

THE RHODODENDRON NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2008

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NOVEMBER

SATURDAY 8TH VIREYA GROUP 11am

Meet at Andrew Rouse's home: 15 Airedale Avenue, Hawthorn East Ph: 9882 5803
This is an opportunity to see Andrew's new glasshouse and vireya collection.

FRIDAY 21ST 2008 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

At Nunawading Horticultural Centre at 8.00pm
Speaker: Cynthia Sladen



DECEMBER



SUNDAY 7TH CHRISTMAS FUNCTION at 12pm

At Mike and Inge Hammer's home: 2 The Crescent, Sassafra. Ph: 9755 2176.
BYO: MEAT (BBQ available), DRINKS, glasses & chairs. Children welcome.
The Society will organize caterers to provide salads, desserts, tea & coffee.

Ring Inge or Marcia Begg (9751 1610) by 1st December to book.

Park in the street, walk down the drive and past the first (older) house.

JANUARY 2009

SUNDAY 18TH : VIREYA AND LILIUM SHOW, 11.00am-4.30pm

A new combined event with Ferny Creek Horticultural Society to be held in
the Ferny Creek Horticultural Society Hall
Hilton Rd, Ferny Creek (Mel: 75 E1)

More details inside.

SUNDAY 25TH AUSTRALIA DAY BBQ. From 5.00pm.

BYO everything and join with members at the National Rhododendron Gardens
on the lawn beside the hall.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

If someone could tell me where the past 12 months have gone, I would be most appreciative. I cannot believe that 1 year has gone by since I put my hand up for the President's job, but I have to because it has.

It has been an eventful year but an enjoyable one. You will see elsewhere the report on both the Azalea and Rhododendron Shows so I will not double up other than to say they were both great Shows. Looking for bigger and better next year and hopefully some of the new members will have a go and put in some entries.

The AGM will take place in a couple of weeks and Nominations forms were sent out in an earlier issue of the Newsletter. If you feel you can help out by joining Committee, I am sure you will find it an enjoyable experience.

I have mentioned in past issues that some of our members have been having a rough time with health problems. Thankfully, they are getting better and it is hoped that their health will continue to improve.

The sub-committee for the 2010 50th Anniversary Celebrations are getting stuck into the organising of this event and would like to hear from any member able to give them a hand. If you can help out please contact Mick Hare on 0418 340 240 for further details.

The Afternoon Tea for new members held during the Azalea Show in October turned out to be a great event and it is hoped that it will be held annually, perhaps on the Saturday of the Rhododendron Show in November. There were approximately 60 members in attendance and all seemed to be having a great time. Many thanks to those who joined in and made it such a good day.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish each and everyone of you a safe, happy and prosperous Christmas/New Year. Thank you all for your support throughout the year.

Carole Quinn.

THE SPECIES COLUMN.

R *concinnum* -Subsection Triflora. [photo page 11]

Rhododendron *concinnum* is, like most of the Triflora series, seems fairly easy to grow. Other species in this series such as *yunnanense*, *davidsonianum*, and *augustinii*, also have small leathery leaves which are more resistant to drought. This species has a wide distribution in the wild and has a wide variety of different coloured flowers, varying from white, lavender, mauve, and in the case of variety *pseudoyanthinum*, deep red. This is the only red-flowering lepidote, except for some forms of *cinnibarinum*.

Name:

The name *concinnum* means neat, referring to the habit of growth. It's variety *pseudoyanthinum*, means like *yanthinum*, which is an obsolete name for *concinnum*. Confusing ?

Distribution:

Western and central China, in woodlands, forests, and cliffs at altitudes from 1500 to 4400 metres.

Characteristics:

Like most of the Triflora series, this species has small leaves (3 to 8 cm. long) and in this case the underside of the leaves is densely lepidote with large yellowish- brown scales. The flowers are usually terminal in trusses of 2 to 5. In cultivation the plant normally grows to about 2 metres..

Awards:

Award of Merit to the R.H.S. Wisley (1951) for a form with ruby-red flowers. This is presumably the form we have in the Garden.

Hybrids:

A few hybrids have been raised overseas:

Argiolus (*concinnum x augustinii*)

Danube (*concinnum x augustinii*)

Sinbad (*concinnum x Lady Chamberlain*)

Conyan (*V.pseudoyanthinum x concatenans*)

This species seems to be a promising parent for lepidote hybrids. It should be compatible with *cinnibarinum* , Royal Flush, and *maddenii*.

(Note: Some species are incompatible due to different chromosome numbers.)

Where to See These Plants:

We have found only two of these plants in our G.P.S. survey. A purple form is growing in the Triflora Bed, and the Ruby-red form is somewhat misplaced in the Scabrifolia bed. Both of these areas are about 100 metres past the Camellia Garden At Olinda, this species flowers around mid-October.\

Alan Kepert.

VIREYA SPECIES COLUMN

R hellwigii [photo page 11]

Section IV Phaeovireya [according to classification proposed by Dr. George Argent *rhododendrons of Subgenus Vireya* RHS 2006]. This section is a large one comprising 44 species two of which come from Sulawesi and the rest from New Guinea.

Source and Name

R hellwigii was collected by Franz Carl Hellwig and his collection recorded in 1892. It is named after him.

Description [taken, though not completely, from Argent]

R hellwigii is a shrub or small tree. It is restricted to the Huon Peninsular on the Finisterre and Saruwaged Mountains Papua New Guinea at from 1065-3050m and is locally common. It is mostly epiphytic high in large trees in montane *Northofagus* forrest, occasionally terrestrial on steep slopes among grasses. Jeremy and Sayers, in their account of their 1964 expedition to New Guinea, said of *R hellwigii*:

“This is a most glorious species with the petals a very dark blood red and so thick and fleshy that one can easily squeeze them so that the red sap runs out through the fingers. It was a devil to collect for, although very common, it prefers to live in the crown of only the tallest trees”

Paul Kores, 1976, collected and distributed seed, described as *R superbum*. The seed was confirmed to be *R hellwigii* by Withers and Rouse [1988] when the plants flowered for the first time in March 1988 in Melbourne and, simultaneously, in Pukeiti New Zealand. Flowering in Edinburgh commenced in September 1989. The species is slow growing and slow to flower from seed, 12 years at the quickest.

Leaves are 3-5 together in pseudowhorls blade 80-160 x 50-100 mm, ovate to ovate-elliptic, sometimes sub-circular; apex obtuse to rounded; margin entire and flat. **Petiole** 10-20 x 3-4 mm, robust, a little flattened, not or only faintly grooved.

Inflorescence an open umbel of 2-6 flowers, held horizontally or slightly hanging. Corolla 65-90 x 50-60 mm, broadly funnel-shaped, dark blood red, fleshy; tube 40-55 x 10-15 x 17-23 mm.

Hybrids

R hellwigii hybridises with *R superbum* at the western end of its range. These are intermediate in colour, deep pink, and scent as compared with the strongly scented white to pink flowers of *R superbum*.

There are a number of *hellwigii* x plants in members gardens but I have no information as to their origin. Walter Lobbezoo won the G Louise Anderson Prize and Sash for best Vireya Hybrid at the 2007 Rhododendron Show with a truss from one of these plants. Bill Taylor has a magnificent plant in a pot.

Where to see these plants

There is no shortage of small plants of *R hellwigii*. Big ones that flower are lots less common. I was lucky to mind two of Andrew Rouse's plants for a year. These flowered well. I have a number of small plants, some in our garden and some in pots. They are slow growing, yet to flower, but, at least, not prone to common problems of rust or attack by lacebug

Propagation

I find *R hellwigii* easy to strike and grow. Just slow.

Verdict

Every vireya grower should have one. Start young so you get time to enjoy it!

Simon Begg

AZALEA SHOW, OCTOBER 4, 2008.

As members are aware, the Azalea Show for 2007 was cancelled due to the lack of Exhibitors. Committee decided that they would give the Show another chance in 2008 in the hope that more Exhibitors could be encouraged to enter.

The Show Sub-Committee were pleased to accept entries from 13 Exhibitors. It was decided to partition off half the Hall and concentrate the display in the front section only. This proved to be successful and the Hall looked a treat once the displays had been set out. A very big thank you to all who worked so tirelessly to make the Hall and the Show the success that it undoubtedly was.

The winning Exhibitors were Simon Begg, Alan Walker, Bill Taylor, Murray McAlister, Alan Kepert, Walter Lobbezoo, Jack Morris, Mike Hammer, Olive Howard and John Quinn. Murray McAlister and Simon Begg assisted a rather bewildered President in the judging for the President's Award. After a long and lengthy discussion, it was unanimously agreed to award it to *R konori*. As it turned out, this entry was submitted by one John Quinn which caused the President a number of embarrassing "digs", I can tell you. The blame was quickly placed back on to Murray and Simon, this President ain't no fool! At least not all the time.

After the Judging was completed, afternoon tea was provided for those members in attendance including new members who received an official invitation. In addition to the new members, some of the long-term members (I have been advised it is politically incorrect to call them older members!) were also invited and it was very pleasing to see everyone chatting and enjoying a joke or two as well as a few "do you remembers". It is hoped that this can become an Annual event, perhaps on the Saturday of the Rhododendron Show? Well done to all those who pitched in and helped. Special mention though to Marcia Begg and Joan Noonan, their efforts were much appreciated.

Carole Quinn

RHODODENDRON SHOW, NOVEMBER 1, 2008.

This Show attracted 19 Exhibitors which was a great result. As with the Azalea Show, the Hall was a blaze of colour and the ooh's and aah's from the visitors was a happy sound for the members in attendance.

The winners included Inge Hammer, Andrew Rouse, Walter Lobbezoo, Murray McAlister, John Quinn, Joyce Begg, Tom Noonan, Len Sloggett, Karel Van de Ven, Bill Taylor. The children's section was a delight with the winners being Lucy Rouse, Sarah Noonan, Charlotte Rouse and Katie Noonan, well done kids, we look forward to seeing your entries again next year.

For those members who were fortunate to be in attendance, all agreed that Karl's standard Yakushmanum was **fabulous!** It stood about 6 ft. tall and was covered in flowers. It is believed to be about 13 years old and like all of Karl's plants, it was stunning. So much so, for the first time in a number of years, the Judges awarded Karl with the Certificate of Merit. Well done, Karl.

Unlike the Azalea Show, the Rhododendron Show has a number of Awards for specific Sections. The winners of these Awards for 2008 are as follows:

Pritchard Trophy for Best Rhododendron hybrid, raised by exhibitor from seed:

Murray McAlister

Dowd Trophy for three Rhododendron species one truss or spray of each:

Walter Lobbezoo

Gibson Trophy for best truss of a Rhododendron: John Quinn

Alistair MacLeod-Cooch Trophy for best three Rhododendron blooms: John Quinn

Alf Bramley Prize for two species and one hybrid of Rhododendron: John Quinn

G.Louise Anderson Prize for the best Vireya Hybrid, truss or spray: Andrew Rouse

Best Vireya Species Sash for best Vireya species, truss or spray: Andrew Rouse

Best Bloom in Show: John Quinn, R. 'Tahitian Dawn'

Certificate of Merit for an entry of exceptional merit: Karl Van de Ven, *R.degronianum*
Var. yakushmanum

R.H.S. Banksian Medal for the highest aggregate over the two shows: Murray McAlister

I would like to point out that there was no President's Award for this Show and the President had nothing to do with the judging of the Best Bloom in Show, so there!

Seriously though, I would like to offer my congratulations to all the Exhibitors, it was a wonderful display and their efforts in trying to maintain a garden in spite of the horrible conditions that we find ourselves gardening under these days, is to be commended. These 2 Shows and all the blooms on display certainly helped to elevate our enthusiasm back up the scale a notch or two. Hopefully the coming year will bring us lots and lots of rain.

Carole Quinn

VOLUNTEER GROUP

A lot of things have been happening in the Rhododendron Gardens.

The timber on the Laburnum Arch has at long last been removed by the group with the help of Neil Allen from Parks using the tall truck. Have a look, it now looks better.

Weeding in the trial garden, species garden and a lot of other places has been accomplished. In your walks around do not be afraid to pull out a weed or two!

The cameras have been very busy as the plants in the trial garden show their colours. The photos will make it a lot easier to choose the best out of the group once they have all flowered. There has been a lot of potting on and John has been checking that the pots in the nursery have all received water.

Parks rangers have been flat out getting the garden beds mulched to retain moisture over summer.

Alan Walker

VIREYA GROUP'S VISIT TO ANDREW ROUSE'S GARDEN

Fifteen enthusiasts spent an enjoyable morning at Andrew Rouse's garden to inspect his new glasshouse. [photos page 11] The first plants we noticed as we entered his property were giant Lobelias with large rosettes of leaves that changed from pink to green as they matured. The flower spikes were about 2.5 m high. The garden was very attractive with clematis, roses, philadelphus and many vireyas in flower.

Behind the lobelias vireyas were sheltered by overhanging trees along the fence. Many were in flower and some up to fence height. All looked very healthy. Andrew has decided to foliar feed on a regular basis instead of using osmocote which he finds takes more time to apply.

The new glasshouse sits snugly along the back fence and has a separate cover of shade cloth suspended above it. The roof has been whitewashed to give even more protection from the sun. It is about 10m long and 3m wide and is already chock-a-block! The glasshouse came in kit

form and involved a major construction effort on Andrew's part to erect especially as the old small glasshouse was still in place.

Inside, the plants are mostly species, the oldest being 35 years old in a hanging basket. This was a seedling grown by his father, John Rouse.

To improve air circulation there are several fans throughout the glasshouse. These and an evaporative cooler are operated by sensors. One fan blows over a tank of water to increase the humidity.

Andrew prefers the smaller species and his goal in hybridising is to create small compact vireyas resistant to diseases. Many of his plants will be available to members in the future. He has offered to grow species he has [and he has very many] for members who wish to put in an order. This is a very generous offer and greatly appreciated. Simon is willing to do the same but he has less available species to choose from.

After the tour Andrew's wife, Vicki, gave us a lovely morning tea and we marvelled over how well vireyas can be grown in the suburbs.

With so much to look at the group spent very little time on 'business'. One item of importance to all vireya growers was the upcoming Liliium and Vireya Show to be held in the Ferny Creek Horticultural Society Hall on Sunday 18th January 2009. This is a joint venture between ARSV and FCHS. Appropriately the organisers are joint members Mike and Inga Hammer and Simon and I. A flyer and show schedule is enclosed with the *Newsletter*. Please enter. Also come and see what will be a wonderful display and buy vireyas and liliiums.

One conclusion everyone agreed was that the best meetings are visiting members gardens. Or nurseries. The March meeting, it is hoped, will be the latter.

Marcia Begg

JOTTINGS

Pakenham Garden Expo: This was held way back in August and was not noted in the September newsletter. A few of us set up a stand to advertise the Society and Andrew Raper supplied us with his excellent plants for both display and sales. The goal with any outside display is to alert the public to the variety of rhododendrons that can be grown in the average garden, especially vireyas which are still largely unknown. Some visitors enquired when the next Mt Waverley Vireya Show would be held and were disappointed to hear it had been discontinued and wanted to know where they could see and buy more varieties. We had a lot of interest and sold a lot of plants. My thanks to Andrew Raper who gives up his weekend time to deliver plants to such activities as these and also to the members who helped on the day.

'The Enchanted Eye: the Botanical Art of Anne O'Connor'. Anne is a member of our Society and her fabulous prints are for sale in the gift shop at the Rhododendron Gardens, either as prints to frame or as gift cards. Her exhibition at the Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery in September and October has received huge accolades from the media and public. The exhibition has been rated one of the best held at the gallery and public response has included many invitations to speak and requests for prints and paintings. Congratulations Anne!

Vireyas in the News: Leslie Eaton found an enlightening article in the 'Country News', her local paper in the Benalla area. It was titled 'Be a Bit Daring and Grow a Vireya'. The article gave some history of vireyas, raved about the glossy foliage, long flowering period and bright colours. Informative cultural notes, companion plants and hints on choice of plants were

followed by a short list of available hybrids. Emphasis was given on their adaptability to small spaces and pot culture as well as hanging baskets. The article was written by a local nurseryman so I presume he has quite a few in stock. Well done.

Phytophthora cinnamoni: (Adapted from H. Edward Reiley. Success with Rhododendrons & Azaleas, Revised Edition. Timber Press. 2004). (From the American Newsletter)

Root rot (*Phytophthora Cinnamoni*), commonly called rhododendron wilt, because the entire plant wilts, can be one of the most serious diseases of rhododendrons and azaleas. The same disease organism also affects *Cornus*, *Pieris*, *Taxus*, *Camellia*, various laurels, *Juniperus*, *Vaccinium* and *Pinus*. It is most active at soil temperatures (20°C -22°C) and affects plants of any size planted in poorly drained conditions. Another form in which *Phytophthora* exhibits itself is in the form of dieback. In DIEBACK, leaves fall off after showing typical v-shaped browning of the central axis of the leaf from the stem toward the middle along the central vein of the leaf. In ROOT ROT, leaves roll downward toward the midrib, eventually wilt and the entire plant wilts. Leaves and stems may not show spongy rot for weeks.

Beechmont Open Garden: Simon and Marcia Begg's garden will be in the Australia Open Garden Scheme 31st January and 1st February 2009. Plants for sale, self-serve tea and coffee. Picnickers welcome. All proceeds to a local community group.

National Rhododendron Gardens: The tour bus that goes around the gardens has finished for the year but the rhododendrons are still flowering beautifully and well worth a visit. For a few weeks they trialled late closing (about 7.00 pm) which was appreciated by late comers who could spend more time walking or picnicking. The gift shop and nursery did a roaring trade!

Investment advice:

Once upon a time, in a village, a man appeared and announced to the villagers that he would buy monkeys for \$10 each.

The villagers seeing that there were many monkeys around went out into the forest and started catching them. The man bought thousands at \$10 each and as supply started to diminish the villagers stopped their efforts.

He further announced that he would now buy at \$20 each. This renewed the efforts of the villagers and they started catching monkeys again. Soon the supply diminished even further and the people went back to their farms.

The offer increased to \$25 but the supply of monkeys was so low that it was nearly impossible to see a monkey let alone catch one! However the man said he would increase the price to \$50. As he had to go to the city on some business he left his assistant to buy on his behalf.

In his absence the assistant told the villagers – ‘Look at all these monkeys in the big cage that my boss has collected. I will sell them to you for \$35 each and when he returns you can sell them to him for \$50 each.’ The villagers collected all their savings and bought all the monkeys.

They never saw the man nor his assistant again, only monkeys everywhere!

Now you have a better understanding of how the stock market works!!!!

Restaurants go modern! This was told on the ABC radio so it must be OK for the ARSV Newsletter!!

We know that restaurants that are BYO always charge for ‘corkage’. However now, with the new screw tops, we hear that the restaurants are charging ‘screwage’! Tut-tut!

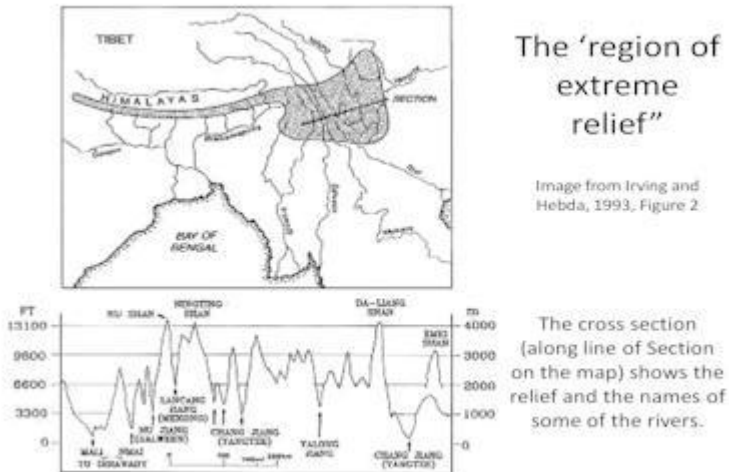
MNB

GENERAL MEETING SEPTEMBER 2008

Graham Price, a former president of the ARSV, spoke on the ‘Evolution of Rhododendrons’. Graham is well known as a hybridiser of *Vireya* and the editor of the *Vireya Venture*. At his previous place of employment he had the use of a large glasshouse where he grew his hybrids. When this facility ceased to be available Graham gave a truckload of his plants to the Society to plant in the Rhododendron Gardens. Many others ended up on his city balcony. Graham’s presentation drew on the work of Irving and Hebda [1993]. He showed a number of slides from their work.

The slides demonstrated a theory of the spread of rhododendrons around the planet from a beginning 68 million years ago [68 MA] that diverges from the conventional theory that all rhododendrons originated at a single source, spread along the Himalaya and neighbouring chains, and spread further from there. The first plants in the *Ericaceae* family were formed after 200 MA, probably about 80 MA. Others in this family, beside rhododendron, include *Ericas*, *Kalmias*, *Vacciniums* (including blueberries) and *Gaultherias*. Ericaceae plants are now found worldwide.

Rhododendrons in particular, thrive and develop new species [speciate] in well drained moist, mostly high altitude climates such the ‘region of extreme relief’ where most Asiatics are now

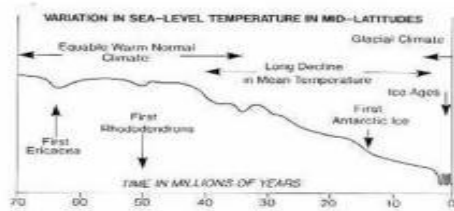


to be found.

World temperatures have been steadily decreasing in the last 45 million years despite recent, relatively very small, increases. One slide depicted mid latitude sea temperatures from 70 MA until now. This shows events and fluctuations along the way.

Irving and Hebda (1993) concept:
Global Climate Change

- Steady cooling since 45I
- Since 3Ma – Ice Age.
- 50,000 yr glacial – interglacial cycle.
- We have been in an interglacial since 14,000 yrs ago.



Graham showed slides of the movements of continents from the time there was one single continent to the breakup of Gondwanaland. Along the way tectonic plates crashed into each other, mountain chains formed, volcanoes came and went and sometimes exploded.

The first Antarctic ice age was 15 million years ago. Climates have swung between hot and cold since then. The last ice age only 18,000 years ago when the sea level dropped by 140mm. The huge continent of Gondwanaland, which included South Africa, South America, New Guinea, India, Pacific Islands, Australia, and New Zealand, moved slowly north and broke apart over millions of years. Some parts moved a lot faster than others and crashed into other continents. Not all have continued to move north. Caledonia used to be a lot further south 30 million years ago. Australia is still moving north at 11 cms per year.

From a beginning, as speciation occurred and earth's traumatic events unfolded, rhododendrons thrived, not in one group, but in separate colonies that replicated ideal conditions for the plants. One of these colonies was vireyas.

Irving and Hebda's conclusions are as under:

Irving and Hebda (1993) Conclusions

- India's collision with Asia caused uplift of Tibetan Plateau and formation of 'region of extreme relief'.
- Climate swings, altitude (temperature) separation, isolation in separate valleys and remixing in warm periods lead many closely related species.
- Scattered populations of evergreen and deciduous azaleas (and some sub-section Hymenanthes) were produced from earlier, more widely distributed species in ranges that have since been reduced by climate change.
- Vireyas originated relatively recently with similar mechanisms for speciation as the 'region of extreme relief'. Random Dispersion along the archipelago into SE Asia and Australia.

Simon and Marcia Begg



R concinnum Alan Keperť's photo
September 2008



Andrew Rouse's *R hellwigii*
January 2008



Group Photo, "Orari Estate"
NZRA Rhododendron Conference 2008



ve R 'Nancy Evans' B & J O'Keefe
Nursery, Woodbury, NZ
October 2008



Members Day ARSV Azalea Show
October 2008



**Andrew Rouse's new Glasshouse,
November 2008**



**Andrew Rouse's young vireya species
November 2008**



**R "Gardenia Odyssey"
"Beechmont" November 2008**

GENERAL MEETING 17TH OCTOBER 2008

ADVENTURES IN RHODODENDRONS.

Graham Smith presented a slide show of gardens around the world, some dating back 30 years. Graham, until recently, had been the Director of the Pukeiti Rhododendron Garden near New Plymouth in the North Island of New Zealand for 30 years. After studying and working at the Kew Gardens in England he and his wife migrated to New Zealand and he worked at Auckland Botanic Gardens in charge of the tropical section, a totally new experience! An advertisement in a local paper describing a position as Curator at Pukeiti caught his attention and he applied successfully after being checked out by a prominent member of the Pukeiti Board who lived in Auckland.

A much younger Graham was shown in some slides as we skipped around the world. An Irish garden he visited 10 years ago was well worth the 25 pounds he paid to visit! Glendoick on the east coast of Scotland, owned by Peter Cox and his son Ken, both authors of many highly respected books on rhododendrons, grows up to 100,000 seedlings a year. Most are thrown away after flowering. Good quality plants will have up to seven crosses on them. The Cox's have another garden on the west coast, very secret, with collections dating back 150 years.

Fabulous bark, *grande*'s over 30 feet tall, *grande* seedlings growing in moss, gardens like 'Stourhead' famous for its vistas and 'Exbury' famous for its brilliantly coloured hybrids. Collections at Edinburgh Botanic Garden where they save 3 of each species for security. Quick glimpses of these and many others to whet the appetite.

Then on to the USA and the 'Crystal Springs Garden' which the Portland Chapter used to manage but is now under the control of the municipal council. *Rhododendron occidentale* growing in Peter Schick's garden in California caused a few stirs. It was very comfortable perched on hummocks in running water. Oh for such a luxury as running water! The same situation was repeated in Papua New Guinea where *Rh. commonae* was also growing on hummocks this time in a swamp. In this instance they have naturally hybridised and have become standardised in different colours.

While plant hunting in Papua New Guinea Graham brought back seeds, cuttings and whole plants. No doubt quarantine regulations would not allow that these days! Pukeiti has benefitted greatly from these contributions as could be seen by the photos of stunning vireyas that followed. Pukeiti has 3-4 metres of rain per year and most of their vireyas need to be kept under cover due to the cold and frosts. Aren't we lucky! Here in Olinda they are growing in the open under deciduous trees to protect them from the hot sun.

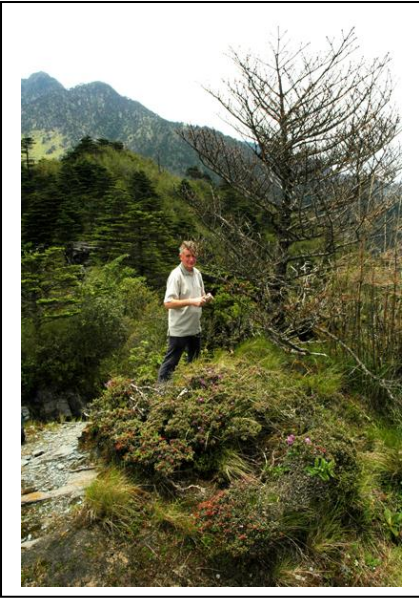
Marcia Begg

NORTHWEST YUNNAN: DREAMS TO REALITY

Jennifer Velinty, Florence, Oregon

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The *Rhododendron* species of Northwest Yunnan, in China, at about 30° latitude and in a wide range of altitudes. For example, *Rhododendron augustinii* ssp. *chasmanthum* grows between 4,500-13,000ft, and *R. anthopogon* prefers a cooler range of 9,000-16,500ft (Greer, 1996).



Left Barry Davidson, Tasmania and *R impletum*, Cang Shan, May 2007



Above *R nerriflora* , Cang Shan , May 2007

The soils in Northwest Yunnan are mostly compounded from weathered limestone rocks that often vary in color according to the mineral content prevalent in different areas. Rhododendrons in Yunnan seem to grow well in soils with iron, magnesium, and calcium content, particularly when supplemented with ample leaf and pine duff. Moisture is provided by annual rains, low clouds and snow melt, and the annual temperatures from the lower elevations to alpine heights can range from -20°F to $+90^{\circ}\text{F}$. Rhododendrons were found in varied habitat: *R. yunnannense* and *R. decorum* were associated with pines and tall shrubs and *R. hippophaeoides* was found in exposed, sometimes boggy areas.

In contrast, my small garden on the Oregon coast is at 45° latitude and 84ft altitude. The annual rains provide about 85 inches of moisture and temperatures can range from an occasional 10°F to 99°F . but gusty winds and browsing deer are the usual hazards.

Under these conditions I can grow propagated *Rhododendron* species, planted in fir bark over sandy soils with moderate success, and by incorporating the Oregon coast native evergreen plants of *R. macrophyllum*, conifers and flowering shrubs the garden has a woodland setting.

Receiving the American Rhododendron Society journals with photographs of the rhododendrons of Yunnan and the Tibetan Plateau inspired me to see some of the genus in its native habitat. Fortunately for me, a tour from Australia to Northwest Yunnan led by experienced botanists gave me the change to ask Diane Weissman¹ to handle myriad travel details and I was able to experience the greatest trip of a lifetime.

Ben Wallace² met me at Kunming airport and I joined seven Australians for a 20-day tour of Northwest Yunnan and the Tibetan Plateau. Designed by Ben and Xiaomei³ Wallace, the meticulously planned itinerary, with 4-star hotels and travel with experienced guides and a talented driver, described a cultural and botanical tour of ancient cultures, unique species of plants and spectacular scenery.

Kunming was warm at the end of May 2007 with street trees of planes and maples shading crowds of people riding bicycles and small motorbikes. From the bus I could see bicyclists with small children riding in colourful backpack baskets, and a slim couple riding on a scooter had a child seated between them. Many women swept the streets with long-brushed brooms as pedestrians grouped together to cross ten lanes of traffic. A few brave individuals dodged between cars, buses and bikes. My gaze was attracted to raised planters of multicoloured potted begonias, pansies and marigolds set out in small pots that were packed tightly together in creative expanses of floral displays.

Near the city of Kunming are popular attractions such as the World Horticultural Expo 99 with displays of Chinese gardens, a butterfly enclosure and award-winning porcelain and jade. There were many examples of regional and international gardens and many trial gardens growing new varieties of vegetables, fruit, tea and different types of fungi. In another part of the gardens, the bronze Golden Temple dating from the Qing dynasty sits high on a hilltop surrounded by Botanical Gardens with old plants of *Camellia*, *Lagerstroemia indica*, *Crptomeria japonica* ssp. *Sinensis* and mixed natural stands of *Keteleeria evelyniana* and *Quercus variabilis*. Further from the city we saw the remarkable Stone Forest, with pathways and stairs winding through gardens and over ponds set between towering gray limestone formations. Our guide was resplendent in her intricate ethnic clothing and took us to see long lines of women in regional clothing dancing to traditional live music of the ethnic people.

We visited the Western Hills National Park overlooking Lake Dianchi and rode in a cable car above forests of regenerating conifers up to the Hua Ting and Tai Hua Buddhist monasteries with buildings housing golden Buddhas and offerings. Statues at the entrance represented four needs of the Chinese, and depicted Food, Health, Family an Protection. Traditional classic half-couplet poems were painted in Chinese characters on each side of the entrance, in the scholarly style of earlier centuries. Peaceful green gardens of *Gingko bilola* trees included a huge 600-year-old tree fully leafed out and *Magnolia grandiflora* in full bloom surrounded by mixed forests of *Pinus armandii*, *P. yunnanensis* and *P. densata*, *Cupressus duclouxiana* and *Keteleeria evelyniana*. Fragrant lotus was still waiting to flower in ponds that were now glowing with pink water lilies and full of orange fish and dozens of little turtles clustered on flat rocks. All were symbols representing a long and healthy life.

The tour itinerary started in Kunming, elevation 6,000ft, continued to Dali and Lijiang at 6,500ft, and on to Lake Lugu situated at 10,000ft, Zhongdian (Shangrila) at 11,500ft and up mountain roads to cross over 13,500ft passes to Dequin at almost 14,000ft. Heading first to Dali, we followed part of the old Silk Road, one of the original arteries of trade from the ancient city of Xi-an that extended west as far as the eastern Mediterranean. We travelled on a new express toll-way that divided a warm valley of agriculture. Groves of ripening banana plants and red flowered pomegranate trees bordered well-kept farms of taro and rice paddies, ploughed with water buffaloes, and workers cultivating rows with long handled hand tools. Farmers sold produce from tables loaded with mushrooms, black fungi, and many kinds of fruits and vegetables. Baskets of species, sacks of nuts and grains made a colourful display. One vendor hand-fed young blackbirds for sale as pets.

Along the way we read *National Geographic* articles of 1926 and 1930 by botanist Joseph Rock, who mapped Northwest Yunnan and collected hundreds of plant and animal specimens. Dr. Rock explored the gorge of the Dulong river in western Yunnan and travelled east to search out and map the Salween (Nu Jiang), Mekong (Lancang Jiang) and Yangtse gorges.

Tribesmen and horses carried his equipment across mountains and all of them had to traverse glacial rivers on twisted vine ropes. Dr. Rock rested at monasteries where he had protection to develop photographs and could give medical care to the local people, and in later years he retired to the Yu Zhu Qing Tian (Jade pillar to the sky) monastery that keeps some of his books, faded photographs and simple furnishings. In the monastery gardens, an enormous *Magnolia grandiflora* shaded the courtyard and ancient entwined camellias grew near a patio that was paved with small stones, individually set in place in traditional designs.

Driving on we saw stands of blue gum *Eucalyptus globulus* had been topped, limbed and extensively pruned to force new growth and harvest the pungent oils for pharmaceutical use. We stopped to hunt for wildflowers in arid, stony fields finding many tiny species surviving and blooming.

In Dali we went to a community market selling huge sides of dry meats, piles of fresh fruits, vegetables, spices and fungus. There were buckets of live fish and eels and big bowls with blocks of creamy bean curd tofu. We saw the huge cooking pans, farming hardware and all the equipment needed by an agrarian society. All of the old ways were juxtaposed with high-rise construction that is impacting populations in cities, on farms and in natural habitats.

We spend almost a day on the Cang Shan, between 7,000 and 10,000ft, for our first plant hunting expedition. Driving up a dirt road to reach the Cang Shan, near Dali, we found many recognizable plants in a mixed forest of oaks and genera *Lithocarpus* and *Castanopsis*. We saw *Hypericum*, *Deutzia*, *Indigofera*, *Mahonia*, and *Gaultheria*. Further along we saw familiar *Buddleja fellowiana*, *Pieris*, *Syringa*, *Viburnum* and *Sorbus* and white *Clematis montana* blooming high in a tree. The creamy white funnels of *Rhododendron maddenii* reached above green shrubs. Several taller lavender-pink *R. microphyton* were competing with shrubs for sunlight and space. Hiking up Cang Shan we looked for white *R. decorum*, creaming *R. pachypodium*, and saw re *R. neriiflorum* blooming. The climb was steep from 8,000 to 10,500ft hunting for the 27 species of rhododendrons found on Cang Shan. At 9,000ft, plants of *R. virgatum*, *R. simsii*, and *R. leptothrium* were seen. Smaller plants of *R. microphyton*, *R. mekongense* vat. *Rubrolineatum*, and *R. racemosum* were growing of 9,500ft and at 12,000ft *R. taliense* and *R. balfouriaum* could be found. Heading up to see conifers of blue-coned *Abies delavayi* and *Rhododendron lacteum* I looked for the red flowers of *R. facetum* and the puckered leaves of *R. edgeworthii* and found the soft oval reddish leaves of the partially evergreen azalea *R. simsii*. Hearing shouts and tinkling bells, I stepped off the steep trail for a string of six packhorses, carrying supplies for a power line across China. From Beijing to Lhasa, new roads, railways and power lines have connected cities, villages and farms to each other and the world.

Education is a high priority to prepare children for the new business economy. Many children to cities attend school six days a week when parents work. Rural children attend school, take care of animals and gather pine duff for fuel and grasses for animal feed. As farms push higher into the hills, agriculture and grazing co-mingle with precious botanical sites. On Cang Shan, wild flowers of lilies and orchids bloomed near a waterfall and plants of *Ranunculus*, *Anemone* and *Primula* thrived in ditches along the road.

That evening we walked in old Dali's cobbled streets and visited small shops with open fronts selling everything from tea, spices and produce to herbal mixtures for Chinese medicine.

Wooden buildings had upturned tile roofs with sharp corners that are designed to deter any hovering demons from entering the building.

On the way to Lijiang we saw work by Bai artisans and craftspeople. The local green marble was carved into decorative screens and beautiful translucent bowls. We reached Zhoucheng, near Dali, and watched women preparing cloth for tie-dyed items. Design details were picked up with needle-and-thread, tied tightly, dyed a deep indigo, and sun dried. Knots were untied to reveal traditional Bai patterns.

Later that day we arrived in Lijiang, a trading center since the thirteenth century that lies below the snowcapped mountain range of Yulon Shan, Jade Dragon Mountain, and is a World Heritage site on the old Silk Road. The ethnic Naxi are known to appreciate Chinese music and poetry dating to the seventh century. In times of cultural chaos the Naxi buried instruments, music and paintings, saving a heritage of songs and art for peaceful times. We were privileged to visit an old, colourfully painted theatre to hear the only World Heritage Orchestra of senior musicians sing and play ancient music on flutes, pipes, bells, gongs and strings. Near the theatre we climbed up steps to photograph a 600-year-old *Cupressus funebris* that was a revered landmark perched on a high viewpoint.

Traveling on to Lake Lugu we visited a plant reserve high in the hills with a paved viewing area overlooking the lake. Among gardens of native plants and transplanted species rhododendrons, a pale pink *Rhododendron trichostomum* bloomed under a pine canopy.

Along the road the dry limestone slope held many botanical treasures of tiny wildflowers of *Primula*, *Iris*, *Gentiana*, and *Anemone*, also *Saxifraga*, *Persecaria* and *Potentilla*. We were surrounded by pink, purple, yellow and white flowers, and little leaves of *Androsace* sheltering between stones. Higher up on the road to Lake Lugu a tall, pink *Rhododendron decorum* on the side of a hill had everyone scrambling to take photographs.

Lake Lugu, edged with forests, is homeland to the Mosuo people, a matrilineal society who have no word for marriage. Women have control of the children and all the property. The matrilineal society was hounded by authorities with accusations of promiscuity. The women were pressured to be monogamous, disrupting the people's ethnic traditional values for almost twenty years. Now the traditional way of life has been restored with some compromises. Near Zhongdian, we were invited into a colourful Tibetan family home and farm that belonged to the oldest woman in the extended family and would do to the next oldest. The custom derives from times of war when women raised families and maintained farms and livestock for the next generation. A new grandbaby wore a reflective round patch on his forehead to keep way any evil.

On the shore of Lake Lugu were wooden buildings with many shops shaded by trees. The next day we crossed the lake in long narrow rowboats to an island with three Buddhist temples settled into forests thick with shrubs, rhododendrons and wild flowers. Riding across the calm lake the tranquillity was enhanced by a Mosuo woman singing a traditional song. On the island, *R. arboretum* ssp. *Delavayi* bloomed, and we found that slender leaves of a white flowered *R. vernicosum* and lavender *R. rubiginosum*. Growing nearby, a tall pink flowering shrub was hanging over the lake and contrasted against a bright blue sky. Stepping over tiny blue irises, yellow anemones and pink primulas. I climbed to the pavilion of the highest temple. Marble floors were littered with paper patterns and piles of fragrant wood were thick

with sawdust. Young craftsmen used hand tools to carve out flowers and birds to decorate the wooden screens that would form the walls of the building. Brightly painted ceilings and carved screens were seen in every temple. One screen depicted a revered monk walking through forests, unhurt by animals, bandits or stormy weather.

That evening we attended a village performance of Mosuo dances beginning at dusk with a huge bonfire. Women in bright traditional dress held hands to circle the courtyard around a huge bonfire and the flutist played faster when energetic young men joined the dance.

On the journey to Zhongdian on the Tibetan Plateau we crossed the great Yangtse River and descended 900 steps into the deep gorge called Tiger Leaping Gorge, named for a mythical tiger that leaps the Yangtse by stepping on a midstream boulder. Looking down 12,500ft between the summits of Jade Dragon and Haba Shan, the churning river is pinched between towering rock walls as it gouges around a huge boulder. The mountain roads were built of hand-fashioned rocks fitted tightly together. They cut around hillsides of crumbling limestone, keeping workers busy shovelling away rockslides. Driving through forests of tall conifers, we came to steep areas of logged hills where wild rose bushes bloomed in the sun. Pine trees sheltered small plants of *R. yunnanense* in lavenders and pinks, all growing in dry orange-yellow limestone and pine-duff. Pollinated by butterflies, insects, and even small birds, the self-seeding plants had spread downhill in rainwater runoffs. Small trees of *Cornus macrophylla* and *Clematis montana* were in full bloom and we scrambled up to see acres of pink and purple flowers of *Rhododendron hippophaeoides* and *R. rubiginosum* blooming under pine trees.

Traveling up a tributary river gorge of the Chong Jiang to Zhongdian and the Tibetan Plateau, we drove through mixed forests of broadleaves and conifers. Frequent stops for brilliant pink *Primula poissonii*, yellow *Euphorbia nematocypha*, white *Anemone trullifolia* and many wild flowers, strained our camera batteries and card capacity. We were recharged after great meal of freshly prepared regional food washed down with Tibetan beer or green tea and a few brave folks tried the Tibetan “firewater” drink.

The next morning we visited the Songzanlin Tibetan Buddhist lamasery destroyed by the Red Guards in an upheaval of Tibetan life and culture. For the last twenty years worldwide support has provided 80 percent of the funding to rebuild the lamasery, a major regional Buddhist center and home to over 700 monks living in clustered homes at the base of the huge building. The temple roof shined gold at the top of the hill as we walked up passing tall wooden drying racks for crops and a wetland where young monks washed red robes. I was told the monks once used ox blood to dye their garments. By devoting their lives to prayer and meditation they aspire to reach enlightenment and promote peace after decades of turmoil and destruction.

A white stucco building with upturned roof corners was a Tibetan hotel. The black window frames were wider at the base, in a design I saw only in Tibet. I was told they reflected the shape of mountains which are sacred to Tibetans. Inside the hotel were colourful traditional designs, with lacquer paintings on furniture, colourful woven wool wall hangings, and incised designs on brass stair treads.

Driving up to the Nappa Hai wetland and bird habitat, an important over-winter refuge for storks and wading birds, we spent a few hours at the Alpine Botanic Gardens and Cypridium Reserve. The area had a mixture of small Yunnan pines, dwarf evergreen oaks with prickly leaves, maple, poplar and birch trees stretching to the top of the hill. Four different

cyripediums grew in sheltered clusters with edelweiss, irises and primulas. The orchids in colors of reddish brown, yellow, shocking pink and white were resplendent with striped saccate lips and long twisting laterals. The efforts of orchid lovers established the reserve to protect these stunning plants. In tall, thick shrubbery at the top of the hill we found a few plants of *Rhododendron decorum* and *R. vernicosium*, and lavender-purple *R. hippophateoides* growing on open ground.

We entered the largest national park in China, the sub-alpine Lake Shudu, and walked near a meadow with grazing black Dzu's, a cross between yaks and cows that can tolerate altitudes under 14,000ft. Full-bodied yaks prefer the highest meadows and cooler weather. Surrounded by thick mixed forests, new boardwalks hugged the lake winding through trees, shrubs, bog-loving yellow *Rheum alexandrae* and a huge tree of lavender *Rhododendron yunnanense* hanging over the lake. At a picnic area two tiny girls in traditional dress posed with small white goats for tourists' photos.

Passing through villages of the ethnic Yi people, we saw traditional black headdresses worn by older women, some with facial tattoos that were reminders of tribal raiders who spurned girls with tattoos and did not abduct them. We saw the rural women carrying huge loads of wood or selling bananas from bicycle and men pushing carts of charcoal bricks, recycled products or selling produce along the road. Along the side of the road near a ploughed field, a drainage ditch held a colony of yellow candelabra *Primulabulleyana* and further along was a hillside covered with yellow *Meconopsis intergrifolia* with 4-inch flowers. In a little valley we saw a reminder of the *Sequoia sempervirens* of California. A small grove of tall *Cupressus gigantea* grew on steep slopes above the river. A temple garlanded with fluttering prayer flags and a 10ft high prayer wheel, was a sacred place that honoured a huge and revered tree said to be 800 years old.

The weather was refreshingly cool and misty in the mountains when we stopped to photograph a golden yellow *Rhododendron wardii* and the snow capped mountain ranges with glaciers. We were able to walk up to view the moraine and toe of the Ming Yong Glacier that drained to the Mekong George from the Kabadkapo Snowy mountain range. The wide glacier descended in five stages from collection to joined, crevasse, moraine and toe. It passed by a Buddhist temple and forests of *Pseudotsuga forrestii*, *Picea brachytila*, oaks, poplars, flowering shrubs and wildflowers. In a high pass near Dequin deciduous larch *Larix potaninii* became more prevalent among groundcover of purple. *Rhododendron russatum* and *R. rupicola*, and taller shrubs of *R. beesianum*. We stopped for a patch of pink-purple primula, *Primula sinopurpurea*, finding wet spots with *Primula secundiflora*, with pink umbellate heads, near a slope of yellow *Paeonia*. Around the next corner was a vision of pale lavender. It was hard to believe I was walking in hillsides covered with tall *Rhododendron yunnanense* with a scenic backdrop of the world's highest unclimbed mountain, Mt Mei Li at over 21,000ft. From our hotel in Dequin we watched clouds and smoke from pine-branch offerings obscure the mountain, and as we waited for that early morning perfect photo-op the high peak glowed in the early sunlight.

A day at Lake Bigu, a sub-alpine glacial relic, was another highlight of the tour. Near a Tibetan summer camp at 13,500ft small black pigs rooted between clumps of heavy headed pink primula and around stacked piles of yak dung collected and dried for fuel. Abundant wildflowers clustered on the roadside bank with *Meconopsis intergrifolia*, maroon *Cypripedium tibeticum*, *Corydalis*, pale *Fristillaria*, *Lilium* and *Cassiope*. Near trees of *Abies*

and *Picea*, acres of purple heath of *Rhododendron hippophaeoides*, *R. impeditum*, *R. tapetiforme*, tall white *R. aganniphum* and pink *R. phaeochrysum* were all blooming together. It was truly a dream come true to be wading through acres of *Rhododendron* species on an alpine hillside.

Acknowledgements

For travel, photograph contributions and botanical information, I am indebted to my travel companions and the following people who generously shared knowledge and experience.

¹Diane Weissamn is a private client travel agent, Mountain View, CA. <diane1030@gmail.com>

²Dr Ben Wallace is a retired Horticultural Botanist of the Royal Botanical Gardens Sydney and Director of Living Collections at the Australian National Botanic Gardens in Canberra <benwallace@bigpond.com>

³Xiaomei Wallace is a linguist in Mandarin, Cantonese and English and has a background in plant science and gene technology. <benwallace@bigpond.com>

Ian Chalk from Tasmania, photographer and mountain trekker.

Harold E Greer, Eugene, OR, *Greer's Guidebook to Available Rhododendrons*, third edition, 1996.

Jenny Velinty is a member of the Siuslaw Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society in Florence, Oregon. Jenny is also a member of our Society. She has travelled to the UK, Ireland, Europe, Australia and New Zealand to see rhododendron gardens. This trip to Northwest Yunnan and the Tibetan Plateau was the greatest trip of a lifetime.

THE WORD LEPIDOTE

Bruce Palmer, Cutten, California

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Most of the flowers on our rhododendrons are gone until next spring. Now it's time for enjoyment of the other features of the genus that cause our addictions. The leaves are quite diverse and many of us collect new plants as much for their foliage as for their flowers. Among the more interesting leaf structures in the genus *Rhododendron* are those that give the surfaces of the leaves distinctive appearances. Let's concentrate on one type of structure this time: scales. The word, then, is **lepidote**. It's from the Greek *lepidos*, scale. Originally, the term applied to the scales of snakes and fish. The prefix is used in a number of places in biology. *Lepidoptera* (scale wing), for example, is the order of insects to which butterflies and moths with their scaly wings belong. *Legidodendron* (scale tree) is used by paleontologists to describe a long extinct group of large primitive trees whose poorly developed conifer-like leaves left scars on the fossil surfaces that resemble snakeskin. The fossil scale marks were so distinctive that early collectors mistook *Lepidodendron* fossils for fossilized snakes. *Lepidodendrons* contributed heavily to the formation of the coal deposits in Pennsylvania and elsewhere.

Scales are one of many types of structures on the surfaces of leaves. To the naked eye they generally appear as dots on the leaf underside. Under a microscope they appear as minute cups with flat covers that project beyond the edges forming wide rims (Leach). They fall in a

category collectively called trichomes (Greek, *trichos*, a hair). The term trichome is probably preferable to the word hair in plants because plant hairs do not arise from multi-celled subsurface follicles as they do in mammals but are modified surface cells. Scales don't resemble other plant hairs, but that is what they are. In some plants other than rhododendrons, olives for example, they are usually called peltate (Latin, *peltatus*, a shield) hairs. Trichomes come in various shapes and have a number of distinct functions. Many aromatic leaves such as rosemary, sage and geranium carry their scent inside swollen hairs that burst open to release the smell. Nettles have hairs containing an irritant. Some succulents such as ice plant have expandable surface vesicles (Latin, *vesicula*, a small bladder) for storage of water in dry conditions. The tiniest structures that absorb water and nutrients for higher plants, the root hairs, are trichomes. The trichomes that we rhododendron enthusiasts are most familiar with are those we term indumentum (Latin, hair covering). Plants living at high altitude and in deserts often have silvery hairs on their surfaces for sun protection and water retention. Indumentum is a general botanical term for hairs on leaves and stems, along with numerous other terms (a page and a half in Stern's *botanical Latin*). Applied to the genus *Rhododendron* many of us tend use the term restrictively to mean coverings of soft hairs of various kinds on the undersides of leaves. They might repel insects also. Whether indumentum on rhododendron leaves does any of these things is an interesting question.

Scales on lepidote rhododendrons are less conspicuous than indumentum and don't contribute a great deal to the appearance of the leaves. Their function is problematic. Leach in *Rhododendrons of the World* indicates that they are for water retention. Others believe that they repel insects. A quick, very unscientific survey of our yard shows that of about 120 rhododendrons growing near redwoods and Sitka spruce, those without scales, with or without indumentum, are twice as likely to have leaf damage from root weevils and cutworms. The sample is not large enough or sufficiently diverse to be a statistically significant finding, but I thought it interesting.

For our purposes, the importance of scales has to do with classification. Classification of the genus is the next best thing to a nightmare for taxonomists, but the presence of scales or lack of them stands out distinctly from others. H. H. Davidian in all four of his volumes of *The Rhododendron Species* devotes the first full page of text to classification, with nearly all of his emphasis on the differences between lepidote (scaly) and elepidote (non-scaly) rhododendrons. Lepidote and elepidote rhododendrons are dramatically different. Their genes are sufficiently different that it is extremely difficult to hybridize between the groups. The seeds are different. The flowers open differently. There may be more of a tendency toward polyploidy in lepidotes, though that idea is still being tested as shown in the recent detailed studies by Jeff Joes et al. published in the fall 2007 issue of the *Journal American Rhododendron Society*. A large majority of all the beautifully fragrant rhododendrons we grow in the benign coastal climate of northwestern California and southwestern Oregon are lepidotes in the subgenus *Rhododendron*.

In summary, lepidote rhododendrons, distinguished by scales, are a distinct grouping from elepidotes and our gardens would be seriously impoverished without them. Let's appreciate them this summer while we have no blossoms on most of our rhododendrons and add scales to the list of interesting features of members of the genus *Rhododendron* in our gardens.

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*Name is not registered.

Bruce Palmer is a member of the Eureka Chapter, American Rhododendron Society. He was a teacher of biology at Maui Community College in the University of Hawaii System for twenty-four years.

NEW ZEALAND RHODODENDRON ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE 2008

After visiting Edinburgh in May and meeting Richard Nanson, President NZRA, and other New Zealanders we met there, Marcia and I decided we should go to the New Zealand Conference to see how they ran it for help to our Society in organizing our 2010 Golden Anniversary Conference in 2010. This despite our discovering that we could not get back to Olinda in time for our Rhododendron Show this year. Our visit was very worthwhile. We learned a lot. We had a good time and were made very welcome. We took lots of hastily prepared flyers with us to advertise our conference. We hope that our visit will encourage New Zealanders to come to our 2010 Conference and also the Adelaide Conference in 2009

The Conference was held in Geraldine, about an hour's drive south of Christchurch on New Zealand's South Island. It is on the south Canterbury Plains. Driving there we wondered how the fabulous gardens we were promised fitted with the landscape. Geraldine is on the edge of hillier country and has a far better rainfall than further north. In any case irrigated dairying has taken off dramatically in recent times, replacing previous vast flocks of sheep.

We were not disappointed. The gardens we visited were everything we were promised. Including rhododendrons to die for. We have many photos and stories to tell at our February General Meeting and a longer narrative.

We knew New Zealand held a successful annual conference. 150 was the anticipated registration. In fact registrations reached 300! 18 were from North America, including Fred and Ann Whitney [Fred is current American Rhododendron Society President] Paul and Marty Anderson and Diane and Bob Weissman, all well known in Australia. We were the only two from Australia. 280 were locals. Most had been to previous conferences.

The conference format reflected the way the locals viewed it. There were two dinners, Tuesday and Thursday, [but most went to two restaurants on Wednesday] with a guest speaker [to entertain, not educate] at the first. There was lunch and morning and afternoon tea, Wednesday Thursday and Friday. All these were catered for, but on a queue up and be served basis, with good wine with all meals and morning tea. We had really good entertainment at one garden. We assume that the wine budget expanded with the extra registrations. At one lunch Ritchie Steffen, curator for the Elizabeth C Miller Botanical Garden, Seattle spoke about that garden. Few delegates had visited it; hardly surprising since only 500 per year are permitted to visit. Fred and Ann Whitney took Marcia and I there in 2004. The NZRA held its AGM where the only serious business was done. Marcia and I spruiked the advantages of coming to Olinda in 2010 and handed out flyers. New Zealand has active projects of great interest [or they should be] to our Society. More of that when our Committee meets. In a word the New Zealand conference was about **fun**.

Simon Begg

BENCH DISPLAY SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER 2008

19/9/08

Our display this month looked very attractive due to the number and quality of the Asiatic blooms, there is no doubt that these flowers in season are very eye-catching for colours, size and the mass of blooms in the trusses. Winners in this section came from John Quinn, Simon Begg, Andrew Rouse and the Hammer's.

Notable blooms - *R. racemosum*, *R. lutescens* & *R. tatiense* [small species] *R. 'Hardijzer Beauty'*, *R. racemosum x spiciferum* [small hybrids], *R. grande*, *R. delavayi*, *R. irroratum*, *R. arboretum*, [large species], *R. 'Rubiyat'* & *R. 'Lapoinya Lollypop'* [large hybrids]. The Maddenia class had a large number of entries & good blooms were *R. dalhousiae*, *R. ciliicaylyx* and *R. johnstoneanum*.

The evergreen Azaleas had a good amount of entries & Alan Walker's *R. 'Kirin'* was the winner. Simon won the species with *R. linearifolium* [the spider azalea].

The Vireya section had a lot of blooms & entries but only 3 winners, Simon, Andrew & Bill Taylor. The small species were well represented by Andrew with *R. rugosum* & *wrightianum x wrightianum*. Simon won the large species with *lateum*. Bill displayed & won the large hybrids with Bold Janus & Simbu Sunset.

The non Rhodo section had some good material on show with Inga's Pleonie Orchids winning.

17/10/08

We had 10 exhibitors who gave us a very good display & fittingly our guest speaker Graham Smith from New Zealand chose the exhibit of the night which was John Quinn's Asiatic Scintillation x Coro an excellent choice. John's other entries in this class were also very good. It was pleasing to see the Asiatic's with pride of place on the bench, they were a high light. Other winners in this section were Andrew Rouse with small species *R. auritum*, Mike Hammer with *R. arboreum* [large species] & Simon Begg with Maddenia *R. edgeworthii*.

The Azalea section had entries in all classes except the evergreen species.

Winners were Simon with an unnamed deciduous hybrid, Gay Stagoll with a plant of Christmas Cheer & Len Sloggett with *R. Caprice* [indica] & *R. occidentale* a deciduous species. Simon again entered a large quantity of Vireyas & won with *R. retusum* [small species], *R. Popcorn* [small hybrids] & *R. viriosum* [large species]. Elizabeth Xipell won large hybrids with *R. 'Mrs. Elizabeth Miller'* & Bill Taylor won with a plant of Blaze Of Glory. Other good blooms were - *R. jasminiflorum*, *R. polyanthemum x Dr. Sleumer x hertzogii*, *R. 'Sunset Fantasy'* & *R. orbiculatum*. The non Rhodo section had a good showing & our president chose a pot of Inga Hammer's. I didn't see it close up but I think it was a *Fritillaria*.

PROGRAMME FOR 2008-2009

NOVEMBER

FRIDAY 21st 8.00pm AGM at Nunawading. Speaker: Cynthia Sladen will give a presentation about her recent trip overseas.

DECEMBER:

CHRISTMAS FUNCTION – SUNDAY 7TH 12.00PM at Mike and Inge Hammer's house, 2 The Crescent, Sassafras.

BYO meat (BBQ available), drinks, glasses and chairs. The Society will provide salads, desserts, tea and coffee.

As this function is being catered for members need to book before 1st December.

Ring Inge or Mike (9755 2176) or Marcia Begg (9751 1610)

JANUARY 2009:

SUNDAY 18TH : VIREYA AND LILIUM SHOW, 11.00am-4.30pm

A new combined event of the ARSV & Ferny Creek Horticultural Society to be held in the Ferny Creek Horticultural Society Hall, Hilton Rd, Ferny Creek (Mel: 75 E1).

There will be a competitive show of vireyas and liliums which all members are welcome to enter. Wholesale nurseries will have plants for sale and Devonshire Teas will be served.

Members are welcome to set up a stand to sell their plants and must notify Inge Hammer by 9th Jan. (9755 2176)

SUNDAY 25TH AUSTRALIA DAY BBQ. From 5.00pm.

BYO everything and join with members at the National Rhododendron Gardens on the lawn beside the hall.

FEBRUARY 2009:

FRIDAY 20TH General Meeting 8.00pm at Nunawading Horticultural Centre.

Topic: The Begg's will give a presentation following their trip to New Zealand and the NZ Rhododendron Conference. Three hundred people, mostly New Zealander's attended this enjoyable social occasion. Come and see why!

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Australian Rhododendron Society Vic Branch Committee 2007-8

President –Carole Quinn Ph 5968 1027

Vice President No- 1 Mike Hammer Ph: 9755 2176

Vice President No- 2 Bill Taylor Ph: 9754 8275

Treasurer – Neil Webster, Ph: 9859 3622

Secretary – Val Marshall, Ph: 9803 4434

Simon Begg – 9751 1610 (Newsletter Editor)

Len Sloggett – Ph: 9808 6484

Inge Hammer-Ph: 9755 2176

Marcia Begg, Ph: 9751 1610

Elizabeth Xipelli-Ph: 0959 9934

John Quinn – Ph: 5968 1027

Alan Walker-Ph: 9726 8836

Mike Hare- Ph: 9844 2232

SOCIETY PICASAWEB SITE

Visit <http://picasaweb.google.com/ARSVic> for the latest pictures.

Additions since the September 2008 Newsletter are :-

* New Zealand Rhododendron Association Conference 2008

* Andrew Rouse's new Glasshouse

For the "Beechmont" Picasaweb site visit <http://picasaweb.google.com/simonwbegg>