VIREYA VINE

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E. White Smith, Editor

The following people have either contributed to or become new subscribers to the Vireya Vine since August 1993. Fran and I thank them and I hope that I have not left anyone off of the list.

Keith Adams	New Zealand
Mitch Mitchell	Hawaii
Steve Hootman	Washington
Doyle Hughes	Washington
Leon Kubala	Texas
David Leach	Ohio
Doris Munson	Oregon
Peter Schick	California
Dave Yuhas	California
John Spring	California
Reg Pohlmann	England
Ralph Love	California
Dick Sonnen	Minnesota
Carol Buchanan	Washington
Norman Cruttwell	England
Dee Daneri	California
Art Dome	Washington
Keith Elliott	California
Jim Gears	Pennsylvania
Jan Oldham	New Zealand
Marty Reed	California
Terry Robinson	Georgia
Jose Almandoz	Spain
Morton Morss	Florida
Stan Eversole	California
Jim Jaeger	California
Bill Paylen	California

Dick Chaikin is organizing a special trip to the American Rhododendron Society Convention in Scotland for 1996. This is a preconvention tour for Vireya people. The entire trip will be about 30 days including the convention in Scotland. This is really the only way to go - a small group with a well thought out plan.

Contact Dick soon for information; Dr. Richard Chaikin, 7 Whittier Place, Boston Mass 02114. The cost is yet to be determined for this special tour.

I have noticed many more species Vireyas blooming the last couple of years. One reasion is that the plants are getting bigger, or big enough to bloom. It is my observation that many species take from 12 to 15 years to bloom from seed. This is a very long time to wait and during this time there are many chances to lose a plant. To day is November 7th 1993. Last night Tom Tatum called me from Vancouver BC Canada to report that he had R.. fallacinum in bloom; rose red flowers with about 24 in the truss. Timber Press in Portland says that Tom's book about Vireyas should be in our hands by this time next year.

At Bovee's Nursery in Portland last week I saw R. crassifolium in bloom and two weeks before that they had hellwigii flowering. I also saw hellwigii flowering at Jim Gerdemann's garden on the Oregon coast last February. I bloomed konori and two forms of superbum here in Tacoma last summer. Right now I have javanicum var. brookeanum, dianthosmum, tuba, gracilentum, and zoelleri in flower. I am still waiting for the 1978 cuttings of superbum to bloom and it should be wonderful because it was collected from the wild and came to us as cuttings. R. rhodoeucum has yet to bloom after twelve plus years of tender loving care.

I had a plant labeled R. laetum 'Black & Wood', bloom this October. It looked exactly like the photo in the 'Vireya Rhododendrons' book by J. Clyde Smith in Australia, page 39 plate # 25. In Clyde's book it is called R. zoelleri 'Island Sunset'. I don't know what to think about this plant because it looks and grows like laetum and the flowers look like lateum except they have the coloring of zoelleri, but not the flowers of zoelleri. These are very nice looking flowers and for the time being I shall re-label it zoelleri 'Island Sunset'. Opinions???

I had my good friend Keith Adams from New Plymouth, New Zealand staying here in Tacoma with us for three weeks in October. Keith looked at this plant of 'Island Sunset' and said that he had never seen a zoelleri that looked like that and that he thought that laetum was always pure yellow. Keith if you remember is the man who goes off into the wilds of Northern Borneo looking for Vireya Rhododendrons. We had a great time talking plants, looking at plants and other things here in the north west US. We went to Portland to see Dick Cavender and Lucy Sorenson at Bovees. We went to the Park greenhouses and the conservatory here in Tacoma to see the Vireyas. We went out to the Species Foundation twice to look at the plants and one of those times even did some work by pulling the weeds out of the greenhouse benches.

I took Keith down to Eureka California with me to the Rhododendron Society Western Regional Conference. We extended that trip on to Fort Bragg California to see the Mendocino Coast Botanic Garden. We also went to Peter Schicks home in Ft. Bragg to look at his Vireyas and other Rhodies. Pete has a very large bunch of fine plants. Lots of big leaf and maddenii Rhodies. At the Botanic Garden, Pete has helped build, probably the best collection of maddenii Rhododendrons in the United States and they all look good. Get there in the spring if you can, it will be a real treat. Whenever I am in Fort Bragg I always like to go to the old family home of Dr. Bowman. He introduced R.. Noya Chief, which we once thought to be a form of R. zeylanicum. The plant in Dr. Bowmans garden is at least 12 feet tall and that big across. A real treat when it is in bloom. This is a big garden and quite old. The only time I have ever had a good look was last year when Pete Schick took us through it. There are many Maddenii plants and a few large big leaf ones. I always knock on the front door when I go there but there is never anyone home so I don't go into the garden very far. Remember, in one the older Vines, Mitch Mitchell told about some Vireyas growing in Hawaii that had come originally from Dr. Bowman many years ago.

Vireyas won't grow for an extended time outside in Ft. Bragg because of the cold snaps that happen every 20 or 30 years so I don't think that there are any Vireyas left at the Bowman's. But, if I lived there, I sure would try and would watch the weather and take appropriate action when it was going to get extra cold. If you are ever in Fort Bragg California and want to find the Bowman Garden it is in the North East corner of the town near the High School. You will recognize it by the huge R. arboreums growing next to the fence. They are at least thirty feet tall and there is nothing else like them in the area.

Other news: Maurice Sumner passed away this summer. He was one of the early growers of Vireyas and had a great garden south of San Francisco. I was there once and it was great. ***RIP Maurice****. You helped. What more can a person want out of life other than to understand, "That you Helped, That you Made a Difference." So many people don't make a difference at all in this world. I really think that Rhododendron people do make a difference in the world we live in.*

In talking with Keith Adams, I asked many times if they were really cutting all of the trees in Northern Borneo and he said yes, and showed me on a map what was already gone. And this rain forest never re-grows because the brambles and bracken fern grows so fast that they shade the ground and the tree seeds can't sprout.

November 9, 1993. Just got a letter from Keith and he is now back home in New Plymouth New Zealand. His family had his garden weeded and the lawn mowed for his return. It is now the prime blooming time in Keith's part of NZ and he reports the following Vireyas in bloom - R. delsianum, phaeochyton, culminicolum (first time and lots of flowers), rugosum, konorii, christianae, commonae (red form), herzogii, polyanthemum, Dr. Sleumer, jasminaeflorum, pauciflorum, pneumonanthum, suaveolens, loranthiflorum, and stapfianum (I think). He comments "not a bad list". I should say that is a good list. Are things differant? Here in the NW USA, Vireyas do not bloom heavy during the normal hardy Rhodie season, but many bloom during the summer and the late fall. Is that not true everywhere? Could it be that we are so far north here in the NW USA that the plants really respond to the seasonal swings of the sun and the difference in day length? In the summer our days can be as long as 17 hours and as short as 9 hours in the winter. I notice that my plants set flower buds and bloom soon after the year passes through the 12 hour day.

From Reg Pohlmann Devon, England
Dear VV, November 27, 1993

I was very interested to read about Dr. Spady's visit to the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh. Like him, I think it is a Vireya lovers Mecca. There is just one thing I would like to correct. The plants are not actually growing in Peat blocks, although it may appear so. They grow in a compost made up of: (by volume) 2 parts course peat, 1 part fine peat, 2/3 parts orchid grade bark, 1/3 part fine grade bark, to which is added magnesium limestone, to bring the pH up to 5.5.

They also add fretted trace elements containing boron 2%, copper 2%, iron 2%, manganese 5%, molybdenum .13%, and zinc 4% applied at the rate of 11.43 grams per cubic foot. See article in The Plantsman Vol.6 part 2 1984 and the article on page 492 of The Garden, November 1993. The micro nutrients are supplied by regular liquid and foliar feeding.

R. P. Pohlmann
Little Acre
Duncannon Mead
Stoke Gabriel, Devon TQ9 6QZ

From Fran Rutherford — Port Orchard Washington
Dear VV — December 15, 1993

The November issue of "The Garden", Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society, has an excellent article on how Vireyas are grown at the Royal Botanic Garden. The article is co-authored by Dr. George Argent, Senior Tropical Botanist at the Royal research collection and Paul Smith who grows plants for their collection.

They have recently returned from an expedition to Irian Jaya to study these plants in the wild. Hopefully, they were allowed to bring back some new species and hybrids. The following information is taken from this article. "Some species grow above the tree line in subalpine shrubbery's where they are subject to night frosts. This does not mean that these species will be hardy in Britain as tropical mountains may experience 'winter' nights but they are followed by 'summer' days with rising temperatures, and the long dark, damp conditions of our winter months is very alien to them."

Growing seasons may occur in the wild but they are usually more to do with periods of drought and rainfall and it is in fact the higher altitude species which tend to be the most difficult to grow. The forest species from 1000-2000m (3,000-6,000 ft.) are the easiest and least demanding. These require minimum night temperatures of 8-10C(46-50F) and are suitable for a cool greenhouse or conservatory. Lowland species are not inherently difficult but do require a good deal of heat, with minimum night temperatures of 15-18C (59-64F). Plants whose foliage turns bright red in the winter are being chilled and showing sign of stress. They will recover from this but it indicates they are close to their tolerance limits and it may delay spring growth. "Hybrids are generally much more vigorous than species, more floriferous and are often of greatly improved habit - do not on the whole make good house plants as they require good light and higher humidity than is generally found in living rooms to look their best."

At the Royal Botanic Gardens, Vireyas are grown in 2 parts coarse peat, 1 part fine peat, 1 part bark plus magnesian limestone to balance the pH to about 5.5. "Water plants freely when in active growth but keep them rather dry in winter, although do not allow them to dry out completely. If they do dry out give the leaves an overhead spraying and water the compost sparingly so that the fine roots can recover without rotting. Overwatering is probably the most frequent cause of plant loss. Vireyas become stressed when temperatures rise much above 25C(77F)." "It is surprising to many people that shading is beneficial to plants which in their native habitat are often exposed to very high light intensities under tropical sun. This is because our light fluctuates more widely during the year and the rapid increase in May can cause scorching if a sudden clear period occurs in the early part of the summer. Shading to prevent scorching is rarely required after July but it can still help to keep temperatures down in hot periods. In winter the plants need all the light they can get." "Vireyas are not amenable to much pruning; cutting all leafy parts off is usually enough to kill a plant and many plants struggle for survival after being cut back to improve shape." Flowers can be enjoyed for a long time if they are not pollinated. Botanical Gardens have the facilities to grow tropical plants at their very best. Heating costs are not a determining or limiting factor as they often are with hobby gardeners. In the Puget Sound Region, our fall, winter and spring temperatures are usually below the minimums in the above article. The cost to maintain these temperatures year around would be prohibitive. However, Vireyas can be satisfactory grown at considerably lower temperatures.

Wau Ecology Institute, northeastern Papua New Guinea, operates two weather stations on Mt. Kaindi and one on Bulldog Road. The average monthly minimum temperature at 3,960 ft (1,200m) ranges from 55-59F. The maximum temperature from 69-71F. The average monthly minimum temperature at 7,800 ft (2,362m) ranges from 52-55F. The maximum temperature from 61-67F. The average monthly minimum temperature at 9,320 ft (2,864m) ranges from 37-41F. The maximum temperature 57-73F.

For about eight years, I grew my Vireyas in a daylight basement. The temperature in the shop area hovered around 64F the year around and there was very little external light entering the area. They were grown in a light, sheet plastic enclosure under fluorescent lights. The plants were misted and/or watered once or twice a day. Lights were kept on for about 12 hours daily. The misting water always contained a very small amount of fertilizer. The plants put on growth the year around and even the low land species bloomed well. I now have a 13 x 16 foot glass greenhouse. For the past several years I have only tried to keep the temperature from going below 32F.

In my area, the temperature during the winter months is often in the thirties and at least once a year in the teens. Under this regime, Vireyas put on very little growth during the winter months and bloom very sparsely. R. aurigeranum and its hybrids do very poorly. However, I have not lost any plants to the cold.

The rest of the species and their hybrids flower well during the rest of the year. E White who keeps his greenhouse considerably warmer and is rewarded with more florescence and better growth. Almost all my plants are grown in 6 inch diameter black plastic pots. Last year we lost our electric power and I had to move all plants to the basement. The plants were exposed to 25F for about 5-6 hours. Most plants suffered some damage, usually defoliation to various degrees, but only a few died. However, it was almost a year before the plants were growing and blooming normally.

This summer, I moved a third of my plants out of the greenhouse and placed them under trees. Another third were put out in the open where they would receive about four hours of direct sunlight. The rest were left in the greenhouse. Those under trees tended to develop fungus infection but otherwise did well. Those in the open had to be watered frequently but otherwise did better than those in the shade. Those in the greenhouse did very well but were subject to leaf burn during our few hot days. Next year, I plan on installing shade cloth and fans in the greenhouse during the summer months. This way I can better control the humidity which I believe is important to Vireyas. I also believe that light intensity is a major factor in producing bloom and the most important factor for poor performance in my area. I fully agree that Vireyas don't make good household plants, specially the species. I have adopted the practice of bringing the plants indoors just when the blooms are starting to open and returning them to the greenhouse when they start to fade.

Do not let them dry out while indoors. If they do not become pollinated they will stay in bloom for a surprisingly longtime. If anyone has been experimenting with halide or mercandesscent bulbs, I would appreciate knowing the results. Also, I would like to find a source for Rhododendron polyanthemun and himantodes either on a trade or purchase basis.

Fran Rutherford
6301 Clover Valley Road
Port Orchard, Wa 98366

Here is the list again of sellers of Vireya's.

The Bovees Nursery
1737 S.W. Coronado
Portland, Or. 97219
Phone (503)244-9341

Cape Cod Vireyas (Dick Chaikin)
405 Jones Rd
Fallmouth, Ma 02540
Phone (508)548-2233 leave a message

Red's Rhodies (Dick Cavender)
15920 SW Oberst Lane
Sherwood, Or 97140
Phone (503) 625-6331

Rhododendron Species Foundation
PO Box 3798
Federal Way, Wa 98063 (Members Only?)

From Fred Renich Camarillo, California
Dear VV, January 26, 1994

Viners beware, the new mildew is here. I have had problems with my plants for over a year and didn't know what was wrong. I thought I had problems with mites or some other type of insect, however I was wrong. I went to the local University and the county agricultural extension service and they both said that it was an insect problem of some kind. I sprayed various insecticides but the problem just got worse. Finally an old citrus grower turned local plant problem diagnostician said to me, "you don't have an insect problem, you have some sort of disease." His suggestion was to spray with a fungicide known as daconil which is an Orthio product. I was still not totally convinced after talking to that man. I decided to call Pete Schick in Fort Bragg, California and get his ideas about my problem. He asked me about my symptoms on the plants. I told him that the leaves showed spotting of various colors, mostly yellow and red, on the leaf tops. The undersides had a light colored growth in areas, often times at the leaf tips. The new growth would often show tip burning and be disfigured. In advanced cases the plants would drop all of the leaves. Pete Schick told me that this appeared to be downy mildew which was first reported by Ken Gibson on Vancouver Island, Canada.

I have since began spraying at first with daconil, and then used bayleton on the second spraying. Sanitation appears to be very important around the plants as with any fungus problem. I.E., like cleaning up old leaves and infected plant parts and disposing of them. Do not put this stuff into your compost pile. I conclusion I am working on this problem and will write later about my success. I sure would like to hear from other Viners about like problems with mildew.

Fred Renich
2082 W. Chapel Drive
Camarillo, Ca 93010
805-484-1459

The next Vireya Vine will be dedicated to discussions about planting and potting mixes for Vireyas. Your ideas and comments are need for this discussion. Every idea makes a difference.

ALSO, from now on your mailing label will have a year date on it that indicates the last time you contributed to the Vine. People have asked me to put their subscription due date on the labels which I don't want to do. Now you are reminded of when you last contributed

Yes, Please enroll me as a member of the Rhododendron Species Foundation.

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