

VIREYAVINE

ISSUE #17 MAY, 1988

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RHODODENDRON SPECIES FOUNDATION

From Richard Chaikin, Boston, Mass. April 17, 1988
Dear Vireya Vine

Within the last year I have been able to collect a few plants and now have the greenhouse about filled. I have a tree fern on which are growing 3 Clipse, 3 Valentine, 3 low growing reds (locha??) which were not labeled when I took the cuttings, and will have 3 christi on the shady side. In addition there is a commonae growing in the same pot as the fern, because I've heard that it can grow in bogs. This tree fern is automatically watered for 20 min every day by drip irrigation from rings set up on top and around the trunk as well as a mist of 20 min once per week. All the rest of the plants are being watered by clock also, 6 min once per week. These plants are both on the bench as well as hanging. They are all in white plastic pots to reflect sun and not absorb it. Most are in 7" standards which I am told will keep residual water from the roots as it will collect in the bottom third of a tall pot.

Since seeing Cavenderland (as well as Badgerland on Mt Gnome in Seattle) I have come to the conclusion that it is OK to put the plants on a four ft. deep bench, five pots deep. I have also seen them that crowded at Bovees in Oregon done the same way. However they cover all the plants with a plastic tent for the winter in addition to the greenhouse insulation they have. So I have tried to do this also with all the bench plants. I built a frame of plastic pipes over the bench the entire length (20 ft) and used bubble plastic for the insulation. This worked extremely well. I do have the proof for when my heater was in the hospital, the only damage was to the hanging pots not under the plastic.

Since this greenhouse has an interior shade system, that is, the shade cloth is attached to the interior of the glass, I am now wondering why it is necessary to remove these plants for the summer. After all, if all the windows are open, and all of the vents are open as well, they should be exposed to the same conditions inside as outside. Also it will be easier to water inside as it is all automatic drip watering inside and the outside only has the mist system that started in Washington State and has moved east recently. (Ed Note; he means the "Micro Sprinkler Heads")

The last Vireya Vine included a letter about plants dying. As I have had a great deal of experience in this regard, I think I can offer the explanation. That only happens to me when I put certain plants in my high rise apartment. The heat is air forced by fan to go thru a hotcoil. There is no exchange of air out of the apartment. The dryness of the air is probably to blame. The plants do not survive well in the apartment, whereas the same clones do well in the greenhouse.

That brings me to the other aspect of this letter. I wish to obtain a list of any plants which are being grown inside, but not in a greenhouse. I have had the impression from a few vireyaholics, that if grown in the presence of at least five other plants, for the sake of humidity, that most vireyas can make nice house plants. I have grown them in my bedroom when my greenhouse was not ready to be built. At that time I had well over 50 plants in my bedroom, and about 30 in the dining room. That should have made for a humid apartment! However I still lost plants in the manner described in the last Vireya Vine. I intend to put this list onto my computer to share with any and everyone, so please send me your list of vireyas that are not grown in a greenhouse or a solarium of any kind, but are grown inside a house or apartment, the living space.

RICHARD W CHAIKIN
7 WHITTIER PLACE
BOSTON, MA 02114

Yes I think that Richard is right about white pots. I only wish that I had a lot more of them but my wife's family has been in the Florist business for many years and I get mostly black and green pots. I should cut lose with a few dollars and buy a case of pots, but. I do still use a old soldering iron to burn holes into the plastic pot sides and think that it helps the plants. Richard also talk's about what he call's 'standard' pots and thinks that they might not stay as wet in the bottom as others. I try to use a 3/4 pot if I have them because the Vireyas don't grow roots down to the bottom anyway and I therefor don't use as much potting mix. I also like the shorter pots because they stand upright much better when they are outside in the lath house. I think that we should hear more about the deep pots and what there advantage is. Any one???

Richard asks a very good question about "why move the Vireyas out of the greenhouse in the summer". I move my plants out of the greenhouse for three good reasons. #1 is because I have a home built, south facing, lean-to type greenhouse that gets VERY hot in the summer. #2, because it gives me a chance at least twice a year to sort, prune, repot etc all of the Vireyas. #3 is in my case important. I clean the greenhouse out in the summer and let it bake for a while, I spray a chlorine solution onto everything to help kill things that I don't want in the greenhouse. I also replace bad boards, brackets and sometimes the inside layer of plastic. None of these jobs can be done while the Vireyas are in the greenhouse. BUT if Richards house is shaded and very well vented then it makes sense to just leave the plants where they are doing well. Other Ideas??? E. White, WV editor.

From Hugh Caldwell, Doctors Inlet, Florida, January 22, 1988

Dear WV,

We've had a hot dry summer (86) here in Florida, but the Vireyas have enjoyed the heat. Over the years that I have had Vireyas, I find that they can take a lot of rough treatment, heat and dry weather. We put all of the Vireyas on long rooting tables (4 foot X 60 Foot) in the back yard this past spring (86), and only watered them about once per week. The Vireyas enjoyed all of the summer heat and dry weather we have here.

In the early Fall (86) I found that the Vireyas had grown out of bounds, and had to be cut back before going back into the greenhouse. A student from the University of Florida came to visit and took a large number of cuttings back to the University. I finished cutting the plants back, leaving only 4 to 6 inches on them. They are growing back great and are making good bush shapes.

We are having a lot of root rot. It is getting out of hand and is getting both species and hybrids. To stop the root rot, or to try to stop it, all of the Vireyas were bare rooted, cleaned and put into pine bark (very fine mixture). The plants are enjoying the bark and are looking much better. I'll know more about the pure bark mixture later. It will take about a year before we can get a re-evaluation of the pine bark mixture.

Rooting cuttings is no problem. During the summer I can get cuttings rooted in a few weeks. We put the cuttings into the greenhouse in the winter but they take longer to root. I would like to try my luck with some bud grafting. This might take longer but would save space and be something new to Vireyas. Holly bud cuttings will root in a very short time in pure white sand. Our weather is great for rooting cuttings, hot days and damp hot nights. We also have a lot of fog and this will help the Vireyas to root. I only know of one other person in Florida State that has Vireyas. I would like to see a study made of the species and hybrid Vireya Rhododendrons. I find that the species are not as a rule very strong and that the hybrids are very strong and can take a lot. I have some three and four way crosses. The plants look good, good plant habit, plus good colors.

I find that the large leafed Vireyas can take our heat and dry weather here better that the smaller leafed plants. I have a couple of small leafed plants and am waiting to see what happens to them. I understand that the large leaf Vireyas are found at sea level or on the coast line. If this is true then we are almost at sea level here. Do I have help from the coast line? (Ed Note; Yes Hugh, some Vireya species are native to sea level but the great majority are not, BUT they grow almost right on the

Equator and are often in clouds.)

Our soil here is very sandy and at 4' below the top soil we have a lot of hard pan clay. The water table is about two feet below the ground, so that we have a damp sandy soil mixture. It takes peat moss and leaf mold by the truck load for the growing beds.

One of my hobbies are the Native Deciduous Azaleas, and Florida has three of them. The *Rhododendron austrinum* with from light yellow to dark orange flowers. *R. canesens* which is all shades of pink and also white and *R. serrulatum* which is pure white and blooms in July. I would like to try to see if any of our native Azaleas could be crossed with Vireyas. You would have a great plant for the hot weather and all shades of colors. I would like to see what some of the large leaf Vireyas could do here in Florida. There is always something to learn about plants and what Nature can do.

Hugh Caldwell,
187 Brickyard Road,
Doctors Inlet, Florida 32030

Hugh brings up a good question about root rot. I have also had a very bad problem in my Vireyas for the last year. I am sure that my problem is, *Phytophthora* root rot. I have lost some very large, small leafed plants and am kicking myself for not understanding what was happening. I do know better or at least I should have known. BUT. I finally got some Subdue and treated the whole greenhouse and I think that I have stopped the *Phytophthora* for now. I am going to treat the plants twice a year from now on. What Hugh is doing with Bark is another solution to root rot, but I do not think that pure bark will work up north where I live. Every *Rhododendron* grower should get a copy of the booklet called "COMPENDIUM OF RHODODENDRON AND AZALEA DISEASES". 64 pages put out by the American Phytopathological Society. The address is;

3340 Pilot Knob Road
St. Paul, Minnesota 55121
U.S.A.

This book has good color pictures and text that even I can understand. I think that it is priced at less than \$20 US. Well worth the price. E. White

From R.A. Mitchell, Jr. Volcano, Hawaii
Dear VV, April 4, 1988
Letter to E. White.

You might remember that we attended the International *Rhododendron* Conference of 1984 in Seattle-Tacoma where I was first introduced to the Vireya section. E. White and Bob Badger, in particular believed that they (Vireyas) would do well here and urged me to give it a try. Graham Smith of Pukeiti, N.Z. also gave encouragement. I told them that I was having trouble with hardy *Rhododendron* which puzzled me then and still does. We have no problems getting azaleas and camelias to produce exceptionally well, but I am still struggling with *Rhododendron* except for the Vireyas.

Briefly, here is what we did. In the fall of 85 we bought about 10 plants from Vireya Specialties Nursery in L.A. and about the same number in 86 and 87. I also bought about 10 plants from the Lyon Arboretum in Honolulu (most of these were *Aurigeranum* hybrids).

Some plants were planted in pots and some in dead tree fern stumps. The pots were placed in a

number of locations to discover which they liked best. Some were under trees on the ground, some on benches, some out in the open, some with afternoon sun and others with morning sun, etc. At this point those in the tree fern stumps are doing OK, but not putting out the amount of new growth as those in pots. I haven't lost any plants so far and am generally quite pleased with their overall condition, except that I expected more flower buds by now. Hopefully I will be seeing more buds this year.

Last March we had the pleasure of visiting Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust in New Zealand. The Curator, Graham Smith showed us his collection of Vireyas, many of which were in bloom. I took some video-tape which I will not be able to show to him until he visits the U.S. because the N.Z. TV system isn't compatible with ours.

We are looking forward to revisiting Graham and Pukeiti in October after attending the International Rhododendron Conference in Wollongong, Australia. We have received our booking confirmation at the Beach Park Motor Inn where we are scheduled to arrive on September 30. Hopefully we will have the pleasure of meeting some of you Viners there.

It is such a pleasure to receive the Vireya Vine, and I do want to express our appreciation to the people who put it together. It must involve a lot of work, and we sent our thanks, our check and our warmest alohas.

Mitch and Sandy Mitchell
P.O. Box 298
Volcano, Hawaii 96785
U.S.A.

Thanks Mitch for the nice letter. Yes you will see some of us in Wollongong this October. I am thinking about putting out a Vireya Vine "member" sign up list at the Conference if they will let me. Many of the Americans that I know of, are going to be in Australia and New Zealand for about a month so we will probably run into each other at other places. I hope that other Viners will not pass up a chance to go to Pukeiti on the North Island. Pukeiti is one of the Major Rhododendron gardens in the world and should not be missed.

To you other Viners who know the answers; why does Mitch have trouble with hardy Rhododendrons? And what else should he do to get more flower buds?

Yes Mitch it is a lot of work typing the Vireya Vine. I do all of that but sometimes I get the stuff already typed on computer disk. Now I just love computer disk. It is 10:45PM and I have been typing for two hours now. I like doing the Vine and feel real good when people say that they like it. Fran Rutherford does the printing and mailing work. Also thanks for the check. We still have enough money in the fund to do the Vine but it is because some of you people send money in each year. We also understand that it is a little bit hard to send money for overseas to the U.S.A. Many thanks to all of you who help with expenses without being asked. If we had to ask for funds the job would be much less fun and harder to do. E. White

PS: I got a short letter from Tom Tatum today saying that he had been very sick but was working on his Vireya Book again. HEY TOM, we are still with you. Many Vireya people need a good book about Vireyas.

From Donald W. Paden Urbana, Illinois USA
Dear W, February 1988

A Flawed Experiment -- Growth Retardants and Vireyas

Several years ago while visiting a research station in Japan I saw a rather remarkable exhibit of the effects of growth retardant on Rhododendron. It took some time before I attempted use of retardants on my Vireya in Illinois.

Despite some very courteous correspondence with several Japanese, I was unable to obtain enough Sumi - 7 (the growth regulator used in Japan) to use on a few plants. I was advised that it would not be available until trials in the U.S. were completed and registration approved. In the meantime there were other growth regulators available and two years ago I plunged ahead using B - Nine, Atrimmec and Embark as substitutes.

In anticipation of all of this I had rooted cuttings of various Vireyas and potted them up in flats, nine varieties to a flat in 7 or 8 flats, with odds and ends in two others. The growth retardants were purchased (at a cost that was not negligible) and applied to three of these flats. Plants in one other flat were "pinched" according to Waldon Delp's recommendations. Yet another flat was set aside as a control. At least one of the flats with odds and ends was treated with B - Nine. The directions for use of the growth retardants were followed reasonably carefully, with the plants being sprayed twice. The varieties used are listed below, the first three being those which in my opinion survived the experiment looking the best.

R. culminicolum
Island Sunset
Pink Delight X R. jasminiflorum
WAU Ecology Institute C-W #1
R. brookeanae
R. christinae X R. aurigeranum
Unknown

The flats were put outside in the summer and there suffered from benign neglect. Unfortunately, they were also invaded by an army of squirrels which took a liking to name tags. The plants were brought in early in the fall and those which survived and for which tags remained were carefully measured. In spite of the best machinations of a statistician there was really no way to make out any noteworthy differences in the growth that the plants had put on since the use of the growth retardants. After a lot of hard work it was a disappointment to be chalked up to ineptitude, naivete, carelessness, or what ever. Thus, this note is an appeal to others to try their hand. I believe Sumi - 7 is now available under the trade name of Sumagic and I may try it myself.

Undoubtedly, readers will ask why one would use a growth retardant on Vireyas in any case? Most growers of Vireyas don't live in climates where temperatures go to -20° F and below and where one must therefore live with them indoors for six months out of the year, in the absence of a greenhouse (and a large one at that). In spite of Dick Cavender's of Sherwood Oregon, "...if you can't say something nice [about Vireyas], don't say anything at all,"¹ Vireyas would be nicer if they could be restrained a bit.

1 Journal of the American Rhododendron Society, Vol. 21, No. 3, Page #146.

If I were to do this all over again I would pot up the plants separately so that they could be dunked into the retardant or sprayed more effectively than perhaps I was able to do, and more importantly, at a time when new growth for each plant had progressed optimally. My own plants have now been transferred to flats, each one with all the same variety so that I can compare more easily the attractiveness of the vegetative growth. Finally, one of the flats with odds and ends was sprayed with B - Nine with curious results. The flat contains two vigorous plants of Island Sunset, one WAU # 3 a somewhat scrawny R. zolleri, and a monster, possibly R. brookeanum. Trunk diameter and height of the latter plant is three times that of other plants. Will the flowers match the vegetative growth? Perhaps this is a home grown version of chaos -- a phenomenon for which there is no cause and no explanation.²

2. Chaos: Making a New Science, James Gleick, Viking Penguin Press, 1987.

Commercial growers of such plants as azaleas and poinsettias routinely use growth regulators to improve the plant habit and bloom of their products. Possibly in Australia this fall at the International Rhododendron meeting where the program includes discussions of both azaleas and Vireyas there will be an opportunity to exchange views.

P.S. On an entirely different subject, I have the impression that it may be of interest to some that *R. intranervatum*, is still growing in Illinois, although not very vigorously. A color photograph of my parent plant appeared on the Journal of the American Rhododendron Society, Vol. 37, No. 2.

Donald W. Paden
2112 S. Pace St.
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U.S.A.

Bill Moyles is the American Rhododendron Society Vireya Seed Exchange person now and all seed should be sent to him along with request for seed. Get your name on Bill's list at least and tell him what type of seed you want. His address is;

A.R.S. Vireya Seed exchange
4243 Norton Ave.
Oakland, Ca. 94602

Bill wrote me a letter and here is the gist of what he has to say at this time.

Dear VW,

I guess that I have distributed around 150 packets of Vireya seed so far. I've made xerox of the last Vireya Vine and shall try to get a copy out along with my revised list of seed available.

So far I have heard from West Germany, India, South Africa, England, Australia, New Zealand and Israel. I was delighted to hear from M.S. Viraraghavan from South India. He has been contributing wild collections of *R. arboreum* V. *niligiricum* to the exchange and it turns out that he also has a very nice collection of Vireyas (at 7,000 feet elevation). He also contributed seed of his cross of *R. konori* X *zoelleri* X *laetum* (my thanks).

I would like to publicly thank (in the Vine) John Rouse, Graham Smith, Peters Schick and Sullivan, and Dick Cavender for their contributions to the seed list. I think that we have a real good beginning. But, of course, we need more seed! Species seed is always in demand and always in short supply, though I still have some *konori* (JLR's best form); *solitarium*, *yelliotii* and *inconspicuum* (G. Smith); *phaeopeplum*, *christi* (Schick) and I'll soon have some *lochae*, *konori* and *aurigeranum* (all very nice forms). I'm hoping that Edinburgh will make a contribution also.

I think that we are very fortunate in being able to offer some interesting hybrid seed. Hybrids tend to show more vigor and are easier for beginners to handle and keep moving. On the average, Vireya seedlings just do not show the vigor that other lepidote Rhododendrons show. But, beyond this, good first generation crosses or self's of the first generation are always valuable. I'm waiting of seed to develop of a cross of two forms of *R. laetum* X *leucogigas* that are "old gold" knockouts. The first generation cross that I have high hopes for is *R. goodenoughii* X *konori*.

I was able to furnish a few blooming plants for a recent San Francisco landscaping show - one plant was "Marshall Pierce Madison", a selection from Pete Sullivan's grex of (Triumphans X javanicum) X leucogigas that many think is the best of the lot. It has an enormous pink truss and excellent foliage showing the jav influence. Sorta blew people away. They wanted to buy it! Hah! Nothing like a little bit of R. leucogigas to perk people up!

Bill Moyles
4243 Norton Ave.
Oakland, Ca. 94602

You are sure right about leucogigas Bill. I was one to think at one time that I did not want that species (which I still don't have) or hybrids of leucogigas because it would get to large. Be real Smith. I am kicking my self still because a person can always cut a plant down once in a while. I at one time grew R. maddenii from CW Sikkim seed. It grew right through the glass top on my greenhouse but I did see it bloom once before putting it outside into the lath house where it froze the first winter. I do have a plant of "Marshall Pierce Madison" about to bloom. It had the biggest flower bud that I have seen on a Vireya and has 7 flowers about to open. The foliage is real nice dark green and the plant is smallish. I will need to get going on some cuttings of this if mine looks as good as you say yours did. I also had 13 trusses on R. stenophyllum this spring. Boy is stenophyllum a good plant when you get it happy. I even had the best Vireya truss in the Tacoma Rhododendron Show last weekend. I felt real good to be able to beat out Bob and Marge Badger who entered about 10 Vireya trusses. The Badgers also came within a hair of getting the award for the "Best Species Plant in the Show" with R. dielsianum in full bloom. That would have been a first in this part of the Rhododendron world. Nice job Bob and Marge. E. White

In Vireya Vine #16 I asked growers who sell plants to write and tell what they are selling and that the Vine would do a little free advertising for them. I got only two answers. Clarice Clark from the Rhododendron Species Foundation pointed out that they have Vireya species in their general distribution catalogue. The RSF also sells Vireya plants at the plant sale area by the main gate to the garden when they have extra plants. The plant distribution list only goes out to Species Foundation Members so people might want to send in their \$25 if they are not members yet. The original intention for the Vireya Vine was to provide a communication link with Vireya growers around the world and to hopefully encourage them to join the RSF. Because this is the seventeenth Vireya Vine to be produced I think that we are doing the communicating but I have no way to know if, or how many of you are members of the RSF. We do welcome new names for the VV mailing list. We will send one Vine with a note that there is a \$10 charge and then drop the name if we don't hear from the person.

Other Vireya Growers are;

Vireya Specialties Nursery
2701 Malcolm Ave.
Los Angeles, Ca. 90084
(mail order only)

The Bovees Nursery
1737 S.W. Coronado
Portland, Or. 97219
(they ship)

Greer Gardens
1280 Goodpasture Is. Rd.
Eugene, Or. 97401
(they ship)

Red's Rodies (Dick Cavender)
15920 S.W. Oberst Lane
Sherwood, Or. 97140
(I think that he ships??)

Bob Badger
P.O. Box 6486
Kent, Wa. 98064
(ships ???)

The last that I have heard, some of these growers stay about sold out all of the time. Vireyas are very popular with people who know about plants for the greenhouse.

We all know that Graham Snell in Australia is selling plants (see VV16 for address) but I do not know who else is selling.

I have always said, when people ask if I sell plants, "No I don't sell, I give them to people who want them". Maybe someday I will grow some special Vireyas to sell. They sure would not be hard to get rid of in flower. I know for sure that I would grow many Valentines for sale because in my book, Valentine is the very best of the small Vireyas. I understand that in Australia, Valentine is called St. Valentine, is that right???

Please write a letter to the Vireya Vine if you want to sell Vireyas and I will try to tell our small part of the world about it.

OK Folks, I am out of letters or copy to print in the Vine so I do need your input.

I hope to put out VV18 before leaving for Australia in late September. I am looking forward to having a Vine full of interesting information for you and to take to the International Meeting in Wollongong.

A Note For The Wollongong People; What are we going to see in Wollongong in October?? Rolling fields and hills covered with Vireya Rhododendrons in bloom?

VIREYA VINE
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