

# VIREYA VINE

ISSUE #36, AUGUST 1993

PUBLISHED BY THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE OF THE RHODODENDRON SPECIES  
BOTANICAL GARDEN

R.S.F. PO BOX 3798, FEDERAL WAY, WA. 98063  
E. White Smith, Editor

*A note from Bob and Jay Murrery who work for Rhododendrons both as Treasurer of the American Rhododendron Society (Bob) and as Registrar of Plant Names, North American (Jay). In VV 35 I mentioned that they have a small booklet of "Vireya Names" for sale. This information is taken from the main database of Rhododendron plant names that the Murrery's keep updated. Jay says that Peter Sullivan has supplied new information and changes and that Tom Tatum has passed on a list of unregistered names. Tom also sent a list of early Veitch hybrids that are presumed to be extinct. This new information will be used in the printing of the next "Vireya Names" booklet. Remember that this project is an ongoing one and that there will be updates when needed.*

*Cost of the booklet is \$5.00 US + \$0.75 postage. Foreign shipments would be for 3 ounces air mail or \$5.00 + \$3.00 postage; well worth the trouble and cost. Send to:*

*Robert A. Murrery  
21 Squire Terrace  
Colts Neck, NJ 07722  
USA*

*In VV 35 we asked for contributions to keep the VV going. As of July 24, 1993 we have received 33 replies and \$835. WOW and I sure appreciate the help. Two people gave \$100 each and three people sent \$50. One afternoon about a month ago I was sitting on my back porch with a glass of red wine, opening letters from you folks and I was truly emotionally moved. Out of six contribution letters that day there was a check for \$100, two for \$50, two for \$20, and one for \$10. I love doing the Vine; but without you people caring, it wouldn't matter nearly as much. Remember that you can use a Visa or Master Card credit card to pay for anything at the RSBG, which keeps our VV funds. It's convenient for overseas people.*

*Here are the contributors or new subscribers as of August:*

<i>Jose Almandoz</i>	<i>Spain</i>
<i>John and Pat Bender</i>	<i>Washington State</i>
<i>Robert Berry</i>	<i>California</i>
<i>Malcolm Boyd</i>	<i>New Jersey</i>
<i>Hugh Caldwell</i>	<i>Florida</i>
<i>Dick Cavender</i>	<i>Oregon</i>
<i>Julie Feste</i>	<i>Washington</i>
<i>Robert Franz</i>	<i>Washington</i>
<i>Jacquelyn Helm</i>	<i>Washington</i>
<i>Robert Hirano (Lyon Arb)</i>	<i>Hawaii</i>
<i>Melba Johnson</i>	<i>BC Canada</i>
<i>Adele Jones</i>	<i>Oregon</i>
<i>Aaron Linxwilder</i>	<i>Washington</i>
<i>James Middleton</i>	<i>Washington</i>
<i>Mitch Mitchell</i>	<i>Hawaii</i>
<i>Robert Murrar</i>	<i>New Jersey</i>
<i>David Niemann</i>	<i>Illinois</i>
<i>Sheldon Ofshe</i>	<i>New York</i>
<i>Joann Paine</i>	<i>Oregon</i>
<i>Rolland Perry</i>	<i>California</i>
<i>Susan Podd</i>	<i>Arkansas</i>
<i>Russell Redler</i>	<i>Louisiana</i>
<i>E. White Smith</i>	<i>Washington</i>
<i>Clyde Smith</i>	<i>Australia</i>
<i>Herb Spady</i>	<i>Oregon</i>
<i>Noel Sullivan</i>	<i>Australia</i>
<i>Peter Sullivan</i>	<i>California</i>
<i>Hiedo Suzuki</i>	<i>Japan</i>
<i>Wes Tarpley</i>	<i>Washington</i>
<i>Charles Trommer</i>	<i>Hawaii</i>
<i>Philip Waldman</i>	<i>New York</i>
<i>Joyce Waters</i>	<i>New Zealand</i>
<i>Bob Withers</i>	<i>Australia</i>

*Thanks folks, Fran Rutherford and I really appreciate your help.*

*Jose Almandoz, our new member from Spain says he is totally hooked on Vireyas. He has had advice and material from Bill Moynier and is growing seed from Bill Moyles "Vireya Seed Exchange". Jose lives in San Sebastian, Spain. Jose, can you grow these plants outside or do you need a greenhouse?*

*We are happy to have you with us and maybe you can get some other people interested from your area. Once a person starts growing cuttings and seedlings he quickly need a place to give them away or one becomes swamped with plants.*

*Pat Bender from Seattle writes that they visited the Mendocino Botanic Garden in Fort Bragg, California and it was a real treat.*

*Charles Trommer from Ninole, Hawaii extends an invitation to all Viners to contact him if they ever get to Hilo on the Big Island of Hawaii. He will show you the local gardens that grow Vireyas: Phone (808)963-6340. The plants really thrive there with little care except for some pruning to keep them from getting too leggy.*

*Another new Viner is Julie Feste. Julie is our daughter and lives here in Tacoma, Washington. I bought her a fiberglass greenhouse and she is going to be a real Rhodie nut some day. She has 10 different Vireya seed batches growing and is doing better than I have ever done with seed.*

*I have a new, for me, species in bloom for the first time, *R. nervulosum*. It has nice rose pink flowers and very narrow leaves. With all of our cool weather, I have not had trouble with rust disease this season, but have had problems with petal blight. Petal blight is especially bad because it spoils the flowers very soon after they open. I have started spraying with a fungicide that seems to work. I usually have a little fungicide mixed up in a small, one quart hand sprayer, ready to use anytime. Watch out for this bugger. If you have flowers on your Rhododendrons turn brown and become all watery, you might want to think about petal blight and do something about it. The booklet "Compendium of Rhododendron and Azalea Diseases" from The American Phytopathological Society, (1986), shows ten good color plates of these diseases.*

*It's just chicken feed. What? And then, just what do you feed chickens? Chicken food and grit. What? Grit? Sure why not.*

*The most asked question about growing Vireyas is about what to pot them in. I have settled upon a pretty standard potting mix. It is 1/3 perlite, 1/3 orchard bark and 1/3 chunky peat moss. Perlite is easy to get. Just ask your local nursery to get you a big bag. Orchid-bark might be a little harder to find but the nursery's can get it if they want to try. Chunky peat moss is available here in North America if you look around or order it. Chunky peat is wonderful stuff. It's nice and chunky and doesn't pack down like the fine shred peat. Yes it does cost more, but you get the feeling that it is really worth more. And then there is chicken grit. The grit I found is crushed granite stone. It is just like the sharpest river sand you have ever seen. Shouldn't this be good stuff for a Vireya mix? I think so and it would add some weight to the potting mix to help keep the pots from falling over. I am going to try it and will let you know.*

From Newton Robinson,  
Dear VV,

Alfred, New York  
March 19, 1993

I have had some limited luck growing Vireyas from Bill Moyles seed. He sent several batches which I kept frozen that did not germinate. Those which did grow were apparently fresh seeds from a cross of *R. christiana* X *zoeleri* which Bill made. Some seed of *macgregoriae* X *christiana* germinated but the plants have not done well. So many seeds of C X Z germinated that it was obvious that all of them could not be grown on.

My hope was to obtain one or more Vireyas that would make good house plants in this cold climate where winter heating causes the humidity to be very low. My principal interest is growing hardy plants for this climate where the annual minimum is close to -20°F. The Vireyas are exposed to harsh indoor conditions in the winter so that the least adaptable died off. Twenty four plants remain, of which 22 are the C X Z cross. Those which have bloomed are yellow trumpets with orange on the petals, although the quality of the flowers and foliage very quite a bit.

The seedlings were started in milled sphagnum moss (like my hardy hybrids) in flats which were placed under fluorescent lights. The day time temperatures was about 70°F but the temp inside the plastic bags that the flats were placed would have been significantly higher. The seedlings were first transplanted into milled sphagnum and later into a mixture of peat moss, pine bark mulch and perlite in roughly equal proportions. They often didn't root into the mixture very well. The seedlings were watered with a very weak solution of Miracid fertilizer (about 1/20th of a teaspoon per gallon of water). These Vireya seedlings turned out to be more sensitive to lack of watering than my hardy hybrids.

Newton Y. Robinson  
34 Sayles Street  
Alfred, New York 14802

From Luurt Nieuwenhuis  
Dear Vireya Vine,

Vancouver, Washington  
May 20, 1993

Another season of Rhodie shows has come and gone. Time for some observations and comments. The main one is that acceptance and recognition of Vireyas and their hybrids still has a long way to go around here.

Portland Oregon has both an early show in March and a late show in May. I usually act as a recorder for the judges, and try to judge the Vireya judges. The early show judges wanted to reject a couple of Vireyas because their leaves were so dirty (!!!), and that the "exhibitors should have cleaned them up before entering the trusses". They were covered with brown scales, not dirt at all; typical for the varieties, but the judges did not know their Vireyas.

Then the judges didn't want to let the Vireya winner participate in the competition for "Best of Show", traditionally a runoff between all of the blue ribbon category winners. The complaint was that it was unfair to the other entries because the Vireya was grown under protection. We had to appeal loud and fast to the show chairman, and pointed out the Vireyas are expressly permitted by the show rules to be grown with protection (essential in our -10°C winters). The conclusion of the matter was that the "Best Truss in the Show" trophy went to an exquisite specimen of *R. spinuliferum* (also requiring, and grown with protection, but the judges missed that fine point).

I also managed to record for the Vireya categories at the late show in May. We had an excellent and well known Plantsman as one of the judges. It was fascinating to hear the critique of the entries in the Fortunei group. Only the world's most perfect specimen would have been awarded a blue ribbon in that group.

When we got to the Vireya hybrids it was another story altogether. There were several excellent, unusual specimens there. With only one category for all possible Vireya hybrids, the variation of flower types was awesome. The judges settled on a very lax truss of *R. laetum* X *zoelleri* that looked to be two weeks past it's prime. All of the Vireya contributors, including the winner, agreed that 75% of the Vireya entries were better than the selected truss.

Having seen a number of shows judged in the Northwest US in recent years, I offer this rough approximation of what catches the most ribbons in our area. A good yellow *R. laetum* will beat out a superb truss of any other variety in two shows out of three, and will usually make it into the final round for Best of Show before losing. To be fair the best yellow in this years show went to a very large trumpet-shaped maddenii hybrid, *R. 'Butterhorn'* (around here maddenii's have a slightly higher approval rating than Vireyas).

When is the next major expedition going into the wilds of the world to collect new and unusual species of Vireyas? I'm still looking for a specimen of *R. nieuwenhuisii*, if anyone has any seed.

Luurt Nieuwenhuis  
PO Box 2353  
Vancouver, Wa 98668

*OK, Folks. There really is a species called R. nieuwenhuisii, but where? And you are right about judging shows. Most Rhododendron show judges do not know Vireyas and we need to keep working on that problem. Also there are not many Vireyas in most shows. The Spring 1993, American Rhododendron Society Journal, which had major Vireya coverage will help with the education. Dick Chaikin's cover photo of Vireya R. 'Cape Cod Sunshine' still has me drooling.*

From Susan Podd

Bentonville, Arkansas

Dear VV,

May 25, 1993

The family who purchased our home in Southern California (Irvine) last year very kindly allowed us to remove the plants that we wanted from the garden. Our son, Dwaine, removed all of the Vireyas, sending some to us and keeping the rest for himself.

Dwaine visited us here in Arkansas last Christmas, and although he and I both warned Mr. Podd (Graham) of the frost forecast. Almost all of them died, I think, but Graham inspects them daily, and truly believes that they will "shoot again from the base." I make encouraging noises but secretly believe they will not bloom again. Please keep the presses going on the Vine. We do not receive any "junk mail" here in Arkansas, so everything is read from cover to cover. Vireyas do not like frost.

Susan Podd

207 Azark Acres Dr.

Bentonville, Ar 72712

From John Bodenham

Devon, England

Dear VV,

May 25, 1993

I just received the latest Vine and Walter Mill's letter prompts me to write. I notice he has "tiny little mite-like flying insects that appear out of nowhere as soon as the seeds start to germinate." It sounds to me that the problem is SCIARID flies, or rather their larvae, about 2 mm long, white with a black head. They are only visible if studied with a magnifying glass. They munch away at the surface algae and miniature Vireyas. You probably realize that your population of seedlings in the trays are rapidly vanishing day by day for no obvious reason.

My efforts to beat the little critters is as follows;

- 1) Watchmakers eyeglass and tweezers (pointed), committing murder, and you don't get them all.
- 2) Use brand new (sterilized?) medium and exclude all outside air for at least six months. Once the little plants are older than that they seem to be less tasty to the munchers.

I read in the newspaper recently that there is now available a nematode remedy, in England, called 'NEMESYS', which I have yet to try. There is even a more potent one available in New Zealand.

I don't know about the USA. I hope that helps. Incidentally, <sup>RAIN</sup>water is a must or the leaves certainly will go brown.

John Bodenham  
Hunters Lodge, Wembury Road  
Wembury, Plymouth PL9 0DL  
Devon, England

From Norman Cruttwell  
Dear Vireya Vine,

Surrey, England  
May 26, 1993

The VV readers may be interested in recent developments concerning the Lipizauga Botanical Sanctuary (LBS) in Papua New Guinea. Quite a lot of problems have arisen. It is part of the Mt. Gahavisuka Provincial Park, and has always been maintained by the Eastern Highlands Provincial Government. However, due to corruption and mismanagement all Provincial Governments have been abolished and put under Central control.

Luckily the LBS. has not been closed down, but it's funding has been greatly reduced. Since I left in 1991, no expatriate successor has been appointed, although for a short time it was managed by an Australian Overseas Volunteer. My assistant, a native highlander named Gopsy Gozapao has now been appointed Curator. He worked under me for 5 years, and attended a botany course for a year at the University of Technology in Lae. He then returned to LBS as Assistent Curator under me. He has also just completed a years work/course in botany and horticulture under Graham Smith at the Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust in New Zealand and will shortly return to PNG to take over the management of the LBS.

The place is being run on a 'shoestring'. Plans which I had drawn up for a nursery and orchid propagation unit have not materialized as promised. Funding was never given. We had hoped to raise money for this by selling plants. I have written to many organizations about our plight, but have not so far had any material responses.

The LBS (area about 10 acres) and the Park (100 acres) contain about 18 natural Rhododendron species and hybrids, plus at least 50 more introduced, but native to PNG. It contains several hundred orchids species and a host of other attractive plants.

I think that the Park will continue to be maintained, but I am worried about the future of the LBS. It must have more funding and support from overseas. The National Park Department is doing their best, but the politicians are more interested in exploiting the environment than conserving it. I think that the LBS is a very valuable resource and I would wish it to continue on a successful basis. I would be grateful for any ideas as to how this could be achieved.

Personally, I am very happy in this Clergy Retirement Home. My health is not what it was and I depend on others to continue my work. About R. 'Birat Red'. It is at yet unidentified, and is a suspect natural hybrid. Its appearance is very similar to R. aurigeranum except that the flowers are a clear soft scarlet red. Its seed does not seem to germinate but it has been propagated from cuttings in Australia. It is an extremely beautiful plant. Graham Snell of 'Shrublands Nursery' in Quensland Australia has it.

Canon N E G Cruttwell  
College of St. Barnabas  
Blackberry lane  
Lingfield, Surrey RH7 6NJ England

*Out of room again and I have three good letters for the next Vine from Russ Redler who lives in the State of Louisiana and one from our friend Leslie Riggall in South Africa and one from Herb Spady in Oregon. Great!!!*

*Remember that you can use your Visa or Master Card Credit Card to pay the RSBG fees and charges.*

VIREYA VINE  
RHODODENDRON SPECIES BOTANICAL GARDEN  
P. O. BOX 3798  
FEDERAL WAY, WASHINGTON 98063  
U.S.A.