

Blue Mountains Rhododendron Society of New South Wales Inc.

Inaugurated April 2nd 1969

January/February 2015

NEWSLETTER

Vol. 41 No. 1

PO Box 238, Blackheath, 2785

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

**General Meeting
Saturday 21st February 2015 at
The Lodge
2.00 pm start**

Guest Speaker

Geoff McDonald

We are very pleased to have Geoff McDonald as our Guest Speaker for this meeting. Geoff is a renowned horticulturalist who has managed the Greenhouses of the University of New South Wales for many years.

Geoff was born and educated in England. He migrated to Australia as a young man. He loves being outdoors and the Australian bush. This love has led him to be a keen bushwalker. Other outdoor activities he enjoys are canyoning and caving.

Geoff is a frequent visitor to the Gardens so we are delighted that he is visiting the Gardens in an official capacity as our Guest Speaker.

New Members

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

Bram and Margo Geluk - Blackheath.

From the President - Julia's Say.

HAPPY NEW YEAR to all members! 2015 is already shaping up as a busy one. The Gardens are putting on lots of growth due to the unusually damp and warm conditions. This means weeds and the dreaded DODDER is flourishing but so too are the Rhododendrons and azaleas!

This newsletter will outline all the speakers we have organised for this year at our general meetings. We have deliberately ensured a wide variety of topics. Please put the dates in your diary and come along as it would be good to welcome all members at least once this year. The seminar scheduled for the end of March is taking shape and a flyer is included with this newsletter. We feel this will be a very informative day, full of interest, fun

and food!! Please let Joan or me know if you want to come. Tickets will be available at the February meeting. There are only 70 places.

Projects for the year: We begin the long process to renew our toilet block and add an accessible toilet. We will probably need to connect to the main sewer. The disabled car park space has been changed to ensure easy access to the new toilet.

Many smaller projects both in the gardens and pertaining to building maintenance will be noted in the Management Plan so all who attend meetings can see and discuss what we are proposing.

The major project is the revision of the Constitution. This is urgent as at present there is no allowance for Life Membership. Our current Constitution does not comply with the current Act hence another reason to revise. Our current objectives will remain with one extra proposed to include links with our local community. The process for this revision has a long time line and many people are involved. You will all receive a copy before the AGM as we will need the approval of a large majority of members for it to pass.

I hope you are all able to join us in some of our activities this year.

I look forward to catching up with you.

Julia

Vale - Joan Tierney

We were saddened to hear of the death of Joan Tierney on 17th January 2015 at the age of 97. Joan served on the Management Committee from 1982 to 2000 and she was a valued garden worker, Life Member and cheerful hostess (along with Marge Baker) at Society meetings.

A more detailed account of Joan's life will appear in the next newsletter. Jeanette Adrian.

This year the Newsletter will feature a series of articles on the History of the Gardens.

History of the Blue Mountains Rhododendron Society - Part 1

The Blue Mountains Nurserymen's Association "conceived the idea of a Blue Mountains Rhododendron Society" in 1968. The Nurserymen held a Public Meeting when it was proposed that the new society was to be separate from the Nurserymen's Association. Ib Sorensen, Dick Harris, Norm and Olive Campbell were part of the inaugural committee who attended a meeting in Wollongong with representatives from Victoria to discuss the formalities of being affiliated with the Australian Rhododendron Society. On 2nd August 1969 The Blue Mountains Rhododendron Society was inaugurated as the Australian Rhododendron Society of NSW Blackheath Branch in affiliation with the Victorian society.

A few months later the Blackheath branch discontinued affiliation due to the high cost of fees. The title of the Society then became the Blue Mountains Rhododendron Society of NSW.

In 1969, the Nurserymen's Association was very helpful in establishing this society as many accepted the duties of office bearers and in seeking a government grant of land for the proposed garden.

The Society's Committee inspected seven sites for the future Rhododendron Garden. Two members of the Committee – Olive Campbell and Mr M Finkh – enquired of Ald. H. Coates of Lithgow, about the possibilities of acquiring Crown land for development of a Rhododendron Garden. The preferred site was within the boundaries of Ridgewell Rd, Bacchante St. Cleopatra St. and Clarence Rd. On the 17th October 1969 approval was given by the Lands Department to establish a garden on the chosen site subject to the BM City Council being the Trustees. This was recorded in the NSW Government Gazette 36.

The first organized meeting was held on 30th May 1970. A letter from the Lands Department to Ald Coates

showed its support by stating that it would survey the area for fencing at no cost to the Society. Further support was received from the Horticultural Society and the Blackheath Festival Committee. The dream of the original founders of the Society was to become a reality.

Sources: Norm Campbell notes on the beginning of the Society; Olive Campbell's Diary; Dick Harris' Eulogy for Norm Campbell.

By Sonia Levitt

Did you know?

At least 13,000 people visited the Gardens during the "Open Days". 3,108 scones were sold. 70 kilos of jam and 66 cartons (600gm) of cream were used.

People from Europe said they planned their trip to Australia around the flowering of our azaleas and rhododendrons!

Some visitors said they are the "best" gardens of their kind in the world..... one could become quite swollen headed, thankfully it's the plants that make the display! Comments like these make volunteers work worthwhile!!

Tea towels

We have beautiful tea towels for sale at \$10.00 each. They make great gifts and help spread awareness of our Gardens.

We are seeking a seamstress who has time to convert some of the teatowels into aprons. Julia has done some and it is easy to do! Please tell a committee member if you are interested in helping.

Diary Dates Please note the following Diary dates in your diaries and make an effort to attend meetings.

- Sat 21st Feb at 2.00pm** - Guest Speaker – Geoff McDonald - horticulturalist.
- Sat 18th Apr at 2.00pm** - Guest Speaker - David Mike – Vexillologist.
- Sat 20th June "Noughties"** a celebratory meeting.
- Sat 15th Aug – AGM** - Guest speaker – Peter Reeve – Hydro Majestic Interior Designer.
- Sat 19th Sept.** - Guest speaker TBA
- Sat 12th Dec** - Christmas Meeting.

Garden Report:

With the Christmas/ New Year break we have not spent as much time in the Garden. We have continued to remove branches etc.; the Potash has been put on where required. I have continued with my weed eradication programme in the Conifer Garden area. and am very happy with the results there. I still have a small amount of Montbretia shooting in the valley area, but am sure I can control this.

We are making some slow progress on the water leak. A gate valve has been put into the line that goes from the pipe near the Shelter Shed in the valley around the Centenary Walk, to further be able to isolate areas of the irrigation system. A new gate valve now replaces the one at the meter that controls the flow to the Lodge, and most of the garden.

We have found a further plan of the irrigation system which shows the alteration of the pipe to the valley, which now only serves the Conifer Garden area. I have a new ball valve to replace the original 2 inch gate valve. The plumber came and had a look, and he believes that there is simply a faulty washer in the tap on the Water Board side of the meter. This would be reported to Sydney Water.

I have also tightened up the collar of a gate valve which controls the water from the Shelter Shed to the valley, on the other side of the service road, and have another gate valve to replace this, as with turning it on and off it will no doubt loosen, and leak again. This gate valve is very old.

Lester Ives is supposed to meet me here on Monday to discuss the removal of dead, damaged and dangerous

trees in the Centenary Walk and service road area. I will ask him to chip the heap of rubbish. Before Christmas a local contractor, was removing and chipping trees etc from the new house in Inconstant Street, and dumping chips where we store some in the overflow carpark. Much of the chip included environmental weeds, including Holly and Cherry Laurel. The Cherry Laurel was carrying ripe seed, and went on to the property where he was working. At first he denied there were any weeds in the chip, however the tree trunk that was being fed into the chipper was Cherry Laurel, and I pointed this out to him, and told him "no more". Later that afternoon he rang me and told me he had removed the chip.

I believe, as this is not the first time someone has dumped chip there, we should put a sign there threatening prosecution for anyone dumping. We have continued to remove dodder from various areas, thanks mainly to the girls.

- I have prepared a list of jobs we need to do:
1. Tidy Quota Walk – removing dead wood etc.
 2. Clean drain under bridge in Species Valley.
 3. Trim and tie back Rhodos and Camellias damaged in snow, above Pryor Bridge.
 4. Clean silt etc. from drain near lily pond.
 5. Put in extra step to track on West of valley.
 6. Clean silt etc. above bridge on road to Conifer Garden.
 7. Fix tar sealing on Bob Baker Walk.
 8. Oil Lithgow seats
 9. Oil deck.
 10. Get permission in late Autumn/Winter to burn heap in Conifer Garden.
 11. Try to get hazard reduction done and then renew fence.

This is in addition to our normal maintenance. I believe we are getting quite a few new volunteers, and I intend to create two teams. One for garden work, the other for maintenance; i.e. buildings, paths, roads, fences etc. The volunteers will not necessarily stay in the one team, but move across to the other as the work dictates. I am hoping Geoff will agree to be in charge of the maintenance team. Dick Harris

An early plea, we will be needing some new people on the committee in August this year. Please give some thought to being a committee member and helping run the Society. It is a lot of fun and not arduous but we have a number of members who are tired after many years of service and need a break. We need new people to become involved if the Society is to continue into the future. We need to recruit new committee members as we have beautiful gardens with a world-wide reputation to maintain! Please talk to a committee member if you are interested in joining the management team. (Julia will be continuing this message each newsletter until we have some new participants!!)

Management Committee 2014 – 2015

President
Julia Hanley
4787 5728

Vice Presidents
Judy Johnston 4787 7298
Sonia Levitt 4787 5502

Garden Supervisor
Dick Harris

Secretary
Joan Hailstone
4787 5859

Treasurer
Val Moorhead
4787 8267

Membership Secretary
Marion Freidman
4787 8416

Committee Members Geoff Cannings, David Cook, Alan Lush, Deb Wells

Meeting Hostess Mary Chernov

Editor Sonia Levitt
Webmaster Julia Hanley

website – www.rhodogarden.org.au

If you have any articles or news for the Newsletter, please send to Sonia at salevitt13@bigpond.com . Thank you

GRAND DESIGNS SEMINAR

To be held at The Lodge,
CAMPBELL RHODODENDRON GARDENS

DATE: 28th March 2015

TIME: 9:00am to 4:00pm

**Cost: \$15.00 whole day, (4 speakers, all food)
\$10.00 half a day lunch included**

Program:

| | |
|------------------|---|
| 9.00am to 10:15 | Katrina Baglin Horticulturalist / Plant Designer |
| 10:15 to 10:45 | Morning Tea |
| 10:45 to 12:00 | Ray Wiles Design of Leura Garden Festival |
| 12:00 to 1:00pm | Lunch |
| 1:00pm to 2:15pm | Christine Osbourne Grand Abu Dabi etc |
| 2:15pm to 2:45pm | Afternoon Tea |
| 2:45pm to 4:00pm | Robyn Matthews Grand Floral Design |

Spaces are limited so buy your tickets soon!!

Hope to see you all there.

To book ring **Julia 4787 5728** or **Joan 4787 5859**
Better yet, buy tickets at the next meeting on the 21st February!