

Vireyas From The Land Down Under



On October 10, 2008, we were fortunate to have Kaye Hagen, a Vireya expert from Tasmania and past president of The Australian Rhododendron Society address our chapter. Her presentation was about Vireyas which she grows at her home in Hobart, Tasmania.

Kaye's presentation included an overview of the growing conditions in her garden and the cultural requirements needed to grow these colorful plants.

The average temperatures in Hobart are between 50°F and 70°F with only approximately 24" of annual rainfall. Temperatures rarely exceed 95°F and the record low is +19°F.

Her presentation featured many beautiful photos of her plants that include a plethora of vibrant colors. reds, yellows oranges, pinks, bi-colors and so forth. In addition to their wonderful colors, vireyas have a beautiful fragrance.

It was interesting to learn some vireyas bloom three times a year so she has plants in bloom literally all year long. Also, some varieties exhibit a color shift depending which season they are in bloom which adds to their interest.

A lunch, arranged by Fred Stanton our new chapter president, preceded the presentation with approximately 30 people in attendance.

A special thanks to Marty Anderson who helped arrange for Kaye to address our chapter.

Gene Paschall In The News

Gene Paschall's garden continues to receive well-deserved publicity and recognition with the recent feature article in the March 2009 issue of *Better Homes & Gardens*.

The entire country now can read about Gene's fabulous garden; something we have been fortunate to witness for many years.

In addition to the beautiful color photos of his garden, including one of his own hybrids, the article includes Gene's growing mix recipe and his suggestions for successful rhododendron culture in our harsh Midwest climate.

Congratulations, Gene!



Midwest Chapter Participates in CBG Lecture Series

By Fred Stanton

Commencing at 2 o'clock on February 22, 2009, three members of the Midwest Chapter of the A.R.S. made presentations for the benefit of Chicago Botanical Garden members and for chapter members.



The first presentation was by John Golab, a long time member of our chapter (25 plus years) and who has served as chapter president several times. John showed pictures of many of his showy Rhododendrons that he has grown in his yard in Barrington, IL, giving information relative to the color of the flowers and hardiness of some of the plants. He expressed our concern for the spring, 2009 flowering season, knowing that some of our plants will have experienced bud blast (ruination of the flowers by the extreme cold experienced during January, 2009). John also discussed the differences between lepidotes (small leafed) and elepidotes (large leafed) Rhododendrons and variation of their shade requirements according to the variety.

The second presentation was by John Honkisz, who is a fairly recent member of our chapter, but has shown great interest in growing rhododendrons and azaleas. John gave an in depth discussion of the proper types of soil to use in which to successfully grow Rhododendrons. John also elaborated on not only the proper chemical combination that affords the most amenable soil in which the Rhododendron thrive, but also the actual source of those acidic, aerating, fast draining materials.

The last presentation was by Fred Stanton who showed his pictures of Kew Gardens taken in late April, early May of 2007. It turned out to be one of the best times to see a majority of the Rhododendrons and Azaleas in full bloom as the photos revealed. The venerable 150 plus year old Rhododendrons that were planted at Kew Gardens in the 1800s towered over 30 feet tall! Hard to believe that some of our varieties will actually become that large, if they live that long. Fred does have several large Rhododendrons in his yard that are nearly 40 years old and at least 12 feet tall, probably not too bad considering our extreme Illinois weather.