

# Rhododendrons South Australia

Australian Rhododendron Society Inc. South Australian Branch

Issue 80 – June 2014

## Coming Events

### Next Meeting, 18<sup>th</sup> June 7:45pm

The next meeting will feature Matt Coulter who has worked in the horticultural nursery industry for the past 27 years. Matt is currently the Curator of plant propagation at the Botanic Gardens of Adelaide, managing the propagation and growing of new plant material for the Gardens. Previously Matt has worked in a broad range of technical and highly specialized propagating roles, with experience in nursery and greenhouse operations, plant nutrition and plant tissue culture.

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

### Meeting, 16<sup>th</sup> July

Guest speaker will be Scott Frobister from the Mount Lofty Botanic Gardens.

### Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> November

Put this date in your diary and keep it free for the Rhododendron Society Christmas Function.



## 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**

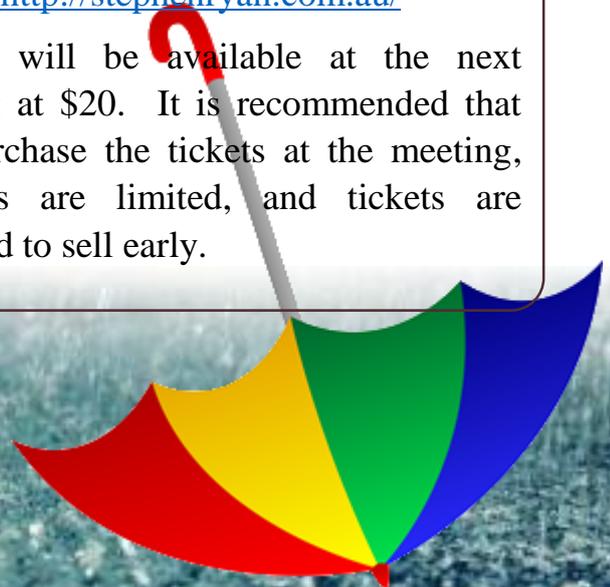
The lecture will be preceded by our AGM.



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 will be available at the next meeting at \$20. It is recommended that you purchase the tickets at the meeting, numbers are limited, and tickets are expected to sell early.



## May Meeting

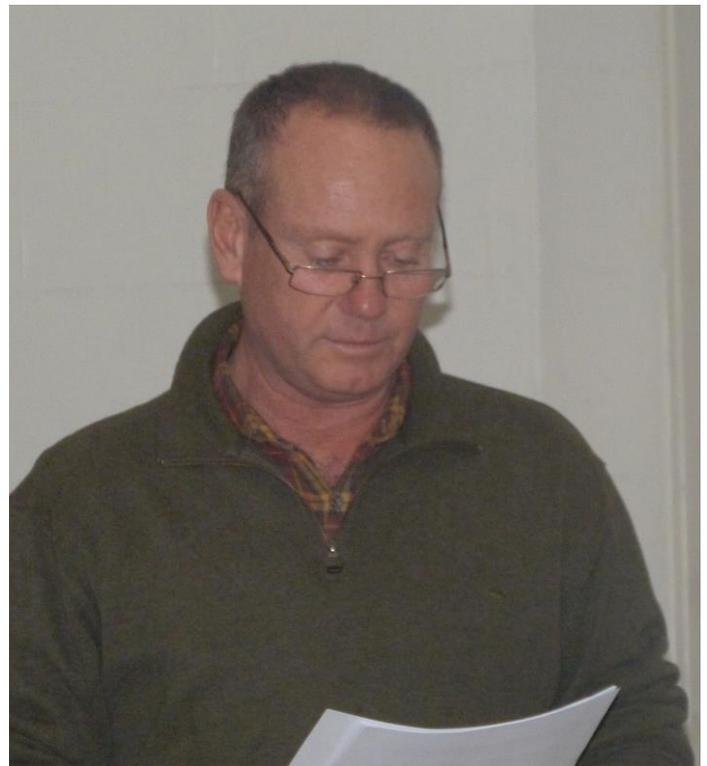
Another tour de force of members turned out to the meeting, with well over forty. We had a short presentation from David Gilbert from the Mt Lofty Botanic Garden Support Group on the design of the new visitor pavilion and fundraising efforts.

Steven Hailstone presented an interesting discussion on his holistic life philosophy and how he applies it to his garden.

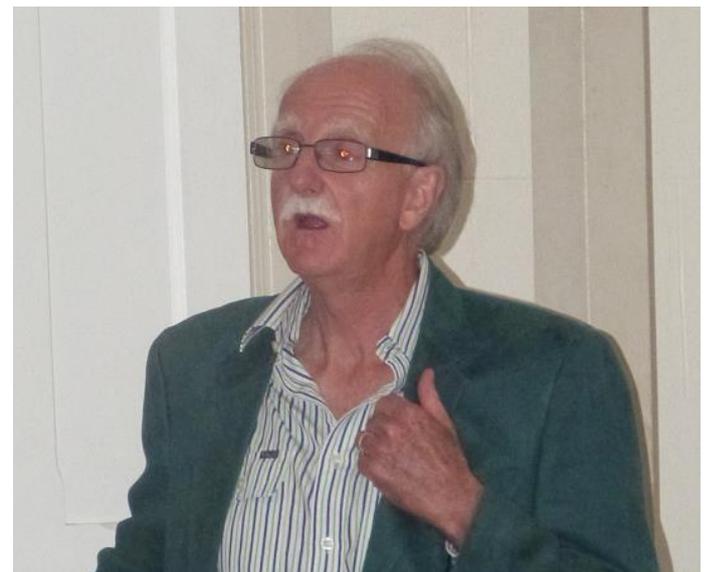
Elizabeth Ganguly went home with a rhododendron firmly tucked under her arm as she had the winning ticket in the raffle draw.

## A Mega Trading Table

The trading table has certainly taken off with a bang! Members heeded the call to keep up the good work from last month's abundant table. We had so much stock that we had to get out an extra table. We raised a grand total of \$138! Peter is ecstatic and continues to rub his hands with glee. Thank you to all members who contributed, all contributions are gratefully received. Let's continue the great work.



*Steven Hailstone*



*David Gilbert*





*By Richard Illman*

## From the Propagating Bench

### Timely reminders

Tuberous begonias are now dying down. Make sure that you cease watering them and store in a sheltered position. The top foliage will fall off and can be disposed of. Watch for new shoots in early October when light watering can recommence.

Start thinking about which deciduous plants can be struck from hardwood cuttings in the open ground over winter. Examples are flowering currants, weigelia, hydrangeas, viburnum, and roses.

### Did you receive a cyclamen for Mother's Day?

If you did, keep an eye out for the development of a seed capsule. They are quite large and will go brown when ripe. When they begin to open, collect the seed, wash the gelatinous material from the surface and sow it in seed raising mix with a light covering of fine gravel. You should be rewarded in several months with a whole pot of tiny cyclamen plants that can be successfully grown. Note that ants have a particular passion for the jelly around the seeds and may beat you to them if you don't keep a close watch on the plant.



*Cyclamen Seedlings*

### Tissue Culture Progress

I am currently experimenting with the sterile germination of rhododendron seed.

Following a procedure applied to orchids, unopened rhododendron seed pods were sterilized by the normal procedure and then opened with a scalpel blade in the laminar flow cabinet.

The seed was applied to the surface of the agar and there appears to be germination occurring after about 5 weeks.



*Rhododendron Seedlings*

## Bird of the Month

### Yellow-faced Honeyeater



*Lichenostomus chrysops*

Not a daily sight in our gardens.

Often hidden in the foliage. It is migratory, going north for the winter and returning to breed in the South in the Spring. With bird-watchers, it is usually heard then seen. A dull looking bird, but the face is a giveaway.



Chris Thomas

## 2014 Rhodo Orders

A reminder to all members that orders from the Boulters and / or Toolangi catalogues close at the end of June.

Orders can be placed with Bronwyn. Please e-mail Bronwyn with your orders at [richwyn@optusnet.com.au](mailto:richwyn@optusnet.com.au) or at the next meeting.

## Autumn / Winter Colour & Perfume

Two wonderful plants for providing autumn colour and winter perfume are Lapageria and Chimonanthus Praecox (winter sweet). The former is a wiry climber that prefers a moist, cool root run and is easily propagated from seed.



The second is a shrub that can be propagated by layering.



Bronwyn Illman



*By Bill Voigt*

## Culture Notes

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

The drier than usual Autumn has meant that the fallen leaves have been blown over small plants in the garden. It is important to remove these so that plants are not smothered. Emerging small bulbs such as freesias, miniature daffodils and crocus need to be in the open air.

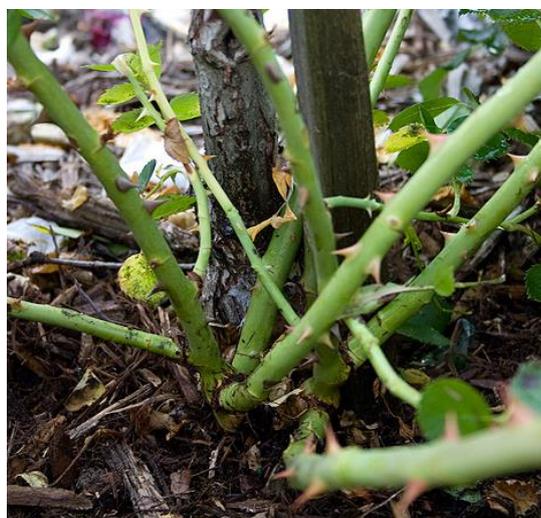
Many camellias produce too many flower buds, so on smaller plants they are best thinned out by disbudding. This procedure will ensure better quality blooms and also maintain the vigour of the plant. A camellia much loved for its deep purple colour is "Dona Herzilia de Freitas Magalhaes" usually referred to as "Magalhaes". If grown in a container it usually becomes more pink each successive season, because the soil in containers changes from being acidic to alkaline over time. Blue hydrangeas are also difficult to keep blue in containers for the same reason. Aluminium sulphate (alum) applied to the soil will rectify the soil. When applying alum, make sure the soil is damp, and then water it well in. Only apply to hydrangeas when they have lost their leaves and are dormant.

Roses, both standard and bush forms as well as weeping flowering cherries and crabapples are grafted on a vigorous stock. Sometimes suckers appear from the stock. With weeping trees they can come from anywhere along the trunk, while from roses these ferals can come from ground level or even deeper. If not removed they will weaken the plant and can even cause the death of the canopy of the tree.

Kurume azaleas have one flowering period, but when in bloom the bushes are completely covered with flowers. "Hinodegiri" is a very hardy popular variety. A bank of



*Dona Herzilia de Freitas Magalhaes*



*Rose Suckers*



*Azalea Hinodegiri*

this variety can provide a stunning display of cerise-crimson. The small foliage although not deciduous, colours during the cooler months. An old indica variety well worth growing is "Leopold Astrid", it is white suffused very pale pink, with a red margin. The blooms are frilled and the plant habit is compact and bushy.

"Fragrantissimun" is probably one of the most highly perfumed of all the rhododendrons. The white flowers, tinged pink can perfume quite a large area. Of straggly habit if not shaped as it grows.

If you like the usually coloured roses, try "Spiced Coffee". It has flowers of lavender turning to tan. Not to everyone's taste, but nicely shaped flower.

There are some interesting rhododendrons in various Hills nurseries now, so a browse can locate something new to add to your collection.



*Rhododendron Leopold Astrid*



*Rhododendron Fragrantissimun*

**NEUTROG<sup>TM</sup>**

**The Experts' Choice**

## Rhodos in 10" rainfall or 250mm per annum

Waikerie, ten inch rainfall, temps in the mid 40's, not recommended rhodo conditions.

For Daphne and Denis Chandler (originally at Aldgate) it represented a challenge.

They now have 22 rhodos most of which have been at their new location for over 3 years. Most are planted in the ground. Generally partial shade, but hot winds & heat are common. Azaleas are growing as well. Drainage is good.

Chris Thomas



## Anlaby Outing

Under laden skies over forty members and friends set forth to Anlaby. After gathering at the front of the property we were given a short history of the property as a whole and then undertook a specific guided tour of the homestead. We were given an interesting insight into the Dutton family history and how the homestead had been developed and extended from a manager's residents to a grand residence for the owner's family. The latest addition being the 1920s library, which once housed one of the most significant collections of first edition Australian literature in the country. Listening to the owners guided tour, one could not help but marvel at the lengths to which they had gone to restore the property in keeping with the era.



Luncheon was served in a magnificent barn which had once served to house the properties Clydesdales.

As the rain started, undaunted we commenced the garden tour, at its zenith a team of 14 gardeners were employed to attend the 10 acre garden. The Dutton's had travelled to Japan on their steamship to collect rare and exotic plants. Many of the trees collected on this trip were disperse throughout the property. The current owners have made a valiant effort to

restore the garden and would be well worth another visit in spring.

I think without exception all members enjoyed an extremely informative and aesthetic outing, soaking up the ambience of this historic property. This was in no small part thanks to the warmth, friendliness and hospitality extended by their hosts Andrew and Peter.

Michelle Woolford





*Milton Bowman*

## Librarian's Report

May has been a warm and dry month with only 100mm of rain compared to a mean of 140 mm. I hope that this is not a signal that another dry year is occurring because it seems like it was only yesterday that the last drought ended. Time will tell!

Rod and Fay Capon not only donated 2 amazing BIG rhododendrons last meeting but also presented the library with a book called "The Rhododendron vol 2" which contains 17 beautiful botanical illustrations of different species. In particular *R decorum* and *R hookeri* are spectacular. It is well worth a browse and will make our species enthusiasts go green.

The Society is looking at getting more involved with the Botanic Gardens and those of us who wish to develop species recognition skills could start on the process using the reference books on species that we have available. This will while away a few cold and hopefully wet nights over the next few months.

There are always books to read and things to learn, and gardening is just like any other activity in that the more you know the more you realise that you don't know much at all. Just keep reading and enjoy.

## Overseas News

The May edition of the RHS garden magazine contained some articles of potential interest to members.

The first, concerned recently proposed French legislation which is attempting to ban the use of pesticides in private gardens and public places from 2020. We have no such legislation pending but many of us experience a growing reluctance to use chemical solutions for pest attacks. If we reflect on Steve Hailstone's presentation at the last meeting there is perhaps another question. If a garden is competently managed, does it need pest and disease controls?

Some of the issues Steve raised can provide food for thought in the management of our own gardens.

The second article examined the concept of protecting food crops with a physical barrier. This was timely, given the reluctance to use pesticides. The mesh that has been marketed in the UK is an insect mesh, sold in a variety of sizes. For most uses mesh with 1.3mm is enough; 0.8mm mesh was a higher price but was required for beetles and whitefly. Aphids were controlled by 0.6mm mesh. The mesh was draped over the crops and buried at the edges. It was claimed to last 5-10 years which is very cost effective and repairs could be made with epoxy resins.

I have not been able to source a supplier in Australia but will inform members when I receive a reply from the UK distributors.

Bronwyn Illman

## Plant Hunting in the Apple Isle

Our recent trip to Tasmania proved to be most fruitful in terms of making new nursery contacts. The Red Dragon nursery, operated by Andrew Lockett, is located just outside Launceston and sells a wide range of rare plants as well as a wonderful collection of rhododendrons, azaleas and conifers. Andrew has acquired many of the plants from Emu Valley as well as other collectors in Tasmania. They are of a high standard and very reasonably priced. He also has a number of different Vireyas for sale. The nursery design is interesting with many parts exhibiting a Japanese theme. Andrew is very knowledgeable and keen to converse with other gardeners who share his interest in rare plants.



*Red Dragon Nursery*



We were interested in visiting [Kaydale nursery](#) at Nietta (a few miles out of Devonport) as it has a wonderful collection of spring bulbs. These, of course, were not in bloom but they had a great display of autumn colour in their extensive plantings of Acers. Kaydale lodge also offers B&B accommodation and would be well worth a visit in the spring.

Our last port of call was [Manx Plants](#) near Devonport. John Emery runs this small establishment and has access to many unusual varieties of maples as well as conifers. He is prepared to send plants loose rooted in winter, so if there are members interested in ordering plants speak to either Bronwyn or Richard.

Another nursery worthy of a visit is [Lambley Nursery](#) just outside Ballarat. This is a perennial nursery specializing in dry land gardening. They have an excellent mail order catalogue and buying from them has been a positive experience.

Even though the trip to Tasmania was relatively short it proved to be a great gardening experience and we can thoroughly recommend it. There is magnificent scenery to drive through and some great gardening B&B's.

Bronwyn & Richard

The following article reproduced in full is from the Australian Garden Historical Society South Australian Branch, June Newsletter.

### ANLABY REVISITED

(Contributed by Kathy Inverarity)

At about an hour and a half's drive from Adelaide, old Anlabby Station is located in the mildly rolling gum-studded country in which South Australian pastoralists took up their extensive holdings very soon after the establishment of the State in 1836.

Henry Dutton was the grandfather of the writer and publisher Geoffrey Dutton and his wife, Ninette, and Anlabby contains the very essence of "Duttonry" - as Patrick White disparagingly called it when he was breaking off the long-standing writerly friendship with Geoffrey. It represents a way of life that included grandeur and leisured world travel but was firmly connected to the fundamentals of farming, animal husbandry, gardening and people management that is involved in running a pastoral property.

There were no less than fourteen gardeners working on the property in 1920, a labour force that the present owners of Anlabby, Andrew Morphett and Peter Hayward can only dream of commanding. Never the less they are doing a grand job of managing the restoration of Anlabby's garden grandeur and practical self-sufficiency. Specially designed cucumber and mushroom houses that were designed to nurture ingredients for the kitchen which could not be obtained from any nearby supermarket in the 1900s, are now being set in working order once more, and no doubt complement the vegetables from the walled garden and the medlar chutney from the espaliered medlar trees.



*Lily pond and Folly beautifully restored, Anlabby 2014*

Christine McCabe's article in the Weekend Australian:

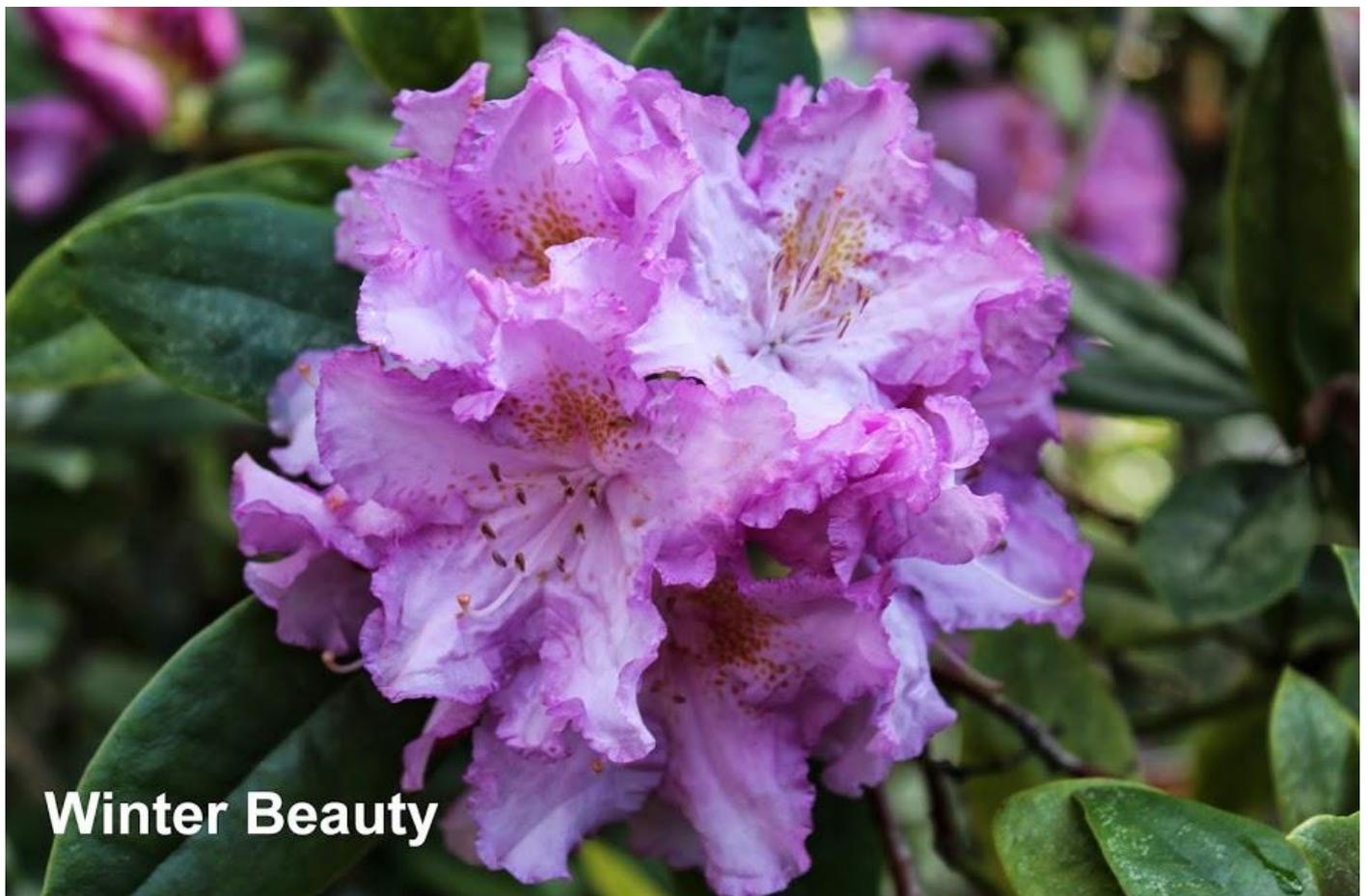
(<http://anlaby.com.au/web2/anlaby-feature-in-the-australian-8mar2014/>) likens Anlaby to the "Lost Gardens of Haligan" in that their form has to be reconstructed from the fascination of dredging old family diaries and yellowed, dusty record books that describe in the hand-writing of their authors, plantings and propagations and constructions. Artifacts in themselves that we are so grateful have not been consigned to the rubbish tip.

Walking around the graveled paths clutching our umbrellas on a final day of autumn that was delivering "opening rains" to the sometimes parched South Australian landscape, we could appreciate the enjoyment and satisfaction of reclaiming the larger, wilder lily pond on the northern flank, and of rebuilding from early 20th century photos, its little island.

Our visit to Old Anlaby was part of the program of the Adelaide Hills Rhododendron Society and we thank Janie Smylie for organising it. Members of AGHS - and of course there is some cross-membership - were delighted to secure a visit to this property as part of AGHS National Conference in SA in 2015.

## Bloom of the month

The Bloom of the Month, Winter Beauty is currently flowering at Richwyn and features in the newsletter title.



**Winter Beauty**