



Rhododendrons South Australia

Australian Rhododendron Society Inc. South Australian Branch

Issue 105-April 2017

March Meeting

Our president, Belinda Cullum, welcomed all members to the 2017 year and made special mention of a new member, Lisa Greenstreet, who had attended the cutting day.

Meeting Business

Cutting Day this was very successful and will most likely become an annual event, occurring again in Feb/March 2018. Plants propagated in 2016 will be available for sale at the annual plant sale to be held on the last Sunday in September at MLBG. 200 plants have been ordered from Toolangi nursery in Victoria to be sold at the plant sale.

Donation to MLBG The society has donated funds to the MLBG to assist in the production of improved signage for the Whibley collection of rhododendrons.

Website matters- the South Australian site can be closed but the need for an online presence will be discussed at future meetings.

Neutroq orders- closing date March 31st.

Local Garden Visits The question of local garden visits was raised and members were asked for suggestions. One proposal was for a visit to MLBG during peak rhododendron time. This could also coincide with celebrations to be held at the gardens in November.

Constitution update: A final version will be sent to members and a review will occur at the next meeting.

Items for Pot Luck stall

Milton Bowman notified members of rhododendrons from the "Growing Group" at MLBG that were available on the "Pot Luck" stall. Proceeds from their sale would be passed to the group.

Nataliya also indicated that she had brought plants propagated from her collection of "custodial plants" and these would be available on the stall. (Custodial plants – these were plants supplied by the Victorian society in 2015 and cared for by a group of interested members. Cuttings would be taken, and if successful would be made available for sale to members. The custodian could keep the original plant.)

Rob Field brought Liliium seed from the Liliium society and this was made available to members free of charge.

Vireya Rhododendron Annetta Gold was displayed by Chris and Tania Thomas.

New Acquisitions to the Library

The librarians Ann & David Matison informed members of 3 new editions to the library.

A new book from K Cox of Glendoick nursery, Scotland, one on the Public Rhododendron Gardens of Vancouver Island and a downloaded version of The Rhododendron story. The librarians also called for library books to be returned.

Guest speaker- Rob Hatcher from MLBG provided an informative update on the North Queensland expeditions to gather information and samples of our native Rhododendrons, Lochiae and Viriosum. All material collected has been sent to New Zealand for DNA analysis.

Raffle Prize: A beautiful specimen of Rhododendron Toolangi Ruby was won by Sue Antel.



A good attendance at the March meeting

Next Meeting

This will be held at the Crafers Hall on Wednesday, April 19th at 8pm. Our guest speaker will be Tim Marshall who will address us on composting.

Please remember to bring a plate for supper and something for the "pot Luck Stall". Friends and new members are always welcome.

Bloom of the Month – Vireya Rhododendron Laetum



Bird of the Month *by Chris Thomas*

Tawny Frogmouth *Podargus strigoides*



A pair of Tawny Frogmouth well hidden. The one on the right is very hard to spot.

The **Tawny Frogmouth** (*Podargus strigoides*) is a species of [frogmouth](#) native to Australia that is found throughout the Australian mainland and [Tasmania](#). Tawny Frogmouths are big-headed stocky birds often mistaken for owls due to their [nocturnal](#) habits and similar colouring. The Tawny Frogmouth is sometimes incorrectly referred to as "mopoke", a common name for the [southern boobook](#) whose call is often confused for the Tawny Frogmouth's.



From the Propagating bench *by Richard Illman*

Autumn brings with it the opportunity to think about germinating seeds in preparation for a colourful spring. We have found that ordering seeds on line to be a very successful process and a company called Swallow Tail Seeds has an extensive catalogue with pictures and growing advice. We have ordered Delphiniums, Primula, Geraniums, and Begonias. They are delivered very promptly and we are now in the process of setting up our “warm box”; a photo of the same is printed below. They are simple to make using a polystyrene Broccoli box (from your vegetable shop) and a fluorescent tube + timer. This system will keep the temperature at 20^oc. Speak to Richard if you wish find out more about seed raising using this system.



Propagating Box

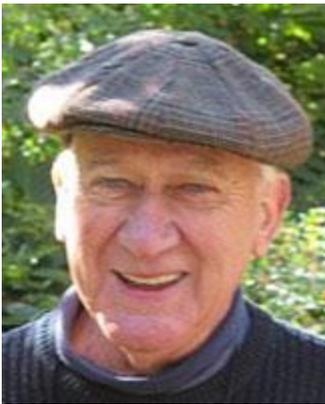


Tuberous Begonias

Proposed Maple Grafting Workshop

Interest was expressed last year for a workshop for members to learn about propagating Maples and in particular to gain skills to graft them. It would be possible, if there is sufficient interest, to run an afternoon workshop on a weekend at the end of July or early August (depending on weather conditions). This would be held at 3 Linwood avenue, Aldgate. If you are interested please let Richard or Bronwyn know so that information can be forwarded to you. You can help prepare for this workshop at this time of the year by finding and marking with a ribbon /cord any seedling maples that may have been growing in your garden. Choose ones that have stems at least pencil thickness and dig /pot them when they are dormant. A good variety of dissectum and other maples will be available for grafting.





Autumn has truly arrived, so there are many maintenance chores to be done in the garden before winter.

Hellebores and *Iris unguicularis* (formerly known as *Iris stylosa*) will be sending up flowers from now on, so to make the flowers more visible, and to make slugs and snail control easier, the old foliage should be trimmed back. Roses

Sasanqua camellias have already started flowering, and they will be closely followed by the hybrids and *Penstemons* should be regularly deadheaded to extend the flowering season. Hardwood cuttings of roses taken in May are usually more likely to strike, rather than those taken later in the year.

The large, annual sunflowers (*Helianthus*) are very commonly grown during summer, but there are very showy, perennial *Helianthus* which bloom now in Autumn. They can grow quite tall and make a bright splash of gold in the garden. Sometimes known as “Sunshine Daisies” they are very easy to grow and after flowering the spent flowers can be cut off and the clumps of plants divided, just as one does with *Chrysanthemums*.

If evergreen azaleas appear rather pale green or yellowish, the cause could be poor drainage or lack of nitrogen. If poor drainage is not the problem, apply weak solutions of urea or slow release fertiliser especially designed for acid loving plants eg. *Rhodos*, azaleas, camellias, *ericas* and *Kalmias*.

Japonicas. One *Japonica* camellia that blooms for up to 6 months is “*Kamo Hon Ami*” This is a white, cupped, single flower with large petals and has healthy green pendulous foliage. A camellia hybrid that produces probably the greatest number of flowers, to the extent of covering the entire plant with little foliage showing, is, “*Donation*”. It has semi-double lavender-pink flowers.



Soon there will be masses of fallen leaves to gather up for the compost bin or heap. Oak leaves and tree fern fronds make a fine acidic mulch suitable for *Rhodos* and azaleas, but leaves from Ash trees and mushroom compost tend to be more alkaline.

Attracting native birds to your garden will help to keep down insect pests as Silver-eyes and Thornbills remove aphids and other insect larvae. Honeyeaters (New Holland and Spinebill) as well as feeding on nectar, also eat insects. *Correas*, *Ericas*, *Fuschias*, *Grevilleas*, *Banksias*, and Kangaroo Paw all provide nectar for Honeyeaters. Their bird baths should be placed high up, in the shade, where cats cannot reach.

Soft, damp earth is ideal for blackbirds to turn over in their constant search for food. Unfortunately, their mining activities can have a disastrous effect on newly planted seedlings and bulbs. Strips of gutterguard can be effective in saving these plants from displacement.

A compost heap should be turned over regularly and if available, small quantities of blood and bone or animal manure added.

Aphis are still to be found on some roses, but if they are not in great numbers they can be rubbed or squirted off.

A very hardy, low growing, early flowering, rhododendron is "Christmas Cheer".

It usually begins to produce its frilled, soft pink flowers in June.

Remember to keep container plants well watered even though there have been light showers.

Don't neglect visits to the Mount Lofty Botanic gardens- there is so much beauty there.



Autumn travels *by Richard & Bronwyn*



A worthwhile short road trip on the long weekend in March can be to attend the Dahlia show in Portland, Victoria followed by the Ballarat Begonia Festival. The Dahlia festival is hosted by the very enthusiastic Victorian Dahlia Society with displays in the Portland Civic hall and the Botanic gardens. The club has an excellent website and offers an extensive catalogue with mail orders being taken in the middle of the year.

Dahlias grow very well in the Adelaide Hills and members may be interested to order some tubers later this year. The Begonia festival was another wonderful display of colour and again, if members are interested in growing tuberous begonias have a look at the catalogue of Swallow tail Seeds mentioned earlier. These plants are spectacular and have not proved difficult to grow.



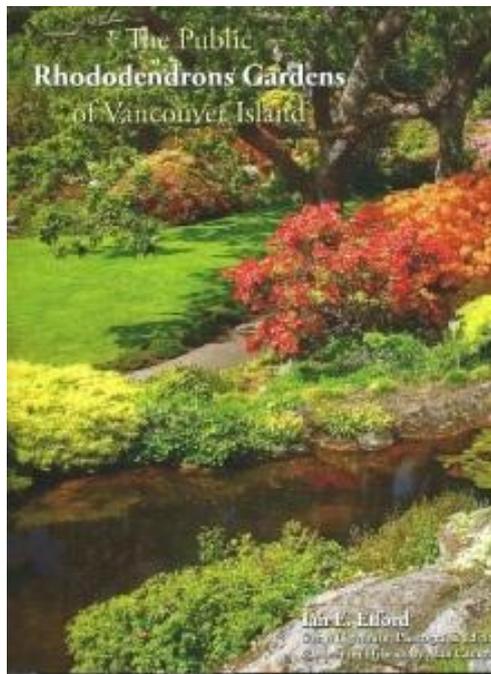
Librarian's Report *by Ann & David Matison*

As mentioned at the last general meeting the Society added a new book to its collection. *The Public Rhododendron Gardens of Vancouver Island*. Thank you to Andrew Waterman, for sourcing it for us.

It is hard to categorise this book; with illustrations exceptionally good and abundant to such an extent that one could almost describe it as a coffee table book. However, it's more than that.

Vancouver Island is a blessed place for Rhododendrons with ideal climate, soil and deer-proof native Rhododendron species. It contains more than 30 Public and visitor friendly private Rhododendron gardens, most of which are described in this book, rendering the latter a rich source of information for any of us intending to visit Canada's west coast. We think it will become a very worthy addition to our library.

We also mentioned at the last meeting that the Society's book *Rhododendrons and Azaleas: a Colour guide* had gone missing. Fortunately I have been able to replace that book with the updated edition, but I do hope that the old one also turns up, because it is a beautiful book. While searching on line I found another book which I can also recommend as long as you keep in mind that it is an English publication. It is named *Rhododendrons: An illustrated guide to varieties, cultivation and care, with step-by-step instructions and over 135 beautiful photographs*. (A long name for a short book). All of the above books are recent publications.



Tales from Forest Lodge *by Milton Bowman*



Our summer has now been and gone, and thankfully it was a mild season with only a few hot days and a relatively good amount of rain. March has been pleasantly warm, the breezes have been mild, and we have had 27mm of rain. This has been enough to keep the district green, and to keep the garden healthy!

As is usual there has been plenty to do around the place and much of the activity has revolved around cleaning up from the 2016 storms, which left *tonnes* of large debris scattered throughout the garden. Each big branch takes a morning to cut up and move to the pile on the front block, and the smaller debris needs time to put through the mulcher. The big stuff will get burnt. I keep the fire hot to reduce the smoke to a minimum, and then cover the heap of hot ashes with soil to produce charcoal which is then mixed with compost and spread on garden areas.

The weeds have done well this year and the lawns are the healthiest that I have seen them. An old neighbour who has lived nearby for 40 years and who knows the property well recently visited and told us that the lawns are looking better now than he has ever seen them. A bit of water and a fair bit of *Neutrog lawn food* has done wonders, and the only downside is the need to mow weekly!

The rhododendrons are budding up well and the next spring looks promising. The cold nights are colouring the leaves of the deciduous trees and the next month will be great both in our gardens and at Mount Lofty Botanic Garden!

Get out and enjoy before winter arrives!

Milton Bowman

Notice Board

Membership Name labels

If you require a name label please e-mail Chris Thomas thomas.chris4@bigpond.com. Chris will try to have it ready for the next meeting. Each label has a photo of a rhododendron and if you want a specific one please nominate this in your request and Chris will try to obtain it.

Newsletter content

As this is the beginning of a new year for our monthly newsletter, our Newsletter Editors were wondering if there are any topics or ideas that members would like to have included or excluded in the document.

Ideas, suggestions and comments from our new members would be most welcome. Please speak to Bronwyn or Nataliya or write to news.editor@sarhodo.org.au.

