

## THE RHODODENDRON NEWSLETTER

October 2013

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Australian Rhododendron Society, Victorian Branch Inc. (A5896Z)  
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**[www.rhododendron.com.au](http://www.rhododendron.com.au)**

### **2013 PROGRAMME**

#### **OCTOBER**

**SATURDAY 19<sup>TH</sup>, SUNDAY 20<sup>TH</sup>** National Council meeting and Convention in Adelaide. Guest speaker - Steve Hootman, Director of the Rhododendron Species Foundation in Seattle, Washington.

**WEDNESDAY 23<sup>RD</sup>** All members and friends are welcome to a garden day with Steve Hootman. Starting at the NRG at about 10am followed by a sausage sizzle. Drive to 'Beechmont', 12 Mernda Rd Olinda, where the new owner, Cherrie Miriklis, will welcome us with afternoon tea, then to Norm and Jill Brown's garden at 4 Ham Rd., Ferny Creek. Please advise numbers for catering for lunch and afternoon tea. Marcia Begg 9728 4466 (please leave a message if no answer.)

#### **NOVEMBER**

**SATURDAY 26<sup>TH</sup> & SUNDAY 27<sup>TH</sup>** Ferny Creek Show. There will be no ARS show this year as the Vireya House has been such a huge commitment. Members are urged to enter exhibits at the Ferny Creek Show. See the FC website or ring Michael Hammer 97552176 for details.

**SATURDAY 9<sup>TH</sup> 2.00PM ARSV AGM @ Olinda NRG.** Speakers: Prue and Francis Crome will describe their trip to Burma.

#### **DECEMBER**

**SUNDAY 8<sup>TH</sup> 12.30pm Christmas lunch** at Seasons Restaurant, Cloudehill, Olinda-Monbulk Rd. Cost TBA, members will be subsidised by the ARS. Bookings essential via the ARS website or phone Prue Crome: 94898094. Before the 1<sup>st</sup> December.

## PRESIDENTS REPORT OCTOBER 2013

Dear members,

Spring is such an exciting time for garden lovers, especially if your interest is directed towards plants that flower at that time of the year. The landscapes are vibrant, the bright colours are pleasing, the growth is verdant and the freshness of the plants makes you feel that the year's work has all been worth it.

There are several things I need to write to you about, aside from the mandatory invitation to members to take some time out and walk through the Garden at Olinda. Any time is good, but Tuesday mornings when the volunteers are at work is a particularly good time to walk through the Garden and to share a conversation with people who are passionate about the place and its plants.

Presidents of our society have for decades decried the imminent death of our group and it is true that the days when the society numbered its members in the many hundreds or could get a hundred at a meeting are gone. It is equally true that at those times when our society was much larger than now and when the interest in the genus *Rhododendron* was greater than it currently is, there often existed tensions between members and not everyone acted in the best interests of the society. I know that that is currently not the case and do not believe our society is currently under threat. It is true membership is at about 120 and there are only about 20 active members. These members though make up for the lack of numbers by working cooperatively and are generous in their endeavour to propagate, disseminate and promote the growing of as large a range of *Rhododendrons* as possible. The active group is a great joy to work with and so long as there remains any sort of productive group then the society will continue to survive. What the society does provide are opportunities that would not occur otherwise and I will mention just three by way of examples.

The Vireya House is complete and we planted it out with a magnificent collection of plants a couple of months ago. These plants were sourced from members, particularly Andrew Rouse. This display is not just pleasing to look at, it is also better than any other public display of *Vireyas* you will see anywhere in the world. We will see over the next few years how happy the plants are in the environment we have made for them. If, as we expect, the plants grow well and we can continue to grow the range we have now installed then this will become a collection for reference and study as well as a source of plant material for interested members both of the society and the public.

An interesting project that started some years ago with Murray Mc Alister and myself building some dry stone retaining walls has been picked up by Prue Crome and has now become a full refurbishment of the moorland garden at Olinda. This garden, which had become somewhat over grown, has now been restored to a landscape of healthy banks of *kiusianum* azaleas, *lutescens*, *augustinii* and *metternichii*. In due course, when the small plants of *nakaharae* cascade over the rocks and the gumpo azaleas fill out, this garden will provide a changing palette of colour for all of the spring months. This project highlights one of the benefits of being an ARS member in that it allows members such as both Prue and

myself, neither of whom have any significant garden at home to play in, to come to Olinda and get our weekly fix of gardening.

The society is very pleased to be able to offer a free lecture by Steve Hootman the Curator/Director of the Rhododendron Species Botanic Garden in Seattle, USA at 6:30pm in Domain House, Dallas Brookes Drv (opposite the Melbourne Herbarium) on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> of October. This talk will describe some of his adventures in Asia right through to New Guinea while collecting Rhododendrons. He will also describe briefly the work of the Rhododendron Species Foundation.

Next month is our AGM and I would ask that anyone who thinks they could make a contribution by joining our committee please make an application. It is not onerous and you get a much better idea of what is going on in the society, in the Garden and in the world of horticulture in general.

JOHN O'HARA



Above: The completed Vireya House.

Left: John O'Hara and Andrew Rouse planting out.

### **THE SPECIES COLUMN**

*R tapetiforme* -Subsection Lapponica.

Subsection Lapponica contains a number of small-leaved and dwarf species which are well adapted to cold climates and high altitudes. They are essentially plants for bare windswept

mountainsides and are often covered in snow for most of the year. Not all of these species can be grown here, but perhaps half of them will survive at Olinda. Our plants of *tapetiforme* do particularly well in the main rockery and their dwarf creeping habit is ideal for this area. (see photo)

Name:

The name means “carpet-like”, in reference to its habit of carpeting large areas with a dense mat of these plants.

Distribution:

Tibet-Burma-Yunnan border regions 3500-4600 metres, covering large areas of open moorland.

Characteristics:

This is a compact shrub up to 1 metre, but usually much less in cultivation. Leaves 0.4 to 1.5 cm. long by 0.3 to 0.8 cm. wide, elliptic, dark green above with translucent scales, lower surface densely covered with rust-coloured scales. The flowers vary from mauve to deep violet.

We have a number of species in the Lapponica Subsection in the garden:

*hippophaeoides*—A fine species with lavender-blue flowers which can be identified by its yellowish-buff scales under the leaves. Most of our plants are the Haba Shan form.

*impeditum*—This is similar to *tapetiforme* but is a slightly larger plant which can be distinguished by its smaller scales.

*polycladum(scintillans)*—More upright than the other species with some of the deepest blue flowers in the genus.

*websterianum*—Quite tall (1.5) metres, and fairly vigorous, with unusual greyish-green leaves.

Where to See These Plants:

Unfortunately many of the original Lapponica species were planted in exposed positions with inadequate watering, and did not survive. However we now have a reasonable collection in the rockery.

*tapetiforme*—Two plants, one at the top of the rockery steps and one at the bottom, flowering mid-October.

*hippophaeoides*—Three plants.

*impeditum*—Nine plants in the rockery and four more in other locations.

*polycladum*—Two plants near the Glasshouse path.

*websterianum*—Six plants located.

**Alan Kepert.**

**AUSTRALIAN RHODODENDRON SOCIETY**  
**Victorian Branch Inc. (A5896Z)**  
**NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

The Annual General Meeting of the Australian Rhododendron Society, Victorian Branch Inc. (A5896Z), will be held on Saturday, 9 November 2013, at the National Rhododendron Gardens, The Georgian Road, Olinda (Melway Ref: 66 J7), commencing at 2:00pm.

The business of the meeting shall be:

- to confirm the Minutes of the 53rd Annual General Meeting held on 9 February 2013;
- to receive from the Committee, reports upon the transactions of the Branch during the last Financial year;
- to elect Officers of the Branch, and the Ordinary Members of the Committee;
- to receive and consider the Statements of Income and Expenditure and Assets and Liabilities for the last Financial Year;
- to elect an Auditor;
- to conduct such other business of which notice is given in accordance with the Branch Rules.

All positions of officers of the Branch, i.e., President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer,  
fall vacant under Rule 55 and are to be filled by election.

Three positions, numbers 4, 5 and 6, of ordinary Committee Members fall vacant by rotation, each for a two year term in accordance with Rule 44. Retiring Officers and Ordinary Members of Committee are eligible to stand for re-election.

Nominations, on the attached form, close with the Secretary, ARS, Vic Branch, P.O. Box 500, Brentford Square, Victoria, 3131, or by email to [secretary@vicrhodo.org.au](mailto:secretary@vicrhodo.org.au), at 5.00pm on Friday 1 November 2013

A copy of the “Rules of the Australian Rhododendron Society - Victorian Branch Incorporated (A5896Z)” including the “Statement of Purposes”, may be obtained from the Secretary.

Michael Hare  
Secretary



The moorland: new steps leading up to Serenity Point



The moorland: stone steps and *kiusianum* azaleas in the foreground, larch and *augustiniis* in the background



*Rh. tapetiforme* (A. Keper)

*Rh. leptanthum* (Andrew Rouse)



## National Rhododendron Gardens

Have you ever wondered what these cages at the NRG are for?



### **PINDONE BAITING CAGE**

**This cage is part of an integrated rabbit control program undertaken in this garden.**

It is important that we reduce rabbit numbers in this area to allow plants and native animals to flourish.

Poisoned oats are occasionally spread in this cage to bait rabbits. We are diligent in our process to ensure that other animals are not affected.

- Birds are at very low risk as they discard the poisoned husk to eat the kernel.
- Non-baited oats are initially used to attract rabbits to this site.
- Larger animals cannot enter the cage.

We conduct continuous monitoring to ensure we maximise the effect on rabbits while minimising the effect on any other animals.

Parks Victoria  
13 1963

## VIREYA SPECIES COLUMN

### ***R leptanthum***

*R. leptanthum* belongs to Section Phaeovireya (Argent 2006). Species in this Section are readily identifiable by their dendroid scales that sit on top of a raised tubercle. Other species in this Section include *R. hellwigii*, *R. calignis* and *R. rarum*. All but two species in this Section are found on the Island of New Guinea.

### **Distribution (from Argent 2009)**

*R. leptanthum* is found in eastern PNG from Madang to Milne Bay, at an altitude of 1370-2250m. It is described as reaching 3m in height; however 25 year old plants in my collection are yet to get to 1m in height. It grows either as an epiphyte of large forest trees or amongst rocks in exposed areas.

### **Description**

*R. leptanthum* is a small to medium size vireya species, in cultivation a much branched shrub, and if allowed, with branches hanging rather than erect (particularly in the *R. warianum* form). New growth is densely covered in red-brown scales which are shed as the leaves age, leaving the tubercle which makes the leaves feel slightly rough to touch. The deep pink flowers are tubular, curved and ~25-35mm in length, with 2-5 flowers in the inflorescence.

Argent (2009) re-classified *R. warianum* as a form of *R. leptanthum* on the basis that the only difference between the herbarium specimens is leaf shape; *R. leptanthum* having broadly ovate leaves with a more rounded apex whereas leaves of *R. warianum* are elliptic with a pointed apex. In cultivation, both forms flower at the same time and the flower are identical. Interestingly, Lyn Craven informed me that the mature bark differs between these forms, with *R. leptanthum* having rough, persistent bark (like an oak) whilst *R. warianum* has flaky bark. This was confirmed when I examined mature plants in my collection. Whether they are two forms of the same species or different species is one for the taxonomists; in any regard it is clear that they are very closely related.

### **Cultivation**

We are fortunate to have both *R. leptanthum* (originally collected by Lyn Craven) and the *R. warianum* form (ex ARS 1972 - I have no other info on provenance aside from this), the forms differing only on leaf size/shape and mature bark (as described above).

*R. leptanthum* is easy to propagate and grow. I've found it to be an ideal hanging basket specimen, with the hanging branches spreading and trailing from the basket. It flowers reliably and prolifically every Spring, peak flowering late September-early October.

I'm not aware of *R. leptanthum* being widely used in hybridizing. A check of [www.vireya.net](http://www.vireya.net) lists five hybrids with *R. leptanthum* in their parentage, however I'm not

aware of any of these hybrids ever being grown in Australia. I've used *R. leptanthum* in hybridizing and collected seed from nine of these crosses and grew most onto flowering. Whilst of personal interest to see them flower, none of these hybrids demonstrated either the vigour or floral display of *R. leptanthum* and I have discarded most of them.

### **Verdict**

An excellent mid-size species, relatively easy to grow and best grown in a hanging basket or pot. Will grow outside in Melbourne if protected from the hottest weather.

Andrew Rouse



Vireya House complete with plants.

AUSTRALIAN RHODODENDRON SOCIETY - Victorian Branch Inc.  
(A5896Z)

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2013

Nomination for election of Officers and Ordinary Committee Members at the Annual General Meeting to be held at 2:00 pm on Saturday 9 November 2013 at the National Rhododendron Gardens, The Georgian Rd, Olinda. (Mel Ref 66 J7).

I, \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_

being a financial member of the Australian Rhododendron Society, Victorian Branch, Inc.

hereby nominate \_\_\_\_\_

who is also a financial member, for the position of: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Seconder, who is also a financial member of the Branch: \_\_\_\_\_

This Nomination is dated: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed (Proposer). \_\_\_\_\_

Signed (Seconder). \_\_\_\_\_

ACCEPTANCE

I accept nomination for the position indicated.

Signed (Person being Nominated) \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Nominations close with the Secretary, ARS, Vic Branch, P.O. Box 500, Brentford Square, Victoria, 3131, or by email to [secretary@vicrhodo.org.au](mailto:secretary@vicrhodo.org.au), at 5.00pm on Friday 1 November 2013

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