the well known vireya nursery, Te Puna Cottage Gardens, owned by John and Merrill Kenyon. We spent a delightful afternoon photographing, discussing and viewing their extensive and beautifully landscaped vireya collection and nursery. They produce a very detailed, coloured catalogue with useful tips scattered throughout. All the in-ground vireyas have been planted in imported soil and for pots they make up their own very open mix which they sell to customers, many of whom are elderly and find vireyas excellent for their small gardens. As at Eden Garden there were many lovely plants, all well shaped, healthy and flourishing. The most spectacular flower was the huge scented *konori* that was grown from seed from John Rouse.

In the second week we met up with Graham Smith at Pukeiti after a chilly walk along the 'Grande Way'. We did not make it around the 900 acres, nor did we see the new tracks and other developments in progress. Once again the tea rooms are open every day though not so well attended at that time of year! Not a lot in flower except for the beautiful *Daphne bholuas*, some six feet tall with wafts of scent filling the air, but unfortunately due to prolific self seeding these Daphnes are becoming a weed! Much too cold here to grow vireyas in the open, they are all safely under shelter.

Everything in New Zealand grows so lush with the abundant supply of water and, in the Taranaki area, good soil. Taranaki is famous for its eight 'Gardens of National Significance' (private and public), not to

mention the hundreds of others that open up during the festival in spring. We stayed at one of these not far from Pukeiti, Te Popo Gardens B & B, and enjoyed the walks and talks around the garden and at meals with the owners.

On the way back to Auckland another must visit is the Hamilton Garden. Not classed as a botanic garden it is a public garden with huge sponsorships from private and public sources. The theme of the gardens is the 'story of gardens' throughout the world. There are recreations of Japanese, Chinese, Modern American, English, Italian Renaissance, traditional Herb Gardens, Victorian Flower gardens as well as sweeping lawns, rhododendron and camellia gardens, cafes, etc and entry is free!

New Zealand is a fabulous place to visit any time of the year and we will return.

Marcia Begg

COMING EVENTS FOR 2005.

August 19th	Rob Small, CEO of Fleming's Nursery and Chair Dandenong Ranges Gardens Advisory Committee- Future for Dandenong Ranges Gardens and NRG John Faull's – Olinda Gardens –The early days	8. 00p.m.
September 16th	Maddenii – A. Kepert	8. 00 p.m.
October 21st	To Be Advised	8. 00 p.m.
October 1st & 2nd	Azalea Show	
October 29th, 20th, 31st & 1st Nov.	Rhododendron Show	
November 4th, 5th & 6th	ARS National Convention South Australia	
November 18th	Satsukis – Azaleas – Len Sloggett	8. 00 p.m.
December 4th	Christmas Luncheon	

VIREYA GROUP MEETINGS

August 13th	NRG, Olinda	1. 30 p.m.
October 8th	NRG,Olinda	1. 30 p.m.
December 10th	NRG, Olinda	1. 30 p.m.