Galston District Garden Club

Yes, it is winter but the Galston Community Hall, 37 Arcadia Road, Galston is WARM with heating and the comradery of people enjoying the Guest Speaker, browsing the Trading Table, taking cutting, hopefully winning a plant in the raffle while also having supper at the end of the meeting. We meet on the 2nd Wednesday of the month at 7.30. Come and join us. Visitors and new members are welcome.

We also have planned garden rambles and a day trip to Bowral's Tulips at Corbett Gardens and Red Cow Farm on the **18th September**.

AZALEA GALL: While among my azaleas recently I noticed funny looking "buds" not flowers. In the ten years of looking after these plants I had never seen this fungus. While researching what was on the azaleas I found out that leaf gall on azaleas can destroy leaf tissue, twigs, and buds – leaving severely disfigured tissue in its wake.

Leaf gall on azaleas is caused by the fungus Exobasidium vaccinii, a wind-born fungus that can overwinter on bark and within buds; other fungi in this genus affect camellias, blueberry and rhododendron. Apparently, you'll most often see azalea leaf gall appear during wet springs or on azaleas that are planted in corners or massed in tight groupings. The fungus needs considerable moisture to mature, so it won't necessarily infect plants every year, even if the spores are present. Like all plant galls, azalea leaf gall causes large fleshy growths to appear where they shouldn't.

Although it is incredibly unsightly, azalea leaf gall treatment isn't normally necessary in the home landscape. Instead, preventative measures should be taken to ensure the fungus doesn't reappear next year. Plants most often affected are those with poor air circulation or planted in deep shade. The first order of business is to improve these conditions by thinning your azalea's interior, cutting ack nearby plants, or moving your shrub. If the galls aren't widely spread, you should cut them from your bush and dispose of them immediately to reduce the number of spores available to further the infection. Remove the hard galls before they hit the ground, and make a concentrated effort to keep all the debris cleaned up around your plant. In severe cases, weekly

applications of neem oil can reduce the number of viable mold spores once the leaves start showing signs of attack.

For further information regarding the Club and it's rambles please visit our website: galstongardenclub.com.au or email galstongardenclub@gmail.com

Still Creek Landcare

The Magnificent spider and her mysterious looking egg sacs

By Kay Birkinshaw

The word 'extraordinary' is widely overused. Not though when it comes to Nature. For no matter how much time is spent in the bush, there is always something new to discover. Two weeks ago Landcare was working on the edge of a gulley in Arcadia when we came upon an unknown phenomenon high in a tree. Eight egg sacs bound and strung together by thick yellow web. The egg sacs were elongated, and about 5cm in length.

A mystery to us, but luckily with a reverse-search, not to the experts on the internet. The eggs belong to a spider endemic to forests along Australia's east coast, the *Ordgarius magnificus*, or **Magnificent Spider**. The female (up to 2.5cm), weaves up to seven of these egg sacs over several nights, an amazing feat, as they each contain up to several hundred eggs. She then usually dies during winter, while the spiderlings will hatch around late Winter/early Spring and balloon away. However this is not their only extraordinary behaviour.

The arachnid also has the nickname of the 'bolas spider'. The female spiders spin a short line of silk with a sticky globule at the end. On detecting the wing vibrations of a moth from the family Noctuidae, the spider emits the pheromone of the female moth and begins swinging the web in a circular motion. The male moths, drawn towards the scent, are hit and trapped. Such extraordinary skill from such a tiny spider!