



# Pukeiti NEWSLETTER

Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust Inc.

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



Entrance to the Rainforest Centre

## The Coming of Spring

This time of the year the drive to Pukeiti shows patches of the promise of spring. At the Cook Entrance the white flowered *Rhododendron yunnanense* is in full bloom, lighting the bush behind, and then on a bend just before the main entrance the red flowered *R. 'Cornubia'* brightens even a dull day. But there is nothing dull about the new entrance to the gardens. The covered entrance to the Rain Forest Pavilion is refreshingly clean-lined and generous in size. It leads to the café past an interpretation area in which the history of Pukeiti and a focus on rhododendrons is interactively displayed. The entrance-way has grand views across the lawn to the sea, and to the side, a newly planted

row of rhododendrons surrounds The Founders Garden which has been grassed with instant turf. Dominant at this time of the year is a tree-sized *R. arboreum* transplanted here as a much smaller plant after Cyclone Bola.

The recent few fine days belies the very wet months of July and August. At Pukeiti it rained every day for fourteen days in the middle of August, making the preparation for the opening of the Rainforest Pavilion (the former Gatehouse) more difficult for the staff and particularly so for those involved in landscaping the exterior. There was much shovelling to move the saturated soil to fill the new beds which, when fully established, will frame the imposing new entrance and the downstairs Rata Room. As a trial run, this was the venue for a lecture by the well-known

plant breeder, Denis Hughes, which was arranged by the Taranaki Rhododendron Group and to which Pukeiti members were invited. With the new interior being impressive, plainly furnished, well-lit and wired for sound, the Rata Room makes an attractive venue for meetings, lectures, and of course, lunches. A lift services it, carrying the food from the up-stairs café.

### **THE FOUNDERS' CAFE WILL BE OPEN FOR BUSINESS ON SEPTEMBER 1.**

The café has a large covered outer area from which a wheelchair friendly walkway leads to the upper section of the Vireya House and continues to the viewing platform over-looking the Water Wheel. A view which will become iconic. Planting in the House is beginning to





Interior of The Rata Room : First Lecture



*Rhododendron arboreum* and the new buildings from the Founders' Garden

fill the space with a variety of companion plants complementing the vireyas which will soon dominate. Many of the plants at this stage are small – propagated from the original larger plants in the old Covered Walk. Already some are in flower.

The Official Opening of the new facilities by the Governor General, Dame Patsy Reddy, will take place on Saturday September 9 2017.

The new buildings are so bold it is easy to over-look the rest of the garden which is the reason for Pukeiti's international appeal – rhododendrons in a rain forest.

One group of these plants is the collection of large-leaved rhododendrons, the peak of whose flowering season is now, although many of the later flowering species are still to open. In the Valley of the Giants some are now tree-like in stature and quite spectacular, especially the *R. protistum* group and their hybrids. Some of these have been named for early members of Pukeiti including *R. 'Gordon Collier'*, *'Jack Anderson'*, *'Geoff Broker'* and *'Ina Hair'*. The other group which stands out at this time of the year is the red flowered *R. arboreum* and its hybrids. One of the best is *R. 'Sir Russell Matthews'*.

Pukeiti is certainly worth a visit in this the early spring. Soon the azaleas will be out with the magnolias flowering in a burst of pink.

By the time you receive this newsletter tenders for The Lodge will be let ensuring that building starts over the summer which will hopefully be a drier time at Pukeiti.

The TRC and the gardens' staff is to be congratulated on the work already done at Pukeiti and that which is planned for the future.

Lynn Bublitz

## The first of the Vireya House collection in flower



*R. cruttwellii*



*R. macgregoriae*



*R. 'Dawn Chorus'*



*R. 'Sweet Mac'*

## A digitised collection.

Work of the staff has not been restricted to gardening and stepping around contractors. Lara Coxhead has worked diligently on digitising the total collection, not only the rhododendrons, using the Iris Programme, which replaced the BG Base Programme, and posting the information on our web-site [www.pukeiti.org.com](http://www.pukeiti.org.com). This information can also be accessed through the TRC site. At this site click on **Gardens**, then under 'Pukeiti' click on **Plant Hunters' Station** and when the next page appears click on **Go to Pukeiti Plant Hunters' Station** and then in the box that appears, name the plant or group that you wish to search. It will give you a description of the plant, where it can be found at Pukeiti, and the year of accession.

This is one of the first public gardens, anywhere, to make its plant collection details available through the web for all to access.



# From the Members' Committee

## MID-WINTER LUNCH

The tables were beautifully set with cutlery, cloth napkins and crackers. Down the centre, in keeping with the mid-winter Christmas theme, was arranged holly (in all its winter glory bedecked with berries), ivy, and in recognition of it being the mid-winter gathering of the Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust, vireyas from Margaret Hodges' lovely garden. After a glass of wine and a time to meet and greet each other, over 50 members sat down to a pleasant three course lunch. Over coffee we were lucky to be able to listen to Basil Chamberlain, the CEO of the Taranaki Regional Council, who told us all about his council's role in conservation across Taranaki. Basil is an amazingly positive CEO and his talk kept coming back to how important it is to work with people to achieve your goals rather than to impose your goals upon people. This, he says, is the only way that the TRC with its relatively small staff, has been able to make such good progress on many potentially contentious issues.

## COMING EVENTS

### Wednesday, September 27

This is the last working bee before the Garden Spectacular and although the staff has the entrance looking amazing and all other areas looking very good the developments have come at the cost of garden tasks which are nice but not essential. The staff are always very appreciative of any help we can give them. Bring your secateurs and weeding implements with you please.

## SPRING MEMBERS' DAY AND AGM

### Saturday, October 07

This year our AGM is back at Pukeiti so we hope many of you will be able to come up to the garden again. It is definitely worth a visit.

### The Day's Programme

**10:30** Graham will guide us around the garden and even if you did come to the Autumn meeting and take the walk around the garden in April, you will be amazed at what progress has been made since.

**12:00 Lunch** – A pot-luck lunch will be served in the Rata Room.

Please leave your contribution to this lunch at the Rata Room before going on the garden walk. (Please note that we will have no facilities to heat food, so please bring finger food that can be served cold.)

**Tea and coffee will be provided.**

**1:00 AGM** – The AGM will be held in the Rata Room following the lunch.

**2:00** Gordon Bailey will give a talk on "Collecting Rhododendrons in Yunnan and Possibilities for the Future".

**The Founders' Café will still be open for tea and coffee after the meeting.**

## ANNUAL GARDEN VISITS

### Saturday, October 15

This was to be the day for our annual garden visits and the committee is sorry that these will not be taking place this year. The appearance of myrtle rust in several areas of Taranaki curtailed visits to the nurseries and gardens we had hoped to visit.

## VOLUNTEERING FOR THE GARDEN SPECTACULAR

### Friday October 27 – Sunday November 05

At the time of going to print we are still awaiting confirmation from the TRC as to what roles members can play in this event. Once this has been clarified, members of the committee will contact people to ask for their assistance.



R. 'Jack Anderson'



R. 'Geoff Broker'



R. 'Sir Russell Matthews'

*Rhododendrons named to honour early members*



R. 'Gordon Collier'

Please mark  
these dates on  
your calendar

## Members' Activities

# 2017

### WORKING BEES

**WEDNESDAY  
SEPTEMBER 27**

**WEDNESDAY  
NOVEMBER 22**

**SATURDAY  
DECEMBER 09**

**9am  
Start**  
meet at  
Propagation  
area

#### MEMBERS' COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Tuesday November 14 – 9:30 venue to be confirmed.

#### BOARD MEETINGS

Friday October 06 – 6:00pm at Govett Quilliam Offices

### ACTIVITIES

**SPRING MEMBERS' DAY & AGM**  
SATURDAY OCTOBER 07

**MONDAY 04 – WEDNESDAY 27  
SEPTEMBER**

PUKEITI MEMBERS' TOUR  
TO XINJIANG, CHINA.

**FRIDAY 27 – MONDAY 30 OCTOBER**  
Rhododendron Conference, Manawatu (based in Feilding).

**FRIDAY OCTOBER 27 –  
SUNDAY NOVEMBER 05**  
2017 Taranaki Rhododendron Festival – volunteers needed  
for manning the Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust Kiosk.

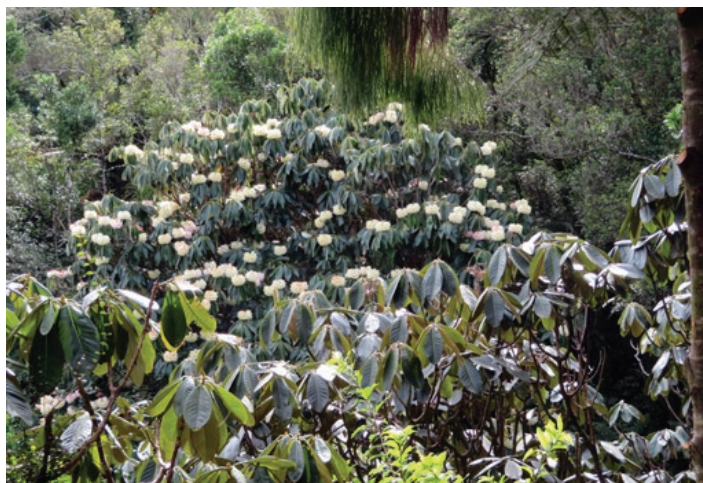
## END OF YEAR BBQ

**SATURDAY DECEMBER 9**

Wet or fine as we are back at Pukeiti and have cover if needed. The Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust will again provide the meat and buns. Please bring a salad or finger food to accompany this. Please book with Secretary Anne Howard - Phone 021 0831 5444



The proposed new Lodge.



*R. protistum* in the Valley of the Giants.



**Pukeiti**

Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust Inc.



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

#### TARANAKI REGIONAL COUNCIL

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