

# Rhododendrons South Australia

Australian Rhododendron Society Inc. South Australian Branch

Issue 82 – August 2014

## Coming Events

### Grant Memorial Lecture

Stephen Ryan of Dicksonia Rare Plants will be delivering our lecture this year on the evening of

**Friday 15th August**

at the

**Coventry Library, Stirling**

The lecture will be preceded by our AGM.



Stephen should prove to be a very entertaining and informative speaker. Please advertise this opportunity amongst your family and gardening friends.

<http://stephenryan.com.au/>

Tickets are still available, and can be purchased from the Treasurer for \$20. The

format will be AGM 6.30, drinks etc. at 7.00 pm, the lecture at 8.00pm

A BBQ lunch will be held at Forest Lodge for members only on the Saturday to chat with Stephen.

**Members are reminded to bring a savoury only supper plate.**

### Garden Visit, 13<sup>th</sup> September

Our garden visit to Lianne Healey's beautiful garden has been organised for Saturday 13 September 2014 at 2.00 pm. (members only) Address available from Lianne or Secretary.

Lianne's garden is 8 acres and has a Japanese stroll garden as one of the many points of interest.

There is no street parking but room for 20 cars on the property so members may need to double up.

## Bloom of the Month



*Vireya christii*

## July Meeting

On a typical Hills winter evening our dedicated membership turned out in force to hear Scott Foubister's talk on his tenure as curator of Rhododendron Gully at MLBG.

Scott was a very enthusiastic speaker who has a passion for gardening and in particular the Mt Lofty Botanic Gardens. He has been employed at the gardens for over 21 years. In which time he has developed an interest (or he might say an obsession) for woodland plants. Approximately 3 years ago an opportunity arose for him to apply for the position of curator of Rhododendron Gully. Having secured this position, Scott developed a strategic plan for the Gully. He shared aspects of this plan and what had been achieved thus far and what he hopes to achieve in



the future. Of note was the recent implementation of feeding the rhododendrons twice a year, once in late autumn, for the flowers and again in the late spring, for the new growth. Scott's obvious passion, enthusiasm and energy for Rhododendron Gully is extremely gratifying to know and we can all be secure in the knowledge that Rhododendron Gully is in very capable hands.

The raffle was drawn and Rob and Barb Field were the lucky winners.



## Trading Table

Members once again generously supported our trading table. It continues to be "a nice little earner" for the Society, with a turnover last month of \$54. "Thank you", to all members who contributed. There won't be a trading table at the AGM and Grant Memorial Lecture. Our next trading table will be the first meeting for spring, so hopefully we will have another abundant table.

Michelle



By Bill Voigt

## Culture Notes

### "What you should be doing with your rhodies and garden this August"

Contrary to the long-range forecast, we have enjoyed copious amounts of precipitation during the first two months of winter. So the soil is really saturated now, and there are areas which need attention so that excess water can drain away. If the soil is compacted, spiking with a garden fork, to the full depth of the tines should allow excess water to escape. Water seeping down a slope can be diverted by digging a few horizontally placed drains.

Not all gardens are large enough for generous plantings of rhododendrons, but in smaller gardens containers of various sizes can be used for growing your favourite rhododendrons and azaleas. As well as the smaller growers, a striking effect can be achieved by growing a larger growing hybrid such as "White Pearl", "Blue Peter", "Mrs GW Leak" or "Taurus" as a standard, and planting underneath with small azaleas or annuals such as lobelia, primroses, violas, dwarf cyclamen or succulents e.g. echeveria.

Hotter summers seem to be with us, so it is all important to have sufficient shade for your rhododendrons. Japanese maples and crab apples are smaller trees that can provide adequate protection from the sun.

Now that most deciduous trees have shed their leaves (though some oaks seem too modest to be seen completely naked) it is easy to see any lower branches that can be removed to provide more light.

If looking for new plants it is wise to visit several nurseries as there can be a great variation in prices and general condition of plants.



*Rhododendron yakushimanum 'Polaris' underplanted with Erysimum 'Bowles Mauve', 'Winterjoy' and 'Zwerg'*



*Rhododendron 'Toreador' - Japanese Azalea standard, Rhododendron 'President Roosevelt', Viola, Aubrieta 'Hamburger Stadtpark', Saxifraga, Dianthus, Sagina and Acorus in pots on balcony*





*Penstemons*

Penstemons provide flowers for a long period, and they can grow well in the Hills. Now is the time to cut the mature plants down to the ground. They will respond with fresh growth quite quickly and will commence blooming again in spring.

Last month's Newsletter featured an article by David Millais. "Mrs. J.G. Millais" is a delightful rhododendron. It has white flowers with a huge gold blotch. A real gem if you can find it.

The hours of daylight are extending so spring can't be far away. Enjoy the magnolias in August.

Editors Note : There were no available images of the standards recommended by Bill, so we have substituted these images.



*Rhododendron 'Mrs J G Millais'*

## Desert Gardening

Even in the toughest environments the intrepid gardener strives to add some colour to their humble abodes.

A sample of little splashes of colour scattered around dry dusty Andamooka during a day off from work, seeing the sights.

David





By Richard Illman

## From the Propagating Bench

It is time to think about sowing the new season vegetable seeds. If you have a warm spot or heated propagating box (as mentioned in previous newsletters) you can propagate next seasons tomatoes, lettuce and herb seeds. They will generally germinate within a week with bottom heat and after a few weeks can be transplanted into small jiffy pots or tubes.

The time for grafting conifers has now passed but the opportunity for maples is upon us. If you have any seedling palmatum maples that have grown in unwanted spots in your garden you can pot them while deciduous and use them to graft treasured varieties. The easiest

method is to use a veneer graft of the wanted plant onto the seedling palmatum root stock.



If you are too late to try this method an approach graft can be done onto a desired plant once spring growth has commenced.

If members are interested in trying these methods of propagation speak to Richard who can demonstrate the techniques or check out the numerous grafting videos on the net.

Many of the old, large growing rhododendrons (eg. Elegans, Sir Robert Peel ) will have formed numerous layers under the plant - particularly if they have been covered with leaf mulch. It is an opportune time to carefully dig, sever, and pot these layers as they will grow away quite strongly and provide new hardy plants for your garden. They would also be a great source of



*Rhododendron layers*

material for our trading table and the annual plant sale as these hardy varieties do exceptionally well in the Adelaide Hills.

Grafting of rhododendrons can also be considered in early spring, but at least three to four weeks before the scion would normally start its spring growth.

## The Death of a Vireya

Through the newsletter I have charted the death of the vireya in the main street of Stirling, in front of the National bank. Its demise is now complete. Unfortunately this vireya is not an isolated case, many of the recently planted rhododendrons around Stirling are suffering the same fate.



*Unknown Vireya May 2013*



*Unknown Vireya July 2014*

## Bird of the Month

### Australian Wood Duck



*Chenonetta jubata*

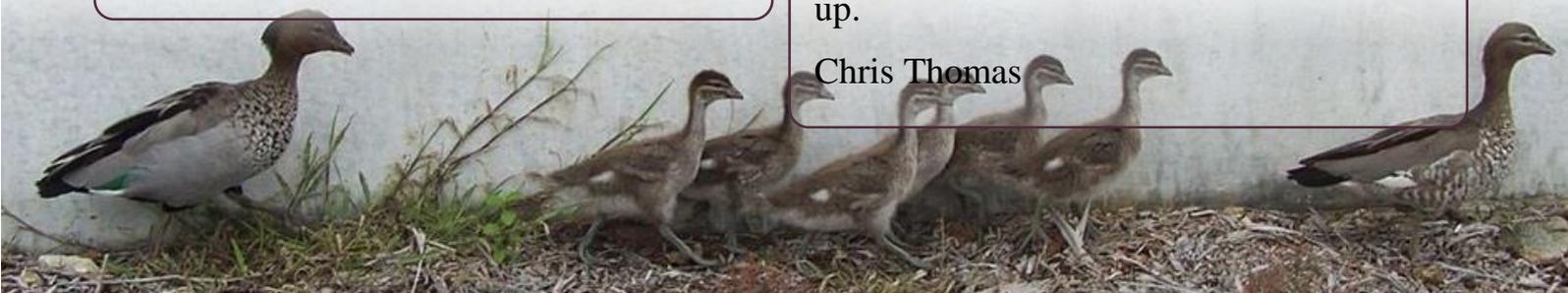
They walk easily on land and may be seen perching on logs and in trees. They will only take to open water when disturbed. Size range 44 cm to 50 cm.

They prefer to forage on land. The Australian Wood Duck eats grasses, clover and other herbs, and occasionally, insects. It is rarely seen on open water, preferring to forage by dabbling in shallow water, or in grasslands and crops.

Often seen on golf courses and parklands and especially on road sides blocking traffic as it crosses roads.

Nests in hollows in trees, often quite high up.

Chris Thomas





Milton Bowman

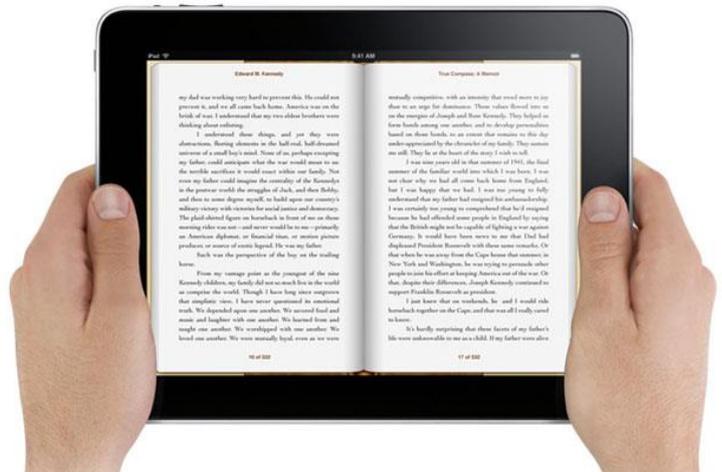
## Librarian's Report

This has continued to be a real winter, it seems to be some time since the sun appeared in Stirling and the normal day has been fog till the afternoon, plenty of strong winds, and rain. The rainfall for July has been 235mm and we are now ahead of the average rainfall for the year to date, with a total of 764.5mm.

This is my last report as Librarian and the incoming Librarians are Anne and David Matison, capable hands indeed.

I have been Librarian at an interesting time, and have watched the internet revolution gathering steam. The future of the reference book is quite uncertain, and I would expect that future references will be only internet based and that the book as we know it will gradually become electronic and that we will get used to curling up in front of the fire with a Kindle or something similar.

The real advantage to this is that when we move house in the future no longer will we need a moving van and 2 or 3 strong men to move our books, we will simply take our library in a USB stick, much easier!



However this does have implications for the Branch Library in the future, particularly with reference material. Possibly a list of good sites, such as the RHS Magnolia and Rhododendron site for Hardy Rhododendrons, or the American Rhododendron Society site for a more general view of Rhododendrons available throughout the world, would be useful. In the meantime there still remains a good solid core of traditionalists who prefer the book to the Kindle.

Thanks for the support and suggestions over the years, and best wishes to Anne and David.



# NEUTROG™

## The Experts' Choice

## Companion plants for Rhododendrons

I found a recent article in the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) journal that dealt with companion plants to grow with smaller rhododendrons such as *R. yakushimanum* and *R. williamsianum* hybrids. Richard and I have had some success with representatives from these groups and are keen to follow some of the recommendations for companion planting. Visit [www.rhs.org.uk](http://www.rhs.org.uk) for some choice small hybrids with the AGM (award garden merit), search 'Rhododendron yakushimanum Bulletin'.

Good Companions:

### Trees & Shrubs

- ❁ *Acer japonicum* 'Aconitifolium'
- ❁ *Acer palmatum*
- ❁ *Camellia*
- ❁ *Chaenomeles*
- ❁ *Cornus kousa* cultivars
- ❁ *Enkianthus campanulatus*
- ❁ *Magnolia* species & cultivars
- ❁ *Pieris* 'Flaming silver'



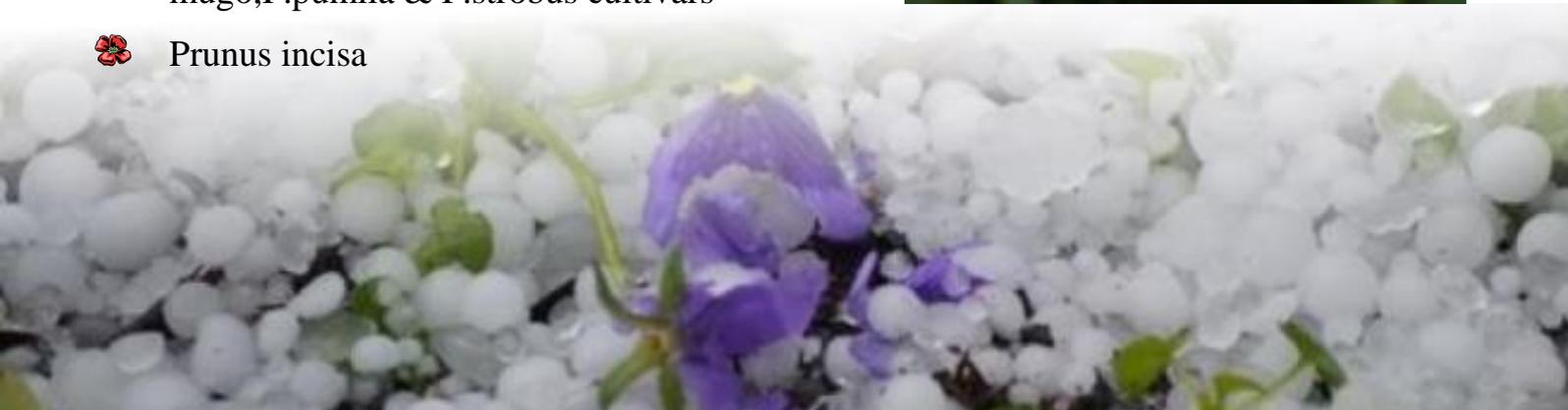
- ❁ Dwarf pines such as *Pinus mugo*, *P. pumila* & *P. strobus* cultivars
- ❁ *Prunus incisa*

### Bulbs

- ❁ *Anemone blanda*
- ❁ *Iris reticulata*



- ❁ *Narcissus* 'Minnow'



## Groundcover plants & Perennials

🌸 Campanula persicifolia

🌸 Digitalis



🌸 Primula vulgaris

🌸 Pulmonaria

🌸 Trillium grandiflorum



🌸 Epimedium

Bronwyn

### Nursery News

Bunnings at Mt Barker have a small selection of new rhodos and azaleas. Amongst the azaleas are two additions to the “Encore” range- Autumn Empress and Autumn Monarch. They were supplied in 140mm pots for \$8.00 and exhibited strong new growth that would be suitable for cuttings at the end of summer.



*Autumn Monarch*



*Autumn Empress*

A timely reminder for azalea growers, that with the onset of a few warmer days the developing flower buds require a spray with Bayleton or other suitable fungicide to prevent azalea petal blight. This disease can completely ruin your spring display so get out there with the spray as soon as you see colour in the buds.

Bronwyn

Late News : Bron reports that the Mile End Bunnings has the full range of “Encore” azaleas.

# Plant hunters extraordinaire

*contributions from the Cornish Lobb brothers during the 1840's.*

## William Lobb



*Chilean fire bush*

From 1840 to 1848, William Lobb collected in South America, sending back plants from Brazil, Argentina, Ecuador, Peru and beyond to Panama. William introduced a host of outstanding plants and is responsible for the widespread cultivation of two iconic conifers. *Araucaria araucana* (Monkey Puzzle), was introduced to the Royal Botanic gardens, Kew, by



*Monkey Puzzle Tree*

its collector Archibald Menzies. Lobb was commissioned to collect seed on his first trip to Chile, and the 3,000 seeds he harvested helped ensure the rise of the monkey puzzle tree to fashionable status in Victorian urban gardens and country estates.

He also sent a large number of *Sequoiadendron giganteum* (giant redwood) seeds to the UK during the Californian gold rush in 1848. His crowning glory was *Embothrium coccineum* (Chilean fire bush). Needing a sheltered, sunny spot with moist, acidic soil to flourish, it flowered for the first time in Britain at Veitch's nursery in May, 1853.

## Thomas Lobb

William's younger brother Thomas made four trips to south east Asia between 1843 and 1860, visiting many areas, among them Singapore, Java, Sumatra, Burma, the Philippines and India. He focused on orchids and tender rhododendrons for the conservatories of the wealthy.

He sent *Rhododendron jasminiflorum* with white flowers and a deep pink eye from Malacca. This, and his collection of an orange-flowered *Rhododendron javanicum*, contributed to the Victorian craze for the



*Rhododendron jasminiflorum*

growing of tender (Vireya) rhododendrons. Veitch's nursery created some 30 hybrids from Thomas's collections.

The Lobb brothers made a great contribution to gardening but they are less well known than many other 19<sup>th</sup>-century plant collectors.

If you would like to read more about the significant plant collectors and particularly the story of rhododendron collecting borrow from our library, the book entitled "Tales of the Rose Tree" by Jane Brown.

Bronwyn



*Rhododendron javanicum*

## A Life's Work: Don Dosser

Peter has sent a link to an article on the stunning Tasmanian garden of Don Dresser, Australia's most successful and prolific rhododendron breeder.

[A Life's Work: Don Dosser, Hilary Burden, published in Country Style, June 2014](#)

