



Rhododendrons South Australia

Australian Rhododendron Society Inc. South Australian Branch

Issue 106 - May 2017

April Meeting

The April meeting was chaired by our Vice President, Rob Hatcher, who introduced Tim Marshall as our guest speaker. Tim demonstrated a wealth of experience in preparing and using compost and brought samples of compost to illustrate the process. His obvious expertise generated a lot of questions from the floor and many members were keen to ask about their own preparations and ways to improve their technique. Tim provided many useful tips about building a compost heap, some of which are mentioned below. He also mentioned that the use of a non-drying glue could stop ants milking aphids and attacking ladybirds.

Tim's Tips

A compost is fertiliser because of what it is made from.

Leaf mould is mainly carbon, good for holding moisture.

Build the *compost heap* on weed mat and put perforated drainage pipe through the heap to aid aeration.

Rhododendrons require a *woody compost* that is fungal dominant.

The raffle prize of a beautiful specimen of Maria's Choice was won by Barb Mynhart.



Next Meeting



This will be held at the Crafers Hall on Wednesday, May 17th at 8pm.

Our guest speaker will be Lucy Sutherland, Director of the Botanic Gardens and State Herbarium.

Lucy will speak about *Myrtle rust (Puccinia psidii)*, which is an area of research that has interested her.



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 *Just Peachy*



Just Peachy is a cross between Haloed Gold and Herzogii.

Gorgeous large blooms of soft peachy-apricot appear on and off all year round. Nice glossy green foliage.



From the Propagating bench *by Richard Illman*

In many of the recent newsletters I have been extolling the virtues of seed collection and I was pleased to note in the last North American Rock Garden (NARGS) journal that there was a whole chapter devoted to this pursuit.

Some points they make are;

- It is a fun way to learn more about plants and increase your garden's biodiversity.
 - It is cheap.
- Garden collected and wild seed will be more diverse than commercially available seed.
 - Many plants are not available commercially but specialist collectors or organisations may have the seeds you really want.
 - Start looking for seed in mid spring - mark any splendidly coloured flower or unusual form. Mark it and come back later for seed.
 - Many fruiting bodies just dry and split open - these types are easy to collect - wait until the stems dry and the pod begins to split then place a paper bag over the stem, cut it, invert the bag and the seeds will fall out.
 - Plants like Clematis, Ranunculi and Hepatica just drop their seeds, but they may fall when green, so just touch them gently while holding a container underneath the plant.
 - Geranium, Hamamelis, Impatiens, Viola and many Legumes will spread their seeds by an explosive mechanism.

Many of the plants I grow have been raised from our own plants or from seed purchased from collectors or organisations such as NARGS. Our current display of tuberous begonias and Streptocarpus contain many seed grown examples. Have a go – it can be very rewarding as well as supplying plants for our “Pot Luck” stall and Plant sale.



Proposed Maple Grafting Workshop

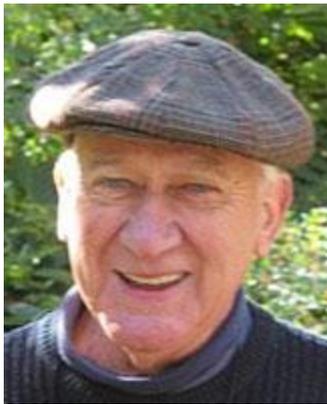
Interest was expressed last year for a workshop for members to learn about propagating Maples and in particular to gain skills to graft them. It would be possible, if there is sufficient interest, to run an afternoon workshop on a weekend at the end of July or early August (depending on weather conditions). 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.



Acer Palmatum - Shaina



Acer Palmatum- Wotnong



There are wonderful displays of colour in the leaves of deciduous trees during this time, but not every garden has enough space for trees to provide autumn colour. However there are smaller trees and shrubs that also exhibit brilliant reds, yellows, and oranges as winter approaches.

The snowball tree, *Viburnum opulus*, is a large shrub that colours brilliantly, even down on the plains, during autumn. A smaller shrub is *Ceratostigma willmottianum*, which has masses of blue flowers in summer, after which the foliage colours very well. Although evergreen, the leaves of various forms of *Nandina* change to red during the colder months and revert to green when the warmer weather arrives. Bulbs that give a colourful display for some time include *Lachenalias* and *Muscari* (Grape Hyacinth). The first *Lachenalia* to bloom is the red *pendula* and this is followed by various yellow and paler varieties, all of which have attractive foliage heavily spotted with purple or black.

The foliage of Grape Hyacinths can become very elongated and cover other small plants, but it can be safely trimmed without affecting the emerging flower spikes. There are pale blue, deep blue, purple and white forms available.

Salvias are very popular now, and the one that has been grown for years is *Leucantha*. This *salvia* has masses of purple velvet – like flowers usually from March to May. Easily grown, some useful ground covers for sunny, drier spots are the many varieties of prostrate *Thymes*. Apart from their fragrance, released when the leaves are crushed or brushed against, they can provide a carpet of pink and white blooms in summer. Most nurseries carry stocks of several types.



Salvia Leucantha

Dwarf cyclamens will provide months of colour, and are suitable for rockeries as well as containers. If not watered during summer they will last for years.



Cyclamen Coum

Autumn is also the time to remove the spent flowering stalks from *Cannas*, *Kangaroo Paws*, *Easter daisies* and *Helianthus*. Annuals to be planted for spring include *Nemesias*, *Linarias* and *Californian poppies*.

Evergreen azaleas – both Indica and Kurume, can be layered now. Any low growing branches can be pinned down and buried in the soil. Metal loops or even stones can be used to pin down a branch. This technique can be used with any Rhodos that may have low branches. Although Rhodos and azaleas appreciate shade from afternoon sun, they must have good air movement to maintain healthy growth. To ensure this happens, lift the canopy of overhead tree branches by removing those that are too low.

Some of the Japonica camellias produce masses of flower buds – too many to result in well formed blooms, so it does help if some buds are removed. Easily done before the buds are too large.



The fallen autumn leaves make a wonderful colourful carpet, but don't let small plants be buried under them for too long.

Azalea Madame Augusta Herrins

Note how the Liquidambers in Stirling don't all colour at once. There are early, mid season and later specimens that prolong the display well into winter. What a magnificent sight!

Plants for Autumn Colour



3 Varieties of Plectranthus



Noisy Miner

Manorina melanocephala



This bird is an **Australian honeyeater**, but is at times incorrectly called the common myna.

24-27 cm. whitish forehead, black crown and cheeks. In flight, rump grey, dark tail tipped whitish. Colonial, aggressive, with noisy group displays; forages in foliage, blossoms; probes bark; often on ground. Male has steep song-flight. Normal flight level, glides on upraised wings. Nesting females fly with heads raised.

Voice: complaining 'pwee pwee pwee'; chuckling 'weedidit'; liquid notes. Alarm call: strident 'pee, pee, pee'.

Habitat: grassy open forests, woodlands, without shrub-layer; large trees on inland watercourses; coastal banksias, paperbarks, heaths, shelter belts, roadside timber, golf courses, outer suburbs, parks, gardens.

Breeds: communally, June-Dec. also March-April.

Nest: untidy cup of twigs, grass, spiders' web, wool; in fork of leafy branch, 2-13 m high.

Eggs: 2-4; buff-white, pink; freckled, spotted, blotched red-brown, blue-grey, lilac.

Range and Status: e. Mt Lofty Ranges.-Adelaide, Yorke Pen. (SA). Common. Vic & NSW.

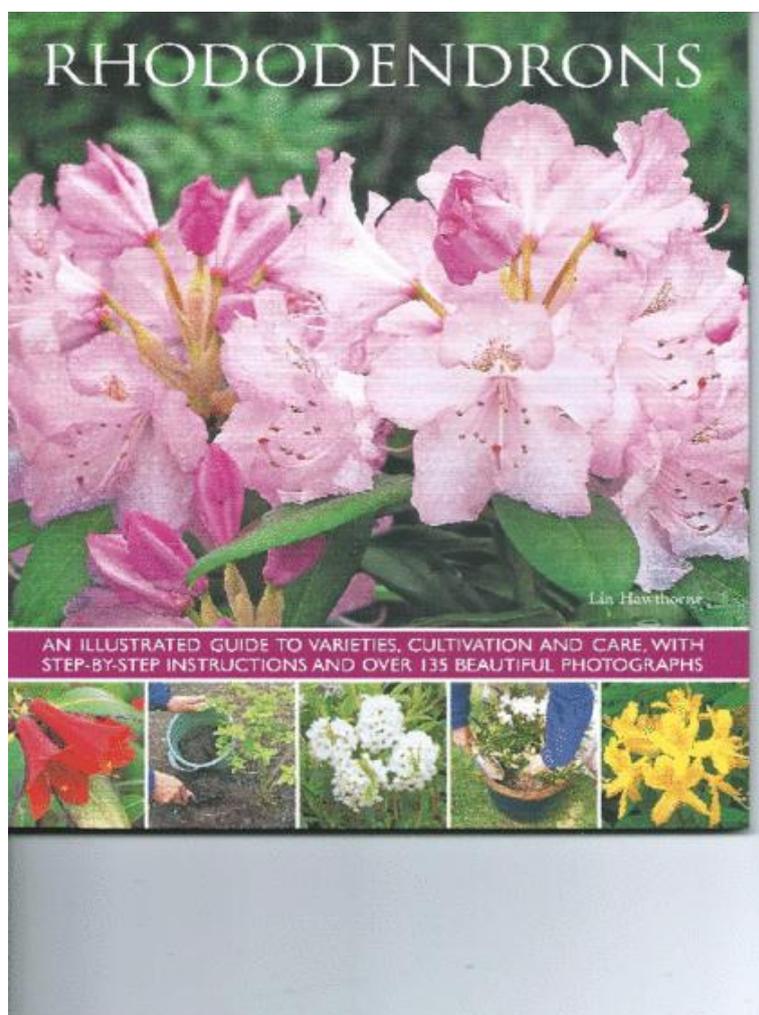
Librarian's Report *by Ann & David Matison*

One of the recent additions to our Library is "*Rhododendrons: An Illustrated guide to varieties, cultivation and care, with step-by-step instructions and over 135 beautiful photographs*" I'm not sure whether the sub-title is actually meant to be a sub-title or a summary of the contents. The author is English horticulturalist, Liz Hawthorne.

It is a short book, which includes all of the topics mentioned on the cover. As it says there are over 135 photographs included which makes it a very attractive book. Many of the photographs are in the section named '*Plant Directory*'. Here the author describes and illustrates a selection of Rhododendrons which, as she says are "chosen for their ornamental merits and includes most types in cultivation today to suit a range of sites and situations." I did recognise a few that are grown locally.

One chapter I found useful is '*Calendar*'. It gives the reader a season by season list of things to do, including taking cuttings, sowing seed and layering.

In summary it is a short, beautifully illustrated book, which contains many practical ideas and much useful advice.



Tales from Forest Lodge *by Milton Bowman*



April has been a benign month and whilst there have been some cold days, in general the climate has been mild and pleasant. Probably this is the reason why the Autumn foliage has not been as early as in many years and we have not yet had those brilliant reds on the Liquidambers in the Main Street of Stirling. Forest Lodge has been slow as well and it has only been

in the last few days that there has been some real colour in the maples. I look over Pine Street and the trees in Emily and Chris Giles' garden are looking fantastic.

Rain has been intermittent but there have been two soaking episodes and this has kept the lawns nice and green and all of the trees look healthy. Overall we have had 60 mm this month and a total for the year of 193.5mm. This is 20mm more than at the same time last year.

Happy Gardening



Enkianthus



Japanese Maple

Notice Board

Cutting Boxes

Time to check your cutting box. Remove any unsuccessful cuttings (leaves will have fallen or turned black). You may also find that the cuttings need a top up of water.



The autumn order has been delivered to the MLBG. If you ordered Neutrog products and have not collected them please contact Rob Hatcher to arrange a convenient time.



Garden Visits in 2017

Any members who can offer suggestions for garden visits this year are requested to contact any member of the executive committee.

Member Name Tags

If you require a name label please e-mail Chris Thomas at 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.

