

Blue Mountains Rhododendron Society of New South Wales Inc

Inaugurated April 2nd 1969

SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2016 NEWSLETTER

Vol. 41 No. 5

PO Box 238 Blackheath

GENERAL MEETING
Saturday 17th September 2016
The Lodge
2:00pm Start

Afternoon Tea will be served after the Meeting. Please bring a plate to share.
We welcome all members, especially those who have recently joined us.

Election of Management Committee for 2016 - 2017

**At the Annual General Meeting of the Society,
held at the Lodge on Saturday 20th August
2016, the following members were elected for
the coming twelve months.**

President - Alan Lush

Vice President - Deb Wells

Secretary - Julia Hanley

Treasurer and Public Officer - Val Moorhead

Membership Secretary - Bill Webster

Committee Members -

Geoff Cannings

David Cook

Dick Harris

Anna Martin

Sonia Levitt

Diane Twose

Brough Warren

Our thanks go to Matt French, for being our Guest Speaker at the AGM. We were much enlightened by the extent of his work amongst animals in the RSPCA. His work is not only about rescuing sick or injured animals but also in helping their owners feed them and to take better care of them. We all learnt a lot about RSPCA's wider role in the community. Thank you very much. And we also thank Wayne Hanley for being the Returning Officer during the election of the new Committee.

17th September Guest Speaker

Rosemary McColl

Rosemary McColl has taught a wide range of horticultural subjects during her 20 years at Ryde TAFE. She has travelled extensively in France and Italy studying Renaissance Gardens of France and Italy. This should be a great topic not only for gardeners but also for history lovers. Her Topic will be **The Renaissance Gardens of France and Italy**.

2017 Calendars

Don't forget - our magnificent 2017 Calendars produced by **David Cook** and **Jimmy Lim** are on sale at a cost of **\$8.00 each**. A bargain! For those members unable to pick them up at the Lodge, we can post one out to you at a total cost of \$12.00 each (which includes postage). Just send your details (and a cheque) to **Blue Mountains Rhododendron Society, P.O. Box 238, Blackheath, NSW 2785**.

From our new President: Alan's Account

Hello to everyone, both new and longer-serving members. As you may know, I have been a member of the Society for over 10 years, a member of the Management Committee for 7 of those years, including 4 as Secretary, and have now been given the honour and privilege of becoming President. In taking over from Julia, I am mindful of the fact that the last 3 years have been some of the most successful in the Society's history, with all credit being due to Julia and the outgoing committee. Many projects have been brought to a successful conclusion – think the new Dick Harris Lookout, the Constitution and Investment Planning Policy, the highly successful Seminars, and the revamp of the Society's website, to name just a few.

To Julia and her hard-working committee I give my thanks, and my appreciation that over 90% of last year's committee have volunteered to continue serving the Society in this way. I welcome Brough Warren as the new member of the committee, and am looking forward to working with everyone in 2016/17. As you will see elsewhere in this newsletter there are still many projects to be completed, with many more new ideas to be discussed in the months ahead. The committee will welcome feedback from members, as well as considering all ideas they may wish to put forward.

Hoping to see as many as possible at the general meeting on the 17th September, as this will be the last meeting before the Open Days start on the 30th and run until the 6th November. If anyone is able to volunteer some of their time during this period to help the Society, please give Deb Wells a call.

Alan Lush – President 2016-17



President's Report from August 2015 - August 2016

It seems like only yesterday that I stood before you to report what we had achieved during 2014 and 2015. Here I am again after a busy year for all volunteers at the Gardens to report some of our outcomes on the various projects carried out during this last 12 months. Dick will fill you in on the garden projects and Geoff on building projects so I will report on the others. My special thanks go to these two people who co-ordinate the majority of the projects.

We have been able to "spend money" as we were very fortunate to receive a large bequest from Frank Jurisits-

Kovacs. This bequest prompted us to develop a Financial Investment Plan which will guide all future investments so any spare money we have may work for us in a protected, conservative manner. Our very able Treasurer, Val, now has carriage of this Plan and will tell you more detail shortly. I would like to especially thank Pat Kenny who was a member of the Financial Plan sub committee and who with his experience in the financial world was able to guide us in writing our policy and procedures for this document. Pat worked many hours in gathering information for the Management Committee's consideration. The resulting document contains our requirements but has been written by our Financial Advisor and approved by our Solicitor.

Our current membership numbers 113 and 10 life members. We still have 69 names on our membership list but they are not financial. During the year Judy Johnston has lead a drive for new members... We have tried paying for advertising but it seems word of mouth, the Seminar or a visit to the Gardens themselves are the most effective ways of attracting new members. Most of our promotion for this spring season will be via media of various types. Our website continues to receive lots of visitors. Anna, our very organised and enthusiastic Secretary, has spent much time with Marius Coomans refining our website. She has also updated our entries on Destination NSW where we seem to attract many people seeking information about the Gardens. This site also allows us to translate our information into various languages. This is a great bonus as a number of our visitors are coming straight from China and other Asian countries these days. Geoff's son helped develop a very good looking flyer which is now two sided and seeks new members and promotes the idea of volunteering at the Gardens. Geoff has distributed these to the local real estate agents for inclusion in the new home owner pack.

We have again reached out to our local community. We have used Quota for catering at the Seminar, The Public School students participated in a poster painting competition again. These have been judged, the posters printed, and prizes have been presented. They will also allow us to advertise on their electronic notice board at weekends during our open days. The Blackheath Alliance has proved a good way to link in with other local organisations. I have had discussions with the Chamber of Commerce about how we can promote the town centre to our spring visitors. I understand that a brochure is being developed which we have agreed to distribute. We are distributing the Heritage Trail brochures developed by BMACHO and are a special "Hidden Gem" on their website. We paid for space in the Garden Trail brochure. I have offered the CWA some Rhodo blooms to decorate their rooms if they proceed with a fund raiser during the Rhodo Festival weekend. We are now using and storing plant cages and star irons that belong to the Streetscape group. Other people to use our Lodge are the Blackheath and District Horticultural Society, Garden Clubs of Australia for their local zone meetings, The Red Cross and at times The Exercise Group, The Scrabble Group, BANC for Christmas Celebrations. I enjoy the fact that we can help others who are fund raising to help those less fortunate in our community. I am concerned that so many people in Blackheath still do not know of the Gardens. I hoped that by engaging with the organisations I have mentioned many more people would know about us!

Throughout the year we have had a steady attendance at our meetings. We have had interesting speakers on varied topics and very good afternoon teas afterwards. Thanks to Deb for organising the speakers and the kitchen, both at meetings and especially during Lodge Open Days. Others on the Management Committee have been hard at work; Bill, apart from maintaining our membership records, has been searching and negotiating the purchase of a large mulcher which we hope will allow us to recycle almost all of our green waste and reduce the cost of the Cleanaway bin. David has produced another wonderful calendar which is on sale from today. He is helping Beryl, our archivist, set up some historical photo exhibitions to help our members and visitors understand our history. Dick, as usual, has many plans for beautifying the Gardens and is always encouraging the Monday workers even when some of the tasks to be completed are difficult. Sonia is taking a short break from her publicity role but is still editing the newsletter. Di has stepped onto the Committee to fill the Publicity role. I'd like to thank all of the Committee who have worked diligently in their various roles and because of this have made my year much easier. It is with sadness that we farewell Judy Johnston from the Committee. She has been a tireless leader and contributor to our Society over many years. We have not lost Judy's skills however as she will join the ever growing band of people who ensure the smooth running of our various activities. Judy will remain our Merchandising Whizz. The others not mentioned so far who have tasks outside the committee are Marion Freidman our Librarian, who has sorted and catalogued American Rhododendron Journals from 1979 to 2005 and Australian Rhododendron Journal from 1952 to 2002 which were kindly donated by Ivan Menzies; Jeannette Adrian our purchasing person and Gardens survey co-ordinator, Beryl Black who is sorting our archive documents and placing them in display books for easy access; Joan Hailstone our meeting hostess, Alan Lush our plant name tag engraver, Alice Reeves who closes the gates each night, Elaine Cannings our First Aid Officer and chief volunteer barbeque organiser! I'd like to thank you all for all your contributions. You certainly make being President a much easier task.

Jeannette has joined Kevin Bell, past director of the Conservation Society Nursery and myself in developing a list of native plants around the Lodge and in the Valley area. Plant labels have been placed along pathways with more to go as we have available time. I hope to have a few copies of a booklet describing these plants available for interested visitors to peruse during Lodge Open Days. Lastly I wish to thank all our volunteers, the Monday workers and those who help during the Lodge Open Days in Spring. Without your untiring support this Society would not be able to maintain the Campbell Rhododendron Gardens in the manner we all expect.

I also wish to thank the members of the Society for giving me the honour of leading this organisation for the last three years. I have enjoyed my time and hope to continue to contribute in the years ahead.

Thank-you written by Julia Hanley



GARDEN REPORT AGM August 2016

Well what a busy year it has been. Last spring was quite spectacular, flowering was great. I put this down to our annual fertilising, particularly the sulphate of potash applications that are now really working to induce flowering.

Of course right throughout the year a great deal of time is taken up keeping the garden tidy, removing dodder etc., making sure the various paths are safe and repairing them when necessary. A new path called the "Volunteers' Way", this is below the road into the valley and above the Maple Grove, a large area where quite a few rhodos couldn't be seen properly. This area will soon have name labels on the rhodos.

After investigation of some large water bills we uncovered a few water leaks. The original polythene pipe was rural grade as it was all that was available at the time. The main line has now been replaced with blue stripe polythene pipe which has much thicker and stronger walls. The rest of the pipe to the valley etc. is now turned off and has to be turned on should we require it to water plant etc.

The weather over the past year has not always been great and we have had to clear up trees that have come down in some of the strong winds which takes a lot of time to cut them up, clear up and put into the big bin all the branches etc. This takes a lot of man power.

We have also had to spray for lace bug and red spider on two occasions during last spring and also treated a few borers in both exotics and natives.

Our weed eradication program has been ongoing and I feel we are gradually getting on top of the weeds. There are now a lot less montbretia, ivy, privet, holly and Himalayan honeysuckle than previously and broom and blackberry are just a matter of keeping an eye out for any fresh plants from bird droppings etc.

We have extended the Quota Walk and planted quite a few rhodos, all done by past presidents or for past presidents. There have also been some plantings of reticulata camellias, dwarf bottle brush, banksia "Birthday Candles" and grevillea gaudi-chaudi in Kovacs area.

A lot of work over the past year has been quite heavy so us boys have had to rely on the girls to keep the place tidy and shipshape to prune the azaleas, hydrangea etc., remove the dodder, take dead wood out of the rhodos and put a cuppa on for morning tea and lunch, clean the toilets and even wash up after lunch.

Plans for the near future are fence on the eastern boundary to delineate who is responsible for weed control, us or the neighbours. We hope in the next few weeks we will burn the heaps of branches etc. in the Conifer Garden area and then I have a plan in mind for this area.

Geoff will outline to you next the huge amount of work done by us all on what we call our projects. You will realise then what a great job all our volunteers have done and following on with tradition they should all stand while we thank them with acclamation.

(written by Dick Harris August 2016)



Project Report

Annual General Meeting 20th August 2016

TOILET BLOCK.

This has been our main project for the last 20 months but most hurdles have now been overcome and the project should be completed early in the New Year.

We now have DA approval and expect the Construction Certificate to be forthcoming within days.

One of the early decisions was whether or not to install on-site treatment but the on-going costs of this and the large area required to be bulldozed for soakage made connection to the sewer a much more attractive option and a more sensible proposition going into the future. Council also indicated early on that this would be the easiest option to gain their approval.

We ran out of time to complete this job before open days this year but building early in the New Year will allow the landscaping and new plantings to become established before open days next year.

SEWER CONNECTION.

Three quotes were received and the job was awarded to David Hellyer. David has been very persistent in his dealings with Sydney Water. David's quote was competitive and he was the only plumber to elect to connect at Wentworth Street Pumping Station which meant that we did not need to deal with Council for street openings etc.

This has been quite a large project but the pipe has now been laid, the tank and the two maceration pumps installed and a connection point fitted for the new toilet block.

Last Monday, the volunteers dug a trench 500mm deep from the lodge to the old toilet block for the laying of extra power capacity for the pumps. This enabled a large saving to be made on the cost of the electrical work.

LODGE APPROACH.

The realignment of the path to the Lodge was completed in September 2015 and this with small ramps at the doorway made entry to the Lodge much easier for people with mobility aids.

SILT TRAP.

The lily pond near the Kovac Garden has been very prone to silting up and twice recently, we needed to get Crawford Earthmoving to scoop out earth that had built up above the water line and was burying the lilies. There was far too much volume for volunteers to remove and so the committee decided to install a silt trap to drop the silt and allow only clean water to flow into the pond. Crawford Earthmoving undertook this construction and provided a porous dam with access at the side for removal of silt by volunteers with wheel barrows as required. This looks a bit raw at the moment but has been planted around with ferns and lomandra which will soon cover the ground and camouflage the works. Work will be ongoing in this area.

UPPER CAR PARK.

Erosion by water over the years had made large furrows in the overflow car park leaving a very rough surface. To improve this we have had a contractor spread and roll a good layer of recycled asphalt to improve the parking for cars and buses.

STEPS & PATHS.

Some work has been done this last year and, will be ongoing, to improve drainage and path surfaces. This is all done by volunteers and is determined after inspections during heavy rain and by observation of tracks with exposed tree roots and rocks.

Yet to be Done

TOOL SHED

The tool shed in the Garden is a donation from the Baaner Apple Orchard many years ago and is considered to have heritage value by the Society. Over the years, termites have done considerable damage to a corner post, some bottom plates, floor boards and under floor joists. It was once decided that volunteers could do this remedial work but recent inspection showed that it was a bigger job than we first thought and a local carpenter, Bryce Sutcliffe will be starting the job in a few weeks. He will replace all timbers with termite-resistant material and not alter the outside appearance of the building. We have decided to add a "name sign" to the shed that will depict its origins. This will be decided after consultation with family of the original donor but will probably be on an apple shaped board.

DISABLED CAR PARK.

In conjunction with the toilet block, Council require that we have a proper disabled car parking space made to the Australian Standard AS/NZS2890.6.2009. This will be done by Crawford Earthmoving and include a path at the required slope to the new toilet block.

REEDS in DAM.

Over the last couple of years we have made attempts to eliminate the reeds around the edge of the dam. The thought is that by constantly cutting the reeds below the water surface will eventually “drown” the reeds and we have had some limited success but to date, we have not been rigorous enough in these endeavours and the weeds still persist. **It is a difficult job from an unstable canoe and so if any member has access to a small aluminium dinghy we could borrow from time to time, we would like to hear from them.** We will continue our efforts here as too many reeds spoil the reflections for photographers.

written by Geoff Cannings August 2016

2016 Financial Year End Treasurer's Report

Audited reports:

Reconciliation statement income includes transfers from Term Deposits to Trading accounts in preparation for sewer connection and new toilet block.

3 Term Deposits on hand at 31.6.16

Balance Sheet - no change to the Buildings and improvements, this will change in new financial year upon completion of the new toilet block. Total assets increase mainly due to bequest from Frank Jursits-Kovacs bequest.

Receipts & Payments show net amts e.g. Calendars, Souvenir/Plants, Tea Sales etc.

Audited books available for perusal.

Open Days 2105:

Amounts received slightly lower than 2014.

Financial Investment Planning:

Policy and Procedures have now been developed, after receiving the large bequest from Frank Jurists-Kovacs. The sub-committee met with a Financial Advisor and our Solicitor to discuss the Society's requirements for these and possible large donations/bequests received in the future. The result being a Financial Investment Planning Policy and Procedure being written by our Financial Planner, John Richards of Richards

Financial Planning, and approved by our Solicitor, John Chapman. The initial investment will be to the My North Platform using a spread of investments to comply with a 50% growth/50% defensive profile, allowing some growth without huge risks, there are no guarantees; however, we feel this split best suits our requirements. Slight changes were made to the original selection, this Platform has a Cash Account included originally set at 15% and is now set at 1%, earnings will be credited to this account and then reinvested in to the investments selected. The total investment platform can be reviewed at any time and reports are readily available. The sub-committee will the review the My North Platform investment plan in accordance with policy guidelines and report to the Management Committee. Any changes to the investments require two authorised signatories (same as our Bank Trading Accounts). Documents are available to peruse today.

“Cashless Society”:

The Society continues to move towards the “cashless society”. We are investigating paying our accounts “online” where possible and reducing our use of cheques. During the open days we will have the Bendigo Bank EFTPOS machine for approximately 3 weeks. Improved mobile reception has been noticed at the Gardens and hopefully the machine will work inside the Lodge.

Written by Val Moorhead, presented at 2016 AGM



We still need people to volunteer for the Lodge Open Day rosters. Please ring Deb Wells on 4787 6724 or 04018 622 307. She will be ringing people to organise shifts in the next couple of weeks. Kitchen orientation Day is on 20th September.

Come and see the beautiful Gardens in October / November and bring your friends!!

Management Committee 2016 - 2017

President

Alan Lush
4787 6983

Vice President

Deb Wells
4787 6724

Garden Supervisor

Dick Harris

Secretary

Julia Hanley
0408 336 635

Treasurer

Val Moorehead
4787 8267

Membership Secretary

Bill Webster
4787 6082

Committee Members: Geoff Cannings, Anna Martin, David Cook, Sonia Levitt, Di Twose, Brough Warren

Meeting Hostess: Joan Hailstone

Editor: Sonia Levitt

Website: www.rhodogarden.org

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



THE BLUE MOUNTAINS RHODODENDRON SOCIETY OF NSW INC.

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