

# Blue Mountains Rhododendron Society of New South Wales Inc.

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January/February 2012

## NEWSLETTER

Vol. 38 No. 1

PO Box 238, Blackheath, 2785.

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

### **General Meeting Saturday 18 February 2012 at The Lodge 2:00 pm start**

#### **Guest Speaker**

#### **Barry Redshaw**

We are fortunate to have as our guest speaker for the first meeting of 2012 Barry Redshaw, the newly appointed Zone Co-ordinator of the Garden Clubs of Australia Blue Mountains Zone.

Barry is a retired Engineer and later, with his wife Beverly, was a Guesthouse and Restaurant proprietor in Mudgee NSW for about 15 years. Their Guesthouse included an award winning garden of antique roses. Barry and Beverly have now retired to Lawson and are both involved in Community.

His Business/Corporate experience includes: Chairman of a Sydney Club with 7,000 members; Chairman of the Bed and Breakfast Council of NSW; Chairman of Explorer Country Tourism and a life member of NSW Tourism. Barry was President of Central Blue Mountains Garden Club for 3 years and is currently the Past President and Secretary.

Barry will talk on the benefit to The Blue Mountains Zone for affiliated Clubs; a short history of Garden Clubs of Australia Inc.; planning for 2013 including "Think Tank Sessions"; and working together toward positive outcomes.

The talk will be followed by questions from the floor – so put your thinking caps on!

#### **New Members**

We warmly welcome the following people as members of the Society, and invite them to become involved in all the activities the Society has to offer.

Pat Welsh,	of Blackheath
Helen Gillam,	of Blackheath
Ann Cripps,	of Blackheath
Lorraine Cook,	of Lithgow

#### **Advance Notice - 1 Autumn Working Bee**

Please keep **Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> March** free for our annual Autumn working bee in the Gardens – no chopping down of dangerous trees will be required!

As usual, lunch will be provided for the volunteers.

#### **Advance Notice - 2 Speaker for the April Meeting**

As you may know, three of the major Rhododendron Gardens between here and Tasmania are our Gardens here in Blackheath, the National Rhododendron Gardens at Olinda in the Dandenongs near Melbourne, and the Emu Valley Gardens in Northern Tasmania. We are fortunate that **Jeannette Adrian** has visited all three, as she has agreed to be our guest speaker for the April meeting, speaking on the three different gardens.

More in the next newsletter.

### *From the President*

Happy New Year to you all! It's a time to consider the future and how one can improve things, or at least try to do so.

Any volunteer knows the satisfaction of successfully achieving a positive outcome. When we are lucky enough to be acting in a group with a common aim, both the results and the satisfaction will be very much enhanced. This volunteering ethic seems to be understood by "the older generation" but is something to be advertised, or taught to, or at least discussed with the youngsters of our community.

If each of our volunteers could recruit just one more garden worker, active indoor worker, student or "general slave" our achievements could be more than doubled. Let's really try it in 2012.

January was marred by the discovery of yet another type of weed in the Gardens – fortunately only one specimen so far – of the "Tree of Heaven" (*Ailanthus altissima*, the copal or varnish tree). An article in the current BMCC Bushcare Newsletter alerted us to this menace and assisted rapid identification and treatment. This deciduous tree spreads by wind, water, birds, garden dumping and suckering of any remnant roots. Its bark and leaves are toxic to animals, and direct contact can cause human dermatitis.

Be ever vigilant, and don't forget to deadhead your agapanthus after their beauty fades.

*Jeannette Adrian - President*

### *2011 Christmas Lunch*

Over 40 members and guests attended our Christmas Lunch, held on the 17<sup>th</sup> December at the Lodge. There was no formal meeting, but Jeannette Adrian welcomed all those present, and thanked all those who provided the excellent quality food (I believe the workers enjoyed the leftovers for their lunch the following Monday!). Jeannette also thanked everyone for their hard work in the Gardens and the Lodge during the year.

The winners of the lucky door prizes were **Barry Korendijk, Janet Dempster and Peggy Ashton.**

### *Calendars*

Our venture into printing and selling our own 2012 calendar, featuring many photos of the Gardens taken by **David Cook**, produced outstanding results. From the print run of 1500 calendars, at last count there were just under 100 left – which meant quite a healthy sum going into the Society's funds.

Preparations are already under way to produce a calendar for 2013. We would like to have members submit their favourite photo(s) taken in the Gardens for possible inclusion in the new calendar.

More on this in the next newsletter.

### *Collectors' Plant Fair*

Information has been received that the popular Collectors' Plant Fair will not be held this year. A number of the Society's members made a point of going to the Fair, held annually at Bilpin, and coming home loaded up with all sorts of rare and unusual plants.

The organisers have announced that the next Fair will be held on the 13<sup>th</sup> & 14<sup>th</sup> April 2013 at a new venue – the Hawkesbury Race Club at Clarendon, near Richmond.

### *Newsletters by email*

This is the first issue of the Newsletter to be provided via the Internet to those members who have provided us with their email addresses.

Paper copies are still being posted to all other members.

Please let us know if you wish to change your method of receiving your copy.



## *Garden Report – January 2012*

We continue to get fallen trees & branches, and clearing these up has been an ongoing effort. I have finished the potash application to those Rhodos deemed necessary and I can already report that this year bud set has been early – and next Spring will be a better flowering period than even 2010 was.

We have all been busy tidying up, trimming azaleas, mowing, etc. A lot of young blackberries, privet, broom, etc have been pulled out from sensitive areas below the Glade Walk, with the remainder being sprayed. The blackberries in the valley area have been treated, and any regrowth of Montbretia & agapanthus that had been treated has again been sprayed.

A sign asking for no swimming in the lake, and no dogs in the lake, was put up – and was immediately stolen. I also wrote a long letter to the Gazette about the problem but it wasn't printed. I don't know what the answer is.

Both the guttering on the toilet block, and the down pipe, have been replaced, and a drain at the bottom of the pavers has been put in. We have also put a drain pipe at the bottom of the Bob Baker Walk, and cleaned out the gutter alongside the access road in the valley. We have to construct a silt trap in one area there. Blocked gutters have also been cleared in various areas.

I have spoken to Tony Crawford – he is coming to fix the top section of the access road where the tar is lifting. He is also bringing in a machine to relocate the stump of the fallen mountain ash into the ground in the valley.

Angophora Tree Services have not been back in touch with me, so I will be getting a couple of quotes to take down some widow makers and drop some trees that are dangerous and hanging up in other trees. When they are on the ground we will be able to handle them. If this process breaks any Rhodos, so be it, as it would be overly expensive to do it any other way.

*Dick Harris – Garden Supervisor*

## *Hazard Reduction Burning (the continuing story)*

This exercise was first promoted in April 2010, following Peter Belshaw's talk at the April General Meeting. Peter, the Bushfire Management Officer at the Blue Mountains City Council, has apologised for the delay in getting back to us in regards to the proposal to conduct fuel management (hazard reduction) burning within the Gardens. Activities associated with storms, bushfires and other high priority projects have recently taken precedence.

However, Peter has been working behind the scenes, with an environmental assessment now completed for the hazard reduction burning of about 2-3 hectares of the Gardens, bounded by Ridgewell Road and the fire trail starting near the Conifer Garden. The assessment has concluded that the burn may proceed on environmental grounds. If the Society still supports this in principle, the next stages of planning and approval can be carried out.

A Bush Fire Hazard Reduction Certificate will then be issued for the proposed area to be burnt – this will represent the formal environmental approval for the burn. Once the certificate has been issued the on-ground preparation for the burn can begin. This will include ensuring vehicle access (eg for medium size bushfire tankers) is available to all areas to be burnt, which will necessitate some vegetation trimming and lopping of branches to provide the necessary clearances. Any work of this nature would be performed sensitively by Council's Fire Mitigation Team in line with strict instructions and work standards. In addition, the fence alongside Ridgewell Road may need protecting from the fire.

If all issues can be resolved in a timely manner, the burn may even proceed before Winter this year (weather permitting, of course!).

## *Have Your Say!*

We would love to hear from you, with your reminiscences, gardening notes, comments on the Gardens, or suggestions.

The Newsletter is produced bi-monthly, but contributions can be received at any time.

Contact Alan for further details.

**Management Committee 2011 – 2012**

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