

Blue Mountains Rhododendron Society of New South Wales Inc.

www.rhodogarden.org.au

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NEWSLETTER

Vol. 38 No. 3

PO Box 238, Blackheath, 2785.

General Meeting Saturday 16 June 2012 at The Lodge 12 noon for a 2:00 pm start

**We welcome all members, especially those who have recently joined us,
to this our midwinter meeting, where, from 12 noon,
we will serve HOMEMADE SOUP with crusty bread or sandwich, tea or coffee.
Cost \$5**

**Come early to browse the range of pre-loved books we have for sale
at various prices.**

**Choose your purchases from the selection of both
fiction and non-fiction books on offer.**

**The general meeting will begin at 2:00 pm, and be followed by our usual
delicious Afternoon Tea.**

June Guest Speaker

Linda Thomas

Linda has been the Community Conservation Officer at the Blue Mountains City Council since 2005. The position is focused on encouraging and supporting conservation works on non-Council land, and manages various programs including Landcare, the Bush Backyards Network and the Rural Practice Improvements program which works with landowners in the Megalong Valley and Sun Valley.

In the past 25 years as a resident of the Blue Mountains, Linda has also been a bush regenerator, working with various contractors in the Blue Mountains and Western Sydney, and was involved with various community conservation groups including being a committee member of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society for several years.

Linda will talk about the Council's Community Conservation Program and the Council's strategic approach to the various issues associated with bushland conservation and weed management in the Blue Mountains (see page 2 for more details).

Annual Membership Fees Due

Please note that the ANNUAL membership RENEWAL fees (for 1st July 2012 to 30th June 2013 are now due, so there will be an opportunity to pay at this meeting.

Still only \$11 per person per annum!

The membership form is attached to this newsletter.

Advance Notice for August

The Society's 43rd Annual General Meeting and election of committee members for the year 2012-2013 will be held at The Lodge at 2:00 pm on Saturday 18th August 2012.

The guest speaker at this meeting will be **Judy Finch**, Manager of the Blackheath Area Neighbourhood Centre.
More in the next newsletter!

From the President

Here in the Blue Mountains we were all enjoying a few days of sunny weather with clear blue skies after the chilly autumn mornings, when we had a 24-hour blast of cold westerly winds gusting to 109 km an hour – a sudden reminder of July 2011 and the resulting devastation. Luckily this time we seem to have had only minor damage – 2 or 3 eucalypts rather than over 100. This clearing job will be added to the previous list of trees / overhangs to be removed by our tree-cutter.

The clear air is a wonderful time to take photographs, perhaps for our 2013 calendar if you hurry. We would like photos to be available by the next General Meeting, on the 16th June.

Recent local community events included the Blackheath Day picnic on the 12th May, celebrating the naming of Blackheath in 1815 by Governor Lachlan Macquarie. The traditional cake was cut by our long-time member **Jean Twyford**, assisted by the youngest pupil at Blackheath Public School, Abbas Haidar. Jean was born in Blackheath (in 1930) and is widely known for her community activities.

Quota International of Blackheath held its 60th Installation Dinner on the 16th May, at which I was pleased to represent our Society. This active group raises several thousand dollars each year and donates to local community organisations. We were delighted to again be recipients of a donation – Quota has supported the Gardens since the early days of our development.

On the 19th May our member **Rill Gibson** celebrated her 95th birthday at a party organised by **Marion Freidman** for Rill's relatives and friends. I was interested to learn that Rill had been an AIM nurse at Innamincka in 1942-44, among other facets of her varied life.

Birthdays to be celebrated in June include **Norm Campbell** (96 on 16/06/12) and **Laurel Phillips** (95 on 25/06/12). Congratulations to all these older members, and thanks for your active participation in this Society over many years.

Jeannette Adrian - President

Last Call for 2013 Calendar Photos

David Cook has almost finished setting up the proofs for our 2013 Calendar – all he needs to do now is to include some photos from members. To that end he would like any member with suitable photos to bring them along to the June meeting (on a disk or memory stick in JPEG format) so he can load them onto the Society's PC on that day.

April General Meeting

The meeting on Saturday 21st April was attended by 31 members and 2 visitors, with 13 apologies being received.

The Treasurer's Report, given by **Joan Hailstone**, showed a Cash Book Balance of \$37,734.44, plus Term Deposits totalling \$209,142.49.

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

There will be some minor changes to the Open Days this year, to ease the burden on the volunteers. The Lodge will be open on the October long weekend (29th September – 1st October) then from the 6th October – 5th November inclusive. The volunteers will now come in at 9:30am, with the doors open to visitors at 10:00am. Last orders will be taken at 3:30pm so (hopefully) we can close up by 4:00pm.

The guest speaker was our own **Jeannette Adrian**, giving a comparison of the major rhododendron gardens at Emu Valley, Olinda, and Blackheath – see next page for a summary.

The meeting closed at 3:45pm and was followed by afternoon tea.

Summary of the Blue Mountains Council Community Conservation Program

Objectives

Focus on:

- ◆ Improved management of significant conservation assets on private land (and support objectives of Environment Protection & Protected Area zoning);
- ◆ Reducing impacts of poor private land management on public conservation assets (weeds, stormwater, erosion & sediment control, loss of native habitat);
- ◆ Partnership development – liaison between landowners & other land management agencies / Council teams for high level, strategic conservation & weed control outcomes across land tenure.

Why?

- ◆ More than half the bushland in the Blue Mountains Local Government Area is on private property;
- ◆ Many threatened vegetation communities and rare & endangered species habitats occur on private land;
- ◆ Public reserves are often impacted by problems on adjoining private land.

Garden Report

Dick and Pat Harris are enjoying a well-earned break, taking in the sights, sounds and tastes of Europe.

We had one wet Monday this month where not much was achieved, except some maintenance on the chain saws. The rest of the days were fine.

Lester Ives still has some work to do on some dangerous trees and widow makers. He is fitting us in between his other outside work.

The ferns and seaside daisy have been tidied up around the stone bridge, and the approaches have been mulched.

The Maple Grove walk has been weeded.

The 'No dogs, no swimming' sign at the lake has been mounted in a frame and erected, with ferns planted around to improve the look.

Some donated helleborus have been planted behind the toilets.

The boggy area across the path near the start of the Englebert walk has been drained, and the track repaired.

The seats that were repaired with pink-primed timber have been painted, along with many others.

The tidying up and maintenance of paths is ongoing.

Geoff Cannings

How do we Compare?

In the last couple of years our President **Jeannette Adrian**, and her friend and Society member **Janet Dempster**, have visited both the Emu Valley Rhododendron Garden in Northern Tasmania, and the National Rhododendron Garden at Olinda, near Melbourne. Jeannette was the guest speaker at the April General Meeting and gave a fascinating evaluation of these two gardens and compared them with our own Gardens.

Both Emu Valley and Olinda are set on beautiful basalt soils which hold moisture, while our Gardens are on sandstone with porous, deficient soil – but which is rich in humus.

Emu Valley, about 8 kilometres south of Burnie, was started in 1977. In 1979, 11 hectares of a local farmer's paddocks became the Rhododendron Garden – with a fee of \$20 a year for usage of the land. The Emu Valley Rhododendron Group, which is separate from the Australian Rhododendron Society, later bought the farmer's land (which is very steep) and set about creating both walking tracks and roads throughout.

The garden, about 50-150 metres above sea level, with a series of lakes at the bottom of the amphitheatre, contains 300 species with over 22,000 rhododendrons. It is set out in different geographical areas (Japan, Nepal, North America, etc), with each area containing both species rhododendrons and companion plants from that particular area. There is also a large area set aside for rhododendron hybrids. Emu Valley was officially opened in 1988, and is funded by government and council grants, with some large donations as well (e.g. from Gunns). There are up to 200 volunteers.

Olinda, in the Dandenongs, an hour's drive east of Melbourne, was started in 1960, and is open to the public every day (with no entry fee). It is a very formal 40 hectare garden, with no paths, only lawns, about 400-600 metres above sea level. The garden contains 15,000 rhododendrons (in some 350 species), proteas, 12,000 azaleas 3,000 camellias and 250,000 daffodils. Vireyas are grown in the open, even though the garden gets some snow. In 1960 members of the Ferny Creek Horticultural Society started another group known as the Australian Rhododendron Society. They were granted a permissive occupancy lease from the Forest Commission of 20 hectares of public land in the Olinda State Forest. In 1975 this area was doubled in size. After the first 20 hectares were cleared of blackberry, etc, the first plantings were carried out. However, a major bushfire in the area after about 5 years meant that work on the garden had to start again. There are now 10 kilometers of walking tracks and 3 kilometers of roads for bus tours. In 1995 the garden was taken back by the Victorian Government, and is now run by Parks Victoria – with 4 paid staff and 25 volunteers.

Our Gardens are still unique in the world, with the rhododendrons and other exotics growing under the eucalypt canopy. Emu Valley and Olinda also have natives growing, but around the perimeter of their gardens. We also have quite a number of the old rhododendron hybrids that are not being sold in nurseries now.

Weddings in the Gardens

There has been a steady stream of young (and not so young) couples choosing the Gardens for their wedding ceremony.

Pride of place so far must go to the couple who wanted to start their life together by being married at the start of the day – 6:30 am – and were very happy with both the time and the place.

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

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