



# Rhododendrons South Australia

Australian Rhododendron Society Inc. South Australian Branch

Issue 117-July 2018

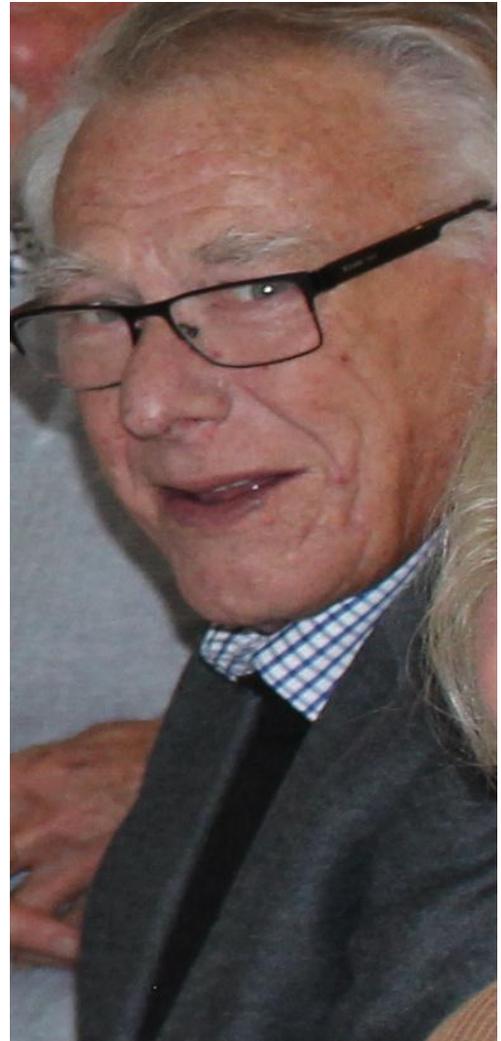
## President's Message

Recently the SA ARS lost one of its dearest members with the sad, but not unexpected death of Dr Ian Smylie. Ian and his wife, Janie, have both been long serving members of our Society, with Ian capably filling the position of president from 2012-2015. For much of his term he was supported in this role with Janie by his side as secretary. As in married life, this was a very workable relationship with Ian demonstrating great efficiency and effectiveness in conducting his presidential duties.

Ian was a very honourable and committed man with dedication to our Society only one of several such positions held over the years; apart from his family the other notable beneficiary being the dental profession where, again, he was highly regarded amongst his peers. In his typical selfless style, he was always mindful of the dedication and efforts of others and readily acknowledged this, regardless of his own personal achievements.

Within our group strong friendships have been forged, derived from close connections as members of a plant appreciation society, coupled with the convenience of mostly living within a relatively small geographical area. Along with Janie, Ian, with his friendliness and good humour had become a very cohesive element in supporting our unique little group and will be sadly missed by us all.

We extend our sincere condolences to Janie, Lisa and Adam, Jock and Joanna, and to all of Ian's grandchildren; he will be missed.



## Last meeting

A highlight of June meeting was the presentation by Milton Bowman on the history and development of rhododendron hybrids by David Whibley during the 1920s in the Adelaide Hills. Milton shared fascinating facts about the start and challenges of a hybridising program, rhododendron hybrids created right here in Stirling, as well as people involved: sponsors, influences and implementers, and the stories behind these hybrids' names. Whibley hybrids are unique as they were created as a result of the only successful hybridising program in South Australia. The hardy hybrids bred mainly by the Waterer Family in the UK during the 19th century such as Pink Pearl, Sappho and Madam Carvalho were used as the genetic material of the Whibley hybrids. Hence they tend to be tough and relatively drought resistant which is important for growing them more-or-less successfully in South Australian climate. Some of them have very attractive flowers and deserve a place in any Hills garden. These plants are not commercially available, so it is important to maintain and promote these hybrids.



*Sir Edward Stirling*



*Mr Rosenthal*

*(named after the Cat)*



*Mrs B Melville*



*Ronnie Whibley*



*Florence Edith Whibley*



*Mrs F Young*



*Glenn (named after the Dog)*



*Raffle ticket winners!*



## Next Meeting

This will be held at the RSL Hall, Stirling, on Tuesday, 17th July at 8pm. Richard Illman will continue last month's theme of hybridising with reference to the work in Germany as well as examining the highlights of the ARS conference.

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

## Winter in the garden



*Vireya Just Peachy*



*Luculia gratissima*



## Tulipmania at Keukenhof by Gill Jenkinson

Keukenhof Floral Park is an extraordinary cultural gem situated south-west of Amsterdam.

A group of us were lucky enough to see it in May when it was at its best.

It consists of 32 hectares of beautifully maintained and designed park with winding paths, towering deciduous trees, riverlets, ponds and a lake.

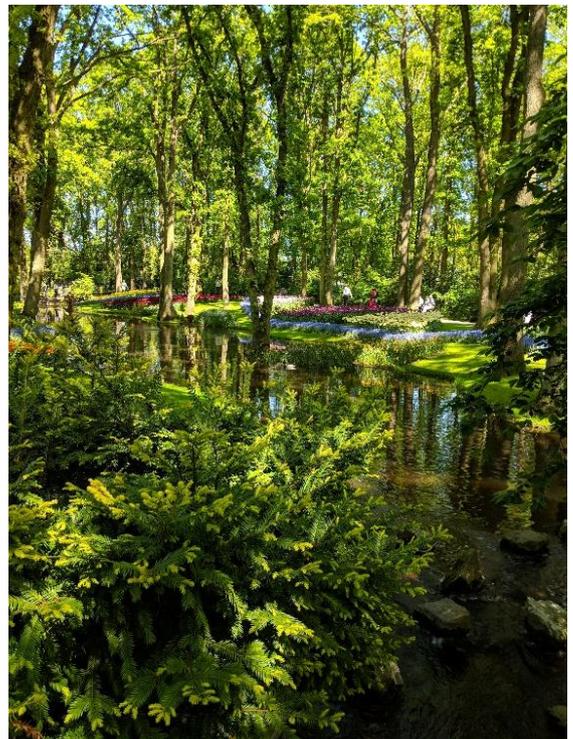
Throughout the park are swathes of tulips, other bulbs and annuals forming ribbons of colour.

Each year they have 7million bulbs in bloom with 800 different varieties of tulip interspersed with alliums, hyacinths, fritillarias and hardly a rhododendron to be seen!

The park is divided into an English style of landscape, a palace garden [more formal in style], an historic walled garden with heritage cultivars, a woodland garden, an area of modern style gardens and a pavilion to rival Chelsea.

The theme changes each year- [this time it was 'Romance'] - and the millions of bulbs are replaced each year. For all that effort it remains open for only 10 weeks and judging by the size of the car park, it is enjoyed by thousands of garden lovers every day.

A 'must see' if you are lucky enough to be in the Netherlands between March and May.



**Bloom of the Month – Hachmann’s Painted Purple**





## From the Propagating Bench by *Richard Illman*

It's time to check on your 2018 Rhododendron cuttings. Make sure that they are still receiving some filtered light and are moist. If they have struck, then you can pot them on into small pots using a good quality acidic potting mix. A spray with some very dilute fertiliser will be beneficial.

Bill Voigt mentions *Nerine Bowdenii* in his article and many of these plants will have set seed which can be removed and placed in a zip lock bag with some moist sphagnum. When they begin to grow root radicles they can be potted and will be ready to plant in the garden in 1-2 years. It is certainly a much more economical way of producing many nerines for your garden.



Last year we offered members the chance to learn how to graft Maples (*Acers*). We ran a number of sessions at times to suit members and always maintained a small number of participants in order to facilitate one to one instruction. Dissectum maples grafted a standards as well as upright varieties will again be offered.

If you are interested in learning this technique or wish to hone your grafting skills please let Richard or Bronwyn know so that sessions can be organised. Any seedling maples that have grown over the last few

years in your garden would be suitable as root stock and they would need to be potted so they can be brought along on the day. It also wise to place the pots in an area where they don't get too wet as grafts seem to be more successful when the root stock is on the dry side.

Some root stocks will also be available on the day. The timing of the workshops is a little dependent on the weather but they will probably run in late July or early August.

Once you are confident with the technique of grafting you can use it to graft desirable camellias, flowering trees, fruit trees and even rhododendrons.



Members who purchased cyclamen seed at the first meeting this year should now have seedlings like those in the photo.





## The Month Ahead *by Bill Voigt*

Many people dismiss the winter season as just a dreary, dull season to be endured with little colour or interest to be found in the garden, but it is really an exciting time for gardeners.

There is the delicate tracery of the now leafless trees and shrubs to be enjoyed and colour from the flowering apricot, *Prunus mume*, red, pink and white japonicas (flowering quince) early daffodils, jonquils and the wonderful pink nerine *Bowdenii*, the flowers of which last for weeks. *Kniphofias* provide late autumn and winter bright spikes, very attractive to honeyeaters. "Ensisolia" is an early flowering yellow variety, while the scarlet "winter cheer" sends up its red torches throughout winter.

Dwarf cyclamens and the red lachenalia are good for brightening the garden during the cloudy days of July and August.

If you have a frost free area, try growing a *Luculia*, a beautifully scented shrub from the Himalayas. There are very fine specimens of this shrub now in bloom in the lower car park of the Mount Lofty Botanic Gardens.



*Prunus mume*

Both white and pink *Daphnes* begin to show their perfumed blooms now. Winter is definitely pruning time for roses, deciduous fruit trees and most deciduous shrubs with the leaves now fallen, it is easy to see any shaping that needs to be done to keep trees and shrubs in a well-balanced shape.

Roses resent close competition from other plants, so use a mulch of pea straw or similar material to suppress weeds under roses and also to provide a source of nitrogen for the plants.

Sasanqua camellias have been flowering throughout autumn and now the earliest of the Japonicas and some hybrids will start flowering. The first to bloom will be "Debutante", "Debbie", "Desire", "Flower Girl", and "Elegans". These all provide much colour during winter. A visit to Stangate House will provide you with the names of plenty of varieties you may want to obtain from local nurseries for your garden.



*Camellia Debutante*

Older plants of Deciduous azaleas can be pruned by removing any exhausted looking canes or branchlets. Many evergreen azaleas have an early flush of blooms now, to be followed by a more abundant flush in spring. Now is a good time to layer any low growths. Just cover part of the stem with soil and keep that in place with a wire peg or even a stone. Early Rhodos. will be flowering now or very soon, - "Sir Robert Peel", "Christmas Cheer", "Seta", "Chevalier Felix De Sauvage".



*Rhododendron Seta*

Many *Ericas* flower during winter and a visit to your local nursery will show you the varieties that are in bloom now. They like an acid soil, especially a sandy loam, and they provide nectar for our native honeyeaters. One very attractive plant much in evidence in our parks and gardens is the dwarf nandina; now displaying a fiery red colour, it will revert to green during the warmer months. It is a very hardy shrub, with no apparent pests and is easy to grow, not requiring too much moisture. Highly recommended for

a colourful display.

If you have the opportunity to visit bushland areas now, there are often native orchids to be seen – various greenhoods, spider orchids and some less common ones. The natural areas in the Mount Lofty Botanic Gardens contain many native orchids.

## **Bird of the Month** by Chris Thomas

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### Royal Spoonbill

*Platalea regia*



The Royal Spoonbill is a large water bird with a very distinctively shaped bill. It has a long black bill with a wide flat “spoon” at the end. The black of the bill extends onto the face to behind the eye. There are rich yellow marks over the eyes and a red spot on the forehead. The rest of the bird is white with long black legs.

In breeding the bird has flowing white plumes on the back of the head and a buff wash on the breast. In flight they hold their neck and bill extended, and in small parties they form ‘V’ formations.

When feeding the bird wades through water and sweeps its bill from side to side through the water. The bill is held slightly open and is very sensitive to touch. Any small creature that touches the bill triggers the bill to snap shut. The bird eats small fish, crustaceans and insects. This sensitive bill enables the bird to feed in muddy water. The main habitats for the spoonbill are inland and coastal shallow waters, freshwater wetlands, coastal lagoons and flooded pastures. Often seen on the Fleurieu Peninsula, and is usually at Laratinga, Mount Barker.

## Librarian's Report *by Ann & David Matison*

As mentioned in my last report, the shift to the RSL CSL rooms inspired us to do a stock take of our Library. The next decision was do we need to keep some of our very old books. As a hoarder of books we are definitely not the people to undertake such a task, so they are still all there.

In the process of the stock-take I pulled out one of the old books *Modern Rhododendrons* by Euan and Peter Cox published in 1957, sixty one years ago. Hardly modern, but on reflection, how do we define modern? Given the archaeological evidence that existence of Rhododendrons preceded the birth of the Himalayas, perhaps the book can still be construed as modern.

The Cox family lived and still live at Glendoick House and as very keen rhododendron collectors the book is about the hardy plants they had managed to grow in their garden, which is very interesting, especially if you live on the Eastern side of Scotland where it can be very cold and the soil is not perfect for acid loving plants.

With so many books in our library written by the Cox family, I decided to do some research and find out who the authors were. It is an interesting story. In the mid nineteenth century four brothers started a jute importing business. They manufactured products from the jute and obviously grew very wealthy. Alfred, the son of one of the brothers bought Glendoick House and estate in 1899. Alfred and Helen had only one son Euan who was educated at Rugby and Cambridge. He was not interested in the jute business, preferring to stay in London. While there, a chance meeting with the garden writer and plant hunter Reginald Farrer changed Euan's life. In 1919 the two men went to Burma on a plant collecting expedition. Later that year Euan returned to England and Farrer remained. However at the age of forty, Farrer contracted dysentery and died. Euan was left to sort and distribute their collections, staying on in London, where he edited a garden magazine featuring descriptions of the new plants flooding into England at the time. He also ran a book shop.

On the death of his father In 1943 Euan was forced to return home to run the jute business which he sold after the war. While his father was still alive he had started planting in the garden at Glendoick. When he and his family moved there in 1944 the garden had suffered throughout the war, but on his return Euan restored it and set to work collecting plants, particularly rhododendrons, to add to the existing collection.

Peter Cox, Norah and Euan's son, was brought up at Glendoick to become a horticulturalist and plant hunter. He travelled to Turkey and N.E. India during the sixties and then to China in 1981. The new plants that he collected were added to the garden. Gradually the garden was extended.

Having worked at Notcutt's Nursery, Peter established a nursery at Glendoick when he returned in 1953. At first Euan and Peter did all of the work, but as the nursery expanded they were able to employ help. It is now the largest retail rhododendron and azalea specialist nursery in Europe.

The next member of the family is Peter and Patricia's son Kenneth. He was not particularly interested in Rhododendrons until he went to America at the age of seventeen and worked with well-known American Rhododendron experts, Ted Van Veen and Harold Greer. While in America he found that he was expected to be a rhododendron expert. After studying Arts and Commerce he returned to Glendoick where he began his research for *The Encyclopaedia of Rhododendron Hybrids* which we have in our library.



Like his father and grandfather before him Peter has also been on plant hunting expeditions, leading expeditions to Tibet and India.

*The side garden at Glendoick*

## Tales from Forest Lodge by Milton Bowman



June has been a different sort of month. We have had 155mm of rain but most of it fell in 2 bursts in the middle of the month and it has been relatively dry for the rest of the time. The pot plants have needed water and some of the new plantings have needed some too. The other notable thing has been the temperature, it has been cold! We possibly became soft with the warm Autumn and have noticed it more, but everybody has been complaining about the cold and huddling around the

heaters. At one stage the maximum temperature did not get over 10C for a week and this really dropped the house temperature to unpleasant levels.

The garden development continues and we are planting the second bed now, and the third is being prepared too. This keeps me fit but does cause a few aches and pains, but it will be worth it once finished. We are looking forward to spring when there should be a lot of Rhododendron flowers to enjoy. In the main garden the camellias are starting to flower and there is an occasional Rhododendron flower to be seen.

We are hoping that despite the thrip damage the plants will recover and put on a good show. I noticed a lace bug on an Azalea yesterday, and it looks like they have managed to overwinter this year. The azaleas will be sprayed over the next few days to stop a major infestation in spring. The other pest is the Elm Beetle. Several trees were defoliated over summer and the recommendation is a soil drench around the root zone which will be done in early spring. Gardening is a challenge, but it does keep both body and mind active, which is said to be good for us!



Happy Gardening

*Milton*



## Notice Board

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### Reminders

The AGM will take place in August and members are reminded to give some consideration to taking on the role of Treasurer. Peter Wiadrowski has indicated he will be stepping down from the role after many years of dedicated service.

### Subscriptions

Annual membership subscriptions are due. Please refer to Peter Wiadrowski's email regarding renewal of the membership.

### Maple Grafting Workshop

Please notify Richard or Bronwyn Illman if you are interested in participating in this workshop (late July – early August).



### Neutrog Spring Order

Start thinking about your spring fertiliser needs. Order forms will be available in August. Speak to Bronwyn or Milton if you need more information about this service available to members.



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Home  
gardener

