

Blue Mountains Rhododendron Society of New South Wales Inc.

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NEWSLETTER

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PO Box 238, Blackheath, 2785.

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

General Meeting Saturday 21 April 2012 at The Lodge 2:00 pm start

Guest Speaker

Jeannette Adrian

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 our President, **Jeannette Adrian**, has visited all three, and has agreed to be our guest speaker for the April meeting. She will talk about the three different gardens, and why each of them is different to the others – whether it is because of the landscaping, soil, quality of the volunteers, etc.

So come along and hear how we compare!

March Working Bee

Although there was a disappointing turnout at the working bee on Saturday 24th March, a great amount of effort was put in by the 9 volunteers who fronted up.

Large piles of debris were removed from the driveway and some of the paths, gardens were weeded, and more of the dirt paths were covered with a layer of woodchips (something we are not short of at present!).

The light lunch that was provided, and which everyone thoroughly enjoyed, consisted of homemade pumpkin soup, sandwiches, quiche and a chocolate walnut cake.

At our next working bee, to be held in September, we hope to see many more members and their friends volunteer their time to ensure the Gardens are looking at their best during the Open Days in October and November.

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.

Julia Hanley, of Blackheath
Tracey Longden, of Blackheath

Advance Notice

Speaker for the June Meeting

Linda Thomas
of the Blue Mountains City Council will be speaking to us on native plants of the area and BMCC's weed control program.

More about Linda in the next newsletter.

From the President

Firstly I must apologise for my over-hasty (mis)identification of a “Tree of Heaven”. It turned out to be an Ash, not the ghastly weed at all. Being “in the wrong place”, the said Ash has been dealt a deadly blow, and I return to identifying only rocks (which don’t usually require a small test).

We have been pleased to welcome two more garden volunteers recently (Julia and Tracey) and trust sunnier weather will encourage more to join. It’s a really good social group at lunchtimes and we now reach double figures (nearly up to double the table-space). Of course we all work to capacity and achieve wonders before and after lunch – aiming to total at least 2000 hours/year.

At last we have a tree cutter in train and expect to have all the dangerous overhangings removed so we can access the area of the Gardens closed since last July. Meanwhile Autumn proceeds quickly in Blackheath and some street trees are already nearly bare. The ground is very wet underfoot from all the recent rains and our dam has been over-spilling for some weeks now. Can we remember a drought?

The Society has been invited by the Blackheath Streetscape Group to plant a Rhodo in Neate Park (on the western side of the highway) to commemorate the 60th Anniversary of the Rhododendron Festival. This will be at 10:30 on Saturday 14th April 2012. The Streetscape Group is to be congratulated on this initiative in encouraging a wider appreciation of rhododendrons and other cold-climate shrubs and trees. Our Rhodo Festival is the longest running festival in New South Wales, so deserves V.I.F. (Very Important Festival) support.

Jeannette Adrian - President

Newsletters by email

This is the second 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.

February General Meeting

The meeting on Saturday 18th February was attended by 23 members and 3 visitors, with 5 apologies being received.

The Treasurer’s Report, given by **Joan Hailstone**, showed a Cash Book Balance of \$57,585.74, plus Term Deposits totalling \$209,142.49.

The Garden Report, given by **Dick Harris**, is shown on the next page in this newsletter.

Preparations for the hazard reduction burn from the Ridgewell Road fence line down to the fire trail are proceeding, but the timing of the burn depends on the weather. Peter Belshaw from the Blue Mountains City Council is liaising with NSW Fire & Rescue Services, who will conduct the burn.

The guest speaker was **Barrie Redshaw**, the newly elected Zone Coordinator of the garden Clubs of Australia Blue Mountains Zone. Barrie and his wife, Beverly, are residents of Lawson, and members of the Central Blue Mountains Garden Club, with Barrie being the current Secretary of the club.

Barrie talked about his focus for the zone during his term as coordinator, looking at opportunities to do something different – without just making changes for the sake of change. He wants to set up a ‘Think Tank’, with input from all clubs in the zone, with the aim of implementing their ideas by November this year. He also said he hoped there would be a zone contribution to the celebrations marking the 200th anniversary of the first crossing of the Blue Mountains in 1813.

The meeting closed at 3:20pm and was followed by afternoon tea.

2013 Calendar

David Cook would like to hear from anyone who has a favourite picture taken in the Gardens, for possible inclusion of the photo in the Calendar for 2013, which the Society will be producing for sale during the Open Days this year.

All photos should be submitted to David no later than at the General Meeting on the 16th June.

Although last year’s calendar was an outstanding success, we know we can do better this year – and with your help, we will.

Garden Report

This year's flowering will be the best ever.

Preparations for the control burn are proceeding, with input from Peter Belshaw. An area has been cleared around the wooden posts of the Ridgewell Road fence line, allowing the burn to start down from there and up from the fire trail. After the burn the wire fence can be repaired where necessary.

Angophora Tree Services have not been in contact with us again about extra work to be done. A local contractor has quoted for the felling of some dangerous trees and widow makers and has been given the go ahead for their removal. It was noted that some Rhodos may be damaged during the tree felling. It was also noted that more trees have come down during the rains and winds in February.

Repairs to the road into and through the valley have been finished, with the road now bitumen all the way to the Wentworth Street gate. In addition, the contractor has removed some fallen trees from the azalea garden lining the road in the valley, and leveled the azalea bed that was tilted at a 45° angle when the mountain ash in the valley blew down in last July's windstorm. The stump of the mountain ash is still there, as a reminder of what happened that day.

The "Tree of Heaven" found near the Wentworth Street gate turned out to be a large seedling Ash – which was removed. Several large Himalayan Honeysuckle found nearby have also been removed.

All the daffodils along the exit driveway have been lifted and replanted. We have been left with a large number of small bulbs that will take 2-3 years to flower.

A plaque commemorating the contribution to the Gardens by the late Joan Storey has been installed by one of the native gardens near the main car park – an area that was one of Joan's favourites.

More plant labels have been put out, following identification of many of those plants by Linda Thomas.

A track has been made to the water meter near the Wentworth Street entrance – for ease of access by the meter readers.

The Montbretia that had previously been poisoned is now starting to die off.

Dick Harris – Garden Supervisor

Campbell Rhododendron Gardens, Bacchante Street, Blackheath

A history.

By Julia Hanley

I have recently joined the Blue Mountains Rhododendron Society of NSW Inc and have volunteered to help in the Gardens. On my second day I was asked by a newer volunteer about the gardens. I told what I knew which was very little and went looking for a history. Jeannette Adrian wrote a very good synopsis for the Rotary "Blackheath: Today from Yesterday" book. It is a factual account of the beginning of the gardens up to 2002. This was a good place to begin but I feel history is much more than the dates of events and names of people involved. It is also about society attitudes, characters, politics and in this case plants.

I expressed an interest in writing a fuller history of the Gardens. The committee has agreed to my beginning this project. There are many archives held in the library in the Lodge but, if possible, I need to talk to people who were involved, or maybe family members. I am happy to travel to peoples' homes if necessary as I feel it is a priority that we gain as much information as possible about the Gardens and their development.

I would be pleased to hear from anyone who has information about the gardens and who would like to talk to me about their involvement.

Please ring me on 4787 5728. I look forward to hearing from you.

Julia

Raining Cats and Dogs – and Tadpoles

You may know that we have had one or two days of rain in the first three months of this year – an unofficial total of 755 mm was recorded in Evans Lookout Road in that period (over half of our yearly average).

So it was no surprise when one of the volunteers at the March working bee found on one of the bush tracks about 50 metres above the lake a large (but very shallow) pool of water that was full of – tadpoles!

Blue Mountains Rhododendron Society Newsletter – March/April 2012

Management Committee 2011 – 2012

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Jeannette Adrian
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Judy Johnston
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Garden Supervisor

Dick Harris

Secretary

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