



THE VIREYA VENTURE NO.24 JULY 1996

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Once again our weather has made no friends, in this region, of those who are still watering their gardens to try and compensate for lack of rain. There seems to have been plenty to our north and to the south but the 55mm that fell in showers in June hardly went through the mulch. We have had no good soaking rain for ten weeks now - since May 5th.

At least temperatures were reasonably warm until this month and the Vireyas flowered well - as did the Azaleas until we had an unexpected bad infestation of petal blight, no doubt due to the warmth. Dr. Peter Valder wrote for 'The Rhododendron' in March 1974 a detailed study of petal blight and one of the facts that he quoted was the American conclusion that mild and moist conditions were most conducive to it. Moisture from heavy dews is enough, it does not have to rain, and temperatures of about 18 - 19°C are ideal. This has been born out in the past when petal blight has not been significant in the winter nor in our usual summer heat.

It is now midwinter but Spring is coming and in Wollongong the month is September for 'Florawarra' - the Illawarra floral festival. The main show will be at the Botanic Gardens on Sept 20-22nd. where their Vireya collection is becoming obvious and of course the Rhododendron Park will have plenty to see. Private gardens will be open on Sept. 28th and 29th and there is much variety in these.

We have a mixture of subjects in this issue and there is much on which you might give us your views and ideas.

Please send them to; The Editor

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J.Clyde Smith.

NEW REGISTRATIONS

From the American Rhododendron Society Register of Plant Names in their Journal, Vol.50 No.2 Spring 1996:-

Lucie Sorensen R.macgregoriae (?) x R.bagobonum
Hybridized 1986 John Rouse, grown Fran Rutherford, Port Orchard WA. Registered by E.White Smith, Tacoma, WA. U.S.
Flowers 4-6/flat truss, tubular funnel shaped, of heavy substance 0.75"long x 0.75" wide, with 5 smooth edged lobes; reddish green in bud, opening vivid yellowish pink (30C). Calyx very small, light green. Truss 1"high x 2.75"wide. Leaves held 3-4 years, elliptic, concave, acute apex, cuneate base, 0.9"x0.4", glossy above. Shrub 14"high x 14" wide in 8 years, very floriferous. Plant and bud hardy to 32°F. Peak flowering spring and autum.

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TRI-D25
Trichoderma

Tri-d25 was recently brought to my attention by a friend who had heard of claims that it could increase the yield of cuttings. It is a biological product containing strains of *Trichoderma koningii* and *Trichoderma harzianum*, beneficial fungi, which is used as an anti-fungus for application to cuttings, seeds, transplants, bulbs, grafts, harvested crops, pots and established crops. It can be activated by over night solution and sprayed on, or cuttings and seeds can be dipped in it.

It is available from John Teulon, Horticultural Consulting Services, P.O.Box 17, Dural 2158, but at about \$135 per Kg (minimum) it is not easily justifiable for small scale use or experiment. However if you have had any experience with it please let us know.

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THE RHODODENDRON STORY

The Royal Horticultural Society's Rhododendron Group has issued a special edition of the normal yearbook to mark the 50th year of its publication.

It covers 200 years of plant hunting and garden cultivation of rhododendrons, and of special interest to us is Chapter 7 - 'The Vireya Story' by George Argent. This is a very concise but complete account of Vireya history, starting with the first to be described - R.malayanum by William Jack in 1822. He goes on then to list many familiar names of this century who have enlarged our knowledge, Australian and New Zealanders.

Dr Argent concludes with a call for a Vireya Garden to be established within the S.E. Asian area from which they came, as a great attraction for rhododendron lovers and a site for further study. (maybe it would be better in Queensland?)

A few copies were brought in by the A.R.S. (for which I am most grateful) otherwise they are available from R.H.S. Enterprises Ltd, Wisley, Woking, Surrey GU23 6QB England for 18 pounds Stg posted

BRISBANE NEWS

From Edna G.Jerrard, Indooroopilly - May 17th.

"It was good to read so many comments in the April Vireya Venture especially from such a wide range of locations. The extremes of conditions in our large country produce a variety of experiences and results even with the same plant, but at least it does help in the long-term knowledge. Probably it will never be possible to make definitive statements except for those applying strictly to one's own slice of Australia. But the means, methods and observations outlined do encourage a more flexible attitude and the patience to persevere.

The recent scorching summer hit all of us, but at least up here in Brisbane the water quality is reasonable - though most of us would have preferred NOT to receive it in such a lump sum as we have had these past four weeks. Our garden has fared reasonably well through the sear and soak, but it has shown a couple of flaws in my decision to plant out the potted Vireyas. The bed is well drained but already somewhat over full with established growth (not Vireyas), but we simply do not have the space or aspect for the 'ideal' Vireya bed.

The above exercise was an attempt to lessen the potting load - an ongoing process through 1995. Sometimes I wonder if it would not be better to leave the 'Vireya Venture' alone, as the enticing descriptions of all the new-comers tend to lead me astray.

All our Vireyas in baskets are doing well; in fact several slender buds of R.orbiculatum are being watched with great delight. I intend to bend Barry Paget's ear on how far one can push the epiphytic nature of Vireyas; though, me thinks, the old Callistemon sighs deeply, being already festooned with said baskets and assorted orchids.

All the Vireyas in the bed must have been affected by the lack of air circulation - possibly too much shade on the actual roots. They have now been repotted and raised well above the surface of the ground - which I hope will help them pick up a bit. There were two actual casualties, 'Crinolette' and R.superbum. The first may be replaced (but kept in a heavy pot) but I may go for a R.superbum x ? - something which may be a little hardier - time will tell.

Our two little R.lochiaie battle on, the 14" one, in ground, produced a magnificent truss last November - (definitely R.lochiaie from the description in the Vireya Venture) while the second one planted out in the old Staghorn fern has had its ups and downs (literally!) due to the decline and fall of the complete fern and the subsequent hoisting and re-attaching - plus being peed on by possums and taken over by Stephanotis. One little branch died but the other two are actually showing growth; no flowers yet of course, but when they do come (like most gardeners, I have ~~lan~~ings of often misplaced optimism) they will be scrutinized most carefully.

Finally, from observation of my sister's collection, the plants which have been most outstanding in flower-power during this difficult time are: 'Princess Alexandra', 'Penrice', 'Sunny', 'Pacific Shower', 'Just Peachy', 'Toff' and 'Fireplum', the latter being well protected from the heat and wind by other greenery, put forth a splendid display of flowers.

Thanks and best wishes to all who are endeavouring to bring the beautiful Vireyas to the general public.

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That list of outstanding performers is most interesting and would invite some indication of what has flowered best in your garden to date this year.

Here at Keiraville 'Triumphans' must head the list - it is perhaps our best red, the plant we have is about two metres high, rather leggy but filling out and flowering from the base through out its height - and it is in full sun and wind.

Others are 'Penrose, R.laetum, 'Jock's Cairn', 'Little Pinkie', 'Coral Flare', 'Golden Charm', R.jasminiflorum x 'Pink Delight', and R.aurigeranum x R.javanicum, all putting on a good display with others in bud also promising well. There are other plants that are shy to flower and with few trusses when they do, but of such quality that they too earn their place in the garden, for example 'Gardenia' and some of the R.konorii hybrids.

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LEONORE FRANCES

The current issue of 'The Rhododendron', Vol.35, has a photo of 'Leonore Frances' in colour, courtesy of Peter Sullivan, 221 Richland Ave. San Francisco 94110-5841 U.S.

The photo has been reduced from the original but is still very indicative of the brilliance of its colour.

Peter has now sent us some comments on it since he sent me the original which was passed on to the Editor of the Journal.

" You have the clone down there; I've seen the name mentioned in some of the publications. Spread this word! It was a very ordinary truss until by accident I found its glory. I had to move the plant into a spot that gets a full four hours of sun mid-year (to set the buds) and in turn is in full shade during the early part of the year. This fortuitous change did it. The colour during its bloom break is something little short of spectacular! When the bloom opens in the normal rhododendron sun pattern it was an ordinary red.....and in the new fullshade during bloom cycle it is a 'magnifique' brilliant cherry pink. I'm not exaggerating - my eyes are not what they used to be -this year again I had to put on my glasses to get a proper focus of the picture - but it has been stopping the wheels for the years since my inadvertant move.

I find considerable pleasure in the success that the clone 'Leonore Frances' has turned out to be. You see I named it for my sister; and when I find the name coming back to me from way down there, the pleasure is deep and wide.

From Mrs.Carver of Woodbridge,Tasmania - a continuation from the last issue:

"The mix into which I potted the rooted cuttings is one part each of Debco coprapeat, vermiculite and orchid compost. All plants are looking good...I potted up 16 out of the original 25 cuttings. The pots are now in polystyrene boxes, at the entrance to my potting shed, just inside if the weather is bad, just outside otherwise. They are getting morning sun when the latter deigns to show!

Of the second batch, started 20th Jan,'96 all are going well except R.konori, of which I lost 2 within the first two weeks, the leaves and apical bud of the third have died but the stem is still green and the second bud down from the tip is swollen so I am hoping it will pull through. Should I have cleaned off the indumentum to reduce hiding places for fungal growth? This morning saw the demise of one of the 3 R.christianae. the other two are well. 'Sunny' is putting out new growth already. They are now out of the laundry and in the glasshouse, which is heated at night if the temperature looks as if it will go below 10°. The propagating tray is switched on even if the heating isn't, but it is put off if the day is sunny and warm. Today I shall feed the cuttings with a weak solution, as I am sure they have now started to put down roots.

The next step is to get ready some special morning sun,afternoon shade positions in the garden with easy access to the hose,for my early collection of Vireyas which are still in pots awaiting a permanent home. My plantings of the last two years are maturing with extra speed due to the summer without water stress, and some of the trees and shrubs look as though they have been in situ for about 5 years. It is hard to believe the difference between our dry Legana property..(see VV No.20) and the more gentle climate of Woodbridge, apart from the wind and the rainfall of up to 1100 ml p.a. The Legana garden took 5-6 years to achieve the progress of our two years here.

With such a wet summer we have lost a few trees in the wetter areas of the property.....We cannot plant anything that will grow above 3m [in one area] as they will block the lovely view we have across D'Entrecasteaux Channel to Bruny Island, where Captain Bligh of HMS 'Bounty' made landfall in 1788 and planted the first Tasmanian apple trees. He was very pleased on a later visit to find some of these had survived."

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Mrs.Carver's comment on indumentum may seem inappropriate but it is not uncommon to find such a query coming from those who have not seen it to the extent that it occurs on young konori leaves. Like scales its function is not certain but it is generally commented on as being of a protective and beneficial nature.

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The A.R.S.Journal has two interesting comments on Vireyas, viz; From Ted Cutlan and Joy Stones of Jubilee Nursery, South Hobart, a description of their potting mix - basically pine bark and sand in the ratio of 4:1 with various additives and comments, of which one was new to me . This was the use of Iron Sulphate

the cheapest source of iron available. Recent research suggests that the more expensive slow release iron formulations are not necessary. Iron sulphate is fixed in pine bark soil mixes and not leached out. It is available for at least 12 months. This may reduce the pH too much and require the addition of dolomite if below-say 5.5.

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And: on a garden visit, Geraldine Roelink commented on some spectacular Vireyas in Dr. John Rouse's garden, particularly a plant of R. lochiaie from Mt. Finnegan crossed with R. lochiaie from Thornton Peak which had flowers twice as large as the average R. lochiaie.

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Mr. N. Puddey of Woolgoolga, N.S.W. has written:

"in the most recent Vireya Venture you mention the growing of R. longiflorum on the mangroves of the Coff's Harbour boardwalk area of their Botanic Garden.

Through the local Garden Club, I know quite well many of the 'Friends' of this Botanic Garden and could possibly encourage them to develop a Vireya section. Many of the Botanic Garden people have been to our garden and been quite taken by the Vireyas. Our local branch of the Society for growing Australian Native Plants are also visiting in June.

Coff's Harbour Botanic Garden is becoming a popular tourist destination, our interest in expanding the popularity and knowledge of these plants could be served well by a display at these gardens.

Are there growers/enthusiasts that could supply both of our native rhododendron species, R. longiflorum and any other species thought suitable for display in these gardens?

I would be keen to grow them in our garden both as a display and backup material for the Botanic Garden if needed.

At 'Jagera', our garden, located approximately 1Km from the ocean, R. jasminiflorum, R. brookeanum, R. aurigeranum (Eureka Gold) and the R. lochiaie form (according to the key provided) of our native species are all growing well. The sub-tropical climate does seem to suit them."

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This would seem to be a good opportunity to start a successful venture. If transport can be arranged I am sure many plants would be offered. In my brief visits to the Garden the 'Friends' seem to be a very keen and competent group, and their boardwalk through the mangrove swamp is a unique feature.

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