



# Pukeiti NEWSLETTER

Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust Inc.

*Rhododendrons in a Rainforest*

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



## *Rhododendron macgregoriae*

*Rhododendron macgregoriae* is in full bloom in the Vireya Walk at Pukeiti and is a magnificent sight.

The species was first collected in 1891 on Mt Yule, New Guinea on an expedition arranged by a Mr Bedford (who is given the credit for its discovery) and was named after Lady MacGregor, the wife of Sir William MacGregor, a former administrator of New Guinea (1888-1898), who promoted the expedition. He later became Governor General of Queensland.

The species is in fact widespread over the mainland of New Guinea and in places locally abundant, observed sometimes covering the hillside with yellow. The first recorded introduction of seed, according to Geoge Argent in his book 'Vireya Rhododendrons', was by Prof Sleumer in 1961. It flowered at Kew in 1964. But in fact, it was first collected by Felix Jury, New Plymouth, in 1957 on a private expedition. The original plant grown from seed collected then still flowers every year at Tikorangi, the Jury Garden. A plant grown from a cutting from the original plant was one of the first vireya grown at Pukeiti.

*R. macgregoriae*, poisonous to stock, particularly the flowers, is well known by the local population in its native land and is often removed from grassland. According to Cecil Smith, author of the introductory book on 'Vireya Rhododendrons' (1989) the flowers are mixed with sweet potato by the local tribes and used to kill rats.

There are several colour forms of the species ranging from yellow to red, and even a pink form. It hybridises readily with other vireya species in the wild and has been used extensively by hybridisers. It is the parent of popular hybrids 'Golden Charm', 'Orange Maid', and 'Butter Maid'.

# Rhododendron macabeanum

Subgenus Hymenantes: Section Ponticum – Subsection Grandia

*Rhododendron macabeanum* is a shrub to small tree (up to 4+ metres). It originates from Manipur and Nagaland in North East India growing at altitudes of 2400-3700m.

Its conservation assessment is EN (Endangered) It is relatively common where it is found but is in a restricted range and is threatened

with forest loss and logging.

Pukeiti has several forms of *R. macabeanum* and many hybrids. It is one of the most beautiful of the large leaf rhododendrons and at this time of the year greets the visitor with a spectacular display on arrival at the carpark. This particular plant is a cross of the FCC and Nymans forms.



## Seed collecting

The *ex-situ* conservation programme requires a variety of examples of a species to be collected from different localities, thus ensuring a wide genetic range which is critical to the conservation of each species. To help achieve this, the Trust, this year, has sponsored a seed collecting expedition to Arunachal Pradesh organised by Shashil Dayal. Previously, with Jeremy Thompson he has participated in a number of successful collecting trips. Several species grown at Pukeiti were collected by them.

This year over 54 packets of rhododendron seed were collected, and these have been sown at Pukeiti by Andrew Brooker. The germination rate has been very good. Over 80 percent have germinated.

In a few years some of the species, no doubt, will be distributed to the network of gardens with which agreements have been signed, and offered for sale to members.



Seedlings germinating at Pukeiti



Stuart Robertson  
TRC Gardens' Manager

## Staff changes

Stuart Robertson, appointed to replace Greg Rine on his retirement, has gathered around him a very good staff which complement those already on the job. Kristian Davies who was the curator of Pukekura Park has been appointed Head Gardener, and he has been joined by Stefan Reijmer who returns to Pukeiti to join the other gardeners: Scott Denim, Ross Gradwell, Sian Davies and the Rhododendron Collections Officer Andrew Brooker.

## Rainforest Eatery

There have been changes in the Rainforest Café, which is now in the hands of Charlie - Carlos Mendoza Jnr.

Current Opening Hours are 10am - 4pm Wednesday to Sunday. From October 1st to February the Rainforest Eatery will be open every day.

*The team there would appreciate your patronage*

# From the Members' Committee

Events at Pukeiti have continued to be well supported this year.

The Drinks and Nibbles day in February was enjoyed by about 20 members who took advantage of the warm and fine summer weather to wander around the garden and see the lovely perennials Sian Morgan has planted in the Keiller Block. Back at The Lodge, over drinks and nibbles, we caught up with what we had all been doing over the Christmas break.

At the beginning of March we held our annual Revive the Memories Day. This day is catering specifically for members who would normally find it very difficult to get down to The Lodge and are not mobile enough to enjoy a normal members' event. It is open to all members with mobility challenges but this year only our retirement village residents, who each get a personalized invitation, attended. Those attending were very appreciative of the effort the committee and garden staff had put in to making their time up at the garden special.

The Autumn Members' Day was well attended and the more relaxed arrangements due to the event being held in the Rata Room seemed to be enjoyed by those attending. It was lovely for Alan Jellyman to step up and take a group of members through the covered walkway whilst Ross Gradwell took the main walk around the large leafed area. Andrew Brooker's talk was well received and tied in surprisingly well with the morning walk Ross took.

Forty plus people enjoyed a glass (or two) of mulled wine before sitting down to a 2-course lunch in the Douglas Cook Room. The lovely food was prepared by the café and served by members of the committee. After lunch, Marion MacKay presented a well received talk giving a clear overview of our conservation project. This she illustrated with a selection of excellent photos. The talk elicited much interest and many questions were asked by those present.



*R. cornubia*

Afterwards, members could accompany Andrew Brooker for a tour around the propagation area. This area is vital to the propagation and consequent dissemination of the endangered rhododendrons whose future the Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust is trying to secure. Members got an opportunity to see the Rouse House propagator and improvements to the shade house which have been paid for by The Trust. These improvements are designed to increase the success rate of the propagation efforts.

**The Soup and Large Leaf Rhododendron Day** was once again threatened by rain but it was decided to go ahead with it anyway. As it happened, rain was threatening when we left New Plymouth. On the way to Pukeiti we drove through thick fog, emerged from that and shortly after, the windscreen wipers were going flat out as heavy rain fell. Just as we arrived at Pukeiti the weather cleared. It stayed like this whilst Ross Gradwell took about 25 members around the large leaf area and it wasn't until we were sitting, sipping our hot soup that the Heavens again opened and there was a good shower of rain. After lunch Ross took our less mobile members, and some late comers, for a drive round the large leaf area in the mobility vehicle and most of us got back to our cars and well on our way back home before we again encountered rain. The large leaf rhododendrons are a bit later this year but there were still enough out to make the walk very pleasant and with Ross's commentary, very interesting. The homemade soups, cooked by members of the committee,

were warm, tasty and enjoyed by all.

Interspersed with these member-only events we have had two walks which are advertised through the TRC websites and open to the public as well.

**The Mother's Day** walk on "Foods from the Forest" went very well. About 40 people attended and most returned to the Douglas Cook Room after the walk to partake in some of the 12 foods available to taste and to browse through the library books out on the tables. I think over all, *Alseuosmia macrophylla* jelly was the most popular, although many thought *Fuchsia procumbens* berries would add a colourful if bland crunch to salads and kawakawa tea was pleasant but somewhat numbing on the tongue.

The second walk took a look at "The Significant Trees of the Forest". Ross Gradwell again helped greatly with this walk helping us find the best examples of the different trees to be discussed and even finding and exposing the lenticel covered, shield-like aerial roots of the good sized pukatea on the corner of the Corrigan walk and Petterson Walk. The forest at Pukeiti is young and regenerating after being heavily logged but there are also a surprising number of large specimen trees that escaped the logger's tools. They now stand like sentinels over the forest, reminding visitors of what the forest would have looked like 100 years ago but also reminding us of what it could again be. Thus, their very presence encourages us in our conservation efforts. Over 30 people completed this walk and several joined us in The Lodge afterwards for a hot drink and biscuits.

# Upcoming Events!

## GARDEN VISITS

### SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 17.

Below are the gardens we will be visiting this year. On the day, please bring the usual personal items such as rain jacket and umbrella, sunblock and sunhat.

### Programme

**10:30am:** Meet at and visit the garden of Bruce and Sandy Gray, 547 Frankley Road, New Plymouth. Parking on the road is difficult here. We will have people on duty to guide you as to where to park.

**11:30am:** Drive to the garden of Sally Masson, 475 Frankley road. Please park in the top paddock. There are a couple of parks at the house for those unable to walk far.

**12:30pm:** Visit Annette Cameron's and Robert Millen's garden, 481 Frankley Road. Please pull into the drive and park in the paddock as directed.

*This is where we will have our picnic lunch. Please bring your picnic lunch, including your drinks and cup.*

**2:00pm:** Head to Brooklands Zoo. Alan Jellyman will guide us around the Gables Cottage Garden, the Kunming Garden and the Rhododendron Dell pointing out special features as we go.

**3:00pm:** Te Henui Cemetery Garden. Cnr Watson and Lemon Street. Park in the area opposite the funeral directors' premises.. We will gather here before Alan again guides us around this 5-star Trip Advisor garden created by an eager group of talented volunteers and NPDC Staff.

Following this visit we are invited to Peter Catt's and Heather Robson's home, 12A Tamati Place, Merrilands, New Plymouth for a social occasion to end the day. *Please bring drinks of your choice and nibbles to share.*

The garden visits will take place regardless of weather.

We hope many of you can join us to visit these gardens. Some of the gardens we are visiting have limited parking spaces so please consider car-pooling with other members.

## SPRING MEMBERS' DAY

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 14

### Why this year's Spring Members' Day is special.

The Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust has combined with the NZRA to bring Steve Hootman to NZ to talk at both our Spring Members' Day and the NZRA Rhodenza Conference.

Steve Hootman is the Executive Director and Curator of the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden in the USA (since about 1992). Not only is he responsible for the world-class collection of species rhododendrons displayed in one of the premier gardens in the world, he is also one of the foremost international plant hunters of the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. He has led and participated in several plant hunting expeditions into China and the Himalayas resulting in the introduction to the west of many new plants. He is a key player in the international effort to conserve rhododendron species and is one of the foreign partners in the PRT Conservation project.

Steve Hootman has a reputation as an excellent educator and speaker and, although he is speaking twice in New Plymouth during the month of October, the addresses he gives at our Spring Members' Day and Rhodenza will be quite different.

For more information about the garden he has developed and an introduction to Steve Hootman google 'Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden'. This will give you several links to follow. There are many Youtube videos to look at. The 4.40 minute clip showing an aerial photo of the glasshouse and the 3.57min clip showing a photo of Steve with the female interviewer will both give you a great introduction to Steve but there are many other you can get lost in. If that's not enough, and you have a few hours to spend lost in the world of rhododendrons and other lovely plants, just google 'Steve Hootman'.

The organisation for the day follows the successful format used most other years.

**10:15am:** Meet at The Lodge

**10:30am:** A garden walk with Steve Hootman and Pukeiti members.

**12:00noon:** Around this time the potluck lunch will be served in the Douglas Cook Room.

*Please bring finger food for a shared lunch.*

**1:15pm:**

**Annual General Meeting**  
*in the Rata Room.*

### Special resolutions for members to consider

- 1 That Pukeiti Inc pay \$12k to the TRC in the 2024-2025 financial year to enable the TRC to service the membership of Pukeiti Inc in the 2024-2025 financial year to meet the objectives of Pukeiti Inc
- 2 That the Pukeiti Trust Fund be authorised to pay to Pukeiti Inc such sum of \$12k from the Trust Fund's Reserve Funds (Accumulated Funds) pursuant to the Pukeiti Trust Fund's Trust Deed

### Notes

If Resolution 1 is not passed by a simple majority, then Resolution 2 does not need to be put and no funds will be paid to the TRC

If Resolution 1 is passed by simple majority, then Resolution 2 needs to be put as a Special Resolution of the members. If this Special Resolution is passed the funds to pay to the TRC will come from the Trust Fund.

If Resolution 2 is not passed as a Special Resolution, then the funds to pay the TRC will come from the accumulated funds of Pukeiti Inc

**2:30pm:**

**Steve Hootman will address those present.**

**RSVP** by Thursday, October 12 to Heather 021 206 5222 or email [cattrobson@gmail.com](mailto:cattrobson@gmail.com) leaving your name, the number attending and contact details. Please state if you need transport down to The Lodge.





## TARANAKI GARDEN FESTIVAL

**OCTOBER 27 – NOVEMBER 05**

Volunteers are needed to assist Pukeiti Staff with hosting duties and plants sales at The Lodge and for membership promotion. This is a very pleasant way to spend a day interacting with people from around New Zealand as they come into the atrium to see the flower display and to buy the rhododendrons Andrew sells during the festival.

This year Diane Toole has again offered to organise the roster and she will be contacting members asking for their help, or you can contact her by emailing [wanderweg@xtra.co.nz](mailto:wanderweg@xtra.co.nz) or phoning 027 414 4060. The day starts at 10:00am and finishes mid-afternoon. The finish time is flexible and varies depending on the weather and the number of visitors.

### THE ORIGINS OF OUR HYBRID RHODODENDRONS

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 19**

This is the final TRC/PRT walk for the year. There will be a guided walk on the above theme followed by drinks and biscuits in the Douglas Cook Room.

### END OF YEAR BBQ SATURDAY DECEMBER 09

This event has been changed back to being a Saturday event. We hope most of you will still be able to attend. The BBQ will be served up at 12:00 noon at

The Lodge (depending on the cooks of course!). The Trust will be providing the BBQ meat and buns but please bring a salad or a small plate of finger food for dessert to share with others.

RSVP by Thursday, December 07 to Heather (06) 7572460 or email [cattrobson@gmail.com](mailto:cattrobson@gmail.com) leaving your name, the number attending and your contact details. Please state if you need transport down to The Lodge.

### Access to The Lodge on Members' Days.

A request from a member wanting to attend the Mid-Winter Dinner but being unable to get down to The Lodge without transport has led us to investigate how to solve this problem in the future. Many of our loyal, long term members are increasingly finding they are having mobility issues and it is unacceptable that they cannot continue to participate in events in The Lodge. The driveway, although getting fully sealed in a couple of weeks is really one way and there is very limited parking at The Lodge. It would be hazardous to both Pukeiti members and the public to have members driving their own cars in and out of the garden. Along with the TRC we have come up with the following solution.

When we have an event in The Lodge, we will arrange to have a designated driver at the gate 15 minutes before the event starts. This person will drive members who need this service down to The Lodge. At the end of the day, there will be a member designated to drive them back up to the gate. If you require this assistance could you please state this clearly when you RSVP for an event so we know how many people will need transporting. We hope this will enable all members to continue to

attend our events.

### Mobility vehicle drivers

Forever, the garden staff have driven the less mobile of us around in the mobility vehicle but as our membership ages, this is taking up an increasing amount of time of garden staff, thus taking them away from their work in the garden.

The TRC has suggested that some of our members be trained to drive the mobility vehicle so we could take our own members around the garden and, if demand was there, we could use the vehicle to transport members to and from The Lodge.

The TRC staff say the training is not onerous and if there were several members willing to do this, then the time commitment would not be onerous either and could be rather enjoyable. The volunteers at Pukekura Park love their job and this would be very similar.

Some members are a little worried they don't know enough about the garden to take on this role but we are working on solutions to this. The immediate one is to have a plants person or someone with a knowledge of the garden with the driver to give a commentary. There are other solutions which we are also looking at but before we follow up on those, we need the volunteers to get trained.

If you are interested in being a volunteer driver at members' events please let a committee member know by giving them your name and contact details, or email Heather at [cattrobson@gmail.com](mailto:cattrobson@gmail.com) or txt on 021 206 5222.

### LOOKING BACK PUKEITI 50 YEARS AGO

- ▶ The Newsletter editorial bemoans the static membership and suggests ways of increasing it.
- ▶ Pukeiti agreed to give The American Species Foundation financial assistance for 5 years to both support a kindred organisation and to benefit Pukeiti in the future by its receiving first-class stock to enhance its collection.
- ▶ Stock collected by Graham on his British Isles trip in 1972 has been released from quarantine and a further 300 scions are still to arrive.



Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden in Federal Way, Washington State

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

# Members' Activities

# 2023

**SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 17**

## Garden Visits

A selection of Taranaki gardens open for members to visit.  
See details under *Upcoming Events* in this newsletter.

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 14**

## Spring Members' Day & AGM

See entry under *upcoming events* in this newsletter.  
A reminder will arrive with the October update.

**OCTOBER 24 - 27**

## Rhodenza returns to Taranaki

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.

**OCTOBER 27 - NOVEMBER 05**

## 2023 Centuria Taranaki Garden Festival

Volunteers are needed for hosting in The Lodge and membership recruitment.

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 20**

## The Origins of our Hybrid Rhododendrons

Final details will be in the November update..

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 09**

## Christmas BBQ

RSVP Thursday, December 08

The New Zealand Rhododendron Association Inc.

# Rhodenza

## TARANAKI 2023

### 'Celebrating Rhododendrons'

24-27 October 2023  
Plymouth International Hotel, New Plymouth

You are Welcome to attend

Hosted by



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.

## Pukeiti Library

Members are welcome to borrow books.

## Board meetings

Friday October 13.  
December date to be confirmed.

**Pukeiti**  
Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust Inc.

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Secretary  
Anne Clough  
Phone 021 450 770  
pukeiti@pukeiti.com

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

**Taranaki**  
Regional Council

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

TARANAKI REGIONAL COUNCIL		<a href="http://www.trc.govt.nz">www.trc.govt.nz</a>	
Office hours	Mon-Fri 8am - 5pm	Environmental hotline	0800 736 222
Postal address	Private Bag 713, Stratford 4352	Regional gardens	<a href="mailto:regional.gardens@trc.govt.nz">regional.gardens@trc.govt.nz</a>
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