

THE RHODODENDRON NEWSLETTER

JULY 2009

Published by the
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PROGRAM

The next three months' program is set out on this page. The complete program for the rest of 2009 is on page 15.

General Meetings are held at the Municipal Horticultural Centre, Jolimont Rd, Vermont. Mel 62 G4 unless otherwise stated.

Unfortunately some speakers have had to be re-scheduled.

JULY

FRIDAY 17TH GENERAL MEETING 8.00PM. SPEAKER; Leslie Eaton on rhododendrons. Leslie & Graham have grown rhododendrons under difficult conditions at Swanpool near Benalla & specialize in dwarf rhododendrons.

AUGUST

FRIDAY 21ST GENERAL MEETING 8.00PM SPEAKERS: Barry & Gaye Stagoll will show us a pictorial guide of Yunnan in Western China & discuss the society, culture & botany of the area.

SEPTEMBER

SATURDAY 5TH SOCIAL OUTING TO LEONGATHA DAFFODIL FESTIVAL, FLOWER SHOW & OPEN GARDENS. The Flower Show opens at 9.00am Saturday and is at the Memorial Hall opposite the Leongatha PO which is at the first roundabout coming from Melbourne. This is a great opportunity to visit some different gardens and support our Gippsland members. We will meet at the show and have lunch in the Hall. Some of us will be staying overnight at the Leongatha Motel. There is a possibility of seeing more gardens/attractions the next day. For more information ring Marcia Begg 9751 1610 or Inge Hammer 9755 2176.

SATURDAY 12TH VIREYA GROUP 10.00am at 44 Chalet Rd Olinda. Olive Howard lives with her daughter, Pam and son in law Robert, and they have kindly invited us to have a tour of their lovely garden and morning tea. They have 5 beautifully landscaped acres with fabulous views. Simon Begg Ph: 97511610.

FRIDAY 18TH GENERAL MEETING 8.00PM SPEAKER: ANDREW RAPER will speak about camellias and have plants for sale.

PRESIDENTS REPORT

Several issues to report on this time. Firstly, the committee has been in discussions with Parks over the spring show, standards, responsibilities, remuneration. I can now report that these discussions have reached a satisfactory conclusion. We will be putting on a spring show under the same remunerations schedule as last year.

In order to improve the standard of the show we will be seeking participation from a number of nurseries and incorporating their material into the overall display. They will also be providing plants for sale by Parks.

The visit to Coolart was extremely enjoyable. The weather was absolutely perfect with bright sunshine from a clear blue sky and very pleasant temperature. A ramble around the grounds was followed by a barbeque lunch and then a 20 minute video of the history of the property in the new theatre and bird hide, an inspection of the inside of the house (interesting period décor and furniture) and lastly a longer walk along the coastal nature trail. Before we realised it was nearly 5 pm and well and truly time to go home. For those who were not able to make it you missed a really good day out.

The June meeting was a talk on lilioms which I hope people found informative and enjoyable. Lilioms are very much companion plants to rhododendrons liking similar growing conditions and providing spectacular colour and perfume over the summer months. At this meeting we tried having bulbs available for sale. This created considerable interest and a fair bit of activity. The general consensus was that most people liked the idea. Accordingly we will endeavour to have plant/bulb material for sale for least at some of the future meetings if not all.

Planning for the 2010 conference continues to advance. The activity schedule is firming up and it is an interesting mix of talks and garden visits. We will have at least one overseas speaker and possibly two depending on how things work out. Some advertising material has already been distributed and more is being prepared. Watch out on the website for this.

As I am writing this I am looking out of the window at a very soggy garden. Up here at Sassafra we have had 60 mm of rain since Friday morning. Not enough to break the drought but none the less, extremely welcome and hopefully a promise of things to come. It is also extremely cold, pretty much the way winters used to be in the past. This is of course the most bare time in the garden but it has its own charm. Now one can see beauty of the framework of trees with the fine tracery of branches and get more distant views normally blocked by abundant leaves. The frequent early morning mist, or sometimes fog, exaggerates the sense of perspective and to me it imparts a mysterious romantic quality to gardens. It is a time of promise with daffodil shoots poking out of the ground, the peony bud swelling and turning red, the camellias heading towards full display and the hellebores and cyclamens displaying to perfection. If you can make it, come up to the gardens and see it for yourselves.

In an effort to make the Friday evening meetings more enjoyable and informative we are going to use the society camera to take photographs of the “Tuesday group” activities and topical points of interest in the garden. These will then be shown to give a more visual perspective on the activities of the group.

The Vireya group meets on the 11th of July (probably before this newsletter comes out) and the topic this time will be a video documentary on the Rothschild garden Exbury in England as well as a walk around Inge and my garden to see what we have been up to of late.

I hope you are all well and enjoying gardening. Please consider coming to the Friday night meetings and becoming more involved with the society. The more people who participate, the more vibrant and interesting our society becomes and the more enjoyment and interest you will get out of your membership fee. You might find you really enjoy the meetings.

Cheers

Michael Hammer
President

[THE SPECIES COLUMN.](#)

NEW PLANTINGS IN THE ROCK GARDEN.

Following the disastrous summer this year, and the damage to most of our species collection, we decided that it would be necessary to find a much more favourable site for our more tender rhododendron plants. Obviously plants that come from freezing mountaintops at some 4000 to 6000 metres will have trouble surviving at 500 metres. We have a large number of species, mostly raised from seed over the last 10 years, which we started planting in whatever gaps we could find in the main rockery. This area has an ideal microclimate with afternoon shade, shelter from wind and humidity from the nearby creek.

Our friends from Parks Victoria took up the challenge and cleared out a lot of old conifers and shrubbery and made a lot more space for planting. We have planted out 50 species so far, and with luck could squeeze in another 100 or so. Some of the more interesting Rhododendron species are listed below:

* *calostrotum* ssp. *keleticum* (Subsection *Saluensia*) From Tibet, Burma, and Yunnan. A prostrate alpine plant with masses of purple flowers.

* *campylogynum* v. *myrtilloides* (S. *Campylogyna*) Flowers pink.- Yunnan Tibet, Burma. A dwarf alpine with small leaves and flowers. [photo page 9]

* *carneum* (S. *Maddenia*) flesh-pink flowers. From upper Burma.

This species is quite attractive with its pale pink flowers and deep red stigma.

* *citriniflorum* (s. *Neriiflora*) Lemon-yellow flowers –Yunnan & Tibet.

One of the best yellow species.

* *flammeum* (S. *Pentanthera*) Orange to Scarlet. SE U.S.A. This deciduous azalea is highly rated in the U.S.

* *impeditum* v. *litangense* (S.Lapponica) Mauve to purple flowers. Yunnan, Szechwan.

* *luteiflorum* (S.Glauca) Bright Yellow flowers. Upper Burma. An excellent small-growing species with small bell-shaped flowers, and not difficult to grow.

* *petrocharis* (Moupinensia) White flowers. From Szechwan. This is a relatively new species which may be merged with *dendrocharis*.

* *pumilum* (Uniflora) Flowers pink to purple. A small alpine from the higher areas of the Himalayas.

* *roxianum* v. *oreonastes* (Taliensia) Flowers white flushed pink. Tibet, Yunnan, Szechwan. A striking plant with long narrow leaves and neat round trusses of flowers.

* *spilotum* (Glischra) Flowers pink with a deep red blotch. From upper Burma.

* *stewartianum* (Thompsonia) Flowers vary from white to pink to crimson. Said to be rare in cultivation, this has rounded leaves similar to *thompsonii*.

* *taiwanalpinum* (Azalea) A low growing plant with white flowers and bristly leaves. Generally easy to grow and strikes easily from cuttings.

* *vaseyi* (Rhodora) Flowers pale to deep pink. A beautiful little deciduous azalea from North Carolina, U.S.A. Grows well at Olinda.

We also have a few rare species grown from seed collected in the wild, which are classed as “not in cultivation”. It will be interesting to see these flower in the future.

* *chunieneii* (Maddenia) -China

* *ciliipes* (Maddenia) -China

* *surasianum* (Maddenia) –Vietnam.

Alan Keper.

VIREYA SPECIES COLUMN

R lamrialianum [photo p8]. According to the classification proposed by Dr George Argent *Rhododendrons of sub genus vireya* RHS 2006 the species is a member of Section V *Malayovireya*. This is a small Section of 12 members. According to Dr Argent all but 4 members are found on the island of Borneo. This species is present in Australia but only in the last few years from seed supplied to Andrew Rouse and derived from Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. No doubt Andrew will make it available when the seedlings grow sufficiently. I have chosen this species because it was one of few that I saw in flower in Marcia's and my recent trip to Sabah, and I was able to identify. The species is extensively described by Argent, Lamb and Phillips *The Rhododendrons of Sabah* Natural History Publications Borneo [in association with Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh] 2007 which, in turn, refers to a paper in *The New Plantsman* 7, 4 (2000): 209.

My guide, on the summit track to Mt Kinabalu, did not know much about vireyas but he had a book of the plants on Mt Kinabalu. He kept referring to plants without flowers he called *R variolosum*. I had Ben Wallace's copy of the earlier edition of *The Rhododendrons of Sabah* [a much smaller book to carry than the later one] which did describe *R variolosum* but the plants my guide referred to did not even look, to me, to be vireyas much less fit the description. Just short of 3.5 km up the track, at about 2500m, a descending party was excited about *R lowii* in flower at some distance off the track. I spent some time trying to get near enough for a good photo without much success. When I descended some time later I had another, unsuccessful, look at *R*

lowii and walked right under *R lamrialianum*. It was an epiphyte though starting from very near ground level. I had seen it in flower at RBGE in May 2008 and the bicoloured flowers are quite distinctive so I recognised it. It was not until I returned to our accommodation with a single floret that was on the ground and looked up my copy of the later edition of *The Rhododendrons of Sabah* that I confirmed that the altitude at which I found the plant fitted, and saw that Professor Sleumer had described it as *R variolosum*. The plant I saw on Mt Kinabalu was, according to *The Rhododendrons of Sabah*, *R lamrialianum* ssp. *gunsalamanianum* not ssp. *lamrialianum* which grows on Mt Trus Madi. I think it is the latter sub species that Andrew Rouse has. However, as one does in a tour party when time is closely regimented, I looked only quickly at the reference books and not quickly enough at the floret I had brought back and photographed. Sadly my photo of the floret is poor but I think it has many distinct scales on the corolla tubes. If so, that being one of the distinguishing features of the two sub species, the plant I saw must have been ssp. *lamrialianum* not *gunsalamanium*. My photo of the plant in situ is much better and does not suggest very many corolla tube scales- but it is hard to tell. As the plant was on Mt Kinabalu, though on a ridge rather than a valley, and as it was clearly about 3m tall, I still conclude it must be ssp. *Gunsalamanium*. An expert, at the time, was definitely needed!

Name

The species is named in honour of Datuk Lamri Ali, Director of Sabah Parks, who suggested the project that culminated in the first, 1988, edition of *The Rhododendrons of Sabah*. Sub species *gunsalamanianum* is named in honour of Ansoo Gunsalam who has accompanied many scientists on field trips to Sabah. The other sub species is *lamrialianum*.

Distribution

This species is found only in Sabah, Malasian Borneo. Sub species *lamrialianum* is found on Mt Trus Mardi, Eastern ridge and above Kidukaruke. Sub species *gunsalamanianum* is found only on Mt Kinabalu from 2150m to 2700m as an epiphyte in moderately shady positions in the tall montane valley forest. Plants without flowers that are probably attributable to this sub species have, according to the authors of *The Rhododendrons of Sabah*, been found on Mt Alab in the Crocker Range.

Description

[taken from *The Rhododendrons of Sabah*]. Ssp. *lamrialianum* is a shrub to 1m of compact form. **Leaves** in pseudowhorls of 4 or 5 with, also, small scale leaves on the stems between which quickly drop off. The foliage leaves are elliptic; slightly acuminate, with a tapering acute apex often rounded at the extreme point; margin flat and entire; the base broadly tapering; 45-80 x 12-30; scales typical of subsection *Malayovireya*; but less dense than typical. Mid vein impressed above and strongly raised beneath throughout its length, lateral veins 3-5 pairs. Petiole 15-25 x 2-2.5 brown, covered in scales and clearly grooved above. **Umbels** 2-5 flowered (up to 10 in cultivation) the flowers half hanging. Corolla bicoloured with orange lobes and a yellow tube, without scent, 25-28 x 18-21mm; the tube 16-18 x 5-6 x 7-8 mm mostly glabrous in the basal quarter prominently scaly in the upper part.

Ssp. *gunalamianum* is a looser form of plant and its corolla tubes are glabrous or only sparsely scaly outside and densely white hairy in the basal half within. The photos [figs 114-5] and painting by Susan Phillipps [fig 117] in *The Rhododendrons of Sabah* match my photo [page 8].

The species is closely related to *R acuminatum*.

Hybrids

The Rhododendrons of Sabah describe pure orange hybrids with *R fallacinum* on Mt Trus Madi. The authors say it would be surprising if hybrids with *R acuminatum* did not occur from time to time, but do not describe any.

Verdict

Ssp. *lamrialianum* was introduced into cultivation at RBGE in 1984. It forms compact plants that, after more than 10 years, are less than 30 cm high. The flowers make a great show, and more than once a year in older plants. The plant I saw at RBGE was certainly striking. A plant for the patient- and younger- members than me!

SWB

SOCIAL OUTING TO COOLART

The drive took just over an hour from Olinda to Coolart Homestead and Wetlands on the shores of Western Port Bay at Somers. Everyone arrived about 12.00 and who would have thought that the end of June would produce such a beautiful sunny and tranquil day for us to enjoy.

We were most impressed with the well equipped visitor's centre, clean toilets and immaculate garden with its majestic trees and fenced herb garden. The ranger had arranged for us to have the use of 'The Stables Picnic Area' in case of inclement weather and kindly provided a gas BBQ and hot water but being such a pleasant day we relaxed in the sun filled courtyard at the 160 year old stables.

After lunch we watched an audio-visual 'Introducing Coolart' in another impressive mud brick building, the 'Wetlands Observatory', which doubles as a bird observatory and theatre.

Coolart was first settled in the 1840's by the Meyricks but they found seaside farming too challenging and moved to Gippsland after six years leaving their name behind in the nearby town of 'Merricks'. Frederick Grimwade bought the estate in 1895 and built the imposing two storey homestead to be the family's country retreat. He farmed cattle, bred racehorses and laid out the formal garden. The Luxtons were the last private owners and one of their legacies was the large lagoon that has made Coolart into a significant wetlands for migratory birds. When the Victorian Government bought the property in 1977 more lagoons and wetlands were established to cater for a wider variety of birds. Parks Victoria is the present manager. The redbrick house is partially furnished and has a superb collection of historic photographs and letters. A tower, though not open to the public, would have given the owners excellent views of their estate and beyond.

Our walk around the Woodlands Track took us to the beach, over the Merricks Creek and through mixed vegetation of *Melaleuca*, *Leptospermum*, *Eucalypt*, *Casuarina* and *Banksias*. Some of the original banksias are very old and large, in full flower and

visited by hundreds of wattle birds. Koalas have damaged many of the eucalypts by overfeeding so some animals have been relocated and many trees have protective barriers around the base. A lot of additional planting has been carried out by Parks and the Friends group. The wetlands and lagoons are sadly lacking in water at present and the migratory water birds are not in residence.

There were very few other visitors which seemed a shame on such a lovely day. A lot of money has been spent at Coolart and there are three full time rangers to keep it in good order! As a day's outing it has a lot to offer for all age groups.

MNB



Coolart Mansion Photo Mike Hammer

VOLUNTEER GROUP

A lot of work has been happening with the vireyas. Down the main track the vireya beds have had a lot of plants removed from the back and brought to the front to fill gaps. The excess plants were planted on the golf course bank which has had the rock wall extended to stop the lyrebirds spreading mulch all over the road. The rock wall also means more vireyas can be planted along the edge.

More plants have been added to the trial garden and the species bed below the trial garden has been cleaned up.

There are many lyrebirds and they are constantly digging up plants. We are putting rocks and tree fern fronds around new plantings to stop them.

AW



***R lamrailianum ssp. gunsalamanianum* on Mt Kinabalu
Simon Begg photo 4 May 2009**



**Floret from *R lamrailianum ssp. gunsalamanianum*
Simon Begg photo 4 May 2009**



Joe and Thelma Verrill on the Woodlands walk at Coolart



***R campylogynum* Otto Fauser 1992**

WORKING IN THE RHODODENDRON GARDENS

Glenn Maskell , Team Leader Parks Victoria

We are at the end of another financial year and planning is well underway for the next year. Our overall budget has been cut and we are arranging projects and contracts to fit within this budget, while this is disappointing it is not unusual in financially hard times for us to have to tighten our belts.

The good news though is we have had approved the projects from money promised by the labour government at the last election for visitor services projects on Mount Dandenong. The Rhododendron Gardens put in for several projects and three projects have been approved

- Replacement of the water mains around the gardens- This will be a tricky project to get water around the gardens without causing major damage to the plantings and in particular trees. The system will be constant pressure which will mean we don't have to make sure the tank has water or the pump is on, it will also mean that we have even pressure so that we can set up irrigation to be more reliable in its coverage. We will also be setting up the system so that we can control watering throughout the gardens with computers.

The old system has done the gardens well but each year we are spending thousands of dollars and hundreds of hours to keep it in repair, along with the associated water loss through many slow leaks.

- Bus drop zone- At the moment most tour buses park illegally on the street to drop passengers creating risks for passengers, the bus and passing motorists. We plan to redesign the entrance to allow safe and comfortable drop off for buses. We hope this will also encourage more operators to bring visitors to these truly magnificent gardens
- Gardens interpretation – A small amount has been set aside to fund the completion of this project which I have been working on for the past eighteen months.

Interpretation in the garden

It has been taking much longer than I had anticipated but the signs have been designed and we are hoping to install three signs in the middle of the gardens to iron out the bugs in the next couple of months. Once these have been installed the design is complete then we will be working hard to finish putting together the information to go on the rest of the signs. Producing and installing them to enriching the experience of the gardens for visitors.

The Lace Bug war continues

It has been an interesting year in the war on Lace Bug. We had little damage from them in the garden this year. It can be hard to assess the damage by the Lace Bug because of the scorching damage to many plants. I would love to say it was the Lace Wing have made all the difference but we know Lace Wing have helped to reduce numbers particularly on Azaleas which has been very pleasing. We will continue to monitor and release in the coming year and would be interested on how others have fared in their gardens particularly if there has been no Lace Bug intervention at all.

Autumn

If you missed the Autumn colour in the gardens this year then you have indeed missed out. I think the hot dry year makes the colour stand out even more. We had John Patrick do a piece for gardening Australia right at the peak so keep a look out for it on ABC TV next Autumn.

HIDDEN GEMS

First – a bit of history. In the 1890's the Dandenong Ranges were sub-divided into 10 acre lots and sold cheaply to potential farmers with the understanding they would clear the land and make it productive to feed the city families. As well as beautiful fern glades, Blackwood Wattles, towering Mountain Ash hundreds of years old (some the tallest in the Southern Hemisphere) and many other indigenous plants there was a wide variety of wildlife including the Superb Lyrebird. Some trees were so large and hollow that families lived in them while they cleared the land with horses, crosscut saws and bullock teams. Consequently the Dandenongs in the early 1900's were largely cleared with the exception of road verges, steep gullies and dead Mountain Ash that had been ringbarked. Many crops were tried - berries, potatoes, carrots, bulbs and even dairies to name some. Few were successful and the disillusioned farmers sub-divided the blocks which became holiday houses and nurseries. Not many of the 10acre lots remain intact today.

Many people, even those who live in the Dandenongs, are unaware of a public garden called 'Pirianda Garden' in Hackett's Rd Olinda. It is classed as a botanical garden as it has a collection of significant exotic trees and shrubs. The twenty acres was bought in 1959 by the Ansell family (of rubber glove and condom fame) and designed and maintained by them until 1977 when they donated it to the Victorian Government. When the Ansell's bought the property it had been cleared, except for the Blackwood wattles and tree ferns in the steep gully, to grow potatoes and carrots. They built a small stone house for two and proceeded to terrace the block with well constructed stone walls.

They would travel widely overseas and return with trees and shrubs from around the world. At that time the quarantine laws were not as strict as now and many of the plants are the only example of their kind in Australia. Now this beautifully landscaped garden or park with its deep fern gully is a haven for wildlife especially the lyrebirds.

At this time of year during the courtship period you are more than likely to see and hear a male lyrebird displaying. We live around the corner from Pirianda and occasionally visit it on our morning walk. One morning we were quite late and on our arrival at the entrance we heard a lyrebird not far away. Quietly, though it is hard to do that on gravel, we headed in that direction which appeared to be near the boundary fence on Hackett's Road. Imagine our surprise when we spotted not one but four males all with tails outspread, frolicking around the lawn. They were oblivious to our presence and continued their activities for some time until a car drove up the road. They then took their time to move off in different directions. I wondered whether they were competing for territory or females, just being sociable or trying to intimidate each other. Further down the hill in the neighbouring bush we heard and

saw another male going through his repertoire. I was concerned that we had seen no females. Had they been taken by foxes, were they all nesting or maybe they were watching the antics of the males from a safe distance?

A week later I took my one year old grand-daughter to the National Rhododendron Gardens in Olinda which were established by the Australian Rhododendron Society in 1960 and where the lyrebirds are creating havoc by spreading the carefully laid mulch and digging up newly planted shrubs. The volunteer group have had to resort to collecting rocks and tree fern fronds to place around each new plant! We spotted seven lyrebirds that afternoon and I was relieved to see many females or young birds. My grand-daughter was mesmerised by two that were scratching at the side of the road only five metres from us. We watched quietly for about ten minutes without one movement or sound from her! Maybe I have a bird observer in the making.

I can recommend these two gardens for their excellent landscaping, exotic plant collections and the opportunity to see lyrebirds close up in the 'wild'. Pirianda's rock wall terraces, maple and other collections and fern gully are unique. The National Rhododendron Garden is 100 acres also beautifully landscaped with lakes, well laid roads and 13,000 rhododendrons. It is also classed as a botanic garden.

Pirianda Garden, Hackett's Road Olinda.9.00am-5.00pm Enter from the Olinda-Monbulk Road NOT Hackett's Road. Entry is by donation.

National Rhododendron Garden, The Georgian Rd Olinda.10.00am-5.00pm Entry most of the year is \$6.90 but during spring entry is about \$11.80 which includes a bus ride around the garden.

Both gardens are now managed by Parks Victoria.

Both are open every day unless there are extreme winds or total fire ban days.

MNB

[BARHAM VALLEY NURSERY, APOLLO BAY](#)

During the Queen's birthday weekend we visited Tom and Nanette MacDougall's nursery in the Barmah Valley at Apollo Bay. We had been a couple of times previously with members of the Rhododendron Society. Tom is a member and, knowing his interest in vireyas, we took a few plants that Simon had struck to add to his collection.

It was a cold, miserable day but there was a steady stream of visitors to the nursery, many were regulars, and all took something home with them. They propagate and sell a wide variety of plants including asiatics, azaleas, vireyas, natives and other exotics. Tom and Nanette also have a beautiful garden of about five acres behind the nursery. Tom took us on a guided tour while Nanette looked after the customers. The garden was no longer open to the public. They have collected many fine specimens. Like everywhere else the January- February heatwave did a lot of damage. Tom had been working hard cutting out the dead bits, planting more sun tolerant plants in exposed and dry positions and making paths. We spent over an hour admiring the garden, taking photos and chatting with Tom.

In these global recession and drought times, as elsewhere in the nursery industry, Tom has had to improvise. He now undertakes landscaping and looks after the gardens of stock brokers and other well to do who have holiday properties in the area. Apollo Bay has good soil and above average rainfall to go with spectacular scenery and beaches. For gardeners it is quite comparable to the Dandenongs. To us it is a

very attractive holiday destination. As the high prices in Estate Agents windows testify there are many others who share our view.

SWB & MNB

JOTTINGS

WORTH READING: the Royal Horticultural Society UK magazine 'The Garden' May 2009, Page 342. An article about the Millais Nurseries in Surrey which specialise in growing all classes of rhododendrons with the exception apparently of vireyas. There is special mention of the bonus of foliage with indumentum for year round benefit. Their website is www.rhododendrons.co.uk.

The 'American Rhododendron Society' Journal Vol.63 Number 2 Spring 2009, Page 80. A very well informed article about *Phytophthora ramorum* (Sudden Oak Death) and *kernoviae*, neither of which we yet have in Australia as far as we know, written by Ian Wright, Garden Adviser to the National Trust in the UK. Ian was one of the exceptional speakers at the Edinburgh Conference last year. We are hoping he may make it out to our Golden Jubilee Conference next year. Rhododendrons are one of the main hosts for *P. Ramorum* and Ian explains the difficulties the UK gardens are having due to the spread of the infection.

Both these magazines are available in the ARS library for members to read. There are some wonderful books in the library and they can be borrowed at any general meeting. See Alan Walker .

MORE ON PHYTOPHTHORA: Also in the May 2009 'The Garden'. 'The UK Government has allocated **25million pounds** to help safeguard the natural landscape, woodlands and gardens of England and Wales against ramorum dieback or 'sudden oak death' as it is known in USA'. *Rhododendron ponticum*, as well as being a weed in UK, is also a favoured host of phytophthora and plans are being made to remove uninfected ponticum plants. The funds will be spent on research, for raising public awareness and for plant removal. The Scottish Government has carried out a consultation on ways to tackle the disease.

TALL TREES: A Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) in Argyll, Scotland, has been officially named the tallest tree in Britain. It measured 63.79m. (209ft). Do they know that that is a baby compared to the Mountain Ash (*Eucalyptus regnans*) growing along the Sassafras Creek? Many of the trees in the vicinity of Lyrebird Falls Reception venue are over 91m and still growing. At least one falls into the category of being one of the tallest trees in the Southern hemisphere and has a rope hanging from it as a result of being climbed and officially measured. Mountain Ash are the tallest flowering trees in the world. The walk along Sassafras Creek is well graded and there is plenty of parking at Beagley's Bridge Picnic Ground.

FLEMINGS NURSERY in Monbulk did not participate at the Chelsea Flower Show this year. According to 2 articles in 'The Garden' magazine they have suffered as a result of the 'disastrous February forest fires'. It is more likely that the economic downturn affected the large exhibitors at the Show, many of whom did not participate this year. Flemings are hoping to take some part in 'Inspiring in Spring, The Dandenongs Garden Festival' this year.

A LITTLE KNOWN FACT: (sent by an esteemed member!). The first testicular guard 'Cup' was used in hockey in 1874 and the first helmet was used in 1974. It took 100 years for men to realise that the brain is **also** important!

IF ONLY!

- ❖ Germany had stuck to making toys
- ❖ England had stuck to making ships
- ❖ America had stuck to making musicals
- ❖ Italy had stuck to making operas
- ❖ France had stuck to making wine
- ❖ Cuba had stuck to making cigars
- ❖ Russia had stuck making vodka
- ❖ Japan had stuck to making tourists
- ❖ China had stuck to making rituals
- ❖ The Middle East had stuck to making history
- ❖ India had stuck to making curry
- ❖ And Australia had stuck to making nothing.
- ❖ WOULDN'T THE WORLD BE A BETTER PLACE?

MNB

VIREYA GROUP

The Vireya Group met on Saturday morning 11 July at Mike and Inge Hammer's house. It was cold and wind with showers threatened. Nevertheless a dozen braved the conditions. Just as well the primary attraction was indoors! A DVD tour of the famous Exbury Garden conducted, on screen, by Nicholas de Rothschild.

Nicholas is the grandson of the famous hybridizer Lionel de Rothschild who established the modern Exbury Garden after he bought the 200 acre estate from Lord Forster in 1919. Lord Forster was appointed Governor General of Australia.

Nicholas not only was the narrator but also the producer of the DVD. For those who have not been to Exbury the DVD should inspire a wish to do so. For those who have been to Exbury the DVD brings back memories and a wish to go again.

Creating Exbury Garden required expenditure of a fortune. Even its maintenance is beyond the grasp of the average gardener. During the second world war, when Exbury was requisitioned by the Navy and it was the site of planning for the D Day armada, the gardening staff was reduced to 15 elderly gardeners. From a normal 80 or so! It was a de Rothschild tradition that each family member had a rhododendron named for him or her. While Lionel was alive he accounted for a very substantial proportion of all Rhododendron hybrid registrations. So, even with a large family there were enough hybrids to go around. The DVD shows some very early photos. Lionel was a keen photographer. In common with most great gardens Exbury makes extensive use of water features; streams; bogs; lakes and rivers [Beaulieu]. I wish we had that opportunity more in Australia. There are bridges to rival Monet's garden at Giverny; many miles of paths and roads and many significant plant collections beyond rhododendrons.

After the DVD the rain had stopped and the group walked around Mike and Inge's garden. It, too, is a place where everything grows.

SWB

PROGRAM 2009

AUGUST – FRIDAY 21ST General Meeting – **SPEAKER: BARRY & GAYE**
STAGOLL: Yunnan
Committee meeting 5.00pm at Nunawading

SEPTEMBER – SALE DAY TO BE ADVISED

SATURDAY 5TH social outing to Leongatha flower show
SATURDAY 12TH, Vireya Group 10.00am at 44 Chalet Rd Olinda
FRIDAY 18TH 8.00pm General Meeting at Nunawading. **SPEAKER:**
ANDREW RAPER –CAMELLIAS. Andrew will bring plants for display and sale.
Committee meeting 5.00pm at Nunawading

OCTOBER – **FRIDAY 2ND, SAT 3RD & SUN 4TH** **ABC GARDEN SHOW @ CAULFIELD RACECOURSE.** The ARSV will probably have a stand to advertise our society. Volunteers will be needed please. Ring Marcia Begg 9751 1610.

SATURDAY 3RD & SUNDAY 4TH **AZALEA SHOW** in Hall at National Rhododendron Gardens
SAT 3RD 2.00pm **MEMBERS DAY**, bring a friend for afternoon tea & show results

FRIDAY 16TH 8.00pm General Meeting at Nunawading. **SPEAKER: DON TEESE** from Yamina Rare Plants. Don will have rare plants to display and sell.
Committee meeting 5.00pm at Nunawading

FRIDAY 16TH TO SUNDAY 18TH **ARS CONFERENCE** in SOUTH AUSTRALIA

NOVEMBER – **FROM SAT. 31ST OCTOBER TO TUES. 3RD NOVEMBER,**
RHODODENDRON SHOW in Hall at National Rhododendron Gardens

SATURDAY 14TH – Vireya Group 10.00am at Andrew Raper's nursery.

FRIDAY 20TH 8.00pm **AGM at Nunawading.** **SPEAKER** to be advised.
Committee meeting 5.00pm at Nunawading

DECEMBER — **SUNDAY 6TH** **CHRISTMAS FUNCTION**

FRIDAY 11TH – Committee Meeting at Olinda 8.00pm

FERNY CREEK HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY EVENTS: 2009

Spring Show: 12th and 13th September
Flower Festival: 24th and 25th October

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ARSV COMMITTEE 2009

The new committee was elected in November 2008 for the following year. There are vacancies on the committee and members who would be interested to be more involved would be made very welcome. The committee meets at Nunawading at 5.00pm before the Monthly General Meeting on the 3rd Friday.

PRESIDENT: Michael Hammer Ph: 9755 2176

VICE PRESIDENT No 1: Vacant

VICE PRESIDENT No 2: Vacant

TREASURER: Neil Webster, Ph: 9859 3622
2232

SECRETARY: Michael Hare, 9844

Simon Begg (Editor) & Marcia Begg, Ph: 9751 1610

Inge Hammer, Ph: 9755 2176

Valerie Marshall, Ph: 9803 4434

Cynthia Sladen, Ph: 9561 8874

Alan Walker, Ph: 9726 8836

Elizabeth Xipell, Ph: 9859 9934

SOCIETY PICASAWEB SITE

Visit <http://picasaweb.google.com/ARSVic> for the latest pictures.

Additions since the May 2009 Newsletter are :-

* Coolart June 2009

* Tall trees of Kallista [there would be more, but the camera batteries gave up!]

* Kookaburra Awards

* Barham Valley Nursery, Apollo Bay

For the "Beechmont" Picasaweb site visit <http://picasaweb.google.com/simonwbegg>

MEMBERSHIP FEES

The membership renewal notices are enclosed. You will see the membership fee has increased to \$35 and, no longer, is there a Family membership. Both these changes have been required in order that Parks Victoria will continue to give a member and a guest access to National Rhododendron Garden without paying an entrance fee to Parks. However the increased fee does not cover the cost of hard copy *Newsletter* and postage. Help us help you by receiving *Newsletter* by email. More colour photos too!