

THE RHODODENDRON NEWSLETTER

March 2010

Published by the
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PROGRAM

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

MARCH 2010

SAT & SUN 13TH & 14TH TESSELAARS GARDEN EXPO & RARE PLANT SALE: the ARS will have a stand. Please come and help on the stand and show your support. Free entry for helpers.

FRIDAY 19TH 8.00PM GENERAL MEETING Helen Lovel from Neutrog Australia will demonstrate their products including 'Seamungus'!

VIREYA GROUP. SATURDAY 27TH 2.30PM Andrew Rouse has seedlings of his hybrids and species which are ready to be potted up into tubes. He is very kindly donating these to members. We plan to have a special day to pot up. All members are invited to participate at 'Beechmont' 12 Mernda Rd Olinda Ph: 9751 1610

TUESDAY 30TH FAMILY FUN DAY AT RHODODENDRON GARDENS – Free entry, activities for children organised by Parks Vic.

APRIL 2010

FRIDAY 16TH 8.00pm GENERAL MEETING. 'Lyrebirds of Sherbrooke Forest' with Jan Incoll a long time observer and recognised expert.

MAY 2010

SATURDAY 1ST 'MAY DAY'. PLANTS TO MARYSVILLE. See notice inside.

FRIDAY 21ST 8.00pm GENERAL MEETING. Andrew Rouse will show slides of species and hybrids that have recently flowered for him and that members may well not have nor have seen

PRESIDENTS REPORT

February 2010

After normal rainfall, overall, in 2009 the first 2 months of 2010, up here in the Dandenong Ranges, yielded 90 mm in January and 44.5 mm, so far, for February (with 1 day to go and rain forecast). The total is 134.5+ mm for the 2 months. This is right on the long term average of 134 mm for these 2 months. Gardens are looking very distinctly better than at this time last year. It gives some hope that the long drought may finally be ending. If true the stress on us gardeners will reduce, allowing us a return to more ambitious gardening projects. Let's hope the rainfall continues.

The Liliium & Vireya show, although no longer a direct ARS activity, did have significant involvement from several ARS members and was a great success. The Ferny Creek hall was filled giving a very colourful display and glorious perfume from the Oriental and Orienpet liliiums. Liliiums are a really great companion plant for rhododendrons. They like the same conditions and take up very little space, growing through other plants, while contributing spectacular flowers and delightful perfume. In our garden flowering started in very early December and, as I write this report, there are still many liliiums in flower. Coming back to the show, there were many complimentary comments about the standard of the display and the atmosphere. It is hoped, and expected, that the show will grow in popularity as it becomes more established.

There is no doubt that Vireyas continue to increase in importance and focus. This is in line with smaller gardens needing smaller plants. Vireyas are also better adapted to Melbourne's climate than are the Asiatic rhododendrons and have the advantage that some are in flower at all times throughout each year rather than just an intense burst in spring. Individual plants often have multiple flowerings. Attendance at the Vireya Group meetings is increasing with better targeted subjects. The March meeting will be held at "Beechmont", Simon and Marcia Begg's place, on Saturday the 27th March at 2.30 pm. Andrew Rouse and Simon need help to pot on species seedlings Andrew has grown from seed supplied from Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, The Rhododendron Species Foundation and French collector Frederic Danet and vireya cuttings, of species and hybrids, Simon has struck. It is not all work. Andrew and Simon plan a distribution of both species and hybrids to those who attend. Many of the plants are not available from other sources. Andrew and Simon are happy to discuss participants' prospects of successful growing of these plants, and if need be, keeping them going in Simon's shade house until they are big enough to be confident of survival. I hope many members will come along.

The Australia Day barbeque was held at NRG on the cherry lawn (just below and east of the hall). It was well attended and enjoyed by all those who came.

As in previous years the ARSV committee has decided to continue funding the lace wing program in the NRG, on a dollar for dollar basis with Parks, up to \$2000. The feedback is that the program is making a discernable difference with much lower levels of damage than was common in previous infestations.

There is no doubt that the main activity that will occupy the committee this year is the upcoming Golden Anniversary Rhododendron conference in October. Planning is now well advanced and a very interesting program has been put together. The Brochure and entry form is enclosed with this *Newsletter*. I urge you all to look at it carefully and consider attending. Putting on such a conference is considerably more expensive than might appear at first sight. The committee has gone to great lengths to try and reduce attendance fees to the lowest possible level and our fees are very competitive with other comparable conferences. The budgeting suggests ARSV will probably end up with a small loss from this activity which the society has adequate resources to absorb. By budgeting in this way we hope that the participation fees are less of a barrier for those wishing to attend. Attending, is not just about hearing interesting speakers and visiting great gardens, but also about spending 3 days in an enjoyable social context with like minded people and supporting your society.

The February meeting was a slide show of gardens in and near Auckland New Zealand, Simon and Marcia Begg visited at the NZRA Rhododendron Convention in November. The show bench was well populated with Vireyas. Simon and Andrew Rouse divided up most of the awards between them.

Michael Hammer

THE SPECIES COLUMN.

formosum [photo page 6] -Subsection Maddenia “Ciliicalyx/johnstoneanum alliance”.

Rhododendron *formosum* is a free-flowering species which is not difficult to grow in East Ringwood. Both varieties prefer light shade, good drainage, and are not too fussy about watering. My plant of *v.inequale* is growing on the South side of the house and is around 30 years old and 2 metres across.

Name:

The name means beautiful. It should not be confused with *formosanum*, which is named after the island of Formosa (Taiwan).

Distribution:

N.E.India at 600-1800 metres (2000-6000 ft.) growing in open forests or riverbanks.

Characteristics:

This species has been split into two varieties, namely:

*Var. *formosum*, which has narrow bristly leaves up to 1.5 cm. wide. The flowers are generally small for a Maddenia, 4-7cm. long, usually white flushed pink with a yellow blotch.

*Var. *inaequale*, which has leaves 1.5-5 cm. wide, with larger scented flowers and looks quite different to the above variety.

The Maddenia group as a whole covers a wide area in nature with the result that it is difficult to separate the different forms into species, varieties, and natural hybrids.

The botanists are facing a difficult task in laying down an orderly and logical classification when nature refuses to follow any rules.

Hybrids.

This species has not been widely used overseas because it is not frost-hardy..

Two overseas hybrids are well-known here:

*Fragrantissimum (*formosum x edgeworthii*); A popular hybrid with very fragrant flowers which is easily grown in moderate shade.

**Tyermannii* (*formosum* x *nuttallii*); Large white flowers on a leggy plant but not difficult to grow.

Australian Hybrids:

*“Donvale Cilpinense” (*ciliicalyx* x *formosum* x *moupinense*); A hybrid raised by Jack O’Shannassy but not registered. It is easier to grow than Cilpinense but much more resistant to lace-bug and petal-blight.

*Anne Teese. (*ciliicalyx* x *formosum*); A beautiful pale pink striped deeper pink but not easy to grow in Melbourne.

*Winifred Merson, (*formosum* x *burmanicum*). White flushed Chrome yellow.

Where to See These Plants:

Our GPS survey shows a total of 8 v. *formosum* and 3 v. *iteophyllum*, mainly growing in the centre of the Maddenia Walk. They can be seen in flower in late September to early October.

Alan Kepert.

VIREYA SPECIES COLUMN

R. ruttanii [photo page 6]. According to the classification proposed by Dr George Argent *Rhododendrons of subgenus vireya*, RHS 2006, the species is a member of Section VII Euvireya subsection iii Solenovireya. The Section is a large one as is the subsection. It is found in New Guinea and Western Melesia, that is the, mostly, Indonesian Islands to the West of New Guinea.

Habitat

R. ruttanii is found on the island of Ceram at Maluku on Mt Merkele and Mt Binaia in primary forest where it is abundant on limestone from 1900-2500m

Name

The species was named for L Rutten, a Dutch geologist, who led the 1932 expedition that discovered it.

Description [borrowed, extensively, from Argent]

R. ruttanii, in its original habitat is a shrub to 2m. Its twigs are rounded, smooth and moderately brown scaly; internodes 1.7-4.5cm. **Leaves** 4-6 together in tight pseudowhorls. Blade 30-80 x 12-45 mm, obvate to elliptic; apex broadly tapering, obtuse to rounded, sometimes slightly retuse; margin entire, narrowly revolute; base narrowly tapering; laxly scaly initially, glabrescent above, more densely and persistently scaly beneath. Mid-vein impressed above, distinctly raised beneath; lateral veins 3-8 per side, curved, interconnecting before the edge and slightly impressed above, straight and inconspicuously raised beneath.

Petiole 5-8 x 2-3 mm grooved above, scaly. **Inflorescence** 4-8 flowered, the flowers held stiffly semi-erect to half hanging, white or very lightly flushed pink as the buds open, strongly and sweetly scented. **Corolla** 45-50 x 21- 30 mm, trumpet shaped; tube 41-50 x 6-8 x 5-6 mm straight cylindrical; lobes 10-13 x 10-12 sub-circular with irregular margins.

Hybrids

Argent notes a natural hybrid with *R. malayanum* found on Mt Binaia in 1987.

Verdict

The species was introduced into cultivation at Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh in 1987. Argent notes its similarity to *R. jasminiflorum* but it has larger flowers. He says it grows well but flowers irregularly mostly in late spring. At Olinda my plants are very small- 20 cm. One is flowering, now, for the first time. Both are just starting to show some vigour. One exceeds the internode distance. The other is at the top end of flowers in a truss. Maybe, like

jasminiflorum, it will do well in Olinda. First to propagate more plants and plant some in the garden; then we shall see.

Simon Begg

GOLDEN JUBILLE CONFERENCE

RHODODENDRONS IN AUSTRALIA

SUNDAY 17TH OCTOBER TO WEDNESDAY 20TH OCTOBER 2010

International speakers

Public and private gardens,

Excellent food and wine

Local attractions

Conference bus

With this newsletter you will have received the Conference Information Booklet.

The committee hopes you will join them in celebrating the first 50 years of the
Australian Rhododendron Society

And the world renowned National Rhododendron Gardens

PLANTS FOR BUSHFIRE AREAS

In the shade house at the Rhododendron Gardens there are a lot of potted rhododendrons which are going to be trucked to Marysville and distributed by the Marysville Lions Club. Van Berkel Plant Transport from Silvan have kindly offered a truck and driver to transport these plants and any others that will fit in the truck. Any members who would like to help pack the truck at this end or help at Marysville would be very welcome. Those who have suitable plants in pots, not necessarily rhododendrons, which they would like to contribute, can deliver them to the Gardens on, or the week before, the 1st May. If we have too many for one truck we will have another trip in spring. Plants should be labeled and in good condition.

Delivery date to Marysville: Saturday 1st May

Further details: Marcia Begg 9751 1610, Mike Hammer 9755 2176, Michael Hare: 9844 2232



***R ruttenii* “Beechmont”, February 2010**



R “Pink Jazz”, “Beechmont”, February 2010



***R formosum* ARSV Rhododendron Show 2005**



***R stenophyllum* "Beechmont", February 2010**



***R Suaevoelens* Dr Brian Oldham, Auckland, November 2009**



R "Lem's Monarch", Rhodoville, Auckland, November 2009

JOTTINGS

GRANDPA, 85, HAS ABSEILING ON HIS MIND: so read the headlines in the local paper this week. ‘Gerry Heilmann spent Sunday cycling a 40k marathon – and standing on his head at the finishing line’!!! Gerry has been a member of the Society for some years and spends much of his time cycling in marathons in both Australia and overseas but he does not stop there! Skydiving, and in the near future abseiling, are part of his dare devil life. Even a broken hip in 2007 has not stopped him enjoying his hobbies. Congratulations Gerry!



RHODODENDRON GENE BANK: A federal institution in Germany with an outstanding background in rhododendron cultivation is working towards setting up a

Rhododendron Gene Bank. Information is collected in databases to verify cultivars and species. Information includes plant descriptions, parentage details, hybridizers, taxonomic classification and photos of the verified plants. Once verified and assessed selected cultivars and species will be propagated and made available to registered members. The important task of preserving plants takes place in nurseries, botanical gardens, parks and private gardens and the objective is to cultivate at least two plants from every cultivar or wild species in at least two gene bank collections. An important future task of the network is to ensure that no rare species or cultivars are lost when members can no longer maintain their collection. *Read more in the American Rhododendron Society Journal, Winter 2010*

AMERICAN RHODODENDRON SOCIETY RESEARCH GRANT of \$5000 was awarded to Dr. Susan Gardiner/Davis from the NZ Institute for Plant and Food Research Ltd in 2009. Dr Gardiner is one of the knowledgeable speakers to be heard at the Golden Jubilee Conference to be held in the Dandenongs in October this year. The grant is for: ‘Molecular studies of Rhododendron subgenus Vireya – implications for international programmes in conservation collection management and plant development’. Dr. Gardiner has developed a DNA extraction machine and with conventional taxonomic methods and molecular markers, specifically DNA, she and her colleagues hope to determine the value of conserving vireyas that may be endangered of being lost in the wild. She also received an ‘Outstanding International Horticulturist Award’ in 2009 in New Zealand for her contribution to apple research. Sue is the Vice-President of the New Zealand Rhododendron Association. *See the Conference information booklet.*

OLD CARD SHARPS: A group of ladies had been playing cards together for many, many years and now at last there were only two ladies left. As they sat across the table from one another one lady said to the other, ‘I am most embarrassed dear that I cannot remember your name, please tell me what it is’. The other lady looked up from her cards and answered, ‘Oh dear, how soon do you need to know?’

WIFE; have you ever wondered how some words originated? This word ‘wife’ was discussed on ABC radio recently and it was revealed that it is an acronym! A well informed listener rang in to the radio station to reveal the truth! WIFE stands for Wash, Iron, Feed, Entertain!!!! I am sure all of us wives new that already!

Marcia Begg

VIREYA GROUP MEETING 27 MARCH 2010
DISTRIBUTION OF VIREYA SPECIES AND HYBRIDS TO SOCIETY
MEMBERS

Where: “Beechmont” Simon & Marcia Begg, 12 Mernda Rd, Olinda. Simon and Marcia [9751 1610] would appreciate knowing if you are planning to attend.

When: 2.30pm

Bring: plant labels/tags. Pots and potting mix will be provided, however if you have pots or mix you prefer, bring them along.

The plan is to pot up my species in need of potting up and also some of Simon’s plants. Then to distribute what we can and save the rest for a later date

Some of the vireya species I have grown and raised from seed on behalf of the Society are now of a size suitable for distribution to members. These include:

- *R agathodaemonis*
- *R culminicola*
- *R aff herzogii*
- *R brassii*
- *R curviflorum*
- *R aff leptobrachion*
- *R macgregoriae*
- *R williamsii*
- *R majus*
- *R armitii*
- *R javanicum*
- *R apoanum*
- *R mendumiae*
- *R gardenia*

Seed was received from various sources over the last few years, including the Rhododendron Species Foundation, Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh, and Frederic Danet (from recent collecting trips to West Papua). Provenance will be provided for all species – I only ask that the provenance is included on the label so this information is available should the plant be handed on or be a source of cuttings. Simon has the same request for his plants. Where the plants are big enough the label should be attached to the plant- so birds or beasts can't relocate the labels!

Some of the species, such as *R apoanum*, *R brassii*, *R curviflorum*, *R agathodaemonis* and *R gardenia* are new introductions to Australia, and will hopefully prove to be worthwhile additions to *vireya* collections. I'm particularly looking forward to seeing *R curviflorum* in flower; according to Argent, "the bright yellow softly hairy flowers are produced in great profusion..." – for full description of this species, see p303 of *Rhododendrons of subgenus vireya* (Argent 2006). Likewise, *R gardenia* is a most excellent addition to *vireyas* in Australia (see p81 of Argent).

The *R apoanum* seedlings are very vigorous and should grow well outside under a range of conditions. The first introduction of *R williamsii* are almost certainly *R kochii*; hopefully these seedlings will be the true to name. The seedlings of *R culminicola* (seed wild collected) are growing well and I'm hopeful that these plants will be more vigorous than the *R culminicola* currently in cultivation in Australia.

Seedlings have been kept under glass, however are at a size where they should be OK outside in a shade house or bench.

For interstate members, please let me know if you are interested in seedlings, or cuttings (as material becomes available).

Simon has a range of more common species and hybrids available for distribution which not everyone has. Species include *R nervulosum*, *yongii*, *phaeochitum*, *tuba*, *rhodoleucum*, *retivenium*, *retusum*, *praetervisum*, *rugosum*, *lochiae*, *viriosum var thornton peak*, *konori*, *radians*, *pauciflorum*, *blackii*, *rarum*, *burtii*, *aequabile*, *rushforthii*, *yelliottii*, *inconspicuum*, *jasminiflorum*, *rarilepidotum* and *christi*. Some are in very short supply. Simon has to sort his hybrids to see what is available but there are a number that Bill Taylor and Murray McAllister collected from New Zealand in 2003. Pink Jazz came from Andrew Raper but, it is believed, came originally from New Zealand. It has attractive pink foliage which persists for quite a while. When Simon obtained his plant no one had seen it flower. It has just flowered for the first time and has proved easy to propagate.

Andrew Rouse

KARWARRA GARDEN

A tranquil botanic garden to visit, Karwarra will captivate with its cooler mountain environment and its landscaped areas with over 2000 native plants and 1300 different species. It provides a natural attraction for a great variety of Australian birds. Certified collections of *Telopea* and *Boronias* are held within the garden, which merges with native bushland.



Climate change and water restrictions have made Karwarra's well stocked native plant nursery a focus as gardeners develop their gardens to suit drier times. Plants in the nursery are mainly watered with collected rainwater and any excess water is recycled.

In the 1970's well-known landscape designer, Ellis Stones, developed the design concepts which transformed an abandoned and weed-infested farmland into the present botanical resource. While the Garden's design has changed over the years as a result of the influence of various gardening fashions and landscapers, the framework visitors see today still reflects designs created by Kath Deery from 1978 to 1984 .



This style would be classified as eclectic, that is, one which includes a mixture of styles throughout the garden. The overriding feeling is one of informality and peace with sensitive combinations of flower and foliage colours, seasonal floral pictures, interesting forms, rocks and pools and meandering pathways opening to new vistas throughout.

The garden is located behind the Kalorama Reserve, Mt Dandenong Tourist Road, Kalorama (Mel Ref 120, B9).

PROGRAMME 2010 GENERAL MEETINGS

March 19th Neutrog Australia will demonstrate their products including Seamungus – Helen Lovel

April 16th Lyrebirds of Sherbrooke Forest, Jan Incoll 9756 6977

May 21st Andrew Rouse, new species and hybrid photos

June 18th Using Grey Water in the Garden by ‘Waterwise Systems’

July 16th Companion Planting – Tim Orpin

August 20th

September 17th

October Meeting replaced by conference

November 19th AGM and

December 5th Christmas Lunch

CONTENTS

Program	Page 1
President's Report	Pages 2-3
The Species Column	Pages 3-4
Vireya Species Column	Pages 4-5
Golden Jubilee Conference October 2010	Page 5
Plants For Bushfire Areas	Page 5
Photographs	Pages 6-7
Jottings	Pages 8-9
Vireya Group Meeting 27 March 2010	Pages 9-10
Kawarra Garden	Pages 10-11
General Meeting Program 2010	Page 11
Contents	Page 12

ARSV COMMITTEE 2009

There continue to be 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

SECRETARY: Michael Hare, 9844 2232

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

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Valerie Marshall, Ph: 9803 4434

Cynthia Sladen, Ph: 9561 8874

Alan Walker, Ph: 9726 8836

Elizabeth Xipell, Ph: 9859 9934

SOCIETY PICASA WEB SITE

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

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