

# Blue Mountains Rhododendron Society of New South Wales Inc.

[www.rhodogarden.org.au](http://www.rhodogarden.org.au)

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July/August 2011

## NEWSLETTER

Vol. 37 No. 4

PO Box 238, Blackheath, 2785.

### Annual General Meeting Saturday 20 August 2011 at The Lodge starting at 2:00 pm

We welcome all members, especially those who have recently joined us, to our 42<sup>nd</sup> Annual General Meeting and election of committee members for the ensuing 12 months.

Please note that members need to be financial to be able to vote.

**ANNUAL membership RENEWAL fees  
(for 1<sup>st</sup> July 2011 to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2012)  
are still only \$11 per person per annum**

The Agenda for the meeting will be supplied separately

#### August Guest Speakers

##### Bill Webster and Dick Harris

Because of the great amount of damage done to the Gardens in the severe winds of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> July (more of that further on in the newsletter), Bill, an SES volunteer of long standing, and Dick, a Gardens stalwart of even longer standing, have prepared an action plan for both the short term and long term recovery of the Gardens.

Bill and Dick will explain what happened in the winds, possibly why it happened, what has been done to start clearing the fallen trees and other debris, what plans have been put in place to aid in the recovery of the devastated areas – and why the Gardens need to be closed to the public for as long as possible prior to the Open Days starting on the 30<sup>th</sup> September.

At the end of their talk, questions from the floor will be welcomed – so please come prepared.

For those interested, some photos of the damage will be available for viewing on the PC in the Lodge.

#### Advance Notice

The Guest Speaker for the September 17<sup>th</sup> meeting will be Scott Pollock from Everglades.

#### Election of new committee

At this AGM a new management committee for the Society is to be elected. According to the Society's constitution the management committee will consist of the office-bearers and (up to) seven other members. The office-bearers consist of one President and four Vice-Presidents, one Honorary Secretary and one Honorary Treasurer.

A nomination form is attached to this newsletter. If further copies are required please contact Alan on 4787 6983. Nomination forms must be returned to the Secretary by Friday 19<sup>th</sup> August.

Terri Hamilton has kindly consented to take the Chair for the election of the new committee.

### *Resignation*

The President, Rob Emanuel, tendered his resignation after the June general meeting. The management committee discussed the matter at its last meeting, and agreed to accept his resignation from both the office of President and from the management committee, while expressing their thanks for Rob's efforts in the last 12 months concerning the web site implementation, his fundraising dinners and his publicity for the Society and its activities, especially in the production of the DVD of the Gardens.

### *Nature – the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*

The Gardens suffered a traumatic two weeks in late June/early July with Mother Nature providing ample evidence of her powers (and don't anyone say 'Global Warming' or 'Climate Change').

Firstly – the Good. During the afternoon of June 21<sup>st</sup>, Blackheath had its best snowfall for at least 5 years, with 3 hours of continuous snow leaving up to a couple of centimetres of snow on the ground. The Gardens got its fair share of the snow, and, hopefully, some of the photos taken that afternoon will appear in the calendar for 2013 that we hope to produce for sale next year.

Secondly – the Bad. Two weeks later, on the 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> July, all the Upper Blue Mountains were buffeted overnight by winds gusting up to 140 kilometres an hour. The Gardens didn't escape the carnage. At first count there are at least 20 trees completely uprooted – with one of them a 30 metre + high Eucalyptus Oreades (Blue Mountain Ash) blown over in the valley. Dick Harris reckoned that if he stood in the hole it made, and Jeannette Adrian stood on his shoulders, she might just be able to see over the rim. In addition there are countless branches snapped off trees throughout the Gardens, as well as many 'widow-makers' left still hanging overhead.

Lastly – the Ugly. With so much work to be done to make the area safe again for the public, the Gardens are to be closed to the public for an indefinite period. Cleaning up started on the day after the big blow, but could take many months to complete. The most popular parts of the Gardens, radiating out from the Lodge and around the lake, will be made safe first, to ensure we will have at least part of the Gardens ready for the visitors during our Open Days in October/November.

In the meantime – if anyone wants some kindling, or firewood, .....

### *Report on the June Meeting*

Our June meeting is always popular with members who arrive early to enjoy a selection of homemade soups, served with crusty bread, before the meeting proper.

Many remembered to renew their subscription promptly, a great help to membership secretary Marion Freidman.

This was a good opportunity to meet with old and new members and to check out the well-stocked Library.

The Spring Raffle was launched at this meeting – a queen size quilt, donated by the ladies of the Quilts Coffee Group of the Upper Blue Mountains Probuc Club. Don't miss you chance to win this raffle!

Speaker Deb Milne from Neutrog gave a strong powerpoint talk, and sent everyone home with a box of Neutrog fertilisers, etc., a gift which was most appreciated. Joe Harris of Blackheath won the Neutrog raffle, going home with a can of Go-Go Juice as well.

Our warm air-conditioned Lodge, the interesting presentation by Deb and the usual excellent afternoon tea contributed to a congenial and pleasant winter meeting.

### *2012 Calendars*

Our thanks go to David Cook for his efforts in developing, at very short notice, a calendar that we can sell during the Open Days.

Two years ago we sold over 500 of the Garden Clubs of Australia calendars which contained some of David's photos of the Gardens. Recently we were told the GCA calendars would not be available this year, so, within a few weeks, David managed to produce, and have printed, a calendar containing photos of the Campbell Rhododendron Gardens only.

This is sure to be a hit at the Open days, and will be very suitable for sending to friends interstate or overseas. The cost of the calendars will be \$8.00 each, plus postage if required. Any member will be able to purchase the calendars (not just those who are able to visit the Gardens), as we will post them out to you. More details in the September newsletter.

## *Garden Report – July 2011*

Most of the month has been taken up with tidying up the masses of bark, sticks, etc that have come down. We have also located all points we can isolate water to various parts of the garden in case of leaks, and we have also located most of the turf valves and hose taps. These will be marked using the Survey pegs that were never used – red for isolating taps and black for watering points (these are also numbered). There are a few discrepancies in two different maps as to where some pipes are, and we will endeavour to correct these.

We have also put out some more name labels on Rhodos, and have some prepared to be put in. We must also get a program in place to get the native labels positioned as we have a large number of these under the Lodge.

The events of this first week in July will mean a great deal of time and effort will be taken in clearing up the mass of trees, etc, that are either down or hanging up in other trees. Martin has already cleared the road for us and I have spoken to Bill Webster who has agreed to help put in place both an action plan and a safety plan. I believe the Garden will have to stay closed to the public for some time. We will have to consider eventually getting in a contractor with the equipment and expertise to take down many of the trees that are hanging up in other trees, and also branches that are caught in other trees. I also believe we will have to shelve some other projects and make the clearing, and trying to save any smashed Rhodos, a priority both time wise and finance wise. The one project we must go ahead with is at least repairing the access road as far as the dam, as there will no doubt be increased traffic on this.

I also believe we must all now sign on and off every time we volunteer in the Gardens until it is back to normal. I will also require to be able to make volunteers adhere to the safety plan we put in place.

It will also be necessary to drop some trees that are now dangerous, and if a Rhodo is damaged – so be it. The only problem we will have with any Rhodos not recovering is if they are grafted, as these will no doubt shoot from below the graft if they need to be cut back hard. The large Eucalyptus Oreades (Blue Mountains Ash) down in the valley would, I believe, be a valuable mill log, and we may be able to get it removed on this basis.

Some areas of the Gardens may need to be roped off during the Open Days if they have not been fully cleared and made safe.

*Dick Harris – Garden Supervisor*

## *Spring Open Days*

In spite of the extensive wind damage, we still aim to have the Lodge (and most of the Gardens) open as usual for the period from the 30<sup>th</sup> September to the 7<sup>th</sup> November for the serving of Devonshire Teas, selling of souvenirs and plants, and general welcoming of the many visitors to the Gardens – local, state, interstate and overseas.

We are drawing up a roster of volunteers to help with this, our major fundraiser of the year. Whether you can come for half a day, or for a number of days, your presence will be most welcome – and very rewarding. Not only do we need people to help out in the Lodge, selling souvenirs, serving the visitors, preparing Devonshire Teas, etc (but not washing up – we have an industrial strength dishwasher), but we also need some people to meet and greet the visitors and pass on information about the Gardens.

Even though the weather last year was unusually cold and wet, the Open Days were very successful – and we aim to be even better this year. David Cook's calendars, at \$8.00 each, are sure to be a crowd pleaser, which will make working during the Open Days a very enjoyable experience.

So, why not give Judy (4787 7298) or Jeannette (4787 7904) a ring and volunteer some of your time for a very worthy cause. You can even get to try a free scone!

## *New Members*

We warmly welcome Diane Twose, from Blackheath, and Trish Watts, also from Blackheath, as new members of the Society, and invite them to join in all the Society's activities.

## *"The Rhododendron"*

Once again the Society has been asked to provide an article for the Australian Rhododendron Society's annual journal "The Rhododendron".

Dick Harris has written the article and supplied a number of photos taken of the damage to the Gardens – it should make interesting reading for all those who may have been unaware of what really happened up here.

**Management Committee 2010 – 2011**

**President**

**Vice Presidents**

**Garden Supervisor**

Jeannette Adrian – 4787 7904  
Judy Johnston – 4787 7298  
Robert Reid – 4787 5253

Dick Harris

**Secretary**

Alan Lush  
4787 6983

**Treasurer**

Joan Hailstone  
4787 5859

**Membership Secretary**

Marion Freidman  
4787 8416

**Committee Members** Barry Barnes, Beryl Black, Bette Brown, David Cook, Nancy Etccl

**Editor/Webmaster** Alan Lush

website – [www.rhodogarden.org.au](http://www.rhodogarden.org.au)