

# Blue Mountains Rhododendron Society of New South Wales Inc.

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November/December 2010

## NEWSLETTER

Vol. 36 No. 6

PO Box 238, Blackheath, 2785.

### Christmas Luncheon Saturday 18 December 2010 at The Lodge Time – 12:00 noon for 12:30 pm

Please bring a plate (e.g. salad, dessert, etc) OR a \$10 donation.  
Drinks (fruit punch, wine, tea or coffee) will be provided.

Please phone Jeannette – 4787 7904, or Judy – 4787 7298,  
re food donations by December 13<sup>th</sup>.

There will be no normal meeting following the luncheon,  
but Joan Hailstone will bring us up-to-date  
on the results of the Open Days.

**On behalf of the Management Committee – a Merry Christmas to all!**

#### For Sale

There are a number of items unsold from the Open Days. These will be available for sale at the Christmas Luncheon – for that last minute Christmas gift.

Shoulder Bags – reduced to \$18  
Tea Towels - \$7  
Special Rhododendron Christmas Cards –  
\$6 pack

#### Raffle Results

The winners of the Open Days raffles, drawn at The Lodge on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> November:

Hamper – N Gumbarton, ticket 55C  
Quilt – M David, ticket 73C

#### Advance Notice

The speaker at the February 2011 meeting will be Brenda Lyons, of Oberon, talking about Daffodils.

#### The Gardens Survey

The survey of our Gardens has progressed well in spite of the very welcome but inconvenient showery weather we have experienced recently.

The high visitation central area has been surveyed and most of the physical detail and significant plants contained within have been recorded. The survey will now extend out to the more distant locations.

Plans of the surveyed area along with the primary digital data have been received from our surveyor. Jeannette Adrian and Barry Barnes are now beginning to apply this information to the creation of a complete and accurate record of our Gardens.

*Barry Barnes*

## *From the President - (Rob's Ramblings)*

Thanks very much for entrusting the Presidency of this great Society to me. Judy Johnston's term of office was a great success, and she leaves big, though rather dainty, shoes to fill. We all owe much gratitude to her vision and energy over the past three years as President and beyond. Her lasting legacy is the extension to The Lodge, which has turned it into a valuable community resource, but she has also done so much more for us. She is doing a very good job of mentoring and I am very glad that she is on the Committee for 2010/11.

We have finished our Open Days for 2010, which, despite the inclement weather, were a successful fundraiser for the year. Many of you gave of your time freely, and I thank you all for that. Joan Hailstone will report on the funds raised at the Christmas Lunch.

There were many highlights for me during the Open Days, not the least of which is how all of our volunteers got on so well and had fun doing what we do so well during The Lodge Open Days – make great Devonshire Teas and sell tickets in great raffles. The teamwork was terrific. The raffles were terrific – thank you Enid Paddon-Row for your quilt.

There was one unforgettable moment in early October, when a couple in their late 60s, from a retirement village in Camden, visited the Gardens on their honeymoon – so I gave them their Devonshire Teas 'on the house'. The look on the wife's face was pure delight and happiness. The punch line came a month later when Meg (the wife) won the Quilt raffle and arrived to pick it up! Our Gardens hold a special place in their hearts.

I thank also our Gardens' Volunteers. They work hard every Monday to keep our Gardens in great condition, and they should be told that I had hundreds and hundreds of visitors this past month to the Gardens come up to me to congratulate and thank them for their hard work in maintaining and expanding our Gardens. Alas, Dick tells me, things have fallen behind due to the bad weather over Spring, so rest assured there's plenty of work to do!

I want to say a very grateful thank you to Joe and Chris Frazer of The Blackheath Deli who have been great supporters of ours over the Open Days, supplying all our milk and cream at less than cost and who also supplied many items to our Local Produce Hamper raffle at cost. Other contributors

to that hamper were Trish Hennessy of the Carrington Deli, Tristan, manager of the Carrington Bottle Shop, and also Bob and Helen Tyrrell of the Dry Ridge Estate winery down in the Megalong Valley on the Six Foot Track (they make great Riesling and Shiraz, well worth checking out). The retail value of the hamper was \$220 - it cost us just \$58.

Libby Raines, of Merry Garth, gave freely of her hand painted cards for sale during the Open Days and so a big thank you to you, too, Libby. Her garden this year was an absolute delight.

David Harris kindly built the wheel chair access ramp at The Lodge at cost, which made a very big difference for many people who visited this year and who warmly thanked us for providing it. So to you David, a very warm thanks. You've made the Lodge much friendlier for some of our less mobile visitors.

A big thank you to Bruce the Blackheath Butcher, who provided the delicious whole scotch fillets at half price for our very successful dinner on November 12th at The Lodge. This was such an enjoyable night that the last of the diners left at 1 AM!

A very big thank you goes to Kerrie Ray of the New Ivanhoe Hotel who provided Champagne By The Lake for pre-dinner drinks at our dinner, as well as the entree and dessert and overall kitchen management. Kerrie and her family have been big supporters of ours over the years for which we are very grateful. It was Kerrie who last year suggested that we have this dinner. Rotary are thanked for making the evening easier by lending their baine marie - thanks to Rob and Judy Quodling.

Finally, many thanks to Jock of Harmony At Home, the new kitchen specialist and gift shop in Govetts Leap Road, for the many dinner plates he has provided at an excellent price – thanks to Pat Harris for organising that.

This community support for our Society and Gardens is one of the reasons that Blackheath is such a special place to live. Long may it be so!

I look forward to seeing you all at our Christmas Lunch on Saturday the 18th of December. There may well be a pleasant surprise in store...

*Rob Emanuel - President*

## *A Truly Golden Conference: "Rhododendrons in Australia"*

The Australian Rhododendron Society Victorian Branch Inc. held a 3 ½ day Golden Jubilee Conference in the Dandenong ranges in mid-October 2010 to celebrate the 50 year history of the Society and of the National Rhododendron Gardens at Olinda. This was an exceptionally well-organised conference with an interesting variety of topics presented and visits to several private gardens displaying collections of rhododendrons and/or other cool climate trees and plants. At Olinda, the first venue for the conference, a brilliant display of prize-winning rhododendrons, including many vireyas, formed a stunning entry to the hall and prompted many complimentary discussions.

Talks ranged over historical developments at Olinda, at Mount Lofty Botanical Gardens near Adelaide, and at Emu Valley near Burnie in Tasmania; breeding of recent Australian rhododendron and vireya hybrids; and vireya species classification using DNA characteristics. The keynote speaker, Kenneth Cox (author and plant hunter from Glendoick Nursery in Scotland), spoke on "Woodland Gardens in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century", mentioning several gardens he had visited, including our own Campbell Rhododendron Gardens. He emphasised the attraction for foreign visitors provided by local, often overlooked but iconic features – such as our canopy of eucalypts with many native plants retained, or tree-ferns in New Zealand gardens. Those are memorable experiences for overseas visitors.

Overall there were 94 registrants for the conference – 1 Scotsman, 51 Victorians, 14 South Australians, 8 New Zealanders, 7 from various states in the USA, 4 Tasmanians, 3 from the ACT, 2 Canadians, and Janet Dempster and me from NSW. There was time to engage in discussions and comparisons with many different interests and specialities. I found the current hybridising and propagation of rhodos and vireyas quite intriguing and the energy of some individual gardeners just staggering.

Major points emphasised were:-

- ◆ The importance of Australian rhododendron collections, particularly species and early hybrids;
- ◆ Preservation and dissemination of knowledge about these collections (by training, guided tours, leaflets, etc);
- ◆ Plant identification as a necessary feature of any botanical collection;
- ◆ DNA classification as a tool for identifying endangered species.

I believe we can feel proud of our recent progress in plant labelling/identification in our own Rhododendron Gardens. We need to be aware of current trends, and our members could benefit from the experience of other Australian rhodo experts, and from visits to interstate gardens. The ARSVB Conference set a high standard for us all in our future endeavours.

Jeannette Adrian

### New Members

We warmly welcome the following new members and invite them to join in all the Society's activities:

Roland & Diane Cameron,	Blackheath;
Alan & Gaynor MacKinnon,	Blackheath, Lindfield;
Roslyn & Joe Phielix,	Blackheath;
Mitria Sahebi,	Ryde;
Kerry Speak,	Northmead.

### Open Day Facts & Figures

Even though the weather was not kind to us, our takings for the period were only slightly down on last year's. Over the 39 days that The Lodge was open we had over 220 mm of rain, 10 wet days, 5 days with mist, 14 days with rain and mist, 1 day of snow - and 2 light hail storms! As we told the many visitors – they were just typical Blackheath Spring days.

We would like to thank all those who did brave the weather and visit the Gardens, especially for the number of glowing comments they made in our visitors' book. It was a joy to talk to most of the visitors and find out where they lived, and how they found out about the Gardens. But then, most people who like to visit Open Gardens are a special type of person - interesting to talk to, and very keen to see what the garden has to offer.

As a matter of interest, most of our visitors came (naturally) from all over Sydney and the Blue Mountains, but the rest of New South Wales was well represented, as were all the other states of Australia. Overseas visitors included those from Canada, Chile, the Czech Republic, England, France, Germany, Holland, Hong Kong, India, New Zealand, Northern Ireland, Poland, Romania, Russia, Scotland, Sweden, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine, USA, and Wales.

**Management Committee 2010 – 2011**

***President***

Rob Emanuel  
4787 5558  
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***Vice Presidents***

Jeannette Adrian – 4787 7904  
Judy Johnston – 4787 7298  
Robert Reid – 4787 5253

***Garden Supervisor***

Dick Harris

***Secretary***

Alan Lush  
4787 6983

***Treasurer***

Joan Hailstone  
4787 5859

***Membership***

Marion Freidman  
4787 8416

***Committee Members*** Barry Barnes, Beryl Black, Bette Brown, David Cook, Nancy Etcell

***Editor/Webmaster*** Alan Lush

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