

VIREYA VINE
ISSUE # 13 APRIL 1987
AN INTERNATIONAL GROUP OF "VIREYA BUFFS" - PUBLISHED BY THE EDUCATION
COMMITTEE OF THE RHODODENDRON SPECIES FOUNDATION

From Fran Rutherford,
Dear VV, (continued from VV12)
(the last time we heard from Fran he was walking amongst *R. beyerinckianum* and being
advised to be careful of feuding social people)

From Fran Rutherford January 11, 1987
Dear VV, Port Orchard, Washington

NEW GUINEA
August 1986

The trip to Mount Maip was over well maintained dirt roads as mines are being developed in the area. The mountain scenes from the road are spectacular and this trip is a must for vireya nuts. On the way up the mountain, we found vireyas growing along side the road in deep grass below limestone outcroppings. We parked at 9000 feet and had lunch. Close by, Graham found three small plants of *Christi* in bloom growing on a slide. Later a pure red form of *Christi* was located. Our plan was to walk down the road exploring each side for plants. There were numerous small plants growing on the road side cuts. The better small leaf plants were found growing on rotten logs in semi-shade. *Rarum* was quite common, both in the small and large leaf forms. None of the larger leaf forms were in bloom, so I do not know if they also have larger flowers. One of the natives found a four foot *herzogii* growing back in the bush which was in full bloom. There were 17 pure white flowers in the truss. We were able to obtain cuttings from this superior form before the native throw it into their truck. Orchids are also prevalent on this mountain.

Our quarters for the night was the Kaiap Orchid Lodge. It is a very comfortable and clean place to stay. As it is located on a ridge, you have an excellent view of the valleys below. Their garden has a fine collection of native orchids and a good collection of vireyas. The most outstanding vireya plant was a large *rubiniflora* growing on a upright fern log. The small dark green leaves completely covered the log and the large bright red solitary flowers were very attractive.

I arose early in the morning hoping to obtain some good photo's of the valley at sunrise. To my disappointment the entire valley was shrouded in dense fog. There was not a cloud in the sky but the grass was dripping wet from the high night humidity. As this area had not had rain for three weeks, it is obvious plants receive a good soaking of dew each night. After breakfast, our transportation arrived. We were expecting comfortable four wheel vehicles but the two ton truck showed up. Joyce and I were assigned to the cab and the rest relegated to the open truck bed. What a miserable trip for them. The road to Giluwe is mostly paved and transverses a level valley until you reach the Kaugel River. Here the road enters the mountain area and becomes very scenic. You travel up a rather steep mountain gorge with a stream on your left. As the road reaches the first plateau, the road becomes very steep with many sharp curves. As the roads are not well maintained in places, the natives drive on the left side, the right side or down the middle. Somehow they seem to sense an on coming car and pull over to the left side in time. I was watching our betel nut chewing driver and it was obvious he was becoming drowsy. I was about to say something, when he ran off the road. Fortunately, we were going very slowly and he picked the cliff side. The other side was a steep drop-off. No problem - he was wide awake for the rest of the trip. The plateau area contained some nice stands of *R. macgregoriae* but we were eager to get to Giluwe. The natives live on and farm the steep hillsides. Their homes are usually made of woven bamboo with thatched roof of bamboo. We finally reached the town of Tambul which is located the base of Giluwe. We stopped at the local market area and soon attracted a crowd. Because they were not about to disperse, we moved over to the agriculture station for lunch and to await our guides.

In mid-afternoon we were on our way to the roads end which is about a half hour from town. By this time, a light rain was falling so on go the raincoats. This time we were required to carry our own sleeping bags as well as our overnight pack, camera gear, and collecting sack. This made the climb more difficult. The first part of the trail is through grass land. We spotted several plants of *womersleyi* but none were in bloom. You then enter the forest with its high overhead canopy of trees which makes photography most difficult. Part way in, we found several blooms of *superbum* with their delightful odor. We were able to spot the plant high in the tree. On our way back, one of the guides climbed the tree and obtained cuttings. We finally broke out of the forest around 7,000 feet. Almost immediately, we saw the beautiful *culmicolum* in bloom along the forest edge. One plant had seven flowers to the truss and was a good clear red. The natives had erected a crude lean-to over which was draped a large tarp. They had built a welcome fire by felling several trees. By this time it was late afternoon and quite cold and dampish. From our camp at 8,000 feet we could see the entire valley and surrounding mountains. Later in the night a storm rolled into the valley and we were treated to a spectacular electrical display. The sky over our heads was clear.

In the morning, John and a guide set out for water to cook breakfast but apparently became lost. Graham, Oz and Richard took off for the summit. After an hour or so wait I decided to walk up to the open grassland. Along the forest edge I found *beyerinckianum* and *commonae* in bloom. Soon I was overtaken by two guides. One sent out to see that I did not get lost and the other to guide the fellows down from the summit. The open grass lands were much different than I had expected. The course grass is about knee high and tiring to walk in. Instead of being dry as I had expected they are almost wetlands. Perhaps a little higher they are dry. Finding no *vireyas*, my guide and I decided to return to camp. The other guide took off for the summit. To mark his position on the mountain, he set a fire which consumed over an acre. This is typical of the highland people who will set fires for any purpose.

On the way down to camp Lass told me a little about his life. He was twenty years old and considered himself at mid-life. When I told him I was sixty nine and expected to live many more years, he looked at me in disbelief. His prime concern was that he was not married and there were no unmarried women in his clan. One just does not marry outside the clan. With a wife or two to raise the children, tend the garden etc. the man is free to hunt, gamble and protect the home. He had no desire to adopt our ways as the land would provide adequate food with little effort to meet his needs. The highland people, I observed, are far more happy, friendly and helpful than the lowland people who are more civilized.

After lunch, Joyce and I started down the mountain before the rest returned from the summit. It was a nice change not to be in a hurry. When the rest of the group caught up with us, we found that they were able to locate several stands of *saxifragoides* and had both cutting and seed. They said the plants were in poor shape and may not survive too many more years. It was mid-afternoon by the time we reached the truck and on our way to Maggie's place. The road up to her Lodge was steep, long and rough. By the time we reach the lodge it was dark and none of us were in good humor especially those who rode in the truck bed. But a hot showers and good food would help.

The lodge consists of her home and several outbuilding which were the guest sleeping quarters. The only bathroom is in her home. However, the shower was not working and there was not even enough hot water for a spit bath. She surprised us with a native style dinner which is best described as UGH. A lot of nasty comments were making the rounds that night. To top it off I got stuck in the bathroom and had to be rescued. In the morning, Maggie cooked us an excellent breakfast and things looked brighter. Maggie is the daughter of one of the early gold rush settlers. She is an excellent conversationalist, a good cook and a most accommodating person. She was surprise we had not been told what to expect at the lodge.

The "rascals" or robbers were on the prowl so we stopped by Maggie's cafe in Hagan and left our wallets in the her safe. However, the trip to the Baiyer River Wildlife Sanctuary was uneventful. The Sanctuary is open to the public and has picnic facilities. The aviary contains almost if not all the birds that are found in New Guinea. The zoo has a large collection of animals common in this area. There is also a small orchid collection. If you are in this area, it's worth the trip.

The next morning, we went to the Hagan airport to catch the flight to Madang. Our plane was rather small and unable to take all our gear. After assurances that the excess baggage would be delivered the next morning, we took off. While the baggage was delivered as promised, Oz's camera and passport turned up missing. It was almost a cloudless day and we had a good view of the terrain between Hagan and Madang.

Our stay in Madang was at the Smugglers Inn. This is a first class hotel with air-conditioning, pool and a quality restaurant. It's a long way to go for a hot shower and swim but it sure was a pleasant change. The restaurant is right out of a Hollywood movie. It is built right on the sea wall, cooled by the sea breeze and with beautiful Polynesian sunsets. Drinks come instantly but food is only served after an hour or two wait. If you are taking a river trip, this is a good place to stay. However the hot and humid climate was most unpleasant to me and I was happy to leave for Port Moresby.

We arrived in Port Moresby on the afternoon of the 28th and went directly to the Davara Hotel. After checking in, we were off to the Botanical Gardens to clear our plants for shipment home. We were too late to obtain complete clearance that afternoon so had to return the next day. The agriculture inspectors are very courteous and helpful but the process is time consuming. Having your plants clean, dipped and catalogued before you arrive greatly speeds the processing. Orchids are more difficult to obtain clearance on than rhododendron cuttings. We also visited the state legislature and state museum before our departure. Both are unique and you should plan on at least a morning in the museum. We arrived back in Australia that evening and turned our plant material over to their officials to hold in quarantine until the flight out. The long flight home was uneventful and I am still surprised how easy it is to bring back cuttings.

It is also surprising to people when they go to great effort to bring home cuttings and small plants, how poor they can do. Some times you will have real good luck but I think the norm is "well I tried anyway".

One thing that the people of the Vireya world gain from a trip like this is that we now have more people who understand how the plants grow in the wild. We shall always thirst for this kind of info. People who go into native Rhododendron plant areas also become quite familiar with some of the plants that they see, which also rubs off on us other folk. E. White

From M. Cullinane, New Zealand January 7, 1987
Dear VV,

I can report that since my problems with *R. christiana* (VV #9), I have had success; after replanting it in a mixture of 50% coarse sand and 50% flocculated clay. Sited on a steepish bank, it has thrived, flowering four times in the year since, and putting on good growth with internodal length of 120cm. A tablespoonful of dolomite to correct slight chlorosis is all the plant has had in the way of interference from me.

I am interested in seeds from Tom Tatum's Herklotz #5 when he has seed available. (VV #11)

I am currently attempting to gather historical information concerning the importation of *Vireya* material into New Zealand. This is something I feel should be done whilst the topic is reasonably within living memory. If any of your readers can contribute information about this, it would be appreciated.

M. Cullinane
Rose Tree Gardens
P. O. Box 8
Russell, 0293, New Zealand

*OK, I looked up 'flocculate' and it says "To aggregate into small flocculent masses, as soils or sediments". So what are you doing? The small clay units are mixed into the coarse sand and that is what you planted in? Sure that should work well because we know that *Vireyas* real need is good drainage, which does not mean that all of the applied water is to drain away. Please tell us more about this product and what it is used for and maybe some of us will try it.*

Last Christmas I received a real nice card from Norman Cruttwell in New Guinea. The card has a front line drawing of R. luraluense which Norman thought I would be interested in. Thank you for your thoughts Norman, the card is appreciated. I am going to take the liberty to quote a little from the short story that he has on the inside of the card.

"This year 1986 has been a double milestone for me. First, I have attained the Biblical life span of three score years and ten (Psalm 90v. 10.) I hope the second half of the verse will not be fulfilled! I have had a wonderful life so far, and have been richly blessed. Praise God.

The second milestone is 40 years in P.N.G., 20 at Menapi, 10 at Agaun and 10 (so far) at Goroka. For 30 of them I was a bush missionary, for five a Rector and for five more a Curator and a Curate at the same time.

The Mt. GAHAVISUKA Provincial Park (containing the LIPIZAUGA Botanical Sanctuary) is nearing the end of its fourth year and is becoming well known to botanists all over the world. We have had many both national and overseas visitors this year. The natural flora of the reserve is as prolific as ever and we are still discovering new species. The introduced plants, all indigenous to PNG are growing up and flowering. We now have a very large collection of Orchids and Rhododendrons. This year has seen the construction of a second Orchid House, two residences for the Assistant Curator and Ranger, (the Ranger, Bing Siga and I live in the town and commute up to the park), an information Center and two more public shelters. We are also creating a small lake.

During the year I have been on some very interesting botanical trips with visiting botanists, including Bouganville Island and Mount Wilhelm. The cover picture is of Rhododendron luraluense, a rare species which grows on two volcanoes on Bouganville, one of which, Mt. Balbi, we climbed. The flowers are pure white and lily-like. It grows near the limit of vegetation and within the sulfurous smell of steam vents.

My contract lasts till August 1988. After that my future is uncertain. I may retire to Kuranda to write it all up, which I have no time to do in this extremely busy life. It depends very much on finding an adequate successor to carry it all on. My assistant Gabriel is doing very well, but he is very young. All being well, I hope to send him for some overseas training later on".

Rev. Canon N. Cruttwell
Curator
Lipizauga Botanical Sanctuary
P. O. Box 961, GOROKA, E.H.P.
PAPUA NEW GUINEA

I left a lot about the church work out of this letter and do not think that Norman will mind to much. We in the Vireya Rhododendron world are so very lucky to have a man like him to tell us about places that we shall never see. Thanks a lot Norman.

AND FROM THE PAST WE HAVE SOME GOOD LETTERS THAT NEED READING AGAIN

The only reason I am using old letters from the old Vireya Vines is that I do not have anymore new stuff to use. You are not writing to the VV and I can not just cause letters about Vireya Rhododendrons to appear in my mailbox.

I would like to hear about hybrids between Vireya and other Rhododendron sections. I would like to hear your ideas about classification. I tried to start a good doer list but was the only person to list any. How about your good doers? It could be that everyone is looking for a better potting mixture, so lets hear about yours.

SO WE GIVE YOU, FROM THE YEAR 1983 (VV5) A FEW CHOICE TIDBITS

From Maurice H. Sumner, California, USA

Dear VV, 9-26-83

There is a lot of excitement in our family. *R. hellwigii* is in bloom. Pete Sullivan says that this is the first time that it has bloomed in California. Sleumers book reports it as the largest red *Vireya* blossom. The flowers are funnel shape with five florets to the truss. The individual flowers are 3 1/2 inches across with 11 to 13 stamens. The buds formed six months ago and took their own sweet time to burst into a delightful bloom.

R. buxifolium is another *Vireya* that I have not seen mentioned in the Vine. It has just finished blooming and has the finest velvet red flowers that I have ever seen. It is a little hard to root and grows slowly, but is worth waiting for. I have enjoyed reading the four issues of the Vine and it hasn't cost me a cent! However, my conscience is beginning to bother me, so I enclose a check to help with the overhead.

Maurice H. Sumner
350 Edgehill Way
San Francisco, Ca. 94127, USA

From Mrs. Ann McLeod, So. Africa 7-24-83

Dear Sir,

What a fantastic surprise to receive the "Vireya Vine". I read it from beginning to end as soon as I received it and would be more than delighted to have future copies sent to me. I enclose my \$10.00 for postage, etc.

I have been battling to grow Vireyas for a few years now. The seeds (sent to me from Australia) came up beautifully but I have very few that have survived after that. I grow the seeds in wattle tree 'peat' mixed with sand (sterilizing the mixture of sand and peat) and watering well (borehole water). I enclose the pots in a plastic bag until well up. It's when I think that the seedlings are big enough to remove from the plastic that I have problems. If anyone can give me a few pointers I would be more than grateful. Our climate is ideal for larger Rodies of which I have a few hundred-- summers here are quite hot--35'C the hottest with a heavy rainfall (48"). We do get slight frost (-2') in the winter but not every day and no rain. At the moment we are experiencing a tremendous drought so it is quite difficult to keep all the Rodos watered on 2 1/2 acres. Altitude 3500 feet, Lat. 29's.

At the moment I have only a shade house with a fiberglass roof and shade cloth sides but am seriously considering putting in a small plastic tunnel with mist spray as I think my Vireyas dry out too much. I must emphasize that I am a complete beginner and would be more than grateful for any *Vireya* seed from any other Viners. I feel that there are quite a few areas in S. Africa where Vireyas would do well and would love to build up my stock of these wonderful plants. Thank you and best wishes.

Mrs. Ann McLeod
P.O. Box 461
Hilton 3245
Natal, South Africa

From Stan Eversole, M.D. California 10-6-83

I like Rhododendrons with character and with that in mind I want to discuss one of my favorites, namely, *R. aequabile*, which I raised from seed collected by Dr. P. Valder in Sumatra. It is so scaly that the leaves are almost chocolate brown. It is so temperamental that it has to be grown in the loosest and airy media; for me, very coarse osmunda fiber. No plastic pot for this temperamental one, but a pulp pot with multiple holes in the sides and chunks of broken up styrofoam blocks in the bottom for drainage and air at the base. When watered it receives Peter Schick's "prescription" of very dilute high phosphate but complete fertilizer with trace elements. Then it is happy and is so characteristic that one can recognize it at a glance. The flowers are orange-yellow, about 2 inches across, 2-3 to a truss. I have distributed many seed and seedlings because it is a rare plant hereabouts.

Dr. Stan Eversole
P.O. Box 4186
Mountain View, Ca. 94040 USA

We had a plant of R. aequabile bloom at the Rhododendron Species Foundation this spring (1987). Very nice and unusual. We also had R. tuba bloom and there is a question if it is named right. The flower is not very close to the description in the book. This RSF plant of R. tuba will need watching. Is this not going to be true with many of the Vireya species that we are growing? Really, very little is known about the Vireya species and not many collections from different locations have been made. We shall have fun for many years to come talking about and looking hard at many of the species. Yes I think that we do know some well like macgregoriae but; are all of the plants that we have growing with a 'mac' label really mac's. Some of mine are not. The plant I had labeled "Pink mac" must be a hybrid of some kind. The flower looks not enough typical to please me. Or is there a real typical MAC look? E. White

MORE FROM 1983

From Dick Lynch, L.A. California, USA 10-20-1983

I have been growing Vireyas for eight years or so here in Palos Verdes just south of Los Angeles, overlooking the Pacific. I have thirty or so flowering hybrids in peat beds in the garden facing east, these range in height from two feet to over six feet and are quite healthy. They are watered once a week for 40 minutes and have a very acid type fertilizer about every six months with exception of any plant with *R. konori* in its ancestry--which burns.

I have constructed a special 'lath' house to hold the large number of potted Vireyas. This consists of an open construction having a translucent plastic roof topped with 50% shade cloth, one solid side (the windy side) and three 50% shade cloth sides. My reason for the roof is that the potted Vireyas in the L.A. have problems in our rainy season--October to April. Being soggy for weeks at a time is deadly. I water the potted plants lightly once a week and add dilute liquid fertilizer and "Superthrive" (a Vitamin B1 formulation) at the same time. I find that "Superthrive" encourages branching to produce more shrubs and less vines! My problem time, however is July, August and September when the temperatures range from the 80's to the 100's and with the humidity usually in the 20's and 30's. This is the time of high plant loss (over 40 plants in 1979) when I cease using fertilizer and use an overhead mister daily. White, ventilated pots are a must because even filtered sun will boil the roots of a Vireya in a black pot which is facing the sun and which has been recently watered.

At this time I would like to thank Bill Moynier of Los Angeles for all his help and encouragement to all the ARS Chapter members in L. A. I would also like to thank Brian Clancy and Arthur Headlam for all their wonderful articles in the ARS Journal over the years, especially on white ventilated pots and fern logs.

Richard E. Lynch
26363 Silver Spur Road
Rancho Palos Verdes, Ca. 90274, USA

From John Rouse, Australia Aug 7-1983

To answer your question in issue # 4, in making crosses Vireya X Azalea complex, we have used no secret incantations, no chemical solvents or neutralizers nor other such potions to overcome incompatibility, just made the pollinations in the normal fashion usually during warm weather and taking precautions to exclude unwanted pollen from the female parent stigma. In the coming year, we may well look at the effectiveness of some of the various techniques for overcoming incompatibility when the pollen tubes are arrested at some point in the style.

Seed resulting from the above type of cross which has been sown recently includes: R. lochae X R. championiae which has resulted in 26 seedlings whose hybridity is confirmed by the presence of glandular hairs and the absence of scales on the first leaves. The seedlings appear normal but it is at yet too early to comment on their vigor except to say that it is not above average. Although we have made many crosses between subsection Euvireya X section Choniastrum, this is the first time that we have obtained viable seed; usually no seed is collected. R. lochae X R. simsii, 22 of the seeds obtained contained developed embryos, 4 seedlings resulted, 1 of which died. The hybridity of the remaining three has been confirmed but they lack vigor and will probably expire.

R. lochae X R. tashiroi has resulted in 17 seedlings, 6 of which appear normal with green cotyledons, the remainder having white cotyledons. Oddly enough, the cotyledons mostly have short adpressed hairs round their rim, which is characteristic of the cotyledons of R. tashiroi. R. lochae X R. schlippenbachii produced seeds, only 1 of which contained developed embryos. However they were inviable.

John L. Rouse
House 8, Stoneheaven Court
Toorak, Victoria, 3142 Australia

As mentioned in VV12, there will be a INTERNATIONAL RHODODENDRON CONFERENCE in Wollongong Australia next year. Ralph Sangster (from the Australian Rhododendron Society) who has spent 10 years promoting a International Rhododendron Union was here in Tacoma with me for three days (April 19-21, 1987) and he left some fliers about the Wollongong meeting. The text of the flier follows.

AUSTRALIAN RHODODENDRON SOCIETY as an Endorsed Bicentennial Activity will host the 4th International Rhododendron Conference, October 1 to 5, 1988. At Wollongong, New South Wales, Australia.

The 4th International Rhododendron Conference is to be held at Pentagon, Wollongong University. The Conference will have an international programme of speakers. Topics covered will include the taxonomy, distribution and cultivation of Rhododendron with some emphasis on subgenus Vireya.

The first meeting of the International Rhododendron Union will follow the conference.

Details of the provisional programme and the Application Form for conference reservation will be sent to any interested person who completes the attached form and returns it to the Conference Organizer. (Overseas applicants please use AIR MAIL) Returning this slip in no way commits anyone as booking will only be made on the official application form, which will be forwarded during July of 1987.

Please mail below form to: The Rhododendron Conference Organizer
P. O. Box 1988, Wollongong East, 2500
New South Wales, Australia.

I/We am/are interested in attending the 4th International Rhododendron Conference to be held in Wollongong in October, 1988 and should be grateful if you would send details of the provisional programme and application form/s to:

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

Name(s) Dr/Mr/Mrs/Miss _____

Address _____

Post Code _____ Country _____

Note that I have tried to make the form for the Wollongong Conference so that you can cut it out from this Vireya Vine and not hurt the rest of the copy. This should be a very interesting meeting. The Illawarra Branch of the Australian Rhododendron Society has a large garden in Wollongong where many Vireyas are grown in landscaped beds. I hope that a lot of Vireya growers take this opportunity to go see a bit of Australia. I know that they will put on a good show and will also have arranged the time schedule so that you can also go to Melbourne in the south. You might also want to include a side trip to New Zealand and have a look at the fine garden of "Pukeiti". Pukeiti is one of the premier Rhododendron gardens of the world and should not be missed. At Pukeiti you will find a large collection of hybrid Rhododendrons along with a extensive planting of the 'big leaf' plants. They also have a large collection of Vireyas and the curator Graham Smith has collected Vireyas from the wild in New Guinea several times.

I hope to announce a tour trip or two to the Wollongong Conference in the next Vine, but send in the form on this page anyway, so that they have an idea what to plan for.

You should note that I have needed to use material from past Vines for this issue. I have nothing else to print; no body is writing to the Vireya Vine. I can not generate the copy that goes into this news letter. I would be very happy if I had enough letters to do another 3 Vines on hand right now. This is your Vine so get busy and write something soon.

I tried a different way of printing VV #12 on a "LaserWriter". This entailed taking the disk from my IBM compatible computer to a person with a Apple Macintosh computer and reformatting the text and then printing it on the Apple LaserWriter printer. It worked good BUT, the type was very small and I think hard to read, so I am doing this VV on my printer at home. I hope that you fine it a bit better. Let me know what you like. I try hard to get as much info as possible onto the page for your money.

VIREYA VINE
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