

VIREYA VINE  
ISSUE # 18, August 1988  
PUBLISHED BY THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE OF THE  
RHODODENDRON SPECIES FOUNDATION  
B. S. F. PO BOX 3798, PEDDAR WAY WA. 98063 E. WHITE SMITH, EDITOR

From Ivan Menzies

Blaxland, NSW, Australia

Dear VV,

May 30 1988

I have been receiving the Vine now for a few years and shame on me, I haven't written an article.

My interest in Vireyas goes back to the late Don Stanton, who kindly gave me some seedlings to get started. I might add that I now need to cut them back each year because they keep touching the top of the shade house.

Vireyas do real well in our area of the Lower Blue Mountains because the climate is fairly temperate, although it can get quite hot in the summer. I have a good collection of plants from over the years but would still like to add more and then embark upon hybridizing when the family pressure begins to abate. I have really enjoyed the "Vine" as it is so informative and gives a person an insight into other growers successes and failures.

Being a "Viner" is a special privilege because other Viners have been so generous over the years in forwarding to me seed and occasionally seedlings. I don't seem to have a lot of success in growing my own seeds, however I have perfected a rather simple procedure that seems to work fine. Although when it is time to prick the seedlings out it can be frustrating because they don't seem to make a lot of progress. Plants that I seem to have the least success with are any of the *R. konori* in the hybrids together with *R. phaeocephalum*. Perhaps some one will be able to offer some advice about potting mixes.

Attached is a list of some of the plants that I have that have reached a reasonable size and if anyone who would like cuttings, I would be only too pleased to send them some. (Ivan also sent in a Check for \$10 to help with the cost of printing the VV. Most people do send money and it is very satisfying not to need to ask for money. If every one would do a little bit then the Vireya Vine can go on for a long time. I also need your letters, PLEASE. E. White)

<i>R. aurigeranum</i> X <i>laetum</i>	<i>R. longiflorum</i> in Malaya
<i>R. Javanicum</i> , <i>teysmannii</i> or perhaps <i>robinsonii</i> , collected in the Cameron Highlands	
<i>R. christianae</i> X <i>jasminiflorum</i>	<i>R. brookeanum</i> from Tom Tatum
<i>R. aurigeranum</i> from near Bulolo	<i>R. loranthiflorum</i>
<i>R. zoelleri</i>	<i>R. ovatum</i> from Hang Chow
<i>R. neoforifolinni</i> (what is this E. White)	<i>R. laetum</i>
<i>R. laetum</i> from Irian Jaya	<i>R. lochae</i>
<i>R. 515</i> ( <i>zoelleri</i> island sunset) F2 X <i>laetum</i>	
<i>R. 472</i> ( <i>zoelleri</i> Island Sunset X <i>lochae</i> ) X <i>Taylori</i>	
<i>R. 499</i> ( <i>phaeocephalum</i> X <i>lochae</i> ) X <i>leucogigas</i> ) X <i>lochae</i>	
<i>R. 458</i> <i>zoelleri</i> Island Sunset selfed	
<i>R. 441</i> ( <i>aurigeranum</i> X <i>zoelleri</i> ) valder X ( <i>laetum</i> X <i>zoelleri</i> ) Peter Schick	
<i>R. 426</i> ( <i>christianae</i> X <i>laetum</i> ) X ( <i>laetum</i> X <i>zoelleri</i> , Golden Gate)	
<i>R. 1C</i> ( <i>lochae</i> X <i>macgregoriae</i> ) X <i>macgregoriae</i>	
<i>R. 2C</i> <i>loranthiflorum</i> X <i>christianae</i>	
<i>R. 7C</i> ( <i>macgregoriae</i> X <i>zoelleri</i> ) X <i>laetum</i>	
<i>R. laetum</i> X ( <i>macgregoriae</i> X <i>zoelleri</i> )	
<i>R. 5B</i> <i>lochae</i>	<i>R. 6B</i> <i>lochae</i> X ( <i>lochae</i> X <i>konori</i> )

Ivan Menzies  
33 Anne Crescent  
Blaxland, NSW, 2774  
Australia

Thanks for the offer to share, Ivan. That is the best part of being involved with the Rhododendron world. Most people are more than happy to share what they have. I see *R. ovatum* on your list and we all should know that *ovatum* is not a *Vireya* but that it is sure worth growing. My plant put on a real show this spring and is well worth a choice spot in my garden.

From Peter Sullivan  
Dear VV,

San Francisco, Ca.  
June 20, 1988

I may be of some use regarding the question on the clone "Valentine". Tom Lelliott of Baronia, Australia made a series of important crosses in the year of 1967 and shared seed pods with Strybing. One seedling, *R. gracilantun* X *lochae* subsequently named 'Valentine' instantly got attention. As was my habit, the name was put on it as a means of easy and intelligent reference. When it came time to register it, we found that the name had been previously used. The distribution however was so universal that the name had to stay. When the clone was reintroduced into Australia a few years ago it would be my guess that the folks down there were successful in registering it as 'St. Valentine'.

It is certainly a plant of merit. It should be shaped early and continuously. I give my plant a "hedging every other year.

Peter Sullivan  
211 Richland Ave.  
San Francisco, Ca. 94110

From Bob Withers  
Dear VV,

Victoria, Australia  
June 13th, 1988

I was interested to read our Editor's comments in the *Vireya* Vine Issue #17 on the *Vireya* named 'Valentine' in the US and 'Saint Valentine' in Australia.

The original cross between *R. lochae* and *R. gracilentum* was made in Australia by Tom Lelliott, and the seed was sent to Pete Sullivan at Strybing Arboretum. Pete raised a batch of seedlings and the best one was given the provisional name of 'Valentine'.

When I visited Pete in 1978 I was very impressed with his plant of 'Valentine' and arranged to import cuttings into Australia. As the hybrid had never been registered, and with the permission of Pete Sullivan, it was registered by the Australian Rhododendron Society. The name 'Valentine' was not a valid name, as it had been used in the past for another Rhododendron cultivar (I think for an Azalea), so it was registered as *R. 'Saint Valentine'*.

Dr. R.M. Withers  
369 Warrandyte - Ringwood Road  
Warrandyte, Victoria, 3113  
Australia

Thanks Pete and Bob for the timely answer about the plant name. I now mark the labels on rooted cuttings St. Valentine (when I remember) and we all should change the name if we can to be right with the world. I, at this time, in the middle of a hot summer here in Tacoma Washington, have three 1 foot tall plants of St. Valentine in full bloom on my back porch and they are wonderful. If no other *vireya* will bloom for you then you must have St. Valentine. It is very easy to root and grow. (E. White)

From Leslie Riggall  
Dear Vireya Vine

Kloof, South Africa  
June 13, 1988

I am sure that there is no advantage in using deep pots for Vireyas, and think that it would be very dangerous to have, "residual water collecting at the bottom third of a tall pot", as this would be a good breeding place for the root-rot fungus, *Phytophthora*.

These shallow-rooted plants are best grown in wide shallow pots, like the Japanese use for various plants, and of course they never blow over. I do not know if such pots are available in America, but if not there is a good opportunity for an entrepreneur to make them or to import them from Japan. Absolutely no water should lie in the pot, and to avoid this we put a layer of coarse pine pieces in the bottom of the pot. Above this we fill with a free-draining 2-1-1 mix of pine bark, coarse compost and soil. Clay pots give better drainage than plastic, but need frequent watering in dry weather.

Various plants do very well in my house, including those reputed to be difficult, but we have not tried Vireyas, which we would consider too untidy for the house. We use mainly symmetrical plants like ferns and palms. We have the (American) Lennox system of air conditioning, which gives better conditions for the plants, in our rather humid climate, than a greenhouse or out of doors. But many American buildings are too dry, and if the Vireyas cannot be grown outside then I suggest placing the pots in a tray filled with gravel or coarse sand. If this material is kept moist it will provide humidity around the plants. (do not let the pots sit in water in a tray)

I was very interested in the letter from Mr. Mitchell, from Hawaii. In my subtropical climate, moist most of the year, I have the same problems that he has. I have failed with hundreds of hardy *Rhododendrons*, while *camellias* and *azaleas* do well here. The small minority that do survive do not flower, and thus are useless.

The line of demarcation can be seen clearly within the species *R. arboreum*, which has Royal Horticultural Society hardiness ratings ranging from H2 (tender) to H4 (hardy). The red forms are tender and grow and flower well here, while the harder pink and white forms simply die. The red *arboreum* is a must for every warm temperate or subtropical garden, but should be given a large space (with short lived plants around it as fillers, and shade from tall trees in hot sunny climates,) because it can grow as big as a house, an amazing sight. The only hybrid to succeed here is Rothchild's "GRENADIER" F.C.C., which has tender parentage (*R. elliotii*).

The tender *Maddenii* series and their hybrids grow well here, and the Vireyas are a great success. I strongly recommend to our colleague in Hawaii to stop "struggling" with hardy *Rhododendrons*, and enjoy life with Vireyas and *Maddenii*s. Incidentally these two different types can be crossed if the Vireya is the pollen parent.

I do not think that much can be done to obtain more flower buds, but one has to wait patiently for maturity. Fertilization might be counter productive, as Vireyas often grow in poor soil, or even no soil, up in the tree canopy.

There are still species lacking in our collection, *R. gardenia*, *R. lowii* and *R. goodenoughii*. Any offers??? I would collect small plants or cuttings in California or the Washington-Oregon area.

Leslie Riggall  
Fern Valley Botanic Garden  
Igwebaba Road  
Kloof 3610  
South Africa (Tel. Durban, (031) 741882 )

Note from E. White (editor), I am going to try to include telephone numbers along with the address of people who write to the VV. I think that when people are traveling in a country it is very nice to have a telephone number to call. It is also very easy now to call overseas. The cost in money is not real high because to call the U.S.A. from the Australia area the call is placed in low rate times. We are almost 12 hours out of sync.

Leslie's comment about deep pots comes from Richard Chaikins letter in VV17 and I must agree with Leslie. There is a problem that happens when a person uses two or more dissimilar type materials in a pot. I do not like to use any other material in my pots at all. I hope that water will drain directly out the bottom. Water will not move freely from one type of material through the next and causes a wet layer. This is some times called a "perched water table" and that is the last thing that I want to happen in my pots. If you are doing a fill on a piece of land and use layers of sand, soil, gravel etc. then there is a very good chance that you will have water problems, "perched water tables". Free water will not flow easily from one layer to the next. Water will not even flow from a topsoil into a sand layer until the topsoil layer is completely saturated with water. I do not want this to happen in my Vireya pots and am very careful to mix the materials well. I also still use a soldering iron to burn holes into my plastic pots. I try to use 1/2 or 3/4 tall pots because I never get roots into the bottom of the pot anyway.

OK, Leslie, tell us more about hybrids between Maddenii's and Vireyas. I am still not aware of any hybrids that are worth growing or that have a long enough life to be worth the trouble. Do you really have good hybrids between Maddenii's and Vireyas? What do they look like? John Rouse has a Article in the Summer 1988, Vol. 42 of the Journal of The American Rhododendron Society about a hybrid between R. retusum and R. nudiflorum. It is a very well done story and is quite interesting but the outcome hybrid plant does not even have the good quality's of the species parents.

International Rhododendron Union::::: I have agreed to be the editor along with Richard Chaikin in Boston of a news letter for the International Rhododendron Union. The IRU is an organization to communicate about Rhododendron things to the whole world. We want to tell people about, gardens, new books, special research, people changing jobs, etc. One of the biggest jobs is to find out who to mail this newsletter to. We would like to have a very complete data base of addresses. YOU CAN HELP. I need to know about Gardens around the world that are interested in and want to be included in the IRU. This can be a very exciting concept, if the Rhododendron world can get together and communicate.

From Barbara Campbell, El Cerrito, California  
Dear VV, July 14, 1988

I have two great loves at the moment, Sister Cities and Vireyas. I am a Sister Cities Representative - State of Calif. and at the annual board meeting in Washington D.C. last March it was announced that Indonesia has 19 cities that are interested in having Sister Cities in the United States. Wouldn't it be great if someone that was interested in Vireyas could link their city to one of those in Indonesia? What an in to go exploring. To carry it one step further, Jim Brighthope of the Australian Sister City Committee would like to get a triangle set up started. His proposal is to have an Australian city adopt the same Sister City in Indonesia plus the U.S. city and the U.S. city adopt the Australian and viola, 2 cities for the price of one. If there is anyone interested in having a Sister City in Indonesia, Australia, or elsewhere please get in touch with me.

For those who aren't aware of Sister Cities, it was started by President Eisenhower as a way to further peace. He figured the only way was for people to get to know people, not government to government. Cities select Sister Cities for a variety of reasons; size, population, same name, common interests - like Vireyas. San Francisco has about 11 Sisters, mostly port cities. Seattle has quite a few. El Cerrito, where I live, has Chelsea, Australia created through the Rotary Club.

Now my other love, Vireyas. Jack spring, Karen Morebuck, Doreen Spellman, and I are busy propagating Vireyas at Strybing Arboretum in San Francisco. They sell very quickly at our annual plant sales. Bill Moyles has supplied me with seeds. I am quite interested in how others are propagating. Pete Sullivan is giving us the benefit of his knowledge. Karen and Jack are working real hard at increasing the collection. I am attending the Sisters Cities conference in Cairns Australia in mid August. I hope to extend my vacation to October so that I can attend the Rhododendron Conference in Wollongong, meanwhile learning more first hand what those down under are doing with Vireyas.

Barbara Campbell  
527 Ashbury Ave.  
El Cerrito, Ca. 94530  
U.S.A. Phone - 415-524-8143

Now Barbara might be getting real close to an idea that I have had for a long time. I think that we in Vireyas need interested people in the Countries where Vireyas grow wild. I do not want people going out into the Wild areas and digging up plants. I think that most Rhododendron lovers think that the native plants need to be protected everywhere in the world. The removal of native plants has been quite destructive in some places in the past. I do think that these same species can be grown in their native land and then sent out to collectors and gardens who can grow them on. It has already happened that cultivated species have been reintroduced back into the wild areas where they have been lost. The Rhododendron Species Foundation has as one of it's functions, to grow species Rhododendron and to save them for the future. We fully intend to send species plants or cuttings back to China some day when the time is right. I would love to find a plant grower in the Philippines that would root cuttings and sell them to me. Would this still be against the rules about endangered plants? Is this being done already??? How would you like to find a grower in Borneo or Sumatra that was interested in Rhododendrons. My good and long time friend, Clive Justice from Vancouver B.C. Canada has been working in Malaysia off and on for the past few years and has asked about Vireya Rhododendrons but no one knows anything about them. Now just ask about orchids and that is a very different story. Surely some one there is tired of Orchids and would like to get into Vireyas. The Sister City program could be one way to solve this kind of problem and the Vireya world would benefit. Thanks Barbara for the nice letter. You almost got me up onto my soap box. ( E. White)

From Bob Malone,  
Dear VV,

Lapoinya, Tasmania  
June 10, 1988

It is a couple of years since I was last in the U.S.A. and when I was there I spent most of my time looking over normal Rhodo gardens. Your country is so big ( and crowded) that I spent most of my time on the West Coast - and never saw one Vireya!!

Here where I live, the climate is ideal for Rhododendrons. 80 inches rainfall, top temperature of about 80°F and a low of approx. 28. Great for normal Rodos while Vireyas need a glasshouse to survive in the winter.

Even so I have a lochae X Macgregoriae cross perched some 8ft. up in a tree which has survived in that position for at least eight years - down on the ground I can have frost crystals up to 2 inches long, not from extreme cold but more from the high humidity and long hours of winter.

In this climate Vireyas really thrive. I grow mine in 5 inch pots crammed on to the shelves some 3 ft. off the ground. Seldom do any die and although most grow fairly tall, they flower in about 3 to 4 years from seed. Might I suggest to all growers who have difficulty that the problems can only be the lack of humidity, (and heat associated with the lack of humidity). My Vireyas are grown in well ventilated pots in a mixture of rotted wood, fern roots, sand and peat with a little Osmocote. (Nutricote would be required in a warmer situation). On the other hand I usually start cuttings in a 50/50 mix of peat and coarse sand and sometimes grow them on in a similar mixture. I don't think that the soil mix is an important part of growing these plants. They are watered daily. Remembering the size of the pots that I use and the very open mixture, compared to what Hugh Caldwell in Florida uses. His are placed on long rooting tables and watered once per week.

I seldom have trouble with root-rot and I put this down to having the plants in the greenhouse most of the year which keeps beetles and weevils (i.e. vine weevil) away from them. Out in the open root-rot is much more frequent and I blame the beetles and weevils for this. Any attack on the root system has to encourage root-rot. We blame the root-rot but I suspect that the real trouble is initiated by the beetles. I suspect that there are more beetles than vine weevil whose larvae feed on Rhododendron roots. I understand that a special nematode has been found which will destroy the beetle larvae and that this is now being distributed in the U.S.A.

To Mr. Mitchell in Hawaii, the trouble that he is having with Rhododendrons is the lack of frost. Most Rhododendrons currently grown in the U.S.A. have a frost period when they can grow roots but at the same time have a rest from leaf and branch growing as frost will burn away any new leaves produced. This enforced rest has become necessary to the plants. Some Azaleas do not need this enforced rest. In fact Azaleas produce much better flowers in warm climates than in colder climates. Professor Valder of Sydney University, Australia has introduced quite a few new Rhododendrons to the Sydney area. I can only suggest to Mr. Mitchell that he not waste time trying to grow cold climate Rhododendrons in Hawaii. It would be like me trying to grow paw-paws or pineapples in Tasmania.

Situated as I am in a low population section of Tasmania I have difficulty in selling Vireyas. Usually I sell them in flower, charging about \$12 a plant. Many are new seedlings well worth naming but at age 70 I can't see much point of that. Many are seedlings from seed sent to me by Peter Schick and John Rouse.

Bob Malone  
Lapoinya Rhodo Gardens  
R.S.D. 106A  
Lapoinya, Tasmania 7325  
Australia Phone (004)45-4253

Thanks for the nice letter Bob. I am not aware of the fact that beetles do damage to Rhododendron. I have always wondered what beetles eat. Do they eat plant roots? Any more ideas about this from you other Viners??? My experience with rot-rot is different from Bob's. I only have trouble when the plants are in the greenhouse in the winter. I also water my Vireyas each day. I am using a "Micro Sprinkler system" that puts very little water on but gets everything wet and keeps the humidity up in the outside lath house. (E. White)

From Michael Cullinane  
Dear Vireya Vine,

Russell, New Zealand  
May 25, 1988

After some years of committing genocide on Vireya cuttings and seedlings by sheer Cultural Malpractice, I started experimenting with potting mixes, and for the last couple of years have been making my own.

Some of the earlier efforts resembled the commercial brews in their killin power, but for the last 18 months I have a mix that seems to be pretty goo (At least for 99% of the Vireya species).

The Mix is; 1 - 3 bushel bag of finely chopped tree fern trunk, plus 33% b volume conifer bark ( pieces 5mm square down), plus 2 - 6" pots of perlite (pumice would do), plus 1kg of dolomite, plus 1 - 10 liter bucket of scori 7mm down with the fines washed out. (what the heck is scoria, Editor) Mix it till your arms fall off, and away you go. I prefer to add fertilize by liquid applications for the sake of accuracy. So NO fert. in the pottin mix. The growth, potted on cuttings make is unbelievable, with very, very good root formation. We have in this country a form of shredded bark, nitrogen stabilized, that seems to be quite good and could be a substitute for half of the tree fern.

Seedlings 10 to 12 mm high respond to being potted into this mix with the exception of the 1% mentioned above. I have seedlings of *R. stapfianum* *micromalayanum* and *yongii* which are 9 to 10 mm high, that simply refuse to grow any further. I have tried everything that I know, but with no success They were originally sown into fine peat, germinated well and grew to thei present size. I have pricked some out and tried them in different mixes and then tried different weak liquid feeds, different light conditions. There is even no response to my potting mix. Can anyone out there suggest remedy? The plants look healthy enough, and seem to have about the right amount of root formation for their size. Weed competition is not present. Nothing that I have done has made any difference to their colour, shape or size.

Michael Cullinane  
Rose Tree Gardens, Titore Way  
Box 8  
Russell, 0293  
New Zealand Phone (0885) 37534

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

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

Does any "Viner" know about any of the Sleumer "An Account of Rhododendron in Malesia" books for sale? or where to write about them. I sure wish we could know if the new books about Vireyas are going to fulfill our needs. Still at this time the "The Rhododendron Handbook" 1980 from the RHS is a pretty good starting guide. I have had the Sleumer book for many years and find it very technical and hard to use, BUT it is the only book with any great detail.

Today is the 12th of August and I have been typing and working on this VV for a week now. It could have been out sooner but the summer was very hot in July and I just could not sit at this computer and type at +80°F.

In a little over one month I well be leaving for Australia and the Rhododendron Conference in Wollongong. If any of you Viners are around please feel free to call on me and my party ( five other Americans and myself are traveling together ). We will be in Sydney from September 26 to Sept. 29th with out to much to do. We will be at the Stellar House at 54 Wentworth St. in Sydney.

Also feel free to call on me in Wollongong. I will be at the Leisure Coast Motel in Towradgi. # (042)83 5533

I would like to have a get-to-gether of the Viners in Wollongong but don't know how to cause that to come off. Any ideas???

WE REALLY NEED YOUR LETTERS  
TO KEEP THE VIREYA VINE GOING  
SO STICK YOUR CUTTINGS AND TELL  
THE WORLD HOW GOOD IT WORKS

And isn't this just special, I have a letter from Graham Smith in Pukeiti and also one from Bill Moynier for the next Vireya Vine which should get to you before Xmas.

Ruth Funder sent a short note urging people going to Wollongong to be sure to go on down to the Melbourne area and get to the Annual Spring Show at Olinda.

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