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Rhodo News

Newsletter 394



Official Newsletter of the

Emu Valley Rhododendron Garden Inc

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A New Species?

Rhododendron syringoideum

In 2011 we were fortunate to receive a few packets of rhodo seed from Bob Cherry who accompanied Steve Hootman into New Guinea on a plant-hunting trip.

Over the years it has been interesting to watch the different growth patterns and leaf shapes of the collection appear. After three years *R. macgregoriae* was the first to flower with typical orange and yellow flowers, and

then flowered *R. herzogii* with long white flushed pink flowers standing proudly above large obovate-elliptic leaves, a larger form than we have been growing at Emu Valley. Then came a very unusual form of *R. beyerinckianum* with pink flowers.

Three of these seed lots – two from Mt Hagen and one from Mt Wilhelm, were unidentified species making them quite intriguing.

Imagine our excitement as one of the unnamed species set flower buds. These buds looked very much like *R. herzogii* in size and shape but as they opened the corolla became trumpet shaped, pink and had a delightful perfume. A picture was sent to Steve who was unable to identify but would endeavor to put a name to it. In the mean time the same pictures were sent to Andrew Rouse in Victoria who remarked that we might have a species new to cultivation in Australia. Andrew tentatively named it *R. syringoideum*. Whatever its name is it will make a delightful addition to our vireya collection and who knows what the other two unnamed seed lots will bring forth. *Maurie*

Calendar

Sunday 19th March
Social Meeting
At EVRG 2pm

Sunday 23rd April (note change)
Social Meeting
At EVRG 2pm

See us at:

emuvalleryhodo.com.au



Sue's Corner

You may notice the absence of Neets' "In the Garden" article this month? Neet is currently on maternity leave, following the safe arrival of Spencer's sister Stella Rose on 16th February. All at Emu Valley extend our congratulations to Neet and Michael and wish them well over the coming months as they adjust to their extended family.

Although the last week of February was the hottest period during summer here at Emu Valley, Autumn has already announced its arrival with the large maple visible from the office window turning a brilliant shade of bronze. Maurie and Pam must be hoping for some good early Autumn rains to quench the thirsty ground, so that their nightly irrigation and watering rounds can taper off.

Without a doubt, the driving force in operating our garden is the efforts of our volunteers. Currently numbering around 70, they run the tea room, cater for functions, look after our visitors, weed, weed and more weed, mulch, build and maintain walking tracks and retaining walls, look after the nursery and its occupants, repair/fix and adapt, plant out and prune. Then there are the one off seasonal tasks, building projects and special events to organise and execute, together with the all the management and compliance duties to attend to. The efforts of our wonderful volunteers, both past and present, are visible, recognised and much appreciated.

Eight of our volunteers have manually uplifted and downloaded 1907 bales of straw in the past month, to complete our annual bale carting. The stacks around the garden will be spread as mulch now that the weeds have been extinguished, in readiness for planting out our new plants in Autumn. A big thank you to all concerned.

One of our volunteers has recently undertaken the task of repairing/replacing/restoring and then repainting the 32 seats we have scattered around the Garden. Having already attended to 8 seats, he reckons he might be finished by next Christmas!

Although we have another four cruise ships this season, so far we have welcomed 1451 cruise ship passengers to our Garden. As these visitors come from all around the world, as well as from mainland Australia, our reputation as a world class tourist destination is magnified by their experience of their time with us. Many return, and others tell us they come at the recommendation of those who have come before. This is most reassuring to all involved in "cruise ship days" – long may it continue! *Sue Johnson*

Social Meeting Report for 19th February

Once underway, after a late start, those attending our meeting heard information from a recent "brainstorming" session where various ideas and suggestions regarding our garden were floated for consideration.

This was followed by the sharing of dot points from a focus group who looked at ways to improve on last years Cherry Blossom Festival. Such areas as traffic control, easier communications between our members, promoting events and imparting information to visitors on the day, were all given close scrutiny and improvements planned.

Ivan shared information regarding an opportunity for EVRG acquiring some adjacent land to enhance the operations of our garden.

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