

Blue Mountains Rhododendron Society of New South Wales Inc.

Inaugurated April 2nd 1969

September/October 2010

NEWSLETTER

Vol. 37 No. 5

PO Box 238, Blackheath, 2785.

General Meeting Saturday 17th September 2010 at The Lodge 2:00 pm start

We welcome all members, especially those who have recently joined us

Because of the Gardens Open Days throughout October, the usual bi-monthly meeting has been brought forward to September

Election of Management Committee for 2011-2012

At the Annual general meeting of the Society, held at The Lodge on Saturday 20th August 2011, the following members of the management committee were elected for the coming twelve months.

President – Jeannette Adrian

Vice President – Judy Johnston

Secretary – Alan Lush

Treasurer (and Public Officer) – Joan Hailstone

Committee Members –

Beryl Black

Bette Brown

Geoff Cannings

David Cook

Marion Freidman

Dick Harris

The committee positions of Archivist, Garden Supervisor, Newsletter Editor, Social Secretary and Webmaster will be confirmed at the first Management Committee meeting in September.

Our thanks go to Al Ritchie, Chairman of the GCA Blue Mountains Zone, for chairing the meeting during the election of the new committee.

September Guest Speaker Scott Pollock

Scott is the Manager of Everglades House & Gardens at Leura – a National Trust of Australia (NSW) property.

Much refurbishment work has been carried out at Everglades in the last few years, and Scott will be able to tell us of the trials and tribulations associated with the running of the property, in relation to staffing, volunteering, major events, and working with their neighbours and Council.

2012 Calendars

Don't forget – our splendid 2012 calendars, produced by **David Cook**, are on sale now at a cost of \$8 each. For those members unable to pick them up at the Lodge, we can post one out to you at a total cost of \$10 (which includes postage). Just send your details (and a cheque) to: Blue Mountains Rhododendron Society, PO Box 238, Blackheath, NSW 2785.

If you want to send one overseas for Christmas, surface mail to England closes on 21st September.

President's Annual Report 2010-2011

This report is presented on behalf of the Management Committee and of President Rob Emanuel, who for personal reasons resigned from the committee in mid-June 2011.

At the beginning of its fifth decade, the Blue Mountains Rhododendron Society comprised a membership of two hundred individuals and five organisations. All members can be proud of the magnificent result of forty years voluntary work, financial contributions, and achievements which ensure the future well-being of these Gardens. Not only a local community asset, the Gardens have a wide-spread appeal as a tourist destination, attracting visitors from all Australian states as well as at least twenty other countries. The excellent flowering season of 2010 met everyone's expectations.

Publicity has been enhanced by active development of the Society's website (www.rhodogarden.org.au) and by the production of a DVD, both projects having been initiated by **Rob Emanuel**. During the year the visitors information leaflet was updated and reprinted, thanks to **Jenny Curtin** and **Alan Lush**. Alan has also produced the Society's Newsletter and arranged for guest speakers at our meetings. **David Cook's** photography had been used in many of our publicity posters, and has recently enabled us to produce a fine calendar for 2012.

Three major projects continuing throughout the year are:

- Maintenance planning and seasonal fertilising of rhododendrons, camellias and azaleas;
- Surveying and mapping of the developed areas in the Gardens;
- Plant identification and labelling of all rhododendrons and of selected native species.

Success in the first of these projects can be gauged by the Spring flowering in 2010, for which we thank Dick Harris and his volunteers (helped by good weather conditions). Contract surveying under **Barry Barnes'** supervision has been completed for over half the developed area, yielding contoured and accurate maps of gardens closer to the Lodge. These provide a foundation for an overall map of the whole Gardens as the project continues. Labelling of plants involves a large team – checking current registers and

diagrams, identifying individual plants, cutting labels, attaching supports, and finally placing the labels correctly. By August 2011, 817 labels had been cut and over 600 placed in the Gardens.

Other improvements this year include:

- Refurbishment of the Kay North fountain;
- Lighting in the parking area and marking of parking bays;
- Extra garden seats;
- Folding tables were donated for functions in the Lodge, and a computer desk for the Library;
- Attention to disability needs, with installation of handrails in toilets and an access ramp to the Lodge;
- Computer listings of library books;
- Computer listings of membership records;
- Computer listings of native plant species.

Several successful functions were held in the Lodge, including an evening of films made by John Moran, and a dinner hosted by Rob Emanuel. Two working bees were held, on 25th September 2010 and 7th May 2011, and involved several enthusiastic helpers as well as the usual "Monday workers". A "Jazz in the Gardens" afternoon on 17th April 2011 featured the Ivanhoe Hotel band.

Sadly, in recent weeks we have lost two long-serving members – Sam Black, former Vice President, Life member and garden volunteer, died on 30th July 2011, and Jean Hodgkinson, widow of Lew, died on 6th August 2011. Jean and Lew provided most of the daffodils now adorning our "island garden" driveways.

Thanks are due to our many volunteers and friends who provide excellent hospitality to visitors during our Spring open days and at our regular meetings. With the gardening teams and our clerical/indoor supporters our volunteers are the lifeblood of our successful, vibrant Society. Thanks to you all.

Jeannette Adrian - President

Spring Working Bee

To ensure the Gardens are looking their best for the Open Days, a working bee will be held on Saturday 24th September, starting at 9:00 am. Lunch will be provided.

Come one – come all!

Garden Report – August 2011

(If this report, given at the AGM, concentrates more on the problems caused by the damaging winds in early July, it is because that was the most significant event in the Gardens over the last 12 months – Ed.)

Today is a very simple garden report as **Bill Webster** and I are your speakers today, and will outline what happened to the Gardens in the devastating winds that the upper mountains suffered recently, how we handled the problem, what we have already achieved, and what remains to be done.

Before this wind event we were making great strides in the Gardens. Thanks to some great rains & our fertilizing program the Gardens as a whole look great, and plant health is really good in most parts. We have progressed further with our environmental weed eradication program, improved the car park, and repaired many bridges & paths, as well as performing our regular maintenance which included clearing some of the thick fern, etc, around the Rhodos in the northern corner, clearing around the stone bridge, and many other jobs.

However, the damage from the wind stretched our resources to the limit, and I think it may put our hazard reduction burn on hold because of the huge effort the Fire Brigades have put in, and the large number of trees & branches down which will add to the fuel build up throughout the mountains – and no doubt alter the priorities for hazard reduction.

I will also have to fertilise things like the Maple Walk, the Camellias, Viburnums, trees in the lawn area in the valley, etc, in the next couple of weeks. So I will have to leave the other volunteers to keep the clean up going.

On the 7th July I came down to the Gardens to see if the wind had caused any damage. However I was sure the damage would be minimal as most of the Gardens were sheltered, and as we had only minimal damage in our garden at Mt Boyce, and virtually no damage at the Nursery, surely the Gardens were safe. How wrong I was!

Martin, who works 4 hours a week in the Gardens had cleared the trees that had fallen over the main exit road, and the volunteers had started to cut up trees throughout the upper part of the Gardens and down into the valley. They were also pruning back broken Rhodos, Azaleas, etc. These will

basically all grow back. However some large ones that were literally smashed will take some years to get back to the size they were.

To start the clean up I sought advice & help from Bill Webster who has years of experience in the SES. We needed to make sure we did everything safely (Bill does have a problem with me as I won't wear ear muffs while using a chain saw). We also had to identify any trees still standing that had been compromised and would be a danger in the future. We marked these trees, plus any with widow makers hanging in them. While doing this we had many discussions as to how we might handle this as some trees were beyond our ability to handle – we needed younger legs, and resources such as ladders, safety harnesses, better chain saws, ropes, pulleys, chippers, etc.

We found out during this process that the Blue Mountains City Council had government funding to help in cleaning up their parks, etc – and Council is the Trustee of the Gardens. **Judy Johnston** handled this for us. She found a lady at Council who was most helpful, believed we qualified for assistance, and put Judy in touch with the relevant Council officer who then put us in touch with Angophora Tree Services. This firm has done a lot of the hard work for us and is now waiting on a crane to handle some of the dangerous trees.

I would like to thank Judy for all the phone calls she made to organise the above. I would also, on behalf of myself and all the members of the Society, like to thank all the Monday garden volunteers for the wonderful job done all year round – and especially for this recent effort.

Among the tasks still to be done in the clean up in the Gardens are the following:-

- Arrange a barbecue for Angophora Tree Services as a thank you for their efforts
- Use the burls from the felled Mountain Ash in the valley as an aid in stabilising some of the banks in the Gardens
- Grind the stump of that Mountain Ash into the ground – and hopefully restore the azaleas growing around it back to a horizontal surface (at present the ground they are in is nearly vertical).

Dick Harris – Garden Supervisor

*Vale – Jean Hodgkinson
of “Eureka”, Blackheath*

Older members will be saddened to hear that Jean Hodgkinson passed away on 6 August 2011, aged 82, in Bodington Nursing Home at Wentworth Falls.

Born in the U.K., Jean emigrated to Australia as a young adult, after the end of World War II. She met her soul-mate Lewis while on a holiday visit to the Blue Mountains. Owing to disrupted schooling during the war, Jean decided to finish her secondary studies to HSC level and then undertook teachers college training for a career in primary school teaching.

Jean and Lewis were members of the Rhododendron Society from at least as early as 1976. Together they developed a garden at their Blackheath home featuring rhododendrons, azaleas, several exotic trees, and daffodils. For many years they generously supplied daffodils for sale at local flower shows, and to us for our open days. The daffodils now growing near the Lodge and lining our exit driveway were donated by Lew and Jean.

Jean suffered from Parkinson’s disease for some years, but with characteristic persistence was still able to do patchwork until only a few days before her death. She was an inspiration to many.

Jeannette Adrian

*Vale – Samuel Wallace Black
20 July 1917 – 30 July 2011*

Long-time friend and member Samuel Wallace Black died on 30 July 2011, only 10 days after his 94th birthday. Sam was active on our Society’s management committee for many years, serving as Vice President for several years before retiring from the committee in August 2005. He was made a Life Member in August 2007, an honour he treasured and one he thoroughly deserved.

Sam was also a valued member of Norm Campbell’s garden committee, and a most versatile and competent Monday volunteer. He could turn his hand to all the mechanical and woodworking maintenance matters in the Gardens.

Sam’s ability no doubt stemmed from his career as a marine mechanic/engineer, training in Sydney and even assisting in building the Sydney harbour Bridge in his early days. He joined the Navy in World War II and later worked at Cockatoo Dock. Before and during his retirement Sam and Beryl travelled in their 4WD campervan to many scenic parts of Australia, with both enjoying the freedom

of that lifestyle.

The early flowering rhododendron ‘Seta’ was Sam’s favourite and this year in our Gardens Rh. Seta first opened its buds in the last week of July in a lovely reminder of this capable and very gentle man.

Jeannette Adrian

Better StormSafe than Sorry

Bill Webster’s and Dick Harris’s talk and powerpoint presentation at the AGM

Bill, a long-time member of the SES, and Dick, our long-serving Garden Supervisor, spoke at length on what has happened in the Gardens during and after the violent wind storm in July.

Because of space limitations in this issue, the full-page article has been held over to the next newsletter. However, a brief summary is included here.

In view of the problems the Gardens, the rest of the Upper Blue Mountains, and Blackheath in particular, suffered during the winds (one gust reached 170 km per hour at Mt Boyce, this information from the SES is provided in case a similar storm occurs again – although hopefully it won’t!

The State Emergency Service is responsible for dealing with storms. This includes planning for storms and educating people about how to protect themselves and their property.

The SES is responsible for sandbagging properties affected by flash flooding, placing tarpaulins on damaged roofs, felling dangerous trees and branches, giving storm safety advice, and rescuing people trapped or injured in storm-damaged buildings.

The main points Bill emphasised. And expanded on, during his talk were:

- What can I do before a storm?
- Emergency Kit contents
- If you need to evacuate your house
- Emergency Phone Numbers
- What can I do during a storm?
- What do I do after a storm?
- What happens after a storm

Spring Open Days

Once again we are getting close to our major fund raising event of the year – our Spring Open Days. Last year, even with the (very) inclement weather during most of October, we still managed to host visitors from all over Australia and the rest of the world, with most of them marvelling at the size and scope of the Gardens, and the beautiful displays of colour from both the exotics and natives throughout the area. What many of them couldn't believe was that all the hard work that goes into the creation and maintenance of the Gardens is carried out by we volunteers as a genuine labour of love.

Of course, this love was put to the test following the damage to the Gardens caused by the very strong winds in early July, but in their own inimitable way the volunteers have set to and are well on the way to erasing the scars left by the worst storm to hit Blackheath and other parts of the upper Blue Mountains in many a year. The initial estimate of at least 20 trees being uprooted, as reported in the last newsletter, is way below the mark. There are perhaps twice that number that have come down, both in the bushland area to the north of rhododendron planted area above the lake and along the nature trail/Quota Grove Walk, in areas where visitors only rarely go. Most of these trees will remain where they have fallen, although some will need to be cleared from the fire trail and paths before any hazard reduction burns are carried out. However, access to these areas can quite easily be blocked off to visitors, in the interests of public safety, so our Open Days will be able to go ahead as planned – from Friday 30th September to Monday 7th November inclusive.

For those members, especially those who have recently joined us, who are not familiar with all the happenings at the Gardens that make the Open Days so successful, let me put you in the picture by telling you what has happened since the 2010 Open Days.

Early in January this year, a 'de-briefing' meeting of 9 of last year's volunteers was held to discuss all aspects relating to the Open Days – including meeting & greeting visitors, sale of plants, food and drink, souvenirs, coaches and other group bookings, toilets, publicity, and the clash of dates with the Leura Garden Festival. Many recommendations were made and are being carried out this year. The management committee have held further discussions to fine-tune the arrangements.

As the Lodge is open for a total of 39 days, we would like to be able to call on quite a few of the members to volunteer their time over that period. There should be a minimum of three people in the kitchen at any one time to prepare and serve food and drinks, and one person 'working the room', greeting visitors, selling souvenirs, raffle tickets, etc. During the rush hours, when up to 50 people from one coach tour may descend on you en masse, another 1 or 2 may be needed to help out.

This year the Garden Clubs of Australia are holding their biannual convention at the Fairmont Resort in Leura from the 9th to the 13th October. One of the trips being organised during the convention includes a visit to the Gardens on Wednesday 12th for lunch. For that visit we will require probably double the normal number of volunteers to help out from about 11:00 am. Some of the local Horticultural Society members will also be asked if they can help out on that day.

Judy Johnston is drawing up a roster of volunteers for kitchen duty, so even if you can give of your time for just half a day, please give Judy a call on 4787 7298 – she would love to hear from you!

Souvenirs are always good sellers – we will be concentrating this year on tea towels and embroidered goods, and have a number of our 40th Anniversary fridge magnets still available. David Cook's 2012 calendar is already selling well and, at \$8 each, should walk out the door during the Open Days. With over 30 photos of the Gardens in the calendar it will be a year-long remembrance of the Gardens for the visitors – and great publicity for the Society.

Raffles are always great earners, and with one of the prizes being the quilt made by members of the Probus Club of the Upper Blue Mountains there should be no difficulty in selling many tickets each day.

One of the main functions of the 'Meet & Greet' volunteers is to put the visitors in a good frame of mind when they first come into the Gardens – but then, with most visitors who come here being avid gardeners already, it is very, very easy to meet & greet at the Information Kiosk. Other activities include selling plants (\$25 each for 3 to 4 year old rhododendrons and mollis azaleas) and calendars, keeping an eye on the donations box, and providing information about the Gardens.

Hope to see you during the Open Days this year.

Management Committee 2011 – 2012

President

Jeannette Adrian
4787 7904

Vice President

Judy Johnston
4787 7298

Garden Supervisor

Dick Harris

Secretary

Alan Lush
4787 6983

Treasurer

Joan Hailstone
4787 5859

Membership Secretary

Marion Freidman
4787 8416

Committee Members Beryl Black, Bette Brown, Geoff Cannings, David Cook

Editor/Webmaster Alan Lush

website – www.rhodogarden.org.au

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