

THE RHODODENDRON NEWSLETTER

November 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.

NOVEMBER 2010

FRIDAY 19TH AGM AND GENERAL MEETING. 8.00pm. B and T Ferns from Silvan will be the guest speakers. Bring along your ferns and orchids for identification.

DECEMBER 2010



SUNDAY 12TH 12.00PM Christmas lunch at NRG. 'Hungry Hamper Catering' will be catering for us. They catered for the conference at Como garden and were excellent. All the meat was freshly cooked and very professionally served. BBQ with salads, desserts, tea, coffee, crockery & cutlery supplied. Friends

welcome. \$15per person (subsidised by the ARSV). **BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL** for catering. BYO drinks, glass and chair. Phone or email Marcia Begg by 1st December or book and pay at the November Meeting. Ph: 9751 1610, Email: mnbegg@gmail.com

JANUARY 2011

SATURDAY & SUNDAY 15TH & 16TH - LILIUM AND VIREYA SHOW AT FERNY CREEK HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY 100 Hilton Rd Ferny Creek. Included in the schedule are hydrangeas, roses and other species. Schedules are available from Mike and Inge Hammer Ph: 9755 2176 or FCHS.

WEDNESDAY 26TH AUSTRALIA DAY BBQ at NRG, 6.00PM. BYO everything. Those who would like to take a walk around the NRG meet near the lunchroom at 5.00pm.



Conference group at Como garden at The Basin



Robert Hatcher presenting Neil Webster with the ARS medal.



ARSV President Michael Hammer & Secretary Michael Hare presenting Marcia Begg with flowers.

PRESIDENTS REPORT

As I sit here writing this report on the last day of October it is pouring outside. We have had 190 mm for the month of October and over 1200mm for the year to date up here in the Dandenong Ranges. In addition it has been a cold winter with the flowering season significantly delayed from the norm. We can hope that this is a sign the drought is ending and signalling a return to cooler wetter conditions. The flowering season for rhododendrons has been the best for many years both with respect to the quantity and quality of blooms. It has been a truly magnificent display.

As reported before, from the start of July, entry to the National Rhododendron Gardens (NRG) is now free. At the same time we have gone to considerable effort to publicise the gardens through our campaign to have them declared Melbourne's Cool Climate Botanical Gardens. The result of these two changes has been a radical increase in garden visitations. So far it is running at between 2 and 3 times last year's attendances with up to 4000 people per day through the gates. Available car parking spaces are now quite inadequate and the crowds are causing traffic chaos on many weekends up at Olinda. Indeed, on the last few spring weekends, the car parks have often been full by 11 am and the more popular walking paths in the garden are crowded. What this shows is just how significant these botanical gardens are to Melbournians and tourism in general and how important it is that we ensure they are protected for future generations. You can help in the drive to have these gardens recognised as Melbourne's Cool Climate Botanical Gardens. Talk about the NRG to your friends, make your acquaintances aware of the gardens, where they are and how significant they are. The more people who are aware of them the more significant they become. Every bit helps.

The resources devoted to maintaining the gardens are far from adequate. It is simply not possible to adequately maintain a garden of this size and quality with only 3-4 staff. The inevitable outcome is either, that necessary maintenance work is not done, or that short cuts are taken which end up doing damage. Previous members have put together a rare and spectacular collection of cool climate plants and, unless we want these efforts to have been in vain, we need to ensure the gardens are protected for the long term. This is why the current committee is campaigning to have the perceived status of the gardens raised by having them declared a first tier state botanical garden.

One of the outcomes from both the increased rainfall and the greater attendances at the garden is a renewed interest in rhododendrons on the part of the public. The staff at the gardens shop is reporting numerous enquires about where visitors can purchase rhododendrons. In reality few nurserymen are still propagating rhododendrons and then only a few varieties. The ARS has been a very significant source, and in some cases the only source, for many species and hybrids. If the cooler wetter weather continues rhododendrons could well see resurgence and we need to increase our propagation efforts. Again we need

more manpower and woman power to achieve this. Please consider being a part of this activity, it really can be a lot of fun.

We held our 50th Anniversary Rhododendron Conference 2 weeks ago and it was a resounding success. We had planned for 50 attendances (with some concern that it might have been less than that). In the end we had about 75 come to the two main days and just under 100 participating in at least some events. The feedback has been extremely positive with many people commenting on how much they enjoyed it and how well it ran. No small thanks to Marcia Begg who took the lead in organising the event. Also thanks to Norm Brown who volunteered to drive the bus ferrying at least some of the attendees from event to event and garden to garden. The more knowledgeable delegates commented very favourably on the significance of the rhododendron collection at the NRG and the need to protect it. Other garden visits were varied, encompassing formal to semi wild gardens, sculpture gardens, native gardens and forest. They gave a very good perspective on the range of environments in the Dandenong Ranges.

As part of this conference we prepared a 50 minute historical DVD covering development of the NRG as well as its current status and a copy was given to each delegate. Parks have now indicated that they are interested in selling this DVD in the NRG shop and we are organising to make these available. Probable selling price will be around \$18 which will give both the Society and Parks some profit from the venture. It will also of course help to further publicise these gardens.

On a more sombre note, attendances at our monthly meetings have continued to fall. Often we have only 3-4 people in addition to the committee attending. The society has around 200 paid up members but it seems that extremely few are willing to take any sort of active role in the Society. Unfortunately we cannot continue to run meetings at Nunawading with invited speakers on this basis. It is both unfair to the speaker and embarrassing to the ARS committee to ask an outsider to address a meeting only to have maybe 12 – 15 people present. If there is something wrong with the format or content of the meetings please let us know. It only takes 2-3 minutes to write a quick email but if we don't know what is wrong we cannot fix it.

The current committee is considering what to do about the problem at present. One possibility would be to hold meetings during the day at people's homes in rotation instead of the Friday evening meetings at Nunawading. That would be a significant downgrade of the Society and still does not solve the problem of outside speakers. However, with such a scenario, a significant component of each meeting would be a walk around the host garden. Maybe that would appeal to more members.

Another possible change that is being considered is to abandon Friday evening meetings at Nunawading and instead merge our meetings with those of the Ferny Creek Rhododendron group which are held on the third Saturday afternoon each month at Ferny Creek in the Dandenong Ranges. Obviously we lose most of our autonomy with such a change (it would

be a Ferny Creek meeting not an ARS meeting) but the current position is untenable. This idea could be extended to running the Vireya group meetings on the morning of the same Saturday every second month with maybe a lunch get together either at Ferny Creek, or elsewhere, between the two meetings. A further suggestion is to run liliium group meetings every second month on the alternate Saturday mornings to revive interest in these beautiful plants. Of course, such a course of action would require approval from the management hierarchy at Ferny Creek which is far from certain. Approaches are being made to Ferny Creek Horticultural Society along these lines. If you have any other suggestions, please let me or anyone else on the committee know as soon as possible.

For those interested, there will be a competitive Liliium Show and garden visit on Saturday 11th December at my house 2 The Crescent Sassafras (Melways 66F11) starting at 2pm. Bring your stems or single blooms and a small plate of food to share for afternoon tea. Parking is on the street.

Have a great Christmas and New Year and don't forget the Liliium and Vireya Show at Ferny Creek on the 15th and 16th of January.

Michael Hammer
President ASRV

THE SPECIES COLUMN.

SPECIES AND HYBRIDS SUITABLE FOR MELBOURNE.

The number of rhododendrons which can be grown in Melbourne suburbs is very limited compared to the Dandenongs. We can all remember the horrifying period in February 2009 when ferocious bushfires swept across much of Victoria resulting in serious loss of lives and homes. Fortunately most of Melbourne escaped the fires, but many plants were severely damaged by 50 degree heat and scorching winds. With global warming already underway we can expect at least 2 degrees higher temperatures and future water restrictions. In my case I lost about a third of my plants last year so it seems like a good time to review what can be grown with limited watering.

If we wish to grow more heat-tolerant plants we need to select the hardiest species to use in hybridising, and select the hardiest seedlings.

It is useful to separate the lepidote (scaly) and elepidote (non-scaly) groups, which do not normally hybridise.

Elepidote species for Melbourne:

arboreum and others in this Subsection including *delavayi* and *zeylanicum*.
decorum

Admittedly this is a very short list. The obvious reason is that nearly all of the elepidotes come from high rainfall and high altitude areas (2000 to 4000 metres) and it is unrealistic to expect them to thrive in Melbourne.

Lepidote species for Melbourne:

There is much more scope here:

Maddenia Group: Most of this group can be grown here. The hardiest species are *dendricola*, *burmanicum*, *inaequale*, *taggianum*, *veitchianum*, and *johnstoneanum*.

Most of the large-leaf Maddenias suffer from excess heat, particularly *nutallii*, *lindleyi*, and *megacalyx*.

Scabrifolia Group :

spinuliferum, and subspecies *spiciferum*.

Moupinensia Group:

moupinense.

Hybrids:

If hybridising for warm climates, you need to choose at least one heat-tolerant parent and this characteristic will be passed on to at least some of the seedlings.

Jack O'Shannassy followed this principle and produced some very heat-tolerant hybrids, including:

Donvale Pearl (*yakushmanum x arboreum*) –Deep pink, gradually fading.

Donvale Ruby. (Lamplighter x *arboreum*) –Deep Red.

Donvale Pink Drift. (*spiciferum* x Crossbill) –Small leaves and deep pink flowers.

Donvale Cilpinense. (*ciliicalyx x formosum x moupinense*) –Name not registered.

My own efforts at hybridising have produced a few heat-tolerant hybrids, including:

(*ciliicalyx pink x veitchianum*) –Pink & white with yellow throat.

(*dendricola x chrysodoron*) –Pale Yellow.

(*yakushmanum x arboreum campbelliae*) Pink & white, good indumentum.

Alan Kepert.

VIREYA SPECIES COLUMN

R heterolepis: a recently described vireya from West Papua.

Frederic Danet collected *R heterolepis* in the Baliem Valley, West Papua, and described it as a new species (Adansonia ser 3, 32 (1): 135-139). Adansonia is published in French, so the following description is drawn from Danet's excellent illustrations and photographs.

Description

Danet describes it as being similar to *R scabridibracteum*, but differing "by having a pink corolla, smaller and less indumented bracts, pauciflorous umbels, smaller anthers, an ovary with scales clearly visible between simple hairs, and a glabrous style in the upper half."

There are 4-6 flowers in the inflorescence with the flowers pendant (or hanging downwards). The corollas are pink, curved down from, with curved tubular-funnel shaped corolla, approximately 6-9 cm in length. The leaves are obovate to elliptic and coriaceous (thick and leathery) and up to 12cm long.

Cultivation

As we will not see *R heterolepis* in flower for some years, the following cultivation notes are of *R scabridibracteum*, a species close in appearance to *R heterolepis*.

R scabridibracteum flowers rarely for me. It flowered earlier this year, however had not flowered in the previous 3-4 years, despite what should be good conditions for vireyas. I've found it to be a leggy plant (long internode length) and does not branch regularly, giving a rather ungainly, straggly appearance. The flower shape is as described for *R heterolepis* however not as pendulous (or at least mine aren't). The flowers are an attractive deep red (see photo).

I grow *R scabridibracteum* in a pot, and have not tried it in the garden bed given its leggy habit. I haven't used it is hybridizing as I don't see it having much potential.

Verdict

For *R scabridibracteum*: really a plant for the enthusiasts (though I'd welcome the opinion of others who grow it).

R heterolepis may prove to have more charm and greater potential as a garden plant.

Andrew Rouse

50th ANNIVERSARY RHODODENDRON SHOW REPORT

Because the 50th Anniversary Conference of the Society took place in mid October there was only one Spring Show this year, the 50th Anniversary Rhododendron Show, which was held in conjunction with the Conference on Saturday 16 October. While the late flowering of some rhododendrons, due to the unusually cold and wet winter and early spring, reduced the number of entries, the quality of the blooms on the show benches was excellent. The results of the judging are:-

Alistair MacLeod-Cooch Trophy:

Awarded for the best exhibit of three (3) trusses of rhododendron, species or hybrid, distinct varieties, one (1) truss of each variety staged separately.

Winner: W Lobbezoo

Exhibit: *R sidereum*, *R macabeanum*, *R niveum*

Dowd Trophy:

Awarded for the best exhibit of three (3) trusses or sprays of rhododendron species, distinct varieties, one (1) truss or spray of each variety staged separately.

Winner: W Lobbezoo

Exhibit: *R sidereum*, *R macabeanum*, *R niveum*

Gibson Trophy:

Awarded for the best exhibit in the Show of one (1) truss of an asiatic rhododendron, species or hybrid.

Winner: J Quinn

Exhibit: Waghorn's Burgundy Sensation

Pritchard Trophy:

Awarded for the best exhibit of a rhododendron hybrid, produced by the Exhibitor and raised from seed by the Exhibitor.

Winner: No entries

Alfred Bramley Prize:

Awarded for the best exhibit of three (3) trusses or sprays of rhododendron, two (2) species and one (1) hybrid, distinct varieties, one (1) truss or spray of each variety staged separately.

Winner: J Brown

Exhibit: *R hanceanum*, *R zeylanicum*, R 'Tolamac'

Banksian Medal:

Awarded to the Exhibitor with the highest aggregate points in the Show.

Winner: S Begg

President's Award:

Awarded by the President of the Victorian Branch, for the best exhibit of a rhododendron species.

Winner: S Begg

Exhibit *R christii*

RHS of Victoria Trophy:

Awarded for the best exhibit of a rhododendron, asiatic, azalea, or vireya, species or hybrid, in the Show, including a potted plant.

Winner: S Begg

Exhibit: R 'Bold Janus'

Best Vireya Species Sash:

Awarded for the best exhibit of a truss or spray of a vireya species.

Winner: S Begg

Exhibit: *R christii*

G. Louise Anderson Prize and Sash:

Awarded for the best exhibit of a truss or spray of a vireya hybrid.

Winner: S Begg

Exhibit; R 'Bold Janus'

Australian Rhododendron Society, Victorian Branch Prize

Awarded for the best exhibit of an azalea.

Winner: S Begg

Exhibit: R 'Ruth Kirk'

Children's Award

Awarded for the best exhibit in the Children's Section.

Winner: K Noonan
Exhibit: "Name Wanted"
Michael Hare
Show Manager

BENCH RESULTS

JULY 2010

There were six exhibitors for the night and not a lot of entries.

Class 1 – Vireya species less than 4cms. Simon Begg with *dielsianum* had no competition.

Class 2 – Vireya hybrid less than 4 cms. Simon first with Red Tubular and second with 'Name wanted'

Class 3 – Vireya species more than 4 cms. Michael Hare with *laetum* was on his own.

Class 4 - Vireya hybrid more than 4 cms. Inge hammer won first, second and third with Nuigini Firebird, *superbum* x *zolleri* and Bold Janus.

Class 7 – Evergreen azalea hybrid. Inge again was first, second and third with Hino De Giri, name wanted (pale pink) and name wanted (dark pink). Unfortunately there was no help with the naming of any.

Class 12 – Rhododendron hybrid less than 4cms. Inge again was first and second with Crossbill and Seta.

AUGUST 2010

There were five exhibitors.

Class 1 – Vireya species less than 4cms. Simon Begg had all three places with *yongii*, *tuba* and *radians*.

Class 2 – Vireya hybrid less than 4 cms. Simon again with Penrice and Penny Whistle.

Class 3 – Vireya species more than 4 cms. Simon again won with *laetum* and no competition.

Class 4 - Vireya hybrid more than 4 cms. John Quinn won with Teddy's Best.

Class 11 – Rhododendron species less than 4cms. John Quinn with *paramonium*.

Class 12 – Rhododendron hybrid less than 4cms. Simon Begg with *spinuliferum* x *speciferum* and Seta.

Class 13 – Rhododendron species larger than 4cms. Inge Hammer was first with *macabeanum* and second with *arboreum*.

Class 14 – Rhododendron hybrid larger than 4cms. Alan Walker had a 'name wanted' and Simon had Cornubia.

Class 15 – One rhododendron in a container. Inge had a *macabeanum* hybrid and *montroseanum*.

Class 16 – Maddenia species. Simon had *scopulorum*.

SEPTEMBER 2010

Only four exhibitors this night but plenty of beautiful blooms.

Class 1 – Vireya species less than 4cms. Simon Begg first, second and third with *yongii*, *tuba* and *inconspicuum*

Class 2 – Vireya hybrid less than 4 cms. Simon again with Vladimir Bukovsky and Popcorn.

Class 3 – Vireya species more than 4 cms. Simon first with *laetum*.

Class 4 - Vireya hybrid more than 4 cms. Simon with Bold Janus and Great Scentsation.

Where are all the vireya growers????

Class 7 – Evergreen azalea hybrid. Len Sloggett had Teena Maria and Peach and Simon was third with Inga.

Class 11 – Rhododendron species less than 4cms. Simon first with *lutescens* and Inge second and third with *racemosum* and *tatsiense*.

Class 12 – Rhododendron hybrid less than 4cms. Inge with *spinuliferum* x *spinulosum*.

Class 13 – Rhododendron species larger than 4cms. Inge had all three places with *macabeanum*, *arboreum* and *grande*.

Class 14 – Rhododendron hybrid larger than 4cms. John Quinn had all three places with Mavis Fairfield, a fabulous Bob Malone and Britannia Delavay.

Class 16 – Maddenia species. Simon had *scopulorum* and *ciliicalyx*.

Len Sloggett also had a very nice camellia floral arrangement. Len is to be applauded for the arrangements, cut flowers and pot plants of many unusual species that he brings to each meeting. They are sometimes overlooked as the evening is getting late but they are always of interest and much appreciated. Inge Hammer is another who often brings a miscellaneous collection of companion plants. These all help to fill the bench and add interest.

Marcia Begg

SEPTEMBER SPEAKER

Cynthia Sladen must have had a wonderful trip to Sichuan in far west China last year despite a bad knee. Her presentation of excellent photos had us all enthused. A lot of the time she was travelling at elevations above 4,000metres and many detours were made around landslides, floods and the damage resulting from the recent earthquakes. She visited a panda reserve where both red pandas and black and white pandas were protected. The mountainous country was cold, rocky and treeless with raging rivers and dangerous roads. Many plants were growing in running water above the snow line. Some that she photographed were *lilium sargentiae*, many meconopsis, primulas, pedicularis, corydalis, phlomis, ligularia, incarvillea, gentian, *rosa sericea*, anemone, aster, *lilium lophophorum*, the exceptionally rare black *primula euprepes* to name just a few. Rhododendrons she photographed were *Rh. decorum*, *racemosum* and *phaeochrysum*.

Marcia Begg

GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE 2010 A SOCIETY WATERSHED

“Thanks you for all the hard work you did to put together your conference. We had a great time and I'm sure everyone did. We appreciate your great efforts and excellent organization. We know it's an enormous amount of work ...!”

Diane and Bob Weissman [USA]

“I'm now safely back in a rather cold Scotland after a brief trip to Tasmania... Thank you very much for organizing an excellent conference. Lots of good company, useful information, and great gardens. Which is what these conferences are all about....”

Ken Cox [Scotland]

“Please would you convey our appreciation and thanks to the conference organising committee for their fantastic achievement in preparing for, and executing, such a wonderful event last week.

Lyn and I were extremely pleased to be able to participate in the Golden Jubilee Conference. The program was well constructed and full of variety and interest. We enjoyed it immensely...”

Kirsty and Lyn Craven [Canberra]

“Just to say I thought it all went well over the 50th Ann. Week-days..... I did enjoy meeting people I hadn't see for years. Also meeting members I only knew by name. Everyone seemed to enjoy themselves...”

Valerie Marshall [Glen Waverly, Victoria]

“We would like to say thank you for a very pleasant conference and an opportunity to get to know some enthusiastic Australian gardeners. Please convey our congratulations and thanks to all your committee who worked to make the conference successful.

We send special congratulations on the garden of the Australian Rhododendron Association which is wonderful, and a great advertisement for the genus...”

Gretchen and John Henderson [Dunedin New Zealand]

“We wanted to thank you specially for the part you played in making our visit so (specially)! Happy and enjoyable at the recent rhodo conference.

Thank you for the inspiring memories we have taken with us of a really well run and organised conference, liberally sprinkled with great speakers and fantastic garden experiences, all so different.”

Barb and Rob Field [Aldgate South Australia]

“On behalf of Annie and I, thank you for making the conference a success. Thank you for the great effort you both put in, it was greatly appreciated by all that attended.

Also the watercolour I received was also a very pleasant surprise and very appreciated. Regards...”

Peter Damman and Anne Woodside [Arrarat Victoria]

“I'd also like to congratulate you on organising an excellent conference, I only wish I could have been there to the end. I very much enjoyed the sessions I was able to attend and the gardens we visited”

Andrew Rouse [East Hawthorn Victoria]

These are excerpts from letters and emails the organising committee received. The organisers take the tributes addressed to us as addressed to the whole Society committee, for in truth the Society committee was the organising committee. To these I add personal thanks and written and personal messages that the president, secretary and others on the committee received that did not come to my attention. That our Society's guests, speakers and members appreciated, and enjoyed, our conference makes the hard work of organising it worthwhile. So, collectively, we take a curtain call! 96 people participated in the Conference in some way and, of these, over 75 attended the main sessions and the Conference Dinner at Sky High.

The National Rhododendron Garden, too, looked at its best and received its share of praise. Our Conference coincided with a “Better Homes and Gardens” segment featuring NRG. On the following weekend 4000 people visited the Gardens. Such numbers have not been seen for very many years.

These successes offer our Society, and NRG as a garden of national significance, an opportunity. This opportunity is to revitalise the Society and NRG. It is enhanced by the breaking of our long drought and the public's renewed interest in gardening and rhododendrons. Parks Victoria say people are asking where they might buy our plants.

The question for you, our Society's members, is what are you going to do to respond to these opportunities? Our Society AGM on Friday evening 19th November is your chance to have your say.

Interestingly, of the 96 Conference participants, only 31 were ARSV members resident in Victoria. Of these 31 only 22 were substantial participants in the conference.

The fact that 55, or thereabouts, of the substantial conference attendees were not Society members or did not reside in Victoria conveys a warning; that Society membership participation in Society events is a low proportion of our 200+ membership. This is the message our President conveys in the “President's Column”. Our Society, and NRG, need revitalising. Again the question for you, our members, is what are you going to do to respond to the warning? Again come to the AGM and have your say.

I, as Editor, get my say here.

Our Society does not lack members. Even after 1st July, when NRG entry fees ceased and the Society membership privilege of free entry to NRG for the member and a guest ceased to have a value, membership did not decline significantly. Our Society does not lack money. Our Society does not lack specialised rhododendron expertise nor the ability to conduct conferences or put out a Newsletter and Journal.

What our Society lacks is *active members*. It lacks *new members, especially active ones*. It lacks *volunteers for committee, especially office bearers*. It lacks *any members willing to learn Asiatic rhododendron expertise from our remaining available veteran experts Alan Kepert and Laurie Begg*. Did you know that I had a desperate scramble on the Monday of the Conference to find an expert available to show NRG to Ken Cox, Sue Gardiner and Lindsay Davies? Eventually **at Ken Cox's request** Peter Damman was transported to the nether reaches of NRG to help Lesley Eaton and Walter Lobbezoo. All went well, but just think; of what use is a rare, specialist rhododendron garden if our Society members lack the expertise to know what is there. Our Society also is short of Vireya expertise but is fortunate to have Andrew Rouse, young enough to pass on his expertise and enthusiasm. Our members have ceased to respond to social outings or to requests to man promotions at events like Tesselaars Plant sales and various annual shows. If truth be told **the Society Committee has become seriously discouraged by lack of member response no matter what work the committee puts in. So the Society lacks committee renewal.**

4000 visitors to NRG on a single Sunday! What a huge opportunity! Surely 40, 1%, of these could be recruited as new members? And 4, 0.1%, of these would join committee? Surely ARSV could sell these visitors plants the Society propagates? In years gone by ARSV had members recruiting and selling on occasions only a 10th as good. Where are they now? The answer, for whatever reason, is *absent!*

I suggest that the Society negotiate with Parks an arrangement whereby

* ARSV has its [existing] volunteer group; the volunteers propagate plants for members and NRG and work in NRG where their expertise is of most value.

* ARSV forms a [new] **guide group**. The guides would include existing NRG guides and would guide visitors to NRG.

* **Parks and ARSV combine to devise strategies to recruit new members to both these groups. It is in the interest of both since, if recruits are found, Parks get new workers and improves its service to the public and the Society gets member revitalisation.**

* **Important details I would include in such an arrangement:**

** Parks actively hand out literature to Visitors

** ARSV provide free membership for a year to recruits

** ARSV provide instruction and organisation for both groups

** an ARSV committee person, better 2 [*volunteers needed*] oversees this operation to see if new active Society members can be found, especially those willing to learn expertise and become tomorrow's Society leaders. In my opinion these two [hypothetical for now] ARSV committee persons hold the future of ARSV in their hands.

You, our members, tell our AGM what you think

Simon Begg

AUSTRALIAN RHODODENDRON SOCIETY Inc.
NATIONAL COUNCIL AND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

NATIONAL COUNCIL

National Council met on Monday 18th October at Seasons at Cloud Hill, the first evening of the Golden Anniversary Conference 2010. The office bearers for 2010-2011 were elected as follows:

President	Neil Webster	Victoria
Vice President	Robert Hatcher	South Australia
Secretary	Simon Begg	Victoria
Treasurer	Peter Wiadrowski	South Australia
Public Officer	Robert Hatcher	South Australia
Registrar	Ken Gillanders	Southern Tasmania
Chair Editorial Committee and Webmaster	Barry Stagoll	Victoria

National Council resolved to pay \$5000 to Emu Valley Branch apprentice program, matching the contribution by Victorian Branch.

It also resolved it would like to dispose of its library and to ask each Branch to submit any offer the Branch wishes to make to purchase the library or any items thereof by the next National Council meeting, that is by Saturday April 9th 2011.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of Australian Rhododendron Society Inc was held at Sky High Restaurant Mount Dandenong on Tuesday 19th October 2010 in conjunction with the Conference Dinner. The Meeting received Reports from its President, Neil Webster, the Treasurer, Peter Wiadrowski, the Presidents of each Branch, The Registrar, Ken Gillanders, and the Chair of the Editorial Committee, Barry Stagoll. The Secretary, Simon Begg proposed, as a special resolution, replacement of the current Society Rules with new ones. This was carried. The new rules are the old ones with minor clarifying/modernising amendments but it was more convenient to replace the rules than to deal separately with a dozen or so changes.

Neil Webster then vacated the chair and the Vice President, Robert Hatcher, presented Neil with the Society Medal and Life Membership.

CITATION FOR NEIL WEBSTER

The following provides information on Mr Neil Webster's attributes in the field of Rhododendrons and the Australian Rhododendron Society Inc.

- Neil's interest in the genus Rhododendron began at an early age when he spent weekends staying at Ferny Creek with his Grandmother, Agnes Peacock Webster, who was an accomplished horticulturalist and keen gardener.
- He later joined the Australian Rhododendron Society in April 1985, when the general meetings were held at Camberwell Civic Centre.

- In 1989, he was invited to join the Committee and soon after took on the role of Secretary. Neil brought to the Committee his considerable business experience, and expertise in computing.
- In 1992, when the then Treasurer resigned, Neil carried on with both the Secretary's and Treasurer's posts until the next AGM.
At the AGM in 1992, Neil was elected to the position of Treasurer & Membership Registrar, a position he continues to serve today with much distinction.
- Also, in 1990, Neil was appointed as one of two ARS members on the Committee of Management of the Rhododendron Gardens at Olinda until August 1995 when the gardens were taken over by Parks Victoria.
- Neil has also served on the National Council of the Australian Rhododendron Society in the positions of Delegate, Treasurer for four years, Vice President, and currently as National President of the Society for the last two years.
- Neil has also acted as a Vice President of Victorian Branch. This was prior to acting in the role of President of Victorian Branch for five months during 2007.
- Many members may be unaware of the work quietly done by Neil to ensure the finances and membership records of the Society remain in sound shape.
- He has carried out his duties with diligence and responsibility, and continues to provide the Society with a depth of experience and judgement. Neil has been generous in supporting Society activities, including assistance & advice to visitors at the nursery at Olinda.
- He has worked with the Planning Committee for the *Rhododendrons in Australia – Golden Jubilee 2010 Conference*.
- Neil has successfully carried a substantial workload over many years and given outstanding service to the Society. He would be a most worthy recipient of the honour of Life Membership.

We, the Committee of the Victorian Branch (Inc.) of the Australian Rhododendron Society, unanimously believe that Mr Neil G Webster of 15 Rookwood Street, North Balwyn, Victoria, has all the attributes required to be granted Life Membership of the Society.

Yours Faithfully,

Michael Hare.

Hon Secretary.

A.R.S. – Victorian Branch (Inc) 10 October 2010.



R "Donvale Cilpinense"
Alan Kepert photo September 2010

Rh. Scabridibractea
Andrew Rouse photo August 2010



Rhododendron Show 2010
Trophy Winners Table

Below left- Barbara Field
& Kenneth Cox

Below- unveiling the
plaque Michael Hammer
& Lesley Eaton





Above - Jillian Brown won the Alf Bramley Trophy



Simon Begg, Alan Kepert and Elizabeth Xipell

Below – Commemorative plaque at the front entrance of the NRG



Below – Matt Mills, Liberal candidate for Monbulk, ARSV President Michael Hammer & Yarra Ranges Mayor Len Cox at the opening of the Conference

Valerie Marshall with Botanical Artist Anne O'Connor



GARDENS VISITED DURING THE CONFERENCE

THE NATIONAL RHODODENDRON GARDEN, Olinda

This is a 100 acre garden created by volunteers from the Australian Rhododendron Society on land granted for the purpose by the Victorian State Government in 1960. The intention of the ARS was to create a garden as a reference collection of rhododendrons and a means of displaying and promoting these to the public. A Volunteer Group of Society members still assists in the maintenance of the gardens which have been managed by Parks Victoria since 1995. Today the gardens incorporate about 15,000 rhododendrons making them the most extensive such collection in the country.



The gardens also incorporate extensive plantings of conifers, magnolias, cherries, beeches, maples and many other plants making the gardens a true botanical garden rather than a single genus garden. Water is derived from a spring on the property which was captured by excavation of two lakes. An extensive network of bitumen sealed roads was developed and today these roads are used by a

bus which ferries people around the gardens during the peak rhododendron flowering season. The gardens offer extensive distant views of the valleys toward Warburton and the more northerly portions of the Great Dividing Range. Just below the hall is an extensive Kurume azalea bowl which is truly spectacular in the spring.

Early garden development was principally focussed on Asiatic Rhododendrons, evergreen azaleas and mollis azaleas however more recently considerably more attention has been given to Vireya rhododendrons and many plantings of these have been undertaken. While they have taken some time to establish in the open they are now maturing very well.

This garden is without doubt a world class botanical garden which should be on the agenda for every person interested in gardening and gardens.



WUURN GARDEN *Laurie and Joyce Begg*

‘Wuurn’ is an aboriginal name meaning ‘dwelling’ or ‘house on the hill’.

The garden is approximately one and a half acres and was originally owned by Joyce’s grandfather until Joyce and Laurie took it over about 30 years ago.

Many of the rhododendrons on the block are 25-30 years old and are the original stock plants that Laurie used for propagating for the nursery that they owned in the Gembrook township.

Over 100 rhododendrons had to be moved before the house could be built 10 years ago. The builders were advised that they had to build around a magnificent specimen of *Rhododendron* ‘August Moon’ which resides at the front of the house.

The house and front garden are 9-10 years old. There is a collection of the Seven Dwarf rhododendrons and Laurie’s own ‘My Snow White’ as the centerpiece of the front garden. Also of interest is a Japanese Umbrella Pine, *Michellia Alba*, a Cork Bark Oak, Giant Redwood which Laurie grew from a cutting and a row of 47 camellias.

Across the track of the property are *Vireya* Rhododendrons and Hydrangeas, and down the centre are Magnolias, a Mulberry, alpine bulbs and *reticulata* Camellias.

Down the west side are big leaf rhododendrons, Pawlonias, a Dove/handkerchief Tree, a Raisin Tree and *Cornus kousa*. Across the front is a variegated Tulip tree, varieties of roses, Mollis Azaleas, daphnes and many bulbs and perennials. The verandah is decorated with red and white Lapagerias.

BLACKWOOD LANE GARDEN & GALLERY *Sue Jarvis & Ian Bennett*

Artist, Sue Jarvis and husband Ian Bennett’s gallery near the Gembrook township overlooks 4 hectares of sloping land adjoining the forest with trees, bulbs and shrubs culminating in a tree fern glade along the Cockatoo Creek. It is a garden for all seasons with deciduous and evergreen plants. At this stage most walking paths are grass.

Over the last 25 years what was once a paddock has been planted with trees of all species. Sue’s passion is trees and there are examples of hundreds of species both native and exotic. A pinetum on the lower area includes over 20 species. Initial plantings of gums sheltered rhododendrons and maples and since 2003 rocks have been added to create a new dimension. A trial garden of Laurie Begg’s rhododendron hybrids is getting to the flowering stage with some showing potential.

Sue is a well known artist and has held many exhibitions. Her works are hung in many galleries and private homes.

BEECHMONT *Simon and Marcia Begg*

Our site is a rectangular 10 acres with approximately 7 acres of garden in Olinda and still growing! We arrived here in January 1997 and found Mountain Ash (*Eucalyptus regnans*) and Blackwood wattles (*Acacia melanoxylon*), a very tall Tulip tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) with a beautiful sculptured trunk and established Beeches (both *Fagus* and *Nothofagus*), hence the name – ‘Beechmont’, all thought to be at least 80 years old. One of our goals is to collect many Beeches of both genuses. Garden areas had been established north of the house

where it is flat, with many varieties of Viburnum, Cornus, Rhododendron, Edgeworthia, Camellia, a Queensland Bunya Bunya Pine (*Araucaria bidwillii*), a Queensland Hoop Pine (*Araucaria cunninghamii*) and many exotics. Most of our energy has been spent to the south of the house where, since 2000, we have been converting the horse paddocks into sweeping lawns and garden beds.

While we have not documented a developmental plan we do accept a few guiding principles. Vistas, focal points and a natural progression from one area to the next are important goals. We grow a lot of the plants ourselves, particularly Vireya Rhododendrons, cottage plants and shrubs, and these are complemented by interesting plantings of unusual shrubs and trees.

2002 brought many exciting changes which we call the 'SKI' gardens ('Spending the Kids Inheritance!') The unsatisfactory tennis court was remodelled into a 'walled garden' with wisterias and clematis on the 'walls', perennial borders and parterres with our initials at the entrances. The Blueberry Avenue, which has many scented plants and a collection of Daphnes, leads from the walled garden to the south gardens with views of The Patch. A beautiful blue crystal-glazed porcelain urn heads a serpentine rill leading to a large reflective pool.

Each year has brought new projects to be designed and developed. In 2004 we installed a bore for irrigation. This has proved invaluable during the drought. Drip systems are used where plausible and all beds are thickly mulched. Large tanks collect rain water to supplement irrigation and also, in a worst case scenario, for fire-fighting. In 2006 we replaced the nursery with a Card Parterre garden and planted two newly released Wollemi Pines (*Wollemia nobilis*) in lawns north and south of the house. Many of the smaller beds were extended to keep the proportions right and the hen yard became another vireya garden to house the overflow from Simon's propagation activities! The new shade house and propagation bed grow vireya rhododendrons species. There are more than 80 different ones.

We hope you enjoy our tranquil garden and find other special features, especially the hidden garden, native garden with its view of the Mornington Peninsula, South African bed, vireya gardens and also the quirky additions that we hope will make you smile. Seats are placed to appreciate vistas so please make use of them.

CLOUDEHILL *Jeremy and Valerie Francis*

Cloudehill is an operating nursery in Olinda attached to an extensive elaborate garden developed by the current owners. It however incorporates features and some plantings from a much older nursery and garden on the site (Woolrich nursery) dating back to the early part of the 20th Century.

A maze of decorative stone walls and hornbeam hedges delineate around 20 separate garden rooms in this 10 acre garden. These rooms are set within meadowland and woodlands of magnificent and historic, cool climate trees including an avenue of 80 year old European copper beech, magnolias, maples and a collection of Asiatic rhododendrons. A major highlight of the garden are the extensive traditional colour coordinated English herbaceous borders which focus on two magnificent Japanese weeping maples. The range of cool

climate herbaceous plants and shrubs being grown is very extensive and includes many rare and very beautiful species.

The gardens also feature a changing display of garden sculpture/art and on summer evenings become the venue of open air concerts and plays.

FERNY CREEK HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

Ferny Creek is a very vibrant horticultural society in continuous existence since 1932. It maintains a hall and 10 acre ornamental garden on land leased from the government (an old tip site). The garden incorporates a very extensive display of heathers (*Calluna*), Proteas and Leucodendrons. It also has a large more formal section consisting of beds of mature trees, shrubs and perennials set among lawn paths. The Society bears some similarity to the Lakeland Horticultural Society in the Lakes District of England both in scope and outlook.

The society holds 4 competitive shows a year and the gardens form a significant additional attraction for visitors at these events.

HOLLINGDALE – A WILD GARDEN OF TREASURES *Inge and Michael Hammer*

The history of Hollingdale started in the late 1920's when Arthur Olver purchased 1 acre of land bordering on The Crescent at Sassafra. He built the original cottage which is still standing near the entrance and is in good condition. It was later extended in 1942. The back of the original 1 acre block bordered on a Roman Catholic convent and with the demise of this convent the opportunity came up to purchase additional land which Arthur did, bringing the allotment size up to the present 5.7 acres (2.3 hectares).

Arthur was always interested in horticulture purchased the property to run as a wholesale and retail rhododendron and camellia nursery. Then, during the Second World War, the property converted to a vegetable garden in aid of the war effort. The main crops were potatoes, beans and pumpkins. After the war the property reverted back to a rhododendron/camellia nursery. Every year the new growth on the rhododendrons was harvested for cuttings and that kept the size of the stock plants in check. However when Arthur retired in the late 70's and sold the property this harvesting stopped and the rhododendrons rapidly increased in size. Many have since been heavily pruned but some have not and these now form portions of rhododendron forest.

The back part of the property was originally forest but was clear felled to open paddocks during the 1950's with the wood sawn up for packing cases. The old saw bench is still on site and can be seen from the bottom of the road leading to the back of the house. Arthur bribed the loggers to leave 3 trees (still visible on the neighbouring block) and by 1989 these trees had re-established the forest you see today.

After Arthur sold Hollingdale, the property passed through 2 owners before we purchased it in 1989. At that time developments consisted of the original house and 3 glass houses all in a poor state of repair. We have since repaired/rebuilt 2 of these glass houses but the third and largest is still un-repaired. We built the garage/workshop in 1990 and the new house during 1994/1995.

Both Inge and I share a love of gardening, and our divergent interests means that between us we cover a wide range of cool climate plants. Early on we had to make a choice between an open garden with lots of lawn areas which we could keep reasonably tidy versus a densely planted garden of many rooms given over to a wide collection of plants. Given its size, the latter would inevitably become relatively wild because of the lack of man (and woman) power. At heart we are both collectors and inevitably chose the latter. Indeed as development progressed the planting has encroached more and more on the few lawn areas until now there is virtually no lawn left in the garden. We have however left the back 2 acres of temperate rainforest as a counterpoint to the developed portions of the garden.

The backbone of the gardens remains rhododendrons and camellias, and we have considerably extended our collection of both genera, but we have also extended into several other areas. Thus we are building up collections of Liliums, Maples, Paeonies, Ariseamas, Hydrangeas, Hostas, Fritillaries and others. Some of these are in dedicated beds but most are scattered throughout the garden. Careful observation as you walk around the garden will reveal many scattered treasures.

Development of the garden has been a learning experience as we find out, largely by trial and error, what conditions suit each plant. What works here is often significantly different from what reference books suggest. Much of the garden is now also mature or post mature giving much shade and few sunny areas, a further gardening challenge and one which involves sometimes painful decisions. Occasionally also trees fall, devastating parts of the garden but these events become an opportunity for redevelopment replacing possibly over mature plantings with new varieties.

To enhance the plantings we are progressively incorporating sculpture and ornaments into the garden and are looking to establish water features. This is very much an ongoing exercise and an interesting adjunct to our gardening pursuits.

COMO GARDEN *George and Pat Hetrel*

Como is an historic garden first established as a nursery in 1873 by the Chandler family at the foothills of the Dandenongs at "The Basin". It was here that the Ornamental Plant Collection Association was first inaugurated in 1989 and Como holds the registration for Magnolia and Prunus. For many years it was the site of the renowned Chandler nursery as well as an extensive display garden. The gardens in total cover an area of 16 acres and include an ornamental lake, formal gardens, wetlands and some long established trees of historical significance.

The garden also incorporates a display hall of 16 historically significant vintage and veteran cars dating back as far as 1896 and a miniature railway. The railway is based on 650 metres of 7.25 inch track and can carry up to 30 people as it winds its way around the garden.

KENLOCH *Tim and Angela Orpin*

An arts & crafts manor set in the heart of the Dandenong Ranges

The grounds of Kenloch were first settled in the 1880s by Estonian Charles Henry Kauper, who established a berry farm on the fertile slopes running down to the spring-fed creek. Mr Kauper was a friend of Baron Ferdinand von Mueller, the inaugural Director of Melbourne's Botanic Gardens and the colony's first Government Botanist. As a result, many of the mature plantings of conifers and deciduous trees in the lower reaches of the garden can be attributed to von Mueller, with some of these being listed on the National Trust Register of Significant Trees.

In 1915, wealthy industrialist Thomas Kennon purchased the 12 acre property, completing the construction of Kenloch Manor in 1917. The house is a particularly fine example of Australian arts and crafts architecture with grand reception rooms displaying extensive use of



local blackwood panelling and leadlight windows. In

keeping with Mr Kennon's position in society and the conventions of the day, he oversaw the landscaping of the grounds creating



formal terraced walks, clipped box hedges, fountain pools, the bowling green, tennis court, a maze, the brisk spring-fed swimming pool and mass plantings of exotic trees and shrubs.

From 1956 the historic property operated as one of Melbourne's premier hills restaurants and wedding reception venues, playing host to many local and international celebrities. Renowned for its spectacular and extensive gardens, multiple generations of the same family have often chosen to marry in the grounds. As proof, we are still finding wine glasses in the undergrowth.

In April 2005, we moved in with the intent of taking Kenloch back to its former glory as a family home. Five years into the project, now only half of our friends think we are crazy. After the passing of almost a century, the original plantings have matured to create a mix of soaring forest giants, open lawns and avenues of mature rhododendrons. While a lot of work is still in front of us, many areas of the garden have been opened up and replanted with bulbs and perennials to make the most of the woodlands. And of course, we have also added a few new twists just to keep things interesting.

The Orpin Family welcomes you to Kenloch and to share in the history and beauty of our garden.

SHIRLEY'S NATIVE GARDEN *Shirley Carn*

Shirley Carn purchased the property in Monbulk in 2003 and saw the potential to grow a wide range of plants from all over Australia. She recycled the exotics and hundreds of daffodil bulbs to friends and removed the front lawn and high hedge. After weeding and mulching planting began except for a small area of lawn at the back. A small orchard and kitchen garden were planted near the back of the house.

Pea straw was dug into the soil where improved drainage was needed and a seaweed based fertilizer was used when planting and again if the plants were not flourishing. Secateurs have been in constant use as pruning is essential for the successful growing of natives.

Smaller flowering plants are a feature, many from Western Australia. Shirley is fortunate that the *Darwinias*, *Dampieras*, *Hypocalymmas* and other plants from the west flourish as well as the local plants.

There is a large collection of plants in the *Epacridaceae* family. These include *Acrotriche*, *Leucopogon*, *Woollsia* and many forms of *Epacris* including Victoria's floral emblem the pink *Epacris impressa*.

At the rear of the property there were remnant indigenous plants and many more have been added such as *Tetrateca*, *Daviesia*, *Dillwynia* and *Pultaneas*. These all flower in spring.

This garden is a haven for birds, butterflies, lizards, the gardener and the grandchildren who love to meander around the paths. It has been a true labour of love and a joy to create.

Marcia Begg

DIARY OF A CONFERENCE

The Australian Rhododendron Society Golden Jubilee Conference, October 2010.

PLANNING for the conference began over three years ago when the Victorian Committee decided that a conference to celebrate fifty years of the Australian Rhododendron Society and fifty years of the National Rhododendron Garden would be appropriate and exciting. Consultation with the National Council followed and it was decided to include all four branches of the Society. What, later, proved to be the bulk of the Organising Committee travelled to Edinburgh for the Scottish Society's 25th Anniversary in May 2008. So, too, did a significant number of South Australian members and also members of the New Zealand Rhododendron Association. We had an informal planning meeting addressing the merits of the speakers and the Edinburgh format. We were impressed by many speakers, including Kenneth Cox of Glendoick Nursery in Scotland. Kenneth is a renowned author, nurseryman and plantsman and has led many plant hunting expeditions to Asia. He was an interesting and knowledgeable speaker. The Organising committee accepted our recommendation, on our return, to approach Ken to be the keynote speaker for the conference. The invitation to Ken was accepted with enthusiasm especially as he had not been to Australia.

Planning started in earnest. National Council met and resolved to provide an 'education fund' to cover the cost of bringing Ken to Olinda. It was agreed that he also visit South

Australia and Tasmania. The dates chosen for the conference fitted with the peak flowering period of rhododendrons during the previous ten years of drought. Little did we know that we would have a long period of rain and cold before October breaking the drought and delaying the peak period by a few weeks! A tentative programme was devised only to be revised a number of times after Simon and I attended 2 New Zealand Rhododendron Association Conferences in 2008 and 2009. We finally settled on the mix of lectures and other activities, more lectures than at New Zealand Conferences but less than in Edinburgh. We included many of the high points of interest of the Dandenong Ranges where the conference would be held and a list of informed and entertaining speakers was made. It was decided that the conference would include a mix of social, educational, historical and tourism features and would be preceded by a single rhododendron show instead of the usual two shows and six weeks cut flower display.

Notification of the intention to hold a Golden Jubilee Conference and Rhododendron Show was sent by email and hard copy to overseas and interstate Rhododendron Societies, garden magazines and individuals. The availability of emails simplified the whole process of advertising and corresponding worldwide. Planning progressed smoothly, until a few months before when the hall at the Rhododendron Garden, where we planned to hold two day sessions, was leased out to a local entrepreneur to become a reception venue.

Many questions arose – would we be able to use the hall and, if so, would the renovations be completed before the conference; did we need to make back up arrangements, etc? We kept our fingers crossed as the date loomed closer and it appeared that the hall would be available and ready in time. The hall was built by the Rhododendron Society in the 1960's so there was a sentimental reason for wanting to use it as well as its location in the Rhododendron Garden. Two weeks before the conference asbestos was discovered in the garden surrounding the hall! It had evidently been washed off the roof while checking the roof for leaks using a high pressure water hose. Fortunately the interminable rain of the last ten weeks had saturated the ground preventing any immediate danger to the staff or public and removal of the top five cms. of soil could be delayed until the day after the conference. This happened during the peak visitation period to the Rhododendron Garden which had recently gained free entry and been broadcast on television. The hall and surrounding ten metres were closed off to the public for four days while the specially clad asbestos removal team moved in. Our alternate venue was not necessary!

RHODODENDRON SHOW. Show Manager Michael Hare and his team did an excellent job setting up the show benches in the front half of the hall while another team prepared the back half for the conference. Working out how to protect the newly laid carpet from water spills caused some drama but eventually large sheets of green plastic were laid in front of the benches. The historical photos and large floral arrangements decorated the conference area. On Friday and Saturday members arrived with their blooms and the room came to life with colour and perfume. The trophy table was erected in a prominent position and the beautifully

polished silver urns looked very imposing especially when draped with royal blue prize sashes after the judging.

The weather forecast for the weekend of the show and following few days of the conference did not look propitious. But this is the Dandenong Ranges and most of our delegates, being rhododendron enthusiasts, were coming from places with similar climates. Responses to my emails to participants warning them that they needed to rug up, bring umbrellas and wear sensible shoes were encouraging. ‘Sounds just like home’, came several replies.

Another warning, this one from my husband, Simon, was to those delegates who had elected to drive cars during the conference instead of taking the conference bus option. We had discovered when planning the routes to the gardens and venues that the latest technology sometimes directed drivers along the tracks used by the bullock teams hauling logs in the nineteenth century! Some do not exist, others are mere dirt tracks in nearly impassable condition especially when wet. So the warning was ‘Use the maps provided or follow the conference bus, do NOT use a GPS or Google map in case they send you on an impossible trip and you get lost’!

With all the planning coming to fruition and nearly one hundred people participating in some way at the conference the vibes were looking good for a successful celebration of fifty years of gardening and promoting rhododendrons.

SUNDAY 17TH OCTOBER. The weather was decidedly cool but the rain held off. Sunday afternoon was ‘Members and Friends Day’ and everyone was invited to view the Show and join fellow members for afternoon tea. Delegates registered and collected their ‘goodies’ bag and Neil Webster, National Council President, welcomed everyone. This was followed by bus tours or walks around the garden, a late visit to William Rickett’s Sanctuary and an optional dinner at ‘The Cuckoo’ restaurant.

Parks Victoria provided a dedicated bus for our visitors to tour the Rhododendron Garden and arranged a staff member to keep William Ricketts Sanctuary open late for our visit. A Society member took over the commentary during the garden tour and some people got off the bus halfway around and walked back while others did the whole tour. Those who visited William Rickett’s Sanctuary were most impressed by the sculptures and films of the history. Everyone had a fun night at ‘The Cuckoo’.

MONDAY 18TH OCTOBER. Monday was the first day of the conference and again held at the Rhododendron Garden and again cold but not wet. The honorary bus driver for the conference, Norm Brown, had safely collected a full load of delegates from the designated pickup points and most of the car drivers had followed their maps. With the newly installed heating in the Hall not yet functioning coats, and even hats, were essential for the seventy-eight delegates!

Neil Webster welcomed the new arrivals and Michael Hammer, Victorian President, took the chair to introduce the speakers.

- Lesley Eaton, a Past President of both National Council and the Victorian Branch of the Society, and Peter Damman, a former Director of the National Rhododendron

Garden, who presented a brief history of the Australian Rhododendron Society [ARS]. This can be read in the 2010 ARS Journal and the American Rhododendron Society Journal.

- Dr Graham Price, another Past President of the ARSV and a vireya hybridizer, followed with the topic of Australian Hybrids. He was ably assisted by Alan Kepert and Laurie Begg, two of the most knowledgeable members of the Victorian Society who are in the Society Volunteer Group that meets every Tuesday at the Rhododendron Garden.
- Keynote speaker Kenneth Cox was next on the agenda and he gave an excellent presentation titled 'Woodland Gardens in the Twenty First Century'. Mike Hammer had made an extra large screen to show Ken's pictures to best effect. Ken commented that to attract notice and be remembered a garden needs to have 'iconic' features eg spectacular sculptures, buildings, lakes, etc. The controversial red phone boxes are an icon, he said, and for overseas people the stands of Mountain Ash with mature big leaf rhododendrons beneath are a unique scene and should be made more prominent in advertising.
- Chris Hardman, Parks Victoria Regional Manager for Melbourne, spoke about Parks' involvement with the Rhododendron Garden, how highly it is regarded and the resources that had been and were continuing to be supplied. Unfortunately there was no mention of more horticulturally trained staff being employed.

We were delighted to have our esteemed member and botanical artist Anne O'Connor displaying her original and limited edition prints during the day. Anne was awarded the Royal Horticultural Society of the UK gold medal in London in 2000 and her paintings of a rose and fern are featured in bound limited editions of Prince Charles' book about Highgrove. All the conference speakers were presented with one of Anne's limited edition prints.

A plaque at the new pedestrian entrance of the Rhododendron Garden was provided by Parks Victoria to commemorate the Golden Jubilee. Lesley Eaton had the honour of representing the ARS members and unveiling the plaque.

Many delegates took advantage of the bus tour around the garden with ARSV members providing a detailed commentary. Others had a guided walk to specific areas of interest including the vireya beds, Australian hybrids, big leaf rhododendrons and Maddeni's, many of which cannot be grown elsewhere in the open.

Later in the afternoon a bus and car convoy departed for Gembrook to visit Laurie and Joyce Begg's garden, 'Wuurn', and Sue Jarvis and Ian Bennett's 'Blackwood Lane' garden and gallery. Laurie, formerly a nursery owner, is a keen hybridizer and his garden is crowded with every kind of plant imaginable. When he needs more space he asks friends to start a trial bed of his new rhododendrons. One of these trial beds is at Sue Jarvis' large garden and some plants are looking promising and may be worth growing on. Sue's passion is trees and her large garden has a collection of rare and unusual trees including a Pinetum of twenty species. She is a well known artist and her gallery was also of interest to the delegates.

We were fortunate to find John and Carole Quinn had arrived home early from their holiday and many took the opportunity to visit their lovely garden two doors down from 'Wuurn'. A large school bell was used very effectively to gather everyone together before the convoy departed from these gardens and those of the next two days.

TUESDAY 19TH OCTOBER. Mont de Lancey Homestead and Museum was a perfect venue for the morning conference and lunch with lots to interest visitors in the museum and in the garden. This was one occasion when the car drivers might still have been wandering around the Olinda Forest totally lost if they had used their GPS! Luckily most had followed their maps or the conference bus from Olinda and only one person, using a GPS, had become lost finding his way from the airport!

The first three speakers spoke on scientific topics and were very well received.

- Andrew Rouse, ARSV member and hybridizer, 'Australian Vireyas Today'.
- Lyn Craven, ARSV member and Emeritus Principal Research Botanist with the CSIRO in Canberra, spoke on 'Vireya Rhododendrons: their monophyly, classification and nomenclature'.
- Dr Sue Gardiner, Vice President of the New Zealand Rhododendron Association and Principal Scientist at the NZ Institute for Plant and Food Research, whose topic was 'Molecular Diversity of Vireyas and their Conservation'.

These three papers will be written up in the 2011 Australian RS Journal.

Morning tea allowed time to socialize and enjoy the sunshine in the garden before hearing about the history and development of three of Australia's most important rhododendron gardens from:

- Graham Simpson, Past President of the Emu Valley Rhododendron Society in Burnie, Tasmania
- Robert Hatcher, Horticultural Supervisor at Mt Lofty Botanic Garden in the Adelaide Hills in South Australia
- Peter Damman, a former Director of the National Rhododendron Garden in Olinda, Victoria, and Lesley Eaton, Past President of the ARS.

Emu Valley Rhododendron Garden and the National Rhododendron Garden have a similar history by being started, developed and maintained by rhododendron enthusiasts and nursery owners with the help of government grants and private sponsors. Articles about these gardens will be written up in the ARSV Newsletter and Journal.

A delicious lunch preceded visits to Simon and Marcia Begg's garden, 'Beechmont' and Jeremy and Valerie Francis' garden and nursery, 'Cloudehill'.

'Beechmont' is one of the original ten acre subdivisions made in the Dandenong Ranges in the early twentieth century and more than half is under garden. There is a mix of formal and informal areas with water features and sculptures. Simon's passion is vireyas and there is a large collection both in the open ground and in shade houses.

Unfortunately Jeremy Francis from 'Cloudehill' was unable to give the group a talk about the garden due to illness. Formerly part of 'Woolrich' nursery Cloudehill has some

magnificent trees to frame the garden. Formal stone walls and hedges create 'garden rooms' and in season the perennial borders are magnificent.

(See garden notes for more information about all the gardens visited).

CONFERENCE DINNER. Sky High is a reception centre at the top of Mt Dandenong and has spectacular two hundred degree views over Melbourne and the surrounding area on clear days and nights. We were lucky! No mist, fog, smog, clouds or rain. Guests were greeted by ARSV President Michael Hammer and entertained by Stax, The Didgeman, playing a didgeridoo. A table of lucky door prizes, many donated by local businesses, created much interest as winners would be able to choose their prize later in the evening.

Andrew Raper, as Master of Ceremonies, kept the evening on schedule and the Australian Rhododendron Society Inc. AGM was over in ten minutes. Robert Hatcher, as Vice President, read the Citation to Neil Webster and presented him with a Life Membership bar and ARS medal, both very well deserved. Neil has held office as Treasurer as well as President of ARS and has been Treasurer of ARSV for many years. (See full Citation in the Newsletter).

After dinner Stax demonstrated the didgeridoo and explained its history. Neil was persuaded to take a turn and managed a few loud blasts.

Ken Cox, the speaker for the evening, presented his talk on 'The Riddle of the Tsangpo Gorges' with the colourful vista of Melbourne's lights in the background.

The evening concluded with a beautiful presentation of flowers to Marcia Begg and the drawing of the lucky door prizes.

WEDNESDAY 20TH OCTOBER. A large group gathered at Grants Picnic Ground in Sherbrooke Forest for an informative talk by Jan Incoll, a knowledgeable member of the Sherbrooke Lyrebird Survey Group. It was decided to cross the road for a short loop walk through the forest. This was quite a dangerous exercise in peak hour traffic but in small groups we managed. Other than for the traffic it was a refreshing and enlightening experience for those who had not been in Mountain Ash forest before.

Ferny Creek Horticultural Society was the next stop for a delicious morning tea and a walk around the garden. Many delegates were surprised at the size and design of the show hall and excellent library.

Michael and Inge Hammer's garden, 'Hollingdale', was just around the corner in Sassafras. Mike and Inge are collectors of many species including alpines, lilliums, rhododendrons and maples. There is also an old rhododendron forest sheltering many of the less hardy plants.

The next bus and car convoy was to take us down to the foothills of Mt Dandenong to The Basin for lunch, talk and walk around George and Pat Hetrel's Garden, 'Como'. Previously the Chandler Nursery with display gardens it has since been extensively planted out with many other species and has the Magnolia and Prunus Collections. George is a keen vintage car collector and his museum houses cars, motorcycles and memorabilia from the wars. One of the jeeps was used by Hitler in the Second World War. A small train, another of George's passions takes groups around a few acres of garden and crosses three creeks on the way.

We had a delicious BBQ and left three-quarter of an hour late partly due to the 'donger' on the bell falling out of its housing as delegates could not be summoned from the far reaches of the garden. An emu parade eventually found it and after a group photo we moved back up the hill to Sassafras to Tim and Angela Orpin's garden, the famous 'Kenloch'.

Tim Orpin is an inveterate collector of plants and seeds. He has lots of passions and imports seed from all over the world to grow in the glasshouse. Trilliums, crocus, arisaemas and fritillarias are just some he collects. Since buying Kenloch five years ago they have nearly reinstated the house as a family home by removing the large reception rooms that were added in the 1960's.

Our last garden visit for the conference was Shirley Carn's unique native garden. On about half an acre Shirley has plants growing that originate from all parts of Australia. Her policy is to keep them lightly pruned and mulched. There is always something flowering but in spring it is especially alive with flowers and birds.

There were many hugs, handshakes and congratulations as we all parted. Some had already left for the airport, others had a few more days in Melbourne but everyone had thoroughly enjoyed the wide variety of experiences we had given them in the unforgettable Dandenong Ranges.

Thanks are due to many who helped make the conference a success but special thanks go to:

- Norm Brown our honorary bus driver who looked after all his passengers so well
- Parks Victoria staff for their help and support
- Anne O'Connor for displaying her botanical art
- National Council for the travel fund they donated
- Andrew Raper and all the speakers and garden owners
- All the delegates who came from far and wide
- Most of all the conference committee who worked so amicably together.

Marcia Begg

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Above – Sue & Graham Simpson, Brett & Susan Coombs from Tasmania.
 John O’Hara, Andrew Rouse from Vic & Lyn Craven from ACT.
 Below – George Hetrel driving his train around Como garden



Bob Weissman from US with Norm Brown & Ian Wallace

Elizabeth Xipell, Julie-Ann Webster & Annie Woodside

CONTENTS

Programme	Page 1
President's Report	Pages 3-5
The Species Column	Pages 5-6
Vireya Species Column	Pages 6-7
50th Anniversary Rhododendron Show Report	Pages 7-9
Bench Results July, August and September	Pages 9-10
September Speaker	Page 10
Golden Anniversary Conference 2010, A Society Watershed	Pages 11-14
Australian Rhododendron Society Inc; National Council and AGM	Page 14
Life Membership and Society Medal presented to Neil Webster	Pages 14-15
Photographs	Pages 16-17
Gardens visited during the Conference	Pages 18-24
Diary of a Conference	Pages 24-31
Free to a Good Home	Page 31
Contents	Page 32

ARSV COMMITTEE 2010

There are vacancies on the committee and new committee members with enthusiasm and new ideas are desperately needed. The retiring committee members and all the office holders have agreed to stand again for election in the hope that they will be acting in a transition to new office holders. The new committee will decide where and when it will meet.

PRESIDENT: Michael Hammer Ph: 9755 2176

VICE PRESIDENT No 1: Vacant

VICE PRESIDENT No 2: Vacant

TREASURER: Neil Webster, Ph: 9859 3622

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Elizabeth Xipell, Ph: 9859 9934

SOCIETY PICASAWEB SITE

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

Arising from the conference there are many new pictures:

* of the conference

* of NRG

* of each of the gardens and venues

* of delegates

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