



# Pukeiti NEWSLETTER

Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust Inc.

VOLUNTEERING  
IN THE GARDEN  
& OTHER  
MEMBER  
ACTIVITIES  
inside

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

## Pukeiti Highlights

### Displaying the Vireya collection

Established when Pukeiti was transferred to the TRC, the Pukeiti Plant Forum has met with various staff members regularly to address questions regarding the rhododendron collection, the placement of plants and other general items relating to the garden raised by the garden staff in the areas of the garden for which they have responsibility. The forum makes recommendations, and these are recorded. Graham Smith, Alan Jellyman, Lynn Bublitz and Peter Catt are Pukeiti Trust's representatives on the forum and are joined usually by Greg Rine, Andrew Brooker and other gardeners depending on which area of the garden needs discussion. Lara Coxhead keeps the record of the meeting. She is an important member of the staff, as one of her main tasks, working with Andrew Brooker, Pukeiti Collection Officer, is recording the collection data which is critical to the *ex-situ* conservation project. Details of the rhododendron collection can be accessed by all through the Pukeiti website.

This month the focus has been on the vireya collection. There are considerable numbers of vireya species and hybrids in the nursery which are now ready to plant out. A number of these will be added to the collection in the now well-established Vireya House giving new emphasis to these plants. This covered walk is one of the main attractions at Pukeiti. Originally built to show-case the vireyas, the additional planting certainly will give this world-renowned collection of rhododendrons the focus it deserves. As well, some of the vireyas will be grown in selected sites in the garden, mainly sheltered places on the bush margins alongside tracks throughout Pukeiti, taking cognisance of their light requirements and need for a well-drained site. Raised ponga beds will also be used. There are fewer frosts at Pukeiti now and the winters are a bit warmer, so it will be interesting to see which of the vireyas are successful in a less sheltered environment.



The Keiller Garden - Alan Jellyman admiring a bed of helianthus and lobelia

### Keiller Garden

The highlight over the summer has been the display at the Keiller Garden. Swathes of red lobelia, orange helium, dahlia and yellow rudbeckia with contrasting *Hydrangea* 'Kyushu' dominated at the height of the season, fading as autumn arrived in a plum-purple cloak of the ornamental grape.

### Liberating Kiwis

The pest control programme undertaken by the TRC in the Kaitake Ranges has reduced numbers of opossums, rats and mustelids to a

level which has been deemed safe for the release of kiwis in the area of the National Park adjoining Pukeiti. Eight have been released each with a location-finding chip. They will hopefully pair up and establish their territories which, for some, might even include the bush areas around the Pukeiti Hill. It has been thirty years since kiwi have been reported at Pukeiti. There was often evidence found of their presence: in 1981 remnants of a nest were found on the track bordering the hybrid block and kiwis were often heard at night, but rarely sighted. Rob Hair,

*continues*





*Vitis vinifera* - Autumn leaves of the ornamental grape.

## PLANTS of Interest at Pukeiti

Peter Catt writes:

### ***Rhododendron renschianum***

Subgenus *Vireya*: Section *Schisthanthe* – subsection *Euvireya*  
*Rhododendron renschianum* is a small shrub to about 50cm with bicoloured yellow and orange flowers which are not scented.

*R. renschianum* is endemic to a few mountains on the island of Flores in the Lesser Sunda Islands of Indonesia. It is epiphytic in *Casuarina* forest or on stony ground near the summit or on the crater edge at 1500-2400m.

Its conservation assessment is LC. (Least Concern).

Although its conservation status is LC, currently, as reported in the Bulletin of The *Rhododendron*, *Camellia*, and *Magnolia* group this may now need to be reviewed. This is due to the popularity of its fruit with the local people and the increasing population of monkeys. I must admit this is the first time I have heard of the fruit of a *vireya* being eaten as food.

In view of this the Indonesian scientists took stem cuttings in 2008 and the Bali Botanic Garden has been growing *R. renschianum* as required for *ex-situ* conservation.



interviewed on his retirement as curator in 1969 said, "At nights up there at Pukeiti the world is stilled – Just the occasional sound of animal and bird, and now and again the harsh cry of kiwi. I've heard them often enough and seen their tracks close to The Lodge, though I have never set eyes on the kiwi itself."

It will be great for us to hear them again. It will make the kiwi road sign, recently erected, pertinent.

### **The Pukeiti Library**

Work is proceeding on cataloguing the library collection of books, of which there are several hundred. This is being done voluntarily by staff members of Puke Arika in New Plymouth. When completed many of the books (but not the rare or reference ones) will be available for members to borrow. Several of the books are rare and in few public libraries in New Zealand. Most have been donated by members, among them John Goodwin and more recently, our Patron, Gordon Collier. The Library, housed in The Lodge Board Room will be open at set times for the books to be browsed and read there. Times of opening will be announced in a later newsletter. The library catalogue will be able to be accessed through the Pukeiti website.

### **Rhodenza**

The registration information for NZRA Rhodenza Conference is enclosed with this newsletter. Pukeiti members are invited to attend and would be most welcome. It will be a great event.



### ***Rhododendron rhodoleucum***

Subgenus *Vireya*: Section *Schisthanthe* – subsection *Solenovireya*  
*Rhododendron rhodoleucum* is a shrub to 4m tall endemic to PNG. It is found on the edge of stunted mossy forest and sometimes on very steep banks at 2290-2750m. It flowers superbly in the autumn in late April-May outside the Bublitz house where there are two plants.

Its conservation assessment is LC. (Least Concern)

Sleumer has suggested that *R. tuba* might be a natural hybrid between *R. rhodoleucum* and *R. carringtoniae*. Certainly, there are many similarities between *R. rhodoleucum* and *R. tuba*.

## From the Members' Committee

2021 dawned with the anticipation that it would be an easier year than the one we had just got through. So far, apart from a couple of hiccups it has proved to be so.

Our first event of the year, the 'Drinks and Nibbles in the Garden' day was held just 4 days after Auckland and the rest of NZ came out of a short period of increased COVID-19 alert levels. It started with a walk up to the Keiller Garden. At this time of the year, in late February, it is this garden that shines at Pukeiti. The summer perennials are still lingering, and the autumn flowering ones are coming into bloom. The Trust put a considerable sum of money towards the establishment of this garden, named for Robert Keiller, an ex-Board member and a generous donor to the Trust of both money and expertise. It's nice to see it looking so good and the weather was lovely for our stroll. Back at The Lodge we sat down for punch and nibbles. It was a smaller crowd than usual – we think it is just that we could not compete with the America's Cup racing that coincided with our event – but still very pleasant, and I'm sure far more fun than watching yet another yacht race on TV!

The next event was our 'Revive the Memories' day for our lifestyle village residents. The invitations were delivered, the RSVPs were being received and committee members were planning what to bake when, on February 28, Auckland was again moved to Alert Level 3, but this time for a week. This placed us in Alert Level 2 so the above event had to be cancelled. Many members who had organised to come expressed their disappointment. We do hope we will be able to hold it next year as it seems to be well appreciated by those who are able to come.

The Plant List was well supported this year and few members had difficulty with the need to use internet banking for payment. The trust we put in members by asking them to pay on receipt of their plants has not been misplaced and I thank you all for adapting so well to the new system being used this year.

Our Autumn Members' Day and the walk to learn about Pukeiti's mosses and ferns were both well supported. It was unfortunate Toby Shanley was unable to give his talk at the Autumn Members' Day but, read on, we have a surprise for you. Lynn Bublitz very generously offered to step into the gap and gave a lovely talk, illustrated with stunning photos, about his garden(s) through the seasons.

The people who turned up to the mosses and ferns walk were vocal in their appreciation of the information imparted by John Jordan on ferns and Lynn Bublitz on mosses. It was great to learn about the different features of mosses and ferns and then to go out into the garden and observe them in the field. All in all, a fascinating and stimulating morning.

This was the first of the year's walks where we are inviting the public to join us. A few non-members came and we anticipate these numbers will increase now the events have been added to the TRC calendar of garden events sent out with the rates demands. Please encourage friends and families to come along on these walks.

Our next event is scheduled for Sunday 16 May, with Andrew Brooker, Pukeiti's Collections Officer, taking a walk showing us weird and wonderful things about Pukeiti's rhododendrons. Those attending are bound to be entertained by Andrew as they discover facts about rhododendrons they never knew.

A year out from COVID preventing us holding last year's Mid-Winter Lunch we are generally bubble free in NZ and the government has now opened our borders to Australia and the Cook Islands. Hopefully not prematurely or tempting fate we have decided to theme our mid-winter dinner 'breaking bubbles'. Details of the Mid-Winter Lunch, and the Soup and Roll lunch are explained elsewhere in this newsletter.

Shortly after you receive the next newsletter (September) we will be holding our annual visits to Members' Gardens. Make sure you keep Sunday 19 September free so you can enjoy these visits. The details of the day will be in the September newsletter.

All the disruptions over the past year or so with COVID-19 resulted in us completely forgetting that 2021 is the 70th anniversary year of the Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust. It was not until it was mentioned at the last Board Meeting that we were reminded of this milestone. There are many clubs and societies established in the 1950s that have long ago ceased to exist, and it is testament to the enthusiasm of our members that we will be able to celebrate this milestone. Keep Saturday, 9 October free, note it in your calendar because we will be doing some special things at our Spring Members' Day. More information will be in the next newsletter and we hope many of our members will join these celebrations.

As can be seen by the timing of COVID-19 alert levels around our first two events of the year, socialising even in 2021 is still a bit of a lottery and it is likely to continue to be so until we have herd immunity to the virus through immunisation. Hopefully, our future events will be unaffected but in the unfortunate occurrence of us having to cancel any we will notify members, as we have done recently, by email.

## Mid-Winter Lunch

**Saturday, June 19 2021**

**The Douglas Cook Room, The Lodge. Cost \$43.00pp**

The Rainforest Eatery will be serving, at your table, a delicious 3 course lunch.

Craig will be available to take the less mobile members on the mobility vehicle at 11:00am.

Please arrive at The Lodge by 11:45 for mulled wine, (non-alcoholic beverages will also be available) and social time.

The meal will be served at 12:30 and you may BYO wine if you wish. After lunch, at approx 1:45, Toby Shanley will be talking to us about the Towards Predator-Free Taranaki project with special emphasis on the team's work within the Kaitake Range and Pukeiti.

RSVP and special dietary requests to either **Heather Robson**, Phone: (06) 757 2460 Mobile: 021 206 5222 Email: cattrobson@gmail.com or **Diane Jordan**, Phone: (06) 752 2800 Mobile: 021 129 3547 Email: jordy@primowireless.co.nz Please book by Wednesday, 16 June.

To confirm this booking, payment must also be received by Wednesday, 16 June.

Please pay by internet banking to: Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust. Account Number: 15 3953 0497531 00

Use your name and 'Lunch' as a reference  
*We look forward to seeing you.*





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

# Members' Activities

# 2021

## SATURDAY, JUNE 19 Mid-Winter Lunch

RSVP and payment by Wednesday, June 16. See details on page 3

## SUNDAY, JULY 18 Learn about the vireya collection

A walk to the vireya house will leave from The Lodge at 10am. This will be followed by refreshments in The Lodge.

## WEDNESDAY, JULY 21 Propagation workshop

Prepare plants for later Members' Sales. Your help is welcome at Pukeiti from 9am.

## SUNDAY, AUGUST 22 Soup and Roll lunch

A walk around the large leaf Rhododendrons followed by a homely lunch in the Douglas Cook Room.

Meet in The Lodge. A guided walk around the Large leafed rhododendrons will leave from The Lodge at 11:00am. Craig will be available to take the less mobile members on the Mobility Vehicle.

After the walk, soup and a roll will be available in the Douglas Cook Room.

## SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 19 Members' gardens visit

A selection of members' gardens will be open for members to visit.

## SATURDAY, OCTOBER 09 Spring Members' Day & AGM

A celebration of our 70th Anniversary. Details later in the next newsletter.

## THURSDAY, OCTOBER 28 Pukeiti hosts the Rhodenza Conference for the day.

Volunteers needed for serving food and drinks, plant sales and membership recruitment.

## FRIDAY, OCTOBER 29 - SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 07 2021 Taranaki Garden Festival

Volunteers needed for hosting in The Lodge and membership recruitment.

## SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 21 Learn about NZ raised rhododendron hybrids

A guided walk around the hybrid block. Walk leaves from The Lodge at 10:00am followed by refreshments in The Lodge.

## SATURDAY, DECEMBER 11 \*Christmas BBQ

RSVP Thursday, December 09

## Members' Committee meetings

Tuesday, August 17 - 9:30am - The Lodge  
Tuesday, November 16 - 9:30am - The Lodge

## Board meetings

Saturday, June 19 - 9:00am, Board Room, The Lodge  
Saturday, October 09 - 9:00am, Board Room, The Lodge

## TUESDAY, 26 OCTOBER - FRIDAY, 29 OCTOBER Rhodenza Taranaki 2021

The New Zealand Rhododendron Association Inc. Conference is being held at various venues in Taranaki. Pukeiti Members are welcome to attend.



## Bookings for The Lodge facilities and Studio can be made on the TRC website

[www.trc.govt.nz/gardens/venue-hire-and-tours/  
pukeiti-studio-accommodation/](http://www.trc.govt.nz/gardens/venue-hire-and-tours/pukeiti-studio-accommodation/)



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**Taranaki**  
Regional Council

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

TARANAKI REGIONAL COUNCIL

[www.trc.govt.nz](http://www.trc.govt.nz)

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