

Blue Mountains Rhododendron Society of New South Wales Inc.

Inaugurated April 2nd 1969

May/June 2010

NEWSLETTER

Vol. 36 No. 3

PO Box 238, Blackheath, 2785.

General Meeting Saturday 19 June 2010 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**

The usual meeting will begin at 2:00 pm

**There will be on sale both our 40th anniversary tag / keyring – cost \$10,
and the Rhododendron Garden magnet – cost \$8.**

A large selection of second-hand books will also be available to buy.

**Please note that the ANNUAL membership RENEWAL fees (for 1st July 2010
to 30th June 2011) are due, so this is an opportunity to pay at this meeting
(still only \$11 per person per annum)**

Guest Speaker at the General Meeting – Peta Trahar

Peta Trahar was raised in Tasmania, lived in Mosman in Sydney and now calls Woodgreen Angus Stud, at Bilpin, home. Peta is a graduate of Ryde School of Horticulture. Her experience includes working as a landscape lecturer, writer, garden judge and selector for Australia's Open Garden Scheme. Her career as a landscape designer has given focus to the development of her nursery, Town and Country Gardens. Time is now spent propagating and marketing her interesting plants. Memberships include the Australian Institute of Horticulture and the Australian Institute of Landscape Designers and Managers. Her garden is a wide collection of unusual plants displayed with an eye to colour and texture. It was shown recently on ABC Gardening Australia.

She is the convenor of the Collectors' Plant Fair (www.collectorsplantfair.com) now in planning for its 7th year. In 2005, together with Beth Stokes, Peta was awarded *NSW Horticulturist of the Year* and the

National Award of Excellence "for promoting horticulture, particularly the use and conservation of rare and unusual plants through the organisation of the Collectors' Plant Fair."

Peta is often asked to speak to garden groups and associations, and her talk and power point show, "How Creative Gardeners Overcome Challenging Conditions" is a fast moving, entertaining presentation that travels through a series of challenging garden situations - all different. Attendees should come away with at least one new idea.

Peta has also promised to bring along some rare plants for members to purchase if they wish.

So why not bring along a friend or two?

From the President - (Judy's Jottings)

Dear Members,

In our fortieth year of operation we have much to celebrate, a mature rhododendron garden with recent improvements including the Dr Matheson-Lines area with lakeside lookout, our Members' Native Walk, a weed eradication program, improvements to The Lodge and a strong membership – to mention just a few. The Campbell Rhododendron Gardens are well known throughout gardening circles, and at the instigation of Rob Emanuel we are shortly to have our own website.

You will hear more of the activities of your active committee members at our midwinter meeting on Saturday 19th June, when you are invited to arrive from mid-day for a mug of homemade soup, etc., and to socialise with fellow members at this special meeting.

Peta Trahar, who organises the Bilpin Collectors' Plant Fair will be the guest speaker talking on challenging garden situations – a topic to interest all gardeners.

As usual to mark ANZAC Day we have presented a gift of books to the Blackheath Public School. This is always much appreciated. The plant labelling operation is well under way, with Alan Lush working overtime at the engraving machine.

A quote for a stronger and larger bookcase in the library has been accepted to house the many extra books donated from Allan MacMillan, Dr Joan Storey and others. We now have a far wider selection of books on native plants.

I am looking forward to meeting with members, especially those who have joined recently, when we meet in June.

And don't forget that your yearly subscription is due then!

With good wishes to all,

Judy Johnston – President

Raffle Winners from Jazz in the Gardens (1st May)

- | | | |
|----|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. | Jennie Curtin | - Josephan's Chocolates and Wine |
| 2. | Thea Elliss | - String of Pearls |
| 3. | Maree Crawford (Gate Prize) | - Bottle of Scotch |

Our thanks go to Josephan's, The Ivanhoe Hotel and Clive Pullman for providing the raffle prizes.

Advance Notice – Kevin Brown from the Mount Tomah Botanic Garden will be speaking at the August Meeting on the cultivation of Camellias. Just the right time to learn how to prune them!

Progress of Engraving of Plant Labels

To provide more information to our many visitors as they wander through the Gardens, we are in the process of engraving labels for each of the over 2000 rhododendrons, camellias, azaleas and natives that have been planted over the last 40 years. Labels for all the plants on the Bob Baker Walk and the new Members' Native Walk have now been prepared – 150 labels down and 2000+ to go!

From Small Beginnings

Date – 30th May 1970

What – The first organised meeting was held

Who – Twelve members attended, with four apologies

Help Wanted

If any member, with some computer knowledge and spare time, would like to be involved in the production of plant labels on our engraving machine at The Lodge, please contact Alan on 4787 6983.

All training provided free of charge!

The Society's New Web Site

The Committee is excited to announce that work has commenced on our web site, to take the wonders of our Garden to the world. Marius Coomans, of Blaxland, is the chosen developer and he is presenting three possible designs for the web site to your Committee this month.

A site name has been chosen and will be announced when the site is up and running.

If **YOU** would like to be involved in this project, please call Alan Lush (4787 6983) or Rob Emanuel (0412 062 236). We'd love to have you involved.

Garden Report – April 2010

Firstly, thank you to those people who attended our Autumn working bee; we concentrated on the area either side of the service road cleaning up the masses of fallen branches and removing dodder which has taken off this season and will give us a lot of work now and into the Spring.

We have also started to transplant ferns into the glade area where we had poisoned and then cut and burnt holly, etc. A big thanks to Peter Belshaw for his assistance in burning the heaps, and of course Blackheath Rural Fire Brigade volunteers. We have also planted in this area the Wollemi Pine that was given to us. I have poisoned the regrowth of Himalayan Honeysuckle in the swamp below this area.

Once again this year we had a late hatching of lace bug, and of course the February rain stopped me spraying, but it was done as soon as the weather allowed.

We still have some trees that came down during Spring and Summer to be cut up, but there are no tracks blocked at the moment.

All in all the garden is looking great, with the fertilizer program really showing its value – a good example are the Sasanqua camellias just along from The Lodge and the maples in the Maple Walk. Once again I suggest members should make many trips to the garden in Spring.

Dick Harris – Garden Supervisor

Bush Fire Risks in the Gardens

(Excerpts from the talk given by Peter Belshaw, BMCC Bushfire Management Officer, at the April General Meeting)

Fire has been part of the landscape for thousands of years; however, plants and animals in the area have adapted to fire, and plants with woody seeds require fire or an ash bed to allow their seed to germinate. If there are no fires, these plants can't reproduce, and may die out.

Even though the Gardens are in a highly fire prone area, there has not been a major fire here since 1952, allowing the fuel load on the ground to increase. Some plants may have disappeared from the area 20 years or so after the 1952 fire, but their seed bank may still be available on or in the ground, waiting for the next fire to start the germination process again.

Rhododendrons are generally regarded as a fire retardant, but even they could burn in hot and dry conditions when they don't have as much water in their foliage as normal. Eucalyptus leaf litter seems to retain its oils, but when the leaf litter begins to turn to humus it becomes less volatile, leaving less available fuel to burn. The most dangerous fire fuel is that which is less than 6mm in diameter.

The Society should determine how to manage the risks associated with bush fires by identifying what we value (buildings, plants, etc.), then make assessments based on the likelihood and consequences of a fire, with risks classified from low to high. The object of these assessments is to minimise the consequences, e.g. by slashing of vegetation (on Council lands) or setting up asset protection zones to protect vulnerable properties. In other areas the available fuel should be minimised, which will influence the way the fire behaves and travels through the landscape.

If the Society wishes to put in a program for regeneration in the Gardens, we should talk to Peter at the Council on how to manage risks but still maintain biodiversity in the area. We should also discuss if certain areas could be burnt to reduce the high fuel load levels. However – it could take a long time for any action to take place!

<i>Management Committee 2009 - 2010</i>		
<i>President</i> Judy Johnston 47877298	<i>Vice Presidents</i> Rob Emanuel 0412 062 236 Alan Lush 47876983	<i>Garden Supervisor</i> Dick Harris
<i>Secretary</i> Alan Lush / Robert Reid	<i>Treasurer</i> Joan Hailstone 47875859	<i>Membership Secretary</i> Bette Brown 47876463
<i>Committee Members</i> Jeannette Adrian, Beryl Black, David Cook, Marion Friedman, Robert Reid		
<i>Editor</i> Alan Lush		

**BLUE MOUNTAINS RHODODENDRON SOCIETY OF NSW INC
PO BOX 238, BLACKHEATH NSW 2785**