

Rhododendrons South Australia

Australian Rhododendron Society Inc. South Australian Branch

Issue 84 - October 2014

Coming Events

Next Meeting, 15th Oct 7:45pm

The next meeting will be a Blooms night.



Members are invited to bring blooms from their garden to display and identify.

**Please 'bring a friend', a plate,
and an item for the Trading Table.**

Plant Sale, 12th October



Members are needed for early morning setup at 8:30am, meeting at the trade gates, Lampert Rd (lower entrance), Mt Lofty Gardens, to transport stock to the lower car park.

Members will also be needed throughout the day. Contact Peter to volunteer for the roster.

Christmas Gathering

Keep the 29th of November free for the Christmas gathering. Details to follow.



September Meeting

The meeting was well attended. Robert Hatcher gave an interesting talk on the Rhododendron Species Foundation's 75th Anniversary, he also included photographs of his recent trip to America.

A number of members brought along some stunning blooms, which bodes well for our October meeting; a 'Blooms Night'.

Bron Illman proposed a cutting day in February 2015 for members, which would focus on hybrids which do well in the Adelaide Hills. The intent is to ensure a supply of 'proven performers' for our plant sale. This was well received and Bron will put forward a formal motion to that effect at the next meeting.

Robyn Wall was the lucky winner of the raffle. Although the trading table was somewhat depleted, the same could not be said of our supper table, it was extremely abundant.

Michelle

The Trading Table

With the advent of Spring, expectations were high for an abundant trading table. Unfortunately this did not eventuate and the trading table was a little meagre. Thank you to all members who did contribute and I would ask members to bring along any plants which are surplus to your requirements. The trading table adds interest to the evening.

Michelle



The supper table

Newsletter Review

Thankyou to all members who, at the last meeting completed the survey about the format and content of this year's newsletters. The responses were overwhelmingly positive and many members added additional comments about the inclusion of other articles. These ranged from sections dealing with member's gardening problems, reminder about due dates for articles, details in last newsletter of the year about requirements for setting up for propagation of rhodos and azaleas to occasional recipes (particularly those from the supper table).

Bronwyn

Presidents Report

ARS (SA Branch) AGM 2014

It is my great pleasure to present this annual report.

Once again we have seen an increase in membership this year and a remarkable enthusiasm from all our members.

Your committee has worked hard to make this an enjoyable year for everyone.

Particular thanks must go to our secretary, Janie, for her tireless work to “make things happen”. Janie is standing down after three years in this position.

Special thanks to our website/newsletter editors Michelle and Bron, our treasurer Peter, Milton as librarian and for IT support from David and Chris. Also to Michelle and Bron for organising the trading table.

The highlight of the year was the ARS National Convention held here in October ... a great success.

Steve Hootman, as speaker proved to be a tremendous drawcard and the associated social functions were enjoyed by all including our interstate and overseas guests.

A special part of the AGM (held concurrently), was the award of life membership to both Tania and Chris Thomas.

Through the generosity of Janet and David Rice the two open days at Beechwood swelled the society's coffers and the Christmas party at Beechwood was a very pleasant end to the year.

The annual plant sale was again a resounding success, with thanks to Bron and Rob for managing members choices.

Another highlight of the year was the (very wet) visit to Anlaby homestead for members and their guests.

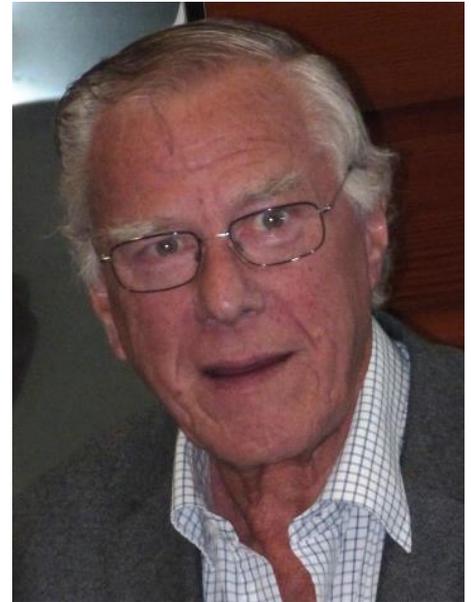
Our guest speakers Rob Hatcher, William Antel, Robert Stone, Steven Hailstone, Matt Coulter and Scott Foubister have all entertained us with a wide range of interests and topics.

I think that it is fair to say we have had a very good year and next year should be even better, having formalised our Education Scholarship and with a much closer relationship with MLBG and Stephen Forbes to foster Rhododendron Gully.

Our Annual seed donation to MLBG will continue.

I would conclude by thanking Neutrog for their support and sponsorship of this evening's door prize and also to the staff of Coventry Library for helping us this evening.

Last, but not least, I thank Tania and Rosemary for the time and effort in providing the beautiful flower arrangements again.



Ian Smylie



Culture Notes

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

The basic requirements for the success in growing rhododendrons and azaleas are:-

By Bill Voigt

- 🌸 Acid soil
- 🌸 Shade-ideally provided by a high canopy of deciduous trees
- 🌸 Good drainage
- 🌸 Regular watering during the drier months
- 🌸 Protection from insects and mites.

Although filtered sunlight seems to be the ideal for most rhododendrons there are some more sun hardy than others. These include Ponticum and many of the Ponticum hybrids, "Mrs GW.Leak", "Sir Robert Peel", "President Roosevelt", "Ivery's Scarlett" and "Broughtonii".

Dense shade causes the plants to produce few blooms and to grow too leggy.

Deciduous azaleas need some sun, preferably during the morning, to flower well.

If a rhododendron looks pale and lacks a healthy green colour the causes could be:-

- 🌸 Poor drainage.
- 🌸 Soil has become less acidic.
- 🌸 Lack of nitrogen.

Sulphate of ammonia can be applied in a weak solution to provide some nutrition while iron sulphate helps to correct soil that has become alkaline.

When applying fertilisers, do not be too heavy-handed as the fibrous roots of rhododendrons and azaleas are easily destroyed, and the result is an unhealthy looking plant or dead one. Always water fertilisers well in.



President Roosevelt



Rhododendron broughtonii

When planting a rhododendron, make sure the hole for the plant is much larger than the root ball. Loosen the soil for quite a drainage distance around the perimeter and, if possible, work in some well-rotted compost. If the root ball is compacted, gently tease out the roots so that they can spread into the surrounding soil.

"Confidor" used as soon as the new growth appears, and again during summer and autumn should keep the plants free from the dreaded lace bug.

Petal blight can quickly ruin blooms. It is disappointing to see lovely flowers turn into a brown soggy mass. The latest spray available to prevent this fungus infection is "Zaleton". It should be applied just before the buds burst. Varieties that flower during the cooler months are not usually affected.

Agapanthus are very popular these days, but beware, even the smaller varieties have a mass of fleshy roots which can overwhelm the fibrous roots of small rhododendrons and azaleas. Don't plant them too close to these more delicate shrubs.

Some vireyas are subject to rust, so at the first signs of any infection on the underside of the leaves, spray with a fungicide.

"Alison Johnstone" and "Elizabeth" are two rhododendrons that often have their new growth attacked by caterpillar, so keep an eye out for this trouble.

Low growing plants for edging and providing some colour are bedding begonias, dianthus and portulaca.

Just now nurseries seem to be overstocked with petunias and tomatoes, but careful searching will reveal other more desirable seedlings.

The daylight hours are increasing, so there soon will be time to garden during the evening hours. Enjoy Spring!



Petal blight



Alison Johnstone

National Plant Collections Register

Attached to the Newsletter are the membership forms for the Garden Plant Conservation Association of Australia, National Plant Collections Register, and Plant Trust. This was mentioned by Stephen Ryan in his talk and asked about by a number of members.

Bird of the Month

Red-necked Stint

I have chosen a bird found on much of the South Australian seashore, but probably generally only known to birdwatchers.

This bird is about the size of our domestic sparrow. It departs our shores around mid-March and returns in September/October.

This little bird breeds in the arctic-tundra from north-central Siberia to western Alaska. There are an estimated 270,000 visiting Australia each year. The parents depart Siberia and the young fly about a week later having never flown the route.

The Coorong collapse has seen problems for these little fellers. Lack of food means many cannot put on enough condition to get back home and they probably die on their way back home.

In the South China Sea area the reclaiming of huge areas of wetlands for golf courses have destroyed feeding locations where the birds would rest to regain strength to finish their journey in both directions. Many birds are failing to complete their migration journeys.

Changes in the sub-arctic seasons are seeing some insect's etc. hatching perhaps 2 to 3 weeks earlier and so when migratory birds arrive much of their food chain has finished.

Migratory bird populations like the Red-necked Stint have survived for tens of thousands of years but scientists are now seeing dramatic changes in under a decade.

by Chris Thomas



Calidris ruficollis

Robust Rhodos

The following names were contributed by members as plants that have performed well in their gardens. If there are additional rhodos. members have found to be successful and are not included in this list, please let the editors know so that a more complete list can be compiled.

- 🌸 Anna
- 🌸 Mrs G.W. Leak
- 🌸 Sir Robert Peel
- 🌸 Furnival's Daughter
- 🌸 Elegans
- 🌸 Bibiani
- 🌸 Mrs Jeanette Clark
- 🌸 Purple Splendour



Van Nes Sensation



Purple Splendour

- ❁ Arthur Bedford
- ❁ Taurus
- ❁ Mrs E.C.Stirling
- ❁ Fragrantissimum
- ❁ Van Nes Sensation
- ❁ Colonel Coen
- ❁ White Pearl
- ❁ Unique
- ❁ Winsome
- ❁ Anna Rose Whitney
- ❁ Wedding Gown
- ❁ Colehurst
- ❁ Lems Monarch
- ❁ Countess of Athlone
- ❁ Edith Praed
- ❁ Rocket
- ❁ Our Gem
- ❁ Mt Everest
- ❁ Broughtonii
- ❁ August van Geert
- ❁ Kimberley
- ❁ Mrs Baker
- ❁ Sappho
- ❁ Vulcan
- ❁ Pink Pearl
- ❁ Bronze Wing
- ❁ Ann Teese
- ❁ Toolangi Ruby
- ❁ Dame Nellie Melba
- ❁ Yaku Sunrise
- ❁ Boule de Neige
- ❁ Blue Peter

Bronwyn



Lem's Monarch



Anna Rose Whitney



Rocket



Countess of Athlone



August van Geert



Fragrantissimum



Mount Everest



Blue Peter

The Freeway Rhodos

by John Schutz (re-published with permission)

Mount Lofty Botanic Garden in South Australia has had a long association with rhododendrons. The first plantings took place back in the early 1960's. Many old hybrids and species were planted throughout the garden. In 1983 Ash Wednesday bushfires destroyed many of these early plantings including quite a few vireya species which had been planted at the top of one of the main gullies.

In 1967 the South Eastern Freeway from Adelaide to Stirling was started and over the next few years this was extended until in the mid 1980's the freeway reached Murray Bridge.

As the Freeway carved its way through the beautiful Adelaide hills, many established gardens paid the ultimate price for progress. This was especially true in the areas of Stirling and Crafers where rhododendrons had been introduced some 70 to 80 years earlier by people such as Sir Edward Stirling among of others.

Rhododendrons had now many years later become an integral part of these beautiful gardens.

With the planned course for The Freeway cutting through a number of these gardens, the then Director of the Botanic Garden, Mr. Noel Lothian, recognised the need to do something.

These plants must be saved if at all possible and at this point in time the Mount Lofty Botanic Garden was beginning to take shape, albeit very slowly. Lothian quickly saw the possibility of rescuing some of the doomed plants and transplanting them into the newly developing garden.

So an official letter was sent by the Director to the Highways Department in regards to the future of these plants. Some two years later a reply was received back saying in effect, that these gardens had now been procured for the purpose of the new freeway and if the Botanic Garden wanted any of the plants they had three weeks to remove them before they would be bulldozed.



Construction of the South Eastern Freeway near Arbury Park in 1969 (Highways Dept)

With this situation the Director was presented with a challenge. This was added to by the time of the year being mid-summer. But to the credit of the Director and the staff from Mount Lofty Botanic Garden, work began immediately to salvage as many plants as possible. Over the next few weeks five Botanic Garden staff lifted 95 mature plants from the freeway site gardens and transported them to the Botanic Garden. They were mostly rhododendron hybrids with a small number of other ornamental trees and shrubs. Many of the rhododendrons were over 10 feet tall and needed to be drastically reduced in size in order to ensure survival.



Cynthia

The plants were rowed out at the top of the garden in a nursery type situation with sprinklers being used to mist the plants regularly throughout the hot summer's days. Here the plants would be allowed to re-establish before being planted out in the garden.

In the words of the then Garden Director Noel Lothian the situation was summed up "Due to the excellent efforts of the staff involved only three plants were lost out of the 95 moved. This was a credit to their expertise."

Once these plants had settled down and made signs of new growth, they were moved to their new homes in the garden.

The majority, if not all of the rhododendron hybrids were planted at the top eastern rim of the old Crafers Quarry. Even though many people may have suggested that this site was far from suitable for Rhododendrons, being very exposed in very gritty quartz based soil, and very low nutrient levels, the plants have proven otherwise.

The plants were planted in big clumps, and have never really looked back with some now well in excess of their original height before transplanting took place. They even escaped the ravages of the Ash Wednesday Bushfires.

Every year these plants provide the visiting public with beautiful displays of colour for months on end, and now have become fondly known as the Freeway Rhododendrons.

But the story does not stop there. These plants have done very well growing on the eastern rim of the old Crafers Quarry. This quarry was purchased by the Botanic Gardens in the 70's, long after it had ceased operations.

As a sesquicentennial project this quarry was to be established as a Texan garden allied to the Crafers sister city of Humble in Texas. Planting began in the quarry in 1987 and numbers have been added to since that time.



Madame Carvelo

We now have a good collection of Mexican and Texan endemic species growing in the quarry area.

The soil that was removed for the Bicentennial Conservatory in Adelaide Botanic Garden was transported to the quarry and used to landscape huge beds on the floor of the quarry. Plants planted in both this introduced soil and on the existing rock screes are doing extremely well.

Now back to our Freeway Rhododendrons. As we previously mentioned these were planted at the top of the eastern rim of this quarry. This eastern slope of the quarry is one of the main screes within the quarry, starting just below the top rim and going all the way to the floor.



Corry Koster

It is a very exposed scree and does get a reasonable amount of full sun and wind as it faces west to south west.

Now several years ago I noticed an unusual occurrence.

It would appear that seed from the Freeway Rhodos has blown over the edge of the quarry and settled in amongst the rocks which make up the scree. Some of these have germinated and begun to grow quite well in this harsh site. We now have a couple of dozen plants doing just fine with some up to 60cm high.

It doesn't seem possible for plants that have always been considered hard or at least difficult to grow, even in far better situations, to be growing in such a harsh environment. These plants receive no additional water or fertiliser and have never been given any attention at all.

I commented to one of my colleagues that this is a new strain of Rhododendrons which would be tough enough to grow in a quarry. And no doubt some of these plants will turn out to be extremely hardy. I am waiting for the flowers to see if they have any potential.

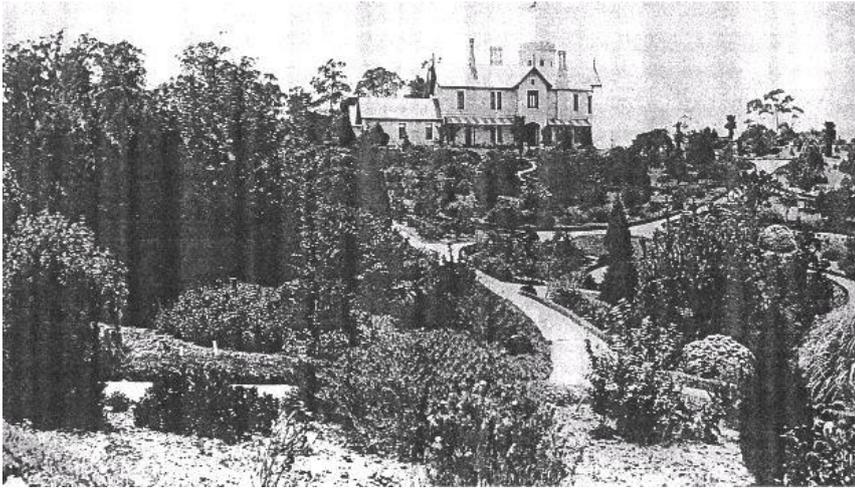
These plants are obviously hybrids from the Freeway Rhodos which in the main are hardy cultivars themselves. Plants of Rh. 'Broughtonii', 'Cynthia', 'White Pearl' and 'Pink Pearl', 'Madame Carvelo', 'Goethe', 'Sophia Gray', 'Corry Koster', 'Schiller', 'W.E. Gladstone' and 'Souvenir of John Waterer'.

So there we have the story of the Freeway Rhodos at least so far, there may well be more to tell about the next generation in years to come.

I would like to thank Noel Lothian, ex-Director of the Mount Lofty Botanic Garden.

Editor's Note : A paper discovered researching for photos for this article, [Development of Mount Lofty Botanic Garden](#), provides more information for those interested.

Tales from Forest Lodge



Weather Report

This month has continued the dry theme of August and there has only been 50mm till the 22nd of September. This, coupled with the warm days that we are having has meant that pot plants are needing regular watering, which really is a bit early in the season. The up side is that the flowers on both the camellias and the rhododendrons are not spoiling so quickly because petal blight is finding the

conditions unfavourable. The other great thing is that the inside of the house is now 16C, a temperature that is usually reached in January.

Secretarial Musings

I will not be in Adelaide for the next meeting and have decided to mention some ideas re our potential involvement with the Mount Lofty Botanic Garden. These are my musings only and they have not been tested in the crucible of a committee meeting or a general meeting, and thus they are not in any way official policy, and are put forward only to stimulate thought and discussion.

The staff at Mt. Lofty Botanic Garden are keen to have us involved. They see us as a source of expertise and knowledge, and would value some physical input as well.

The expertise and knowledge concerns the identification of both species and cultivars in the garden and the assessment of their general suitability for conditions in the Adelaide Hills. This process is a help to the Garden Staff and also a help to the society, in that we will be in a better situation to make our own decisions re plants that we buy for our gardens, and to make better recommendations to the general public. Hence interested society members could work with Scott Foubisher as he and his staff catalogue and assess the plants in Rhododendron Gully, and the hybrids in the Woodland areas.

The physical input could take several forms. It could be that some Society members would like to assist with the WHIBLEY COLLECTION by doing light general maintenance such as weeding, dead wooding, fertilising and ensuring that the labelling is correct. Another possible project is the propagation by both seeds from species and cuttings from hybrids. Matt. Coulter has indicated that he would welcome some input and would provide guidance and support for both propagation methods.



Milton Bowman



Another area of interest to the Garden is enlarging their hybrid collection, especially the old hardy varieties that have survived in the district. Thus there is an opportunity for society members to propagate their own plants and donate material to MLBG.

Yet another idea could be to provide funds for an interpretive sign for the Whibley Collection with information to tell the general public why the collection is important to South Australia.

Any other ideas would be very valuable.



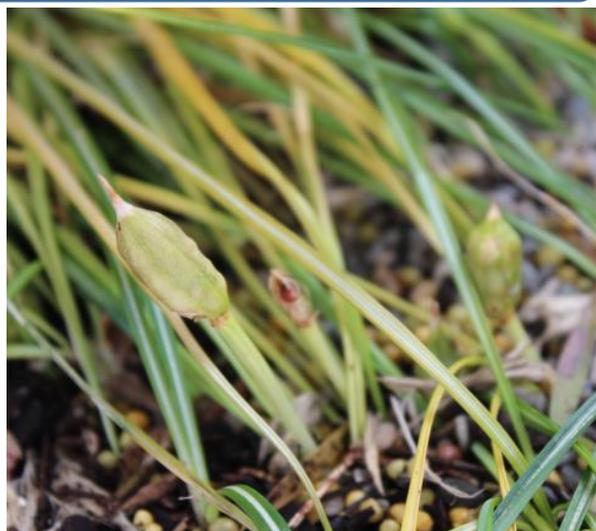
By Richard Illman

From the Propagating Bench

Autumn Crocus

It is now time to keep an eye out for the seed capsules of any crocus that you may have pollinated early in the year. The seed capsules need collection just as they are opening and once they have shed their seed they need to

be sewn promptly in seed raising mix covered with about 1 cm of fine gravel. They will germinate readily in the autumn and flower in about 3 years.



Autumn Crocus Seed Pod

Species tulips

If you grow species tulips and would like to increase their numbers through seed production you need to get out with your camel hair brush and pollinate the flowers.



Photos of species tulip and pollinating process



Cutting Day

Proposal for Member's Propagation Day in late February 2015.

(this idea was raised at the recent meeting and a request was made for a formal proposal)

The aims of the day are twofold;

- ✿ To produce rhododendrons and azaleas that are known to prosper in the Adelaide Hills
- ✿ To encourage members to get involved in propagating rhododendrons and azaleas.

The proposal

- ✿ A suitable date in late February or early March would be nominated as a propagating day.
- ✿ This would be open to all members.
- ✿ The society would provide propagation boxes, striking media and rooting hormone.
- ✿ Cuttings of hardy hybrids and species rhododendrons would be available. Members would also be able to bring any rhododendrons or azaleas that they wished to propagate.
- ✿ Propagation advice and demonstrations would be available.
- ✿ Members would take their boxes of cuttings home and look after them until they were ready to pot on (information on when & how would be available).
- ✿ Plants that represent the hardy hybrids and species that prosper in the Adelaide Hills would be donated to the annual plant sale or the trading table. Members would be able to retain some of the struck plants for their own gardens if they desired.
- ✿ The event could conclude with a social activity eg BBQ.

Please consider this proposal and be prepared to discuss/comment & vote at the next meeting.

Bronwyn



Cutting Day – March 2013

Helpful Tips

Editors Tip : Where possible images for articles in this Newsletter are sourced from members. Where this is not possible, images are sourced from the internet. Due to deadlines it is not possible to seek permission to use each image, so we hyperlink each of the images in acknowledgement of their source. This has an additional benefit, if you click on these images you may be able to find information in addition to that in the article.

A Hidden Gem in the Hills

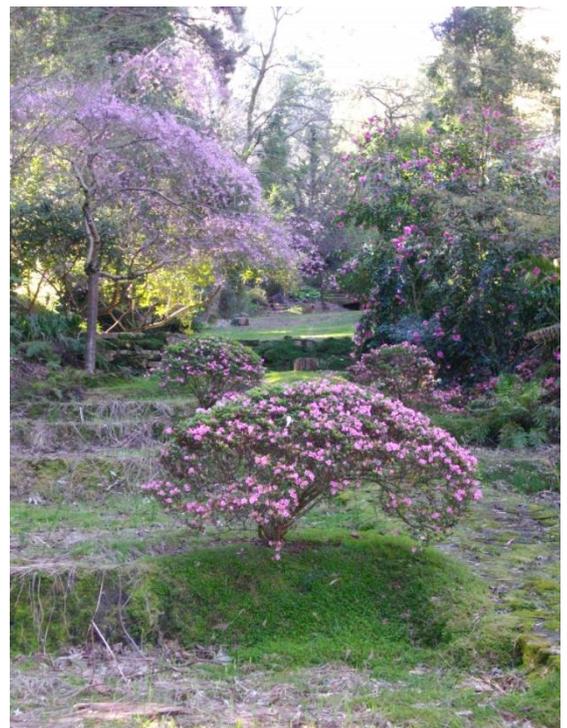
The Society was fortunate enough to be invited by one of our newer members, Lianne Healy, to visit her eight acre garden.

The property was known to some of our members as it had originally been owned by Jeffrey and Nanette Dutton and later 10 acres was purchased by Sir Ben and Lady Dorothy Dickinson. Sir Ben employed Stephen Hailstone (in his first major commission) as a landscape gardener to establish the garden. Unfortunately due to an untimely illness the property had to be sold before the completion of the commission and was bought by a property developer, who was expecting to subdivide it into 10 one acre plots. Due to water catchment restrictions, the developer was prohibited from this; however he was able to sell off 2 acres of land which contained a substantial part of the hard landscaping. The garden lay neglected the five years and was put on the market when the developer realised he would not be able to achieve his aims.



The property was then purchased by Lianne. As all gardeners know five years of neglect can absolutely decimate a garden. 20 years ago when Leanne purchased this property it was covered in noxious weeds, with many of the valleys and ravines obscured by the weeds. Large earthmovers had to cut pathways through the noxious weeds.

With her background in horticulture and landscaping and armed with her vision, sheer force of personality, determination and help from a novice gardener once a week, she has transformed this garden into a truly magnificent hidden gem of the Hills. There are many garden rooms with the garden designed to provide interest throughout the year. She has successfully married the natives with exotic and the garden is a testament to her vision.



All present at the garden tour stood in awe of her energy, enthusiasm and sheer single-mindedness in transforming the garden. We were very privileged that she shared her private passion with members.

Michelle

Problem Corner

This is a new section in the newsletter - if you have any problems that you would like included please send photos plus a brief description to the news editor.

Azalea Petal Blight

This problem occurs when azaleas experience warm but damp weather. The flowers open, but soon collapse and have a slimy texture. The solution is to spray at “pink bud” stage with “Bayleton” or a fungicide containing Triadimefon. Bayleton is no longer registered but Triadimefon is present in products called Triad or Sling shot fungicide. These are possibly available through Farmer Johns at Nuriootpa but may only be available in larger quantities as they are used on wheat crops. In this case we may be able to purchase some and divide it amongst interested members. Bronwyn will continue to investigate.



A long suffering rhododendron!

This Broughtonii has been struggling for many years in our front garden. We have tried all manner of remedies to no avail. If any members have ideas Richard and I would love to hear from you.



Submissions

Please send photos and a brief description prior to the 1st of the Month to;- news.editor@sarhodo.org.au



Librarians Report



by Ann & David Matison

As you all know, the collection is housed in the cabinets at The Crafers hall and is available for lending at each meeting. The collection, although small, is quite comprehensive.

There is also a collection of journals from The Australian and American Rhododendrons Societies. These journals do not fit into the cabinets so are kept at our home in Aldgate.

If people wish to gain access to this secondary collection, please contact Ann or me on 0417819622.

Shortly, a catalogue of the whole library contents will be established

We welcome suggestions regarding the purchase of new books and of course also welcome gifts and bequests.

Dog of the Month

I could write a book about Jack as he has lived so long.

Jack is a living treasure and a very expensive one. A Cairn terrier over 16 years old.

Nine years ago he was given a bait containing slug killer and was treated and specialised for 2 days by a local hill's Vet, and we still have our much loved dog.

He has been a great rat and snake killer and an escape artist in his time, but is just a quiet old boy now, but will still run away given the chance.

He has grown up with our family and is much adored by them all.

He recently had a huge tumour removed from his jaw by the same Vet and is expected to live perhaps another couple of years.

Ian & Janie



Jack at work in the garden



20,000 + 2 !

Port supporters numbering 20,000 and 2 plantaholics travelled to Melbourne on Friday, September 20th.



Plant Lovers Fair

Our paths diverged at Bacchus Marsh and we continued to Mt Macedon to visit the “Plant Lovers Fair” held in the wonderful gardens of the historic cattle stud, Bolobek. This homestead is located at the foot of Mt Macedon and was an idyllic site to host the fair. Even though the morning was very chilly and damp it did not deter many plantaholics from lining up to wait for the opening time. The nurseries represented, had worked hard to display an extensive array of rare plants and people snapped up early bargains.



Plant Lovers Fair

We could not resist travelling up the mount and visiting Stephen Ryan’s Dicksonia Rare Plant nursery where we were able to procure some real treasures. The nursery across the road from Stephen’s also proved to have some good bargains and is beginning to build a collection of Rhododendrons. Both these nurseries are worth a visit if you are in the area.



Mt Macedon Nursery



The other “not to miss” garden is the Ballarat Botanic Garden. These are always a delight, with colourful annual plant beds and a high standard display in the conservatory. They also offer a good selection of plants propagated in the gardens at very reasonable prices.



Ballarat Botanic Garden

Our return journey to Adelaide on Sunday was a much more subdued affair – something to do with the final result at the MCG on Saturday perhaps?

Bronwyn

Article Submissions

The news editors welcome submissions for the monthly newsletter. In addition to Problem Corner, Dog of the Month, and Bloom of the Month, members are welcome to submit articles on any topic that will be of interest to the Society's membership.

We have a deadline of the 1st of the month to allow time to prepare the newsletter for distribution a week before the meeting.

Submissions can be made directly to Michelle or Bronwyn, or emailed to; news.editor@sarhodo.org.au

Michelle & Bronwyn

Bloom of the Month

This month's bloom of the month which features on the newsletter header is “Jeanette Clark” an Australian hybrid.



www.sarhodo.org.au

