



# *Rhododendrons South Australia*

**Australian Rhododendron Society Inc. South Australian Branch**

*Issue 121-November 2018*

## **President's Message**

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As another year draws to a close, we as a society can reflect on another year of achievements and successes. Pleasingly we continue to enjoy a growing membership, regularly welcoming new members at our monthly meetings. On that note, since the beginning of the year we have settled quite comfortably and happily into our new meeting venue of the Stirling RSL Hall. Apart from a few issues concerning the library, the transition from the Crafers Hall has been successful and favourably received, and will hopefully continue to suit us for some time to come.

It is customary that the final two meetings of the year focus on the rhododendron blooms primarily sourced from individual members' gardens. It is always a treat to see and enjoy what is on display. In particular, for the benefit of newer members, this can be used as an opportunity to have mystery rhododendron plants from your gardens identified by bringing along blooms to be examined by our collective membership. This is a challenge relished by members, and I can personally vouch for its merit, having had my "unknowns" identified. Keep in mind as well, that if you see something you'd like to have growing in your own garden, this is the opportunity to make a request for cuttings when the ideal cutting time occurs later in the summer season.

Before we officially wind down for the Christmas and summer period we will celebrate the end of year and festive season with a catered lunch at Ian and Robyn Wall's property. This is always a jolly and relaxed occasion and we hope to have a good turnout of members to enjoy what is traditionally a wonderful annual event. Many thanks to the Walls for their generous hospitality.

## Blooms night



An extravaganza of blooms

An extensive "pot luck" stall



Testing her powers of reasoning, Heather investigates the mystery object.

## Next Meeting

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This will be held at the RSL Hall, Stirling, on Tuesday, November 20th at 8pm. It will be our second evening for displaying blooms.

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

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### *Christmas Party*

*Venue: The home of Robyn & Ian Wall  
at 35 Cricklewood Road Aldgate.*

*Date: Sunday, December 2<sup>nd</sup>.*

*Time: 12.30pm*

*Please provide your own glasses, drinks and chairs.*

**Please contact Milton Bowman ASAP if you haven't indicated that you are attending (November 1<sup>st</sup> was the due date!)**

**Bloom of the Month – Mrs G W Leak at Peter & Jill Wiadrowski's home**

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## The Month Ahead *by Bill Voigt*

Because the weather this year has been so fickle, we find that we are moving from milder temperatures into quite high ones very rapidly, so we should prepare our gardens for what promises to be a long, hot summer.

Mulching certainly benefits plants because it keeps the soil from drying out too fast, and also keeps the soil cooler. Although birds do tend to delight in strewing the mulch around, pea or Lucerne may provide the best mulch as the decaying straw also adds nutrients to the soil.

This year there has not been in many areas sufficient heavy rain to wet the subsoil, so it is vital to keep newly planted shrubs and trees really well watered.

Most camellias have finished flowering now, so they can be fertilised with well-rotted cow manure or one of the slow release fertilisers made specifically for acid loving plants.



Spring flowering shrubs such as spiraea, weigela, ribes, forsythia, deutzia and cistus need to be trimmed back to promote a well-balanced shape and a much tidier appearance.

Forsythia

It is time to feed citrus trees now, especially any grown in containers, where the nutrients very quickly leach out of the well-draining potting medium.

Occasionally one branch of an azalea or rhodo wilts and seems to die for no apparent reason. This is usually because of a fungal infection, so the diseased branch should be removed to prevent the disease spreading.

Roses will be delighting their growers now, but apart from the constant need to remove the spent blooms, be aware of any suckers that can erupt from below the budding or grafting spot. Left unchecked these suckers can soon overwhelm the rose bush.

All the deciduous trees are now in leaf, so it should be easy to see which lower growths need to be removed so that the shade loving plants beneath the canopy can receive sufficient light and air to lessen the chance of mildew.

When cymbidium orchids have finished flowering they can be divided and repotted. During summer they need to be placed in a position where they will receive filtered sunlight or morning sun to ensure the development of flowers for the next season. Later, before the cold weather returns, they can be brought back to more protected sites.

Watch out for snails and slugs on emerging dahlias. Taller varieties will need staking as the stems are very easily damaged by wind.

Nurseries will be packed with petunias of almost every colour to provide summer displays, but there are other annuals to consider for summer: try portulaca, lobelia, various forms of tagetes

(marigolds), phlox, zinnias, antirrhinums, coreopsis, ageratum, salvias, dianthus, impatiens, cosmos and iberis.



Coreopsis



Cosmos

“Confidor” is still available at most garden centres and seems to be the best spray for combatting the pear and cherry slug and for Rhodos and azaleas, the dreaded Lace bug.

January is the ideal time to lift and divide bearded iris. They should not be planted too deeply.

Geums are perennials well worth growing. There are taller varieties, “Mrs Bradshaw”(red), “Lady Stratheden”(yellow) as well as dwarf types, very suited to rockeries.



Geum Mrs Bradshaw

Enjoy your summer garden and don't forget to visit the Mount Lofty Botanic Gardens.



## **From the Propagating bench** by *Richard Illman*

2018 Rhododendron cuttings should be showing signs of growth. Propagating boxes should remain in a sheltered position but their lid needs to be raised progressively to acclimatize cuttings. If members have experienced success with their cuttings they may also see roots visible through the side of the box and it is possible on a cool day to pot them on.

### **Planning for Cutting day 2019**

Preparation for this day is well underway and members need to begin reviewing their requirements for the event.

***As this is the last newsletter for the year members are requested to contact Richard Illman via e-mail ([linwood4574@icloud.com](mailto:linwood4574@icloud.com)) in order to provide the following details.***

***Do you require a propagating box? (new members receive one at no cost)***

***Do you require new propagating mix? If so, how much? (one propagating box holds 18L of mix)***

All members will receive an e-mail in the New Year detailing the date and time of the cutting day. It is usually a Saturday towards the end of February or beginning of March. Milton and Kristina Bowman have generously offered their home, Forest Lodge, for this event. After the cutting morning members are invited to participate in a BYO BBQ.

Please also give some consideration to cuttings that could be provided from private gardens. We have been alerting members to the fact that commercial supplies of rhododendrons are dwindling and that we need to propagate more of our garden collections to support the annual plant sale.

### **Information for new members**

The cutting day is an educational event that is open to all members. Its primary goal is to teach members how to propagate Rhododendrons and Azaleas and to build a supply of plants for the annual plant sale.

The day usually takes place towards the end of February or beginning of March depending on when the plants are ready to take cuttings. Members are also invited to participate in the taking of cuttings.

New members are asked to indicate if they intend participating. They are entitled to one propagating box, cutting mix and rooting hormone. Members experienced in the propagating process will be on hand to guide others in the procedure.

***We hope that all new members will participate in this social and educational day.***

## Travel; discoveries can still be made

Travelling to the Dandenong Ranges in Victoria appears to have become an annual pilgrimage for a number of members in our society. The challenge, when you have been there a number of times, is to find new and different places to visit.

On a recent trip we managed to meet some of these challenges. We visited Lambley's dry land nursery, just outside Ballarat and were able to source some Lapageria and Clematis plants. Also near Ballarat, in the Wombat Forest is the modern rhododendron nursery of Blackwood Ridge. This nursery is well worth a visit, beautifully landscaped and it holds a good selection of different rhododendrons. A bonus is the restaurant, which offers high quality lunches and morning /afternoon tea. Blackwood Ridge is only open Friday through Sunday.

Arriving in the Dandenongs late Saturday we attended the Ferny Creek Horticultural Society spring show, and it was there that we learned of another nursery near the Blackwood Ridge called Autumn Joy. Although we were unable to visit the nursery, the owner was very obliging in bringing some rare plants to the show on the Sunday just so we could purchase. We also learned that this nursery has been able to purchase many of the rare plants previously held by the now closed Yamina Rare Plants. We will be sure to spend more time in and around Ballarat on our next visit.



The Ferny creek show had some beautiful examples of Paeony plants and an inquiry led us to a lot number in the Monbulk area. This site proved to be the highlight of the trip. We were most fortunate to come upon the owner, Ronnie, who proved to be a most informative and passionate grower of these wonderful plants. Ronnie is the largest Paeony grower in Australia and supplies all major nurseries. We wandered through his nursery looking at a collection of around 10,000 Paeonies and many thousands of maples. Needless to say we added to our own collections! The people we met and places we visited have ensured another trip, but perhaps a little longer next time.

If you would like any more information please chat to Rick & Bronwyn Illman or Robyn & Ian Wall

## *Brown Thornbill*

### *Acanthiza pusilla*



The Brown Thornbill is a small bird, but is one of the medium-sized and more common of the thornbills. It has olive-brown to grey upper parts, with a warm reddish-brown forehead scalloped with paler markings. The rump has a reddish-brown patch, the tail is grey-brown with a black band and a pale tip, and the under parts are off-white, streaked blackish on the chin, throat and chest. The eye is dark red with a duller eye. The two most likely to be seen in the Adelaide Hills are the Brown Thornbill and the Striated Thornbill.

They move quickly and are seldom “at rest”. The Brown is usually in the lower undergrowth, perhaps up to 7 metres; the Striated is more often in the tree foliage up high. The Brown is a beautiful singer which helps in identification.

About 15 years ago at Crafers I found a nest on a garden path – the nest had fallen down in a storm. Two babies were still in the nest which was like a ball with an entry tunnel. I picked it up and tied it to a fork branch about 2 metres from the ground using a bright hivi coloured tape. The parents raised the two chicks using the repaired nest. I was able to watch the nest for its new location was about one metre from a window.



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

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Thanks again to Peter and Jill Wiadrowski for the book that I have been looking at this month. The Garden Design of Paul Bangay - The Defined Garden. Written by Paul Bangay and illustrated with beautiful photographs by Simon Griffiths. It really should be on someone's coffee table.

The Defined Garden is Paul's first book and contains the principles of his landscaping design. The Introduction starts as a brief autobiography where he explains the influences that led to his ideas about gardens and landscape design. His inspiration started with his mother's garden and a greenhouse that was given to him one Christmas. He achieved a Bachelor of Science in Horticulture and then went on to open a small boutique nursery and landscape design business in Melbourne.

After a few years Paul decided to travel to England to see firsthand the garden designs that he had studied from afar. From there he travelled to France and then Italy, and to places beyond.

On his return to Australia he was able to use the inspiration that he had acquired on his travels to design spaces that were Australian. His designs are not just about gardens. They are an integrated plan that involves the entire site including buildings, paving, walls, statues, plants and particularly water.

After the quite brief introduction the next eighteen chapters are examples of his work. Eighteen properties and eighteen beautiful spaces. Some were new at the time the book was published in 1996, some were older that he had worked on over years with his clients. Each is very different, reflecting the needs of the client, the specific demands of the site and of course the climate.

Several years ago I had the privilege of visiting Paul Bangay's own garden in Macedon. It is quite magnificent. Lots of hedges and walls paths and beautiful plants. It's where I first saw a mass planting of dark purple tulips which really was a wow factor. As Paul points out, each garden is individual and has to suit the owners. His is wonderful, but the thought of trimming all of those hedges! I think I will stick to mine.

## Tales from Forest Lodge by Milton Bowman



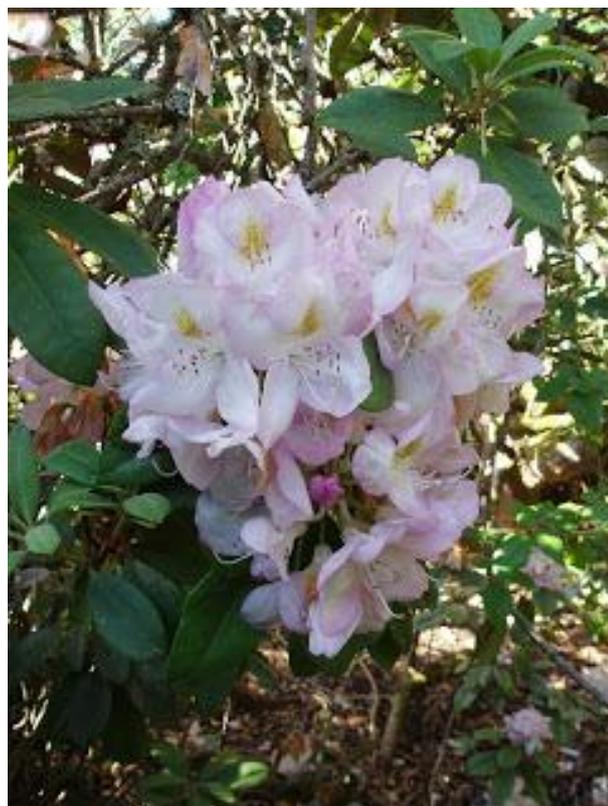
We appear to be heading into a dry summer, and certainly the last 2 months have been very dry compared with the norm for spring. In September we had 49mm and only 52mm in October. Temperatures have been mild so far with only one fire ban day in October and currently we are having a run of mid teen temperatures which is not a bad thing as this does reduce the need to irrigate.

The rhododendrons have been slow to bloom but are doing so now. We planted a lot of rhododendrons in the revamped long beds and these were planted blind. Most were cuttings from the last 5 years and the labels had faded or had simply disappeared. We dug up plants and popped them in wherever they fitted.

The result is a very varied colour palette and we will have to move some again next winter. The bonus is discovering that we have quite a few plants that have wonderful blooms that I have never seen before and we are now trying to identify them. I have identified 2 Gomer Waterer specimens, which is just as well because the century old mother plant is in the process of dying and will be gone in 1 or 2 years. It will live on as young and healthy progeny.

We have noted that a number of the very old rhododendrons are starting to go spindly, and so I will need to propagate several of them this year before it is too late. Gardening always gives one a few projects and challenges.

Milton Bowman



## Notice Board

### Christmas Party

Members are invited to celebrate the end of the “Rhododendron Year” at the Christmas party to be held on Sunday, December, 2<sup>nd</sup> at the home of Ian and Robyn Wall, 35 Cricklewood Road, Aldgate.

The party is a catered event but members need to supply their own chairs, glasses and drinks.

**Members should have already notified Milton Bowman of their intention to attend, as the caterer required numbers and any special dietary requirements you may have. If you have not done this you need to contact Milton ASAP.**

### Plant Trial

Members may be interested to learn of three plant trials that are underway at the home of Richard and Bronwyn Illman.

Based on the experience gained at the conference in Germany earlier this year we have purchased some coarse peat and are trialling mixing this peat with our soil when we plant new rhododendrons or azaleas.

There is a horticultural product available for growing Blueberries. This mix has a pH of 4.0 which is very suited to acid loving plants. We have potted some of our propagated cuttings into this mix.

Another product used in fruit orchards has been designed to reduce the internodal growth in fruit trees in order to prevent them from growing into anti-bird netting. It is also used by the nursery trade to produce compact and floriferous plants. We have tried this product on two identical rhododendrons planted in the same growing media. The result has been significant and we believe may have some potential in producing compact standard rhododendrons.

We will keep members informed about the progress of all three trials. If you are interested contact Richard or Bronwyn for more information.



Shortened internodal growth



Normal internodal growth

## MINUTES OF SA ARS MEETING TUES. 16/10/2018 AT STIRLING RSL

Meeting opened by president B Cullum at 8.10pm

Present 27 members

Apologies S Beckoff, J Woodburn, R Hemmerling, H Hancock, M and P Samson, B Voight, R Nesbitt, V Popov, A and D Matison, J Hatcher

Welcome to new member A Williams

Minutes of previous meeting had been circulated, president moved accept, N Popova seconded, meeting accepted.

### BUSINESS ARISING

- 1) Neutrog supplies, all collected now, but % bags of Rapid raiser available at \$20 each, see B or R Illman.
- 2) Plant sale report, Good weather, new marquee suitable, thanks to the many helpers, a successful sale and 7 new members as a result. The new picture catalogue was a great success. Nataliya asked re a change of date to get more plants in bloom, and possible alternative venues in case of fire bans
- 3) Garden visits, thanks to R Wall for her organisation and to the owners of the visited gardens, All gardens were in close proximity and showed both similarities and differences that made for a successful day. Congratulations extended to J Smylie for both her and Ian's care and preservation of Wensleydale during their ownership.
- 4) Emily and Chris Giles to hold an open day in their garden on the 3-4th Nov. in aid of the recent Indonesian earthquake.
- 5) National council in Tasmania to be held in early Nov., R hatcher and J Jenkinson to attend.

### TREASURER'S REPORT

B Mynhart presented her first report as treasurer, she noted profits from sale at \$710 with some stock remaining

Financial situation of working account currently \$11027

Treasurer moved accept, J Jenkinson seconded, meeting accepted

### NEW BUSINESS

- 1) Christmas lunch set for Sunday 2nd December, at R and I Walls' property, to be catered for, please notify sect. by end of October. Members and partners invited.
- 2) Cutting day 2019, to be held in Feb. at Forest Lodge, BBQ lunch to follow on a BYO basis. new members are entitled to cutting box and medium, please let B or R Illman know if wanted, and other members check their requirements for cutting day.
- 3) Speakers for 2019 Members asked for suggestions re topics and speakers.

- 4) R Illman spoke re developments from the German trip, especially using peat as a major part of growing media and noted the availability of a commercial blueberry medium that may be useful for rhododendrons and other acid loving plants. Rick demonstrated a medlar on hawthorn graft, as an example of what can be done.
- 5) J Jenkinson showed a most unusual bloom, obtained from a cutting in Beaufort, and more recently identified as *flora plene*, an almost forgotten plant from the mid 19thC.

Raffle drawn, R hatcher won Taurus

Meeting closed followed by an interactive blooms presentation and supper

