

THE RHODODENDRON NEWSLETTER

May 2010

Published by the

Australian Rhododendron Society, Victorian Branch Inc. (A5896Z)

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PROGRAMME

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

MAY 2010

SATURDAY 1ST 'MAY DAY'. PLANTS TO MARYSVILLE. See article 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.

JUNE 2010

FRIDAY 18TH 8.00PM GENERAL MEETING. 'Waterwise Systems' will demonstrate and explain the use of grey water in the garden.

SUNDAY 20TH 2.30 PM VIREYA GROUP. All friends and members welcome to help pot up and distribute plants from Andrew Rouse and Simon Begg. This follows the very successful day in March. 'Beechmont' 12 Mernda Rd, Olinda, 9751 1610. To give us an idea of numbers to prepare for please ring or email Simon or Marcia (mnbeegg@gmail.com).

JULY 2010

FRIDAY 16TH 8.00PM GENERAL MEETING. Tim Orpin, who bought the well renowned Kenloch Reception venue in Olinda a few years ago, will talk about 'Companion Planting'. Tim and his wife have made huge changes to the house and garden. Both are botanists and plant collectors who are widely travelled. Delegates to the Rhododendron Conference in October will have the good fortune to visit Kenloch and the garden.

AUGUST 2010

FRIDAY 20TH 8.00PM GENERAL MEETING. Speaker to be decided.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Our 50th anniversary conference is coming up in just over 5 months. Our keynote speaker is Ken Cox from Scotland and in this regard I would like to mention that the ARS National Council is providing up to \$7,500 of funding to support Ken's visit of which \$4,000 has already been spent in airfares. The Victorian branch is very grateful for this support. Planning for the conference is now well advanced and it should be a great event. I would encourage everyone reading this report to seriously consider attending.

I would also like to mention that Parks Victoria has been very supportive of our conference. They have offered us material for distribution to attendees at no charge, they will be keeping the Ricketts sanctuary open later to accommodate a visit from attendees and some Parks employees will be attending.

The Victorian committee of the ARS has been concerned for some time over the low public profile of the National Rhododendron Garden. We feel that if the garden is to survive long term, it needs to have a higher profile. Specifically, it needs to be publicly recognized as a botanical garden rather than an urban park. If the latter view persists it will ultimately degenerate to such a status. We take the view that it should be considered as Victoria's cool climate botanical garden, equivalent to Mt Tomah in NSW or Mt Lofty in South Australia. We are looking at ways to promote this point of view and we have made unofficial representations on this theme to our local members, both State and Federal.

With this in mind it is very gratifying that Parks Victoria has indicated that they take a very similar view and are also promoting it. Indeed, some representatives of Parks have recently visited Mt Tomah specifically to compare it to the NRG and they have indicated they are promoting the idea in their long range planning documents.

Within the NRG, new signage has been erected and it looks really great. This was organized by Parks with contributions from the ARS and others. It may seem of low significance, but good signage has a very big impact on how the gardens present. Again, those of you who live close by, and have not seen it, I urge you to go and have a look.

Recently, there was a letter to both Parks and the Age criticising the upkeep of the garden and claiming it was falling into disrepair. While the letter maybe exaggerates a bit (the gardens still look spectacular) there is no doubt that there is some justification for the overall theme. This letter resulted in Denise Gadd, the gardening editor of the Age, visiting the gardens and generating articles in the Age newspaper and the Age on line. I was contacted for comments with respect to these articles and these were quoted (albeit with a few inaccuracies). The articles supported our theme that the NRG deserves higher status and more support. For example the NRG has 3 paid gardeners while Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne, which is smaller, has 30. The NRG also desperately needs a modern, viable, multipurpose visitors centre and needs to have greater prominence, both with respect to advertising and visibility. One possibility with respect to the latter would be to link NRG more tightly to the tourist township of Olinda which is only a few hundred meters away.

We followed up on these articles with a letter to the Age from ARS. The letter was published but, unfortunately, only after very heavy editing by the Age. With this in mind, for those who are interested to read what we actually wrote, our letter is reproduced below.

On more mundane matters, the last meeting of the Vireya group was very well attended with much enthusiastic potting up of newly grown Vireya seedlings. The March general meeting was an entertaining presentation from Neutrog on their range of fertilizers. Since then Martin Ferrugio (A nurseryman specializing in Lapagerias and Peonies) has commented to me that their Seamungus fertilizer is extremely beneficial. On his recommendation I have purchased some and am trialing it. I will report in due course on how it works for me. The April meeting was a talk from the Dandenong Ranges Lyrebird group on these fascinating birds and it prompted a significant number of questions and discussion.

The Tuesday group is continuing work in the NRG. It has planted out some new Azalea beds from material Bill Taylor provided (working alongside Parks and with their assistance) and it has contributed substantially to garden maintenance.

On the first of May, ARS organized a very large truck load of free plants to Marysville for residents devastated by the bushfires of last year (thank you Marcia for doing the organizing).

Van Berkel provided a truck, driver and two helpers free of charge. Six members of ARS went up to Marysville and helped the Lion's club unload the truck and distribute the plants. This fulfils a promise we made, shortly after the fires, to support recovery. As it so happened the Lion's club organized a community day to coincide with our plant distribution and the premier attended, opened the newly rebuilt School, promised \$1.9m to refurbish Gallipoli Park and thanked everyone except, sadly, ARS and its plants. Such is life! On the other hand the residents were immensely grateful for what we offered and we can all feel gratified that we have helped to restore a beautiful area and give some pleasure to people who have been through much trauma.

Another, very significant, recent development is the Government announcement that, as from 1st July 2010, there will be no charge for entry to any parks or gardens run by Parks Victoria including the National Rhododendron Gardens. This may or may not be good for the gardens. On the one hand attendances are likely to increase which increases the relevance of the gardens (witness the community day on 30th march when 1300 people attended) but, on the other hand it might further re-inforce the idea that the NRG is just an urban park. We will need to wait and see how it pans out.

As far as the society is concerned the attraction of free entry into the gardens ceases to have any value, but on the other hand we can reduce the annual membership back to \$25 which is what the committee has decided to do for next year. I hope members will see value in being part of the society in its own right.

Lastly to the perennial issue of the weather. Here in the Dandenongs, rainfall continues to be close to normal with 125mm in March and 82mm in April and while most of April was very warm we are now returning to normal cooler weather.

Michael Hammer

THE LETTER WE SENT TO THE AGE

With respect to the recent letters and articles regarding the National Rhododendron Gardens (NRG) at Olinda, we (the Australian Rhododendron Society) progressively designed and developed these gardens on vacant land granted to us for the purpose by Sir Henry Bolte in August 1960. By 1995 the gardens had risen to such significance both nationally and internationally that the state government of the day decided to transfer management away from the ARS and into public hands (Parks). Despite this change, the ARS has worked together with Parks to continue development of the gardens and is still very actively involved today.

From the outset the NRG was expressly intended as a botanic garden with the goal of showcasing to visitors a range of botanical diversity that would otherwise be difficult to see. While the dominant theme of the garden is undoubtedly rhododendrons, plantings include a very wide variety of other cool climate trees and shrubs increasingly difficult to grow in Melbourne suburbs (magnolias, maples, beeches, conifers, and many others). Given the botanical diversity on display, the gardens can justifiably claim to be Melbourne's cool climate botanic garden, equivalent to Mt Tomah in New South Wales or Mt Lofty in South Australia. They are also ideally positioned, very close to Melbourne's centre of population yet right in the heart of a major tourist precinct.

At 40 hectares of developed garden these are one of the largest public botanic gardens in Eastern Australia. They are in fact so large they require motorized visitor transport facilities within the garden. Both in size and quality they deserve to stand along side Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne and Cranbourne just as Mt Tomah stands along side the Sydney botanic gardens and Mt Annan.

The NRG has considerable status overseas yet unfortunately, closer to home, it seems that some in power view the gardens more as an urban park rather than a significant botanic garden. The result is that it is severely under resourced and under promoted. The current resources are simply not enough to maintain and enhance a garden of this size and quality. Botanic gardens require considerably more manpower to maintain, catalogue and extend botanical collections but they also return much more value to citizens, national and international visitors. The gardens also lack a credible visitor centre - a critical deficiency.

The government is spending a very large sum of money developing Royal Botanic Gardens, Cranbourne. Given that such expenditure is justified, would it not be equally desirable to spend a tiny fraction of that sum recognising, promoting, maintaining and enhancing an already existing, and internationally renowned botanic garden right on Melbourne's doorstep.

THE SPECIES COLUMN.

R campanulatum -Subsection Campanulata. [photo page 8]

Rhododendron *campanulatum* is divided into two subspecies namely:

Ssp. *campanulatum*, is larger and has unistrate (single hair) indumentum.

Ssp. *aeruginosum*, has bistrate (double hair) indumentum, and has particularly attractive bluish-green foliage.

Some authorities think they should be regarded as separate species.

The flowers are attractive and vary in colour from white to pale rose or lilac.

Name: refers to the bell-shaped flowers, which are also common in many other species.

Distribution:

Widely distributed in the Himalayas, in North India, Nepal, Bhutan, and Tibet, at 2900-4100 metres (9500-13500 ft.) growing in forests and thickets.

Characteristics:

There are only two species in this Subsection, which are closely related but can be distinguished by their indumentum.

campanulatum has a dense fawn to brown indumentum on the underside of the leaves.

wallichii has little or no indumentum

Hybrids:

This species has been used overseas in the production of mid – season hybrids, but most are not well-known here.

Boddaertianum (*campanulatum* x *arboreum*) A very old hybrid raised by Van Houtte in 1863. It has pink and white flowers and is heat tolerant and lace-bug resistant. Boddaertianum does well in Melbourne and should be more popular.

Lamellan (*campanulatum* x *griffithianum*)

Annabella (*campanulatum* x *Loderi*.) –Rothschild 1933.

Stanwellii (*campanulatum* x *ponticum*)

Constant Nymph. (*campanulatum* x *Purple Splendor*)

Fleur de Roi (*campanulatum* x *thompsonii*)

Where to See These Plants:

Our GPS survey found nine plants of *campanulatum* in the Maddenia Walk near the trial bed area. These can be seen flowering in late September. We also found three plants of ssp. *aeruginosum*, and one particularly good specimen, with its blue foliage can be seen near the gazebo above the lake.

Alan Kepert.

VIREYA SPECIES COLUMN

R rousei [photo page 8]. 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 iv Malesia. The Section is a large one as is the subsection- with 53 members found from Vietnam to New Guinea and most places in between.

Habitat

This particular species hails from the Phillipines, Rombion Province, Sibuyan I, Mt Giting Giting, Camp 3 above Magdiwang, on the ridge leading to Mayos Peak among ultramafic boulders in open sub-montane forest at 1300m.

Name

The species was discovered by Dr George Argent and Domingo Madulid in 1989 and named for Dr John Rouse, of Toorak, Melbourne, for his outstanding contribution to knowledge of vireya rhododendrons

Description [borrowed, extensively, from Argent]

R rousei, in its original habitat, is a shrub to about 1m. In Olinda my plants are, as yet, too small to tell how big it will grow. It, certainly, is not over vigorous in Olinda. Its **twigs** are, at first, laxly covered with brown scales but these quickly fall to leave the surface warty.

Its **leaves** are crowded into tight pseudowhorls of 3-7 full sized leaves and several much smaller ones. The blade is 25-50 x 15-30 mm, elliptic to obovate; apex broadly obtuse to rounded, sometimes slightly retuse; margin recurved, strongly so when dry; base tapering; dark shining green above, much paler green beneath; mid-vein impressed above, raised below, lateral veins 3-5 a side, distinctly impressed above, smooth below. Petiole 5-12 x 2-2.5 mm, grooved above scaly. **Inflorescence** an open umbel of 2-6 flowers, held horizontally to semi erect. Corolla 22-28 x 45-57 mm, white, without scent; tube 11-13 x 6-7 x 10-13 mm, funnel shaped; lobes 24-28 x 22-25 mm, lobes overlapping 1/3-2/3 widely spreading to almost 90 degrees.

Relations

Argent notes *R rousei* is closely related to *R vidalli* but is distinct in that the young stems lack simple hairs and are warty with scale stalks when the scales are gone. It also has larger, darker green leaves and much larger flowers. I cannot comment as, unfortunately, *R vidalli* has yet to appear in Australia.

Verdict

R rousei was introduced into cultivation in Edinburgh in 1989. Argent says it has a good, freely branching, habit and its glossy, dark green, foliage is a very attractive feature. As to all this my two plants are, as yet, very small, and do not exhibit these features, though I have had them for at least two years. As yet I have no cutting material. But one flowered for the first time in March. It was flowering when the Vireya group came to pot up Andrew Rouse's species seedlings. It had very attractive white flowers. I know Andrew has the species and has had flowers. As to be expected for a species named for his illustrious father! But I don't know how big his plants are. The flowers are a pure white and, as Argent says, they last a long time. He also says it is nearly always in flower. For me that has yet to be seen. My verdict is a Scottish one. Not Proven.

Simon Begg

CONFERENCE NEWS

KENNETH COX, son of Peter Cox, who will be one of the keynote speakers at our Golden Jubilee Conference in October, will be selling a limited number of his books at the conference including the ‘**Species Encyclopaedia**’.

Delegates will have the opportunity to have a signed copy which would make an excellent gift to themselves or a friend.

Registration forms, programmes and the full conference booklet are available from Marcia Begg or committee members.

JACK O’S HANNASSY DIES

Just as the finishing touches were being made to *Newsletter* I received advice of Jack’s death. A proper tribute to Jack will appear in the next *Newsletter*. Jack was already a senior citizen of the Society when Marcia and I joined in the mid 1990’s. My earliest memory of him was one of the first Society meetings we attended, about the time Bill Taylor took over from Lesley Eaton as President. Jack explained how to grow seed using a 150 mm pot filled with seed growing mix, the mix dampened, a frame of two pieces of wire bent in U shape with the ends in the mix, and a plastic bag covering the pot, by this time with seed sowed on the surface of the mix, supported by the wire, and secured with an elastic band. He handed us, and other members seed of *R aequabile* and an *R aurigeranum* x. I grew the resulting plants. Notwithstanding many deaths I have surviving plants. For that reason, occasionally, I can enter blooms grown by exhibitor from seed. Marcia and I visited Jack and Carmel’s property in Donvale not long before they moved to a unit in Warrigal Road Burwood. We saw his radio equipment [Jack was a ham radio buff] and where Jack’s hybridising was done with such success. All the “Donvale” series. I counted 17 of these this morning. No doubt there were others also. They included both Asiatics and Vireyas. R “Donvale Pink” *lochiae* [these days probably *viriosum*] x *leucogigas* “Hunstein’s Secret” is one, available commercially, that anyone would be proud to have.

Jack designed, and kept, the seed raising beds in the propagating house at NRG and looked after seed there until macular degeneration took most of his sight a few years ago. Thereafter Carmel or his daughter would bring him, occasionally, to the Lunch Room on Tuesdays.

Jack spoke on hybridising at “Rhododendrons Down Under” the first rhododendron conference I attended in 2000. He must have been in his late 80s when he died.

Jack served on ARSV committee before my time and wrote, eruditely, in early *Newsletters* and, I expect, *The Rhododendron*. For his contribution to the Society he was made a life member. He will be sorely missed. He was an able and kindly man. A true asset to our Society. Our thoughts go to Carmel and his family.

SWB



Vireya rousei



Emu Valley Rhododendron Garden, Burnie, Tasmania



Rhododendron campanulatum



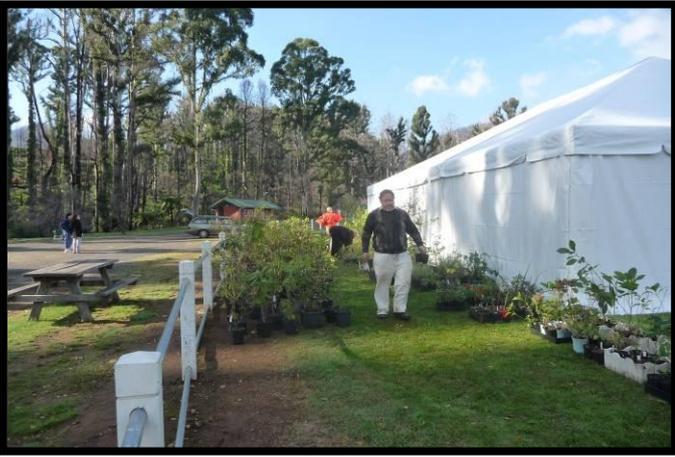
Maurie Kupsch beside *Rh.* 'Maurie Kupsch' at Emu Valley.



Prue Crome in the rock garden at the NRG.



‘The Hoboe’ at Bruno’s Art & Sculpture Park
Marysville



Unloading the plants at Gallipoli Park, Marysville

AUSTRALIAN RHODODENDRON SOCIETY NATIONAL COUNCIL
MEETING AT EMU VALLEY ON SATURDAY 17th APRIL 2010

Office Bearers

Neil Webster (President): Victoria, Robert Hatcher (Vice President): South Australia
Simon Begg (Secretary): Victoria, Peter Wiadrowski (Treasurer): South Australia,
Ken Gillanders, (Registrar and Technical Officer): Southern Tasmania,
Barry Stagoll (Chair of Editorial Committee and Web Master): Victoria.

Delegates

Marcia Begg and Julie Ann Webster (Victoria), Graham Simpson and Maurice Kupsch
(Emu Valley)
Arthur Mercer and Jeff Jenkinson (South Australia) Ken Gillanders and Gordon Hagan
(Southern Tasmania)

The South Australian delegates, the Treasurer, Barry Stagoll and Gordon Hagan from Southern Tasmania were apologies for the meeting.

Life Membership and Society Medal for Neil Webster

National Council, on the motion of Victorian Branch, decided to honor Neil. Apart from starting a second year as President, Neil served for many years as treasurer and Vice President of the National body as well as continuing to serve as Treasurer of Victorian Branch- a position he has also held with distinction for many years.

Vireya Species for Mt Tamborine Botanic Garden

Simon Begg reported that he had answered a request from Roy Bilbie of Mt Tamborine to help it establish a Vireya species collection. Anton Vanderbyl transported these to Mt Tamborine and they have now been planted. [see photo p]. Unfortunately due to a mix up with Anton plants that ARSV provided were not collected. Anton will be back in October so more species can be sent then. Simon received a very appreciative letter from Mt Tamborine. Importantly the Vireya species are being spread around Australia in different collections to people who value, and will preserve them. Simon is also trying to fill the gaps in Emu Valley's Vireya species collection.

Ken Cox's visit and the 2010 Golden Jubilee Conference

Ken is visiting Mt Lofty and Emu Valley, just before, and just after, the conference, respectively. Consequently those branches' delegates to the conference will accompany Ken on their legs of his journey including from Tullamarine to and from Olinda. This saves a lot of worry and effort for the organising committee.

Rule Update

It was agreed that Simon would prepare and circulate a draft revision of the National Rules clarifying points of obscurity.

Presidents visit to Hobart

Neil Webster announced he had arranged to visit Hobart shortly after the National Council meeting and would attend a meeting of Southern Tasmanian Branch.

SWB

VOLUNTEER GROUP

Sadly, now that Bill Taylor is unable to maintain his extremely large stock of nursery plants, many truck loads are being transported to the National Rhododendron Gardens (NRG). The truck and driver have been supplied by Parks who have worked together with the society members to load and unload the truck. Some of those went to Marysville gardens. Many of his azaleas are being planted in a large triangular bed and others will be planted in a newly cleared bed below the gatehouse.

Prue Crome, who joined the group six months ago, has made a huge impression on the rockery near the bottom lake. Weeds have been cleared and many dwarf rhododendrons including lepidotems and azaleas have been planted. Perennials have been tidied up or removed and mulch has been spread. Prue is working with an artist's eye and has recently held an exhibition of her photographic work of bushfire affected forests.

Others in the group have planted species in the rockery below the lunch room. More plantings in the trial garden and mulching of the vireya species bed have been ongoing activities.

Unfortunately some areas of the garden have been affected by disease. Phytophthora or Armillaria, (honey fungus) are both root rot diseases and may be the problem. One area that has had many deaths will be turned into lawn and the remaining plants kept together in a separate garden bed away from healthy areas.

The Volunteer Group meets every Tuesday. Lots of information and knowledge is shared over morning tea and lunch and various jobs around the NRG are undertaken. Members who would like to go along for an hour or a day are very welcome. Just turn up or ring John Quinn on 5968 1027 for more information.

MNB

VIREYA GROUP

The Vireya Group met at "Beechmont" on Saturday afternoon, 27th March to pot up, and distribute, Vireya species seedlings that Andrew Rouse had grown from, mostly, seed sourced outside Australia. Most of the species were very rare in Australia. Some seed came from Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, some from the Rhododendron Species Foundation, Seattle and some from French collector Frederic Danet.

Vireya Species distributed by Andrew Rouse

<i>R apoanum</i>	<i>R armitii</i>	<i>R brassii</i>
<i>R citrinum</i>	<i>R culmnicola</i>	<i>R curviflorum</i>
<i>R edanoi ssp pneumonathum</i>	<i>R gardenia</i>	<i>R aff herzogii</i>
<i>R javanicum</i>	<i>R macgregoriae</i>	<i>R majus</i>
<i>R mendumiae</i>	<i>R rarum (cutting)</i>	<i>R williamsii (possibly R kochii)</i>
<i>R womersleyi (cutting)</i>		

I distributed Vireya species plants grown from cuttings. My species were not so rare but some, deriving from Bill Taylor's and Murray McAllister's 2003 visit to New Zealand, were relatively rare. Potting up Andrew's species and distributing them took a lot longer than we

had bargained for so no time was left to pot up, sort and distribute a shade house full of my cuttings, many sourced from Bill's and Murray's New Zealand acquisitions. That will take another Vireya Group day. By then Andrew may have another group of species seedlings.

At the same time I set aside Vireya species to send to Mount Tamborine Botanic Garden to assist it in establishing a Vireya species collection

Vireya Species distributed by Simon Begg to Mt Tamborine

<i>R blackii</i>	<i>R aurigeranum</i>	<i>R tuba</i>
<i>R rhodoleucum</i>	<i>R bayerinkianum</i>	<i>R yongii</i>
<i>R retivenium</i>	<i>R villosum</i>	<i>R inconspicuum</i>
<i>R yelliottii</i>	<i>R nervulosum</i>	<i>R radians</i>
<i>R rugosum</i>	<i>R konori</i>	<i>R praetervisum</i>
<i>R viriosum</i>	<i>R lochiaie</i>	<i>R aequabile</i>
<i>R fallacinum</i>	<i>R phaeochitum</i>	<i>R x planecostum</i>
<i>R rarum</i>	<i>R kochii</i>	<i>R retusum</i>
<i>R rarilepidotum</i>	<i>R christi</i>	<i>R cruttwellii</i>
<i>R carringtonii</i>	<i>R christianiae</i>	<i>R javanicum</i>
<i>R rushforthii</i>	<i>R jasminiflorum var heuseri</i>	<i>R jasminiflorum var punctatum</i>
<i>R quadrasianum</i>	<i>R zoelleri</i>	<i>R pauciflorum</i>
<i>R macgregoriae</i>	<i>R brassii</i> [a couple of seedlings from Andrew Rouse were big enough]	

20 members attended which is a record for the group. It suggests to me that an interesting activity with a purpose is better value than just visiting an interesting collection or garden or listening to a talk. I hope so, anyway, and that the little plants survive and prosper. The aim is to spread the rare plants as far as possible so that a fire, frost, disease or other disaster affecting one collection will not remove species from Australia. This aim is well assisted by the species sent to Mt Tamborine. I hope also to send Vireya species that Emu Valley does not have [and that I do] to Emu Valley to augment the Emu Valley collection. First I have to get an accredited nursery to assist me ensuring the plants will pass Tasmanian quarantine requirements. Andrew emphasised the importance of recording the correct name and provenance in each pot. He spent most of the afternoon writing labels to make sure the labelling was done right. His plants were too small to attach the labels to the plants. My experience is that non human predators [blackbirds I think- I have never caught them at it] pull the labels out. So, as soon as I can, I attach a correct label to the plant. I use sheep tags, slightly less expensive than, but similar to, those at National Rhododendron Gardens. Mine are not numbered.

Next Vireya Day

After discussion with Andrew Rouse the next Vireya day will again be at "Beechmont" on **Sunday 20 June at 2.30 PM.**

Andrew's contribution will be rooted cuttings of recent registrations:

R "Pixie Star"

R "Highland Bonsai"

R "Little Duchess"

R "Gypsy Bell"

He has up to 15 rooted cuttings of each.

SWB

MARCH GENERAL MEETING

A representative from Neutrog, Chloe, gave a very informative talk about that company's products. The four fertilizers she displayed were 'Strike Back for Orchids', 'Sudden Impact for Roses', 'Seamungus' and 'Rapid Raiser'. All the lucky members present received a small tub of each of these to test on their gardens.

Following a delicious supper Mike Hammer showed his latest development in photography. Last year he was fortunate to visit the 'Huntington Library and Botanic Gardens' in San Marino in California which was the vision of the Huntington family from the early 1900's. It is a garden and museum of hundreds of acres divided into themed areas. The Desert Garden has the largest collection, over 4000, of succulents and cacti in the world and was one that had Mike captivated. Some other themes were Japanese, Roses, Jungle, Shakespeare and a huge tropical conservatory.

Mike's latest photographic exploration is called 'Photo Story', a free programme that can be downloaded from the net which turns a selected group of photos (up to 300) into a customized display of photos in motion each one having a designated time and focal point. Mike added excellent music to play with the photos. A delightful 30 minute show.

MNB

BENCH RESULTS

Azalea section: Simon Begg won with 'Inge' which seems to have at least one flower on it year around, second was Simon again with 'name wanted', but unfortunately no name was forthcoming!

Vireyas: Species up to 4cm – 1st *loranthiflorum*, Andrew Rouse, 2nd *wrightianum* x *wrightianum* also Andrew and 3rd *burtii* Simon Begg.

Hybrids up to 4cms – 1st 'Josephine Gordon' Simon Begg, 2nd a new hybrid by Andrew Rouse and name wanted, 3rd 'Nuigini Firebird' Andrew Rouse.

Species larger than 4cms – 1st *laetum* Simon, 2nd *laetum* Andrew, 3rd *konori* Simon.

Hybrids larger than 4cms – 1st *macgregoriae* x ? Simon, 2nd 'Hallowed Gold' Simon, 3rd 'Cinnamon Pink' Simon.

Potted vireya – *rousei* by Simon

General flower group – a vase of mixed unusual flowers by Marcia Begg.

WL

APRIL GENERAL MEETING

Jan Incoll and Alex from the Sherbrooke Lyrebird Survey Group gave a very professional presentation about themselves and the group's activities in Sherbrooke Forest. The Lyrebird Survey Group started in the 1980's because of concerns about declining lyrebird numbers. They found that cats, dogs and foxes were the prime causes. The Council brought in curfews

for cats, fines for wandering dogs and poison programmes against foxes. Lyrebird numbers have significantly improved following these measures.

Jan joined the group ten years ago and barely a day goes by that she does not walk through the forest. Her husband has started a data base to record each tagged lyrebird. They are tagged while still in the nest. At least one of the Sherbrooke tagged lyrebirds has found its way to the Rhododendron Gardens. Jan and Alex try to record every siting of tagged birds and ask members of the public to report sitings if they can give details about tag colours.

Alex, as a child of eight living opposite the forest, was so fascinated with lyrebirds that he was encouraged to join the survey group. He developed a talent for photography and at the age of seventeen was presented with an environmental award by the then Minister for the Environment. He is now twenty-two and studying Environmental Science and finds plenty of time to spend in the forest continuing surveying and photographing lyrebirds.

Their talk was followed by many questions from the audience.

SHOW BENCH There was a small number of exhibits and these were predominantly in the Vireya section. Simon Begg won first place in classes 1, 2 and 3 with natural hybrid *R. x planecostatum*, *R.* 'Sweet Mac' and *R. rhodoleucum* respectively. Inge Hammer won class 4 with *R.* 'Concerto of Brass'. No vireya pot plants were exhibited. The only exhibits in the azalea section were in classes 6 and 7. Class 6 was won by Inge with *R. reticulatum* and class 7 by Simon with a bloom of *R.* 'Inga'. Len Sloggett won the non-rhododendron section with a floral arrangement of mauve blooms.

MNB

MARYSVILLE

On Saturday 1st May in conjunction with the opening of the new Marysville Primary School by the Premier and Christine Nixon there was a Community Day held at Gallipoli Park in Marysville.

Members of the Rhododendron Society had grown and collected nearly a thousand plants including 300 rhododendrons which they planned to distribute to Marysville residents who had lost their gardens in the bush fires. One hundred of the rhododendrons were from Bill Taylor's nursery and the remainder from the society's nursery at the Rhododendron Gardens. The mixed varieties were from society members who had been potting up plants from their gardens.

Needing a truck to transport the plants to Marysville, the Van Berkel Plant Transport Company was asked what the cost would be to hire a truck and driver for a day. The Managing Director, Rodney Wintle, had no hesitation in offering the services of a large, specially equipped, truck and driver at a date to suit us, at no charge.

A small team of helpers loaded the very large truck in Olinda on Friday 30th April with the expert help of the driver, Greg. It was packed to the gunnels with plants of every shape, size and variety. Definitely not the usual load of meticulously potted and labelled plants Van Berkel was used to transporting! Early on Saturday morning another driver, Mark, and his friends drove the truck to Marysville and a 'nursery' was set up beside the marquee at Gallipoli Park. Plants were distributed to the residents with the help of the Marysville Lions Club. Many locals showed us photos of their gardens before the fires. They were determined to rebuild. A special visitor was Bruno Torfs who's Art and Sculpture Park is once more a very special place to visit after being devastated by the fires.

Our special thanks to Bill Taylor for donating rhododendrons, the Marysville Lions Club for their organisation, those that helped on the day, and grew plants and, most of all, to the staff of Van Berkel.

MNB

JOTTINGS

BLUE MOUNTAINS RHODODENDRON SOCIETY: Simon and Marcia visited the beautiful tranquil rhododendron garden at Blackheath in the Blue Mountains and delivered flyers and booklets about our conference in October. They had celebrated their 40th anniversary this year. The garden is a pleasant mix of endemic and exotic flora in a natural valley. Banks of rhododendrons can be viewed from the club rooms and must look magnificent in spring. These are reflected in the dam where there are surrounding lawn areas with stone bridges and seating. Gravel and tan bark paths are well graduated and wend their way to the lower sections of the garden. There are one hundred and fifty members many of whom live in Sydney and regularly commute to the Blue Mountains to attend fund raising functions and club activities. They are well supported also by the local council.

HINTS ON PREPARING FLOWERS FOR SHOWS: An article in the American Rhododendron Society Journal gave this advice, which I have abbreviated!

- Choose potential buds in autumn. They need to have upright terminal trusses with perfect whorls of leaves.
- Remove any extra buds and unnecessary leaves that spoil the whorl.
- Use stakes to train straight upright stems
- Withholding fertilizer and water in late summer and autumn will often encourage flower bud development.
- Through winter and spring watch for diseases and pests and tag potential entries.
- Just before the show watch the weather report and protect trusses or pick early if forecast is doubtful.
- Good luck!

MIDLIFE CRISIS: After being married for 44 years, I took a careful look at my wife one day and said “Darling, 44 years ago, we had a cheap apartment, a cheap car, slept on a sofa bed and watched a 10” black and white TV. But I got to sleep every night with a hot 25 year-old girl. Now I have a \$500,000 home, a \$45,000 car, nice big bed and plasma screen TV, but I’m sleeping with a 65 year-old woman. It seems to me that you’re not holding up your side of things.”

My wife is a very reasonable woman. She told me to go out and find a hot 25 year-old gal, and she would make sure that I would once again be living in a cheap apartment, driving a cheap car, sleeping on a sofa bed and watching a 10" black and white TV.

Aren't older women great? They really know how to solve your mid-life crisis.

MNB

PROGRAMME 2010 GENERAL MEETINGS

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 and September 17th TBA; **October** Meeting replaced by conference

November 19th AGM and Meeting; **December 5th** Christmas Lunch

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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 PICASAWEB SITE

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

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