



# Pukeiti NEWSLETTER

Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust Inc.

*Rhododendrons in a Rainforest*

[www.pukeiti.org.nz](http://www.pukeiti.org.nz)

## The Joy of the Garden

### Recent Members' Events



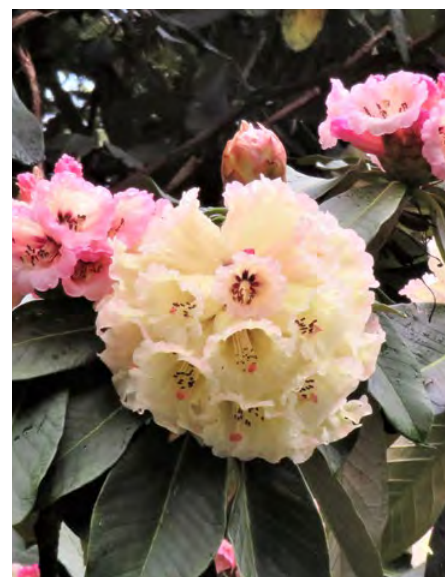
Heather pointing out the epiphytes and climbers from the waterwheel lookout

### Meeting epiphytes and other aerial plants at Pukeiti

Heather Robson led an informative walk to sites in the rainforest to observe the epiphytes and other climbing plants. There are many types and the rainfall at Pukeiti is ideal and they festoon and cover the trunks of many of the taller trees. True epiphytes germinate on the trunks and branches, absorbing moisture and nutrients mainly from the air. They simply perch on the host tree and include *Astelia* and ferns. Another group, the hemi-epiphytes, often send roots down to the soil which in the case of the giant ratas ultimately surround and outlive the host tree.

### A walk among the giants of the Rhododendron world

Graham Smith assisted by Ross Gladwell led the group of members into the Valley of the Giants. And giants many of these rhododendrons have become. Planted over sixty years ago, the biggest of the *R. protistum* hybrids are as tall as the surrounding bush. Most of the big leaf rhododendrons are native to the high rainfall areas of the Himalayan ranges in Bhutan, Northern Burma and Western China - the monsoon country. The high rainfall at Pukeiti suits them admirably. It has one of the largest collections of these in gardens anywhere in the world.



*R. protistum*

### Perennial Propagation

A group of members, the majority of which join the weekly working bees held each Wednesday, potted a variety of perennials which had been lifted from various places around Pukeiti particularly the Keiller Garden. The plants will be offered for sale to members next year.



Keiller Garden in summer



# Garden Report

Spring is early this year at Pukeiti. The gardens have never looked better - their appearance is a tribute to the work of the staff and a lot has been achieved. Highlights at this time of the year are the Valley of the Giants, the camellias, the range of complementary foliage in the display houses, the promise of a good flowering season for the vireyas, and the wall of bloom on the roadside entrance to the gardens of R. 'Sir Robert Peel'.

Kristian Davies, the head gardener, has provided a brief outline of some of the work being undertaken in the garden.

The herbaceous border in front of The

Lodge has had a major revamp with the help of the wider gardens team. All the perennials were removed, the border was dug over and had 2 cubic metres of compost and some base fertiliser incorporated into it. The beds were then levelled and replanted with some of the existing plants and we have also added some new varieties to add more interest and extend the flowering period.

- We have fertilised the whole garden to encourage spring growth and support plant and soil health.
- The Founder's and main lawn have been limed, and there's been a dramatic improvement to the drainage of the main lawn following the 'fracking' in late summer.

- All the hydrangeas have been pruned with the help of our fantastic volunteers.
- Spireas, miscanthus and grapes have also had their spring growth cut back.
- Ongoing plantings throughout the garden.

## Projects

- The accessibility path via the Kokopu House has been upgraded, making it more useable for visitors.
- The lower bridge in the wetland has been removed and a new one has been installed.
- Building of the lookout in the Hybrid Block is about to begin.



The staff (L-R) Stuart, Ross, Lara, Scott, Stephan, Sian, Kristian and Andrew



R. 'Rangitoto Sunrise'

## Rhododendron Conservation Programme

One of the objects of the *ex-situ* project is to distribute plants raised, mainly at Pukeiti, either by seed, cutting or grafts, to gardens throughout the country, matching the climatic conditions to each species requirements. Andrew Brooker's role is to establish and supervise the resulting distributed collection and its conservation.

Following are notes from Andrew Brooker on the recent dissemination project. Andrew was accompanied by Ross Gladwell.

## Disseminated to Gwavas were the following :

*R. formosum* var *formosum*

*R. linearifolium* var *macrosepalum*

*R. maximum* x *yakushimanum* (Michael Hudson hybrid)

*R. ciliipes*

*R. vialii*

*R. reticulatum*

Also given to Stuart and Phyllida Gibson were two camellias, a white *reticulata* species and a *reticulata* hybrid propagated from plants at Gwavas in 2021. Whilst Gwavas is not formally a part of the Rhododendron Conservation Project network of *ex-situ* sites the value here is the continuation of the relationship which started in 1951 with Michael Hudson and now extends to the next generation.

There is a need to continue this relationship in other ways to maintain a reciprocation of material and information going forward. Stuart and I talked about the cutting material collected over the last three visits, 2014/ 2017/ 2021, and the potential for more of this to make its way back to Gwavas as part of their garden renewal programme. He would also like assistance to register some of the outstanding cultivars that Michael Hudson had developed during his lifetime in the garden.

## Disseminated to Heritage Park were:

*R. falconeri* wild collected JTSD

*R. hunnewellianum* ssp *hunnewellianum* RCMG seed

*R. scopulorum*

*R. simsii* KW22036

*R. keysii* wild collected JTSD

*R. lepidotum* wild collected JTSD

*R. augustinii*

*R. 'Sir Russell Matthews'* NZ cultivar

*R. 'Don Brunton'* NZ cultivar

As you will see these also included some NZ raised cultivars which are not common in the regular trade lists. The timing of our visit was such that the plants were put in the ground the following day in sites where they should thrive. It was also an

opportunity for Ross to meet some of the volunteer team who have a passion for the garden.

## Auckland/ Whangarei and Kerikeri.

The visit to **Auckland Botanic Gardens** was as a follow up to an idea to conserve key rhododendron taxa, and in time the entire NZ collection, in an on-site seedbank. Jack Hobbs introduced me to the propagation manager and his team so that I could gain an understanding about what they use for successful seed storage, how and why the material they work with is collected and prepared for storage and the end use of the seed as it relates to the operation of the Botanic Garden and other regional parks in the Auckland catchment.

The creation of a storage facility with a designated fridge and freezer would also enable us to hold pollen for longer term projects within the garden that encompass different flowering periods.

**West Lynn Garden** – this garden was developed by Jack Clark, creator of Eden Gardens, very early on in the 80s and initially listed several *vireya* taxa that were of interest to the project (1989 garden inventory). My visit was to ascertain if any remained today in the garden, and if so, start a conversation around propagation. The garden contained *vireya* cultivars and whilst some were of an impressive size they were not the plants sought after.

## The plants disseminated to Eden Gardens

*R. carringtoniae*

*R. solitarium*

*R. 'Mount Taranaki'*

*R. 'Rowena Knight'*

*R. 'Rangitoto Blush'*

*R. 'Brazen Beauty'*

*R. 'Rangitoto Sunrise'*

*R. 'Rosy Comet'*

Most of these are NZ raised cultivars that are not available anywhere and Pukeiti has the sole stock plants at this stage. Except for the two Pukeiti registered cultivars the others were the work of Dr Brian Oldham in Auckland.

Time was also spent with the new gardener, Mike Tuck, who in the eighteen months of working at Eden has made some encouraging progress in redeveloping and managing the garden whilst working within the restraints of the 'memorial plant scheme' and budgets. Key criteria for plant selection on this trip was to ensure that our plants complemented the existing display without adding further care requirements to the team.

## The plants disseminated to Whangarei Quarry Gardens were :

*R. horlickianum*

*R. leptothrium*

*R. ciliipes*

*R. subansiriense*

*R. kanehirae*

*R. formosum* 'Ten Tashi'

*R. lindleyi* KW8546

*R. nuttallii* x *edgeworthii* (Michael Hudson hybrid)

*R. vialii*

*R. superbum*

*R. fallacinum*

*R. luralense*

Fewer *vireya* were distributed on this trip with the intention of extending the temperate collection to a warmer climate enabling us to experiment a little and compare growth rates/survivability etc with examples here, at Pukeiti and further south.

Spent the morning with the volunteer team who do a marvellous job caring for this space, and who proudly showed off the *vireyas* entrusted to them on the previous trip along with the material I freighted to the garden immediately after Cyclone Gabrielle. Interestingly they had observed that the initial planting was not thriving in the site they had first prepared and undertook to research what might be causing this as all other plantings were doing well. It was discovered that the canopy trees, *Ceiba pentandra*, had a reputation for souring the soil around its roots to prevent competition. Subsequently the plants were relocated to a different site, that of a slip caused by Gabrielle, and are looking very happy amongst the rockfall.



The plants disseminated at Wharepuke Garden in Kerikeri were:

*R. retusum*

*R. renschianum*

*R. commonae*

*R. alborugosum*

*R. praetervisum*

*R. solitarium*

*R. searleanum*

*R. calignis*

*R. x planescotatum*

*R. lulralense*

Robin Booth has created his own permanent label to complement our accession tags acknowledging the Rhododendron Conservation Project and this highlighted how proud he and the family are to continue being a part of it. He did report that six of the original dissemination didn't survive the droughts Northland experienced last summer but was reassured that this was part of the greater project

experiment. The remainder were in great shape and had made impressive growth highlighting not only the site selection but also the resilience of some plants over others. Personally, I feel the quality of the plants we are now able to disseminate is far better than at the beginning and the mortality rates will reflect this going forward.

The plant selections for these last two Northland gardens have also reflected the valuable contribution the late Os Blumhardt made to both the nursery industry and Northland in particular. At Whangarei we caught up with his brother, Albert, who could remember the various collection trips with Os and the plants that were introduced as a result – including the subsequent hybridising. Robin Booth, as a long-term friend of Os' has a similar connection and it is important for the success of our project sites in Northland that when selecting plants we consider these connections.

As well as the rhododendron taxon young plants of *Dimorphanthera*

*keysseri*, grown from a plant collected by Os and growing well at his old nursery, were shared with the following:

- Auckland Botanic Gardens
- Whangarei Quarry Gardens
- Chris Blumhardt at Koromiko nursery
- Wharepuke Quarry Gardens

Lastly, a variable range of cuttings of other subtropical genera were collected at Wharepuke and are now on the prop bench at Pukeiti. Some may prove too tender for our site but the opportunity to try and the potential to get some different companion plants for Pukeiti and possibly Hollard Gardens was too great.

Andrew Brooker

*Rhododendron Collections Officer*  
27 August 24

## Rhododendrons of distinction



### *R. tuba*

Found growing on the side of Mt Dayman on the margin of the moss forest growing there. Introduced into cultivation by N Weeks and N Cruttwell in 1974. This is a fine species which will grow outdoors in a sheltered position and never ceases to attract attention when in flower.

### *R. rothschildii*

Subgenus Hymenanthus: Section Leiorhodium – subsection Falconera

*Rhododendron rothschildii* is a large shrub to small tree (up to 6metres). In the wild it is found in NW Yunnan, China growing in mixed woodland at elevations of 3,700-4000m. It is in quite a restricted distribution on the Ta-pao Shan. Its conservation assessment is VU. (Vulnerable)

It was first collected by Joseph Rock and George Forrest but spent many years misidentified and it wasn't until 1972 H. H. Davidian described it and named it after Lionel de Rothschild of hybridising fame.

It is likely to have arisen as a hybrid between *R. arizelum* and *R. praestans* but because of its isolation on the Ta-pao Shan has been able to stabilise and speciate. It is not in the Pukeiti collection but is flowering beautifully at Heritage Park, Kimbolton at the moment.





# Members' Garden Visits

**SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 22**

Please bring the usual personal items such as rain jacket, umbrella etc, a picnic lunch, nibbles to share and drink of choice for the gathering at end of the day.

**10.30am** travel to Diane and Alistair Jordon's Garden, 453 Maude Rd, Korito (take the second entrance to the property and park behind the house).

**11.30am** Visit Martina Murray's organic garden (Blue Petal) noted for its botanicals and honey which can be purchased; 335 Maude Rd, Korito. We will have our picnic lunch there.

**1pm** Drive to Neil and Linda Tapsell's garden, Kowhai Garden, 92 Ridgewood Drive. This is a garden of Regional Significance. It is on a steep hillside. Please leave your cars on the roadside and if required transport up the hill will be arranged.

**2pm** Visit Tupare, 487 Mangorei Rd. Meet in the carpark and join a guided tour of the major trees in the garden and on the river flat.

**3pm** Drive down Mangorei Rd to 4 Kinross Drive, the private town garden of Adrienne Tatham.

**4pm** You are welcome to Lynn and Robin's new home, 9 Mackillop Way, Brooklands, for a social occasion to finish the day. Please bring drinks of your choice and nibbles to share. There is limited parking so please park on Brooklands Rd and walk down the Way to the white house at the bottom of the slope.



*R. formosum 'Ten Tashi'*

## Spring Members' Day

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 19**

**10.15am** Meet at The Lodge.

**10.30 am** A garden walk including a visit to the site of the proposed lookout in the Hybrid Block.

**12 Noon** Potluck lunch will be served in the Douglas Cook Room. Please bring finger food for a shared lunch (*Potluck lunches have been a feature of Members' Days at Pukeiti since the very beginning*).

**1.30 pm** Annual General Meeting - In the Rata room - *details on the back page*.

### Rule Changes

Special Resolution: That the draft constitution be approved.

NB: Under the new requirements the Board will now become a Committee and the Members' Committee a subcommittee of the Board. It is also proposed that there will be in addition a Finance Subcommittee and an *Ex-situ* Subcommittee. The Committee (ex-Board) will consist of 3 elected members plus one from each of the subcommittees and a representative from the TRC, all with a three-year term.

**2 pm:** Gordon Bailey is the speaker and will address the meeting on re-establishing the overseas connections.

*Please note the Rainforest Eatery will be open Wednesday to Sunday, from 10am to 4pm: Ph 067524143*



Bublitz Garden - 9 Mackillop Way

## Obituary

Life Member and a keen member of Pukeiti for many years Dr Margaret Wilson has passed away aged 90. She was a biochemist and lectured for many years at Massey University. She was a supporter of many community organisations and assisted in the establishment of U3A (University of the Third Age) in New Plymouth. Margaret served on both the Pukeiti Board and Members' Committee for a number of years, her service recognised with the award of Life Membership in 2010. Her long life of service began, no doubt, when appointed Head Girl of New Plymouth Girls' High School in 1952.

**Please mark these dates in your calendar. Some dates and details have been changed so check carefully\***

# Members' Activities

# 2024

**SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 22**

## Garden Visits

A selection of Taranaki gardens open for members to visit. See previous page for details

**FRIDAY, OCTOBER 18, 5PM**

## Board meeting

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 19**

## Spring Members' Day & AGM

### 72nd Annual General Meeting Agenda

1.30pm, Saturday 19 October 2024 . The Rata Room at Pukeiti, 2290 Carrington Road, New Plymouth

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|---|--|
| 1. APOLOGIES  | Therefore, John Eagles and Marion MacKay are declared to be elected to the Board.  |
| 2. WELCOME  |  |
| 3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE 2023 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING     | 11. APPOINTMENT OF ACCOUNTANTS   |
| 4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES                           | 12. APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS  |
| 5. CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT                                   | 13. APPOINTMENT OF SOLICITOR   |
| 6. ANNUAL ACCOUNTS  | 14. LIFE MEMBERSHIP  |
| 7. TRUST FUND REPORT  | 15. GENERAL BUSINESS   |
| 8. MEMBERS' COMMITTEE REPORT                                  | With the introduction of the Incorporated Societies Act 2022, the PRT Inc Board Members have worked on our constitution to comply with the new requirements. A vote is required to adopt the updated Constitution. |
| 9. APPOINTMENT OF PATRON                                      | 16. CLOSE OF MEETING   |
| 10. ELECTION OF BOARD MEMBERS                                 |  |
| Two nominations for the vacant Board positions were received. |  |

All incorporated societies must re-register with the Registrar of Incorporated Societies by April 2026 and provide a compliant constitution. Your PRT Inc Board have proposed changes to our existing Constitution that comply with the new Act. Please have a read through and we will vote at our 2024 AGM as to whether we adopt the proposed changes. Please look on our website under recent updates to review the draft Constitution, or simply click on the link to go directly to the draft Constitution <https://www.pukeiti.com/news-updates-projects/incorporated-societies-act-2022-draft-updates-for-our-prt-inc-rules/>

The AGM will be followed by our Guest Speaker Gordon Bailey, who will be speaking on re-establishing the overseas connections. We look forward to seeing you at the AGM.



THE NEW ZEALAND RHODODENDRON ASSOCIATION INC.

## RHODENZA 2024

GERALDINE & TIMARU



**29 OCTOBER - 1 NOVEMBER 2024**

*'Rhododendron Odyssey'*

HOSTED BY  
SOUTH CANTERBURY  
RHODODENDRON GROUP

Details and registration forms are available on the NZRA website – [www.rhododendron.org.nz](http://www.rhododendron.org.nz). Click on 'conference' in the menu bar. Pukeiti Members are welcome to attend.

**NOVEMBER 1 - 10**

## Centuria Taranaki Garden Festival

Experience glorious gardens and events at New Zealand's biggest spring celebration

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 14**

## Christmas BBQ



**Pukeiti**

Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust Inc.

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Chairperson  
Gordon Bailey gordon.bailey@code.govt.nz



[www.pukeiti.org.nz](http://www.pukeiti.org.nz)  
is worth a look!

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## Pukeiti Library

The catalogue of books can be accessed at the following site  
[www.librarycat.org/lib/Pukeiti](http://www.librarycat.org/lib/Pukeiti)

