

Blue Mountains Rhododendron Society of New South Wales Inc.

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NEWSLETTER

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PO Box 238, Blackheath, 2785.

General Meeting

Saturday 15 June 2013
1pm for a 2pm start

at

The Lodge

We welcome all members, especially those who have recently joined us, to our *Mid-winter Meeting*, from 1pm for a drink of your choice.

Browse in the Library - there are books there for everyone.

The General Meeting will begin at 2.00pm, followed by our usual delicious *Afternoon Tea*

GUEST SPEAKER
LIBBY RAINES
of
"Merry Garth"

We are delighted to have Libby Raines of "Merry Garth" Garden in Mt. Wilson as our Guest Speaker for our June Meeting. Libby has had a life long connection with the garden; firstly through her parents who rented a cottage on the block from the Wynne family during the war, and continued to live there for many years. Libby, her husband and family came to live there in 1979 when they began to create the garden. The garden is surrounded by rainforest and has wide views across Bowen Creek to the Mountains Banks, Hay, Bell, Tomah and beyond.

Besides developing "Merry Garth" Garden, Libby has been a tireless worker for Bushcare. Last April, the BMCC Bushcare Officers awarded Libby with The Golden Trowel Bushcare Legend award.

Libby will have much of interest to tell us at our next meeting which is not to be missed.

Annual Membership Fees Due

Please note that the ANNUAL Membership RENEWAL Fees (for 1st July 2013 to 30th June 2014) are now due, so there will be an opportunity to pay early at this meeting.

Still only \$11 per annum

Membership Form attached to this newsletter

Advance Notice for August 2013

The Society's 44th Annual General Meeting and election of committee members for the year 2013/2014 will be held at The Lodge at 2pm on Saturday 17th August 2013.

New Members

We warmly welcome **Elizabeth and Brough Warren of Blackheath** to the Society and invite them to become involved in all the activities the Society has to offer.

From the President - Judy's Jottings

Blackheath has enjoyed the usual shades of Autumn colour, our bulbs have been planted and all the regular seasonal jobs have hopefully been accomplished by now.

I represented the Gardens with the tribute of natives on ANZAC Day with the ceremony now being held inside the park, a much better arrangement than having it on the street. The Parade was enhanced with the presence of the horse 'Lollipop' representing the unknown soldier and bearing a folded flag from the Gallipoli campaign.

The gardening Seminars in April were an outstanding success with the five presenters being introduced by former "Gardening Australia Magazine" editor Jennifer Stackhouse. We were fortunate to host the fourth of five seminars at The Lodge, and Jerry Colby-Williams and others have determined to visit again in springtime. For those who were able to attend, this event was truly a special treat.

In the Gardens our special project to create a walkway and lookout over the valley is progressing under the guidance of committee member Geoff Cannings, who is getting advice and quotes from engineering firms.

Sonia Levitt and Diane Twose have taken the Editorial job this month as Alan Lush and wife Brenda are on an overseas trip. They will attend the Chelsea Flower Show, a highlight of their trip, so we'll surely hear from them about this special event. Paul and Carol Ketelhohn will attend 'Chelsea' also, so Blackheath will be well represented there!

On a recent visit to Mt. Wilson, John and I went to "Merrygarth" for a few special plants for our garden. Libby and Keith Raines were most welcoming and donated four different Enkianthus species for the Rhododendron Gardens. We have three healthy plants in the valley already and the new ones have been planted by the volunteers in close proximity.

Libby will make a return visit to be our speaker at the General Meeting on 15 June, a date to anticipate.

Our good wishes to Dick Harris for a successful knee operation this month and for a speedy recovery.

Best Wishes to all *Judy Johnston*

Dick's Garden Report - May 2013

Most time, over last month, has been spent on tidying up, weed removal and general maintenance of paths, steps etc. I have purchased several treated pine sleepers for steps, timber to fix drain covers, small bridges across paths and to repair seats. Jenny from Watsons has offered us a good price on paint and hopefully they have four litres of Mission Brown for seats etc. Also purchased weed mat and pins so we can line drain from Wentworth Street to the Lily pond.

We have been doing some tidying up of the Joan Storey garden (near Joan's plaque) and have purchased twelve native plants to replenish the area. Some of these plants grow in the wild, some in the Blue Mountains, some are naturally occurring cultivars found in the wild and some produced by hybridisation. In this area there is a reasonably established deciduous tree and I ask the committee to decide its fate. If this tree is not found to be Donated, or a "tree of importance" then it should be moved if possible, or removed. The ultimate decision will be mine to make.

Bill Webster has been continuing in Valley area removing weed such as Holly, Cotoneaster etc, with the help of some of our recent volunteers. I have been over the Glade area and treated any fresh germination of weed and also have continued to target Montbretia and self-seeded Agapanthus in the Valley area. Robert will cut dead wood from two azaleas, on the path from top gate to The Lodge and treat with cow manure and wood chip mulch.

I will take the whipper-snipper and the lawn mower (not ride-ons) to Delwyn Delrosa for service to fix any problems, so that we can use these to do what Martin had been doing.

Dick Harris - Garden Supervisor

The Library

Latest additions to the Library were some excellent books kindly donated by John & Beverley Watters; and two new purchases, "Hassan's Walls Orchids" by local Lithgow authors Helen Drewe, Ken Durie and Suzanne Lollback. And "Creating an Australian Garden" by Angus Stewart.

Walking through the Gardens in May...

"Yellow Buttons" (*Chrysocephalum apiculatum*) was in fine form. Its silvery felted leaves trailing over the brickwork in front of The Lodge. The golden yellow flowers brightening up the cold wintery days. This spreading native perennial herb is a quick growing groundcover in most soils, tolerant of frost and dry soil. Grows well from rooted cuttings.

Bicentennial Garden Lecture Series 2013

During the weekend of 12th to 14th April 2013, local garden clubs or horticultural societies hosted 5 seminars at which five speakers traced the evolution of gardening in the Blue Mountains over the last 200 years. The seminars were organised by Warren Boorman and Barrie Redshaw and chaired by Jennifer Stackhouse. The Campbell Rhododendron Gardens held its seminar on the Sunday morning. The speakers were Bunduluk, Prof. Dr Ian Jack, Alison Halliday, Angus Stewart and Jerry Coleby-Williams.

To commemorate the Blue Mountains Crossing Bicentenary, Angus Stewart has developed a yellow everlasting daisy which has been named “Explorers’ Triumph” which was the winning name in a competition initiated in the local primary schools.

Bunduluk, a member of the Darug people, has a vast knowledge of indigenous plants and their medicinal properties. Two plants of particular interest were the Sweet Sarsaparilla (*Smilax glycyphylla*) vine, the leaves, stems and flowers which have a bitter-sweet taste. It is used as an antioxidant to relieve chest pains and sore gums. The other plant is the *Dianella* spp. Flax Lily which has a very fibrous leaf. The fibre is stripped and then twisted into strands to make ropes and baskets.

Prof. Dr Ian Jack is Senior Fellow at St. Andrew’s College of the University of Sydney. He is currently a member of the History Advisory Panel of the Heritage Council. His presentation traced the historical development of the Blue Mountains and its early gardens. The following quotation sums up much of his content. “The Mountain Plateau had been for millenia an area where Aboriginal people from different language groups, Daarug, Gundungarra and Wiradjuri had met long before the Weatherboard Inn was dispensing dubious hospitality, long before Katoomba Street and Lurline Street were lined with accommodation houses.

Alison Halliday is the co-author of the book “A Passion for Place, Gardens of the Blue Mountains” She spoke mainly of the development of the cool-climate gardens and “hill stations” of Mount Wilson, Mount Tomah, Mount Irvine and some of the Bell’s Line of Road. The gardens range from those mellowed by over a century of growing time to those of tackling the challenges of modern day gardening. She had a number of interesting photographs from residents’ albums, one showing a young woman sitting on top of a tree fern in her pale stockings and white dress and wearing a 1920’s cap.

Angus Stewart is a noted native plant breeder and a presenter on ABC TV’s “Gardening Australia”. He detailed the link between the developed garden and the local environment. He spoke of the huge changes that have taken place over the last 200 years in how we garden and yet it seems that some things seem to have gone full circle.”Gardeners today are just as likely to be dependent on tank water, organic fertilisers and organic remedies as they were in days gone by. Our 21st gardens are very much focussed on providing a safe haven from a changing world and a place that can put food on the table.”

Jerry Coleby-Williams is the Director of Seed Savers Foundation and also presents on the ABC TV’s “Gardening Australia”. His presentation was titled “Into the Future - Challenges and Opportunities”. He spoke of how a populace can be motivated to grow food, as in Britain during the World Wars. He also explained the effect climate change is having on the various climatic regions in Australia especially in the blue Mountains. He had data to support the acceleration of the effects of climate change and is convinced that we will have very different vegetation surviving in the lower and upper Mountains in 20years time.

Julia Hanley and Jeanette Adrian

DVDs of these presentations are available for \$15.00 from your garden Club, Horticultural Society or Rhododendron Society.

Management Committee 2012 – 2013

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Jeannette Adrian
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Committee Members Beryl Black, Geoff Cannings, David Cook, Julia Hanley,
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Meeting Hostess Bette Brown

Editor/Webmaster Alan Lush

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