

VIREYA VINE

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RHODODENDRON SPECIES BOTANICAL GARDEN

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

From Dick Chaikin
Dear Vireya Vine,

Boston, Massachusetts
June 1, 1995

I have been asked by our editor, as well as others, to explain exactly what the "International Vireya Group" is, who belongs, and what it stands for.

First of all, any person who is, was, or will be, a Vireya Vine subscriber is automatically a member of the IVG. Any person who currently subscribes to the Vireya Venue (Australian Vireya Newsletter), as well as those who have, or will be a subscriber, is also a member of the IVG. In addition, any person who is thinking of subscribing to the Vireya News (New Zealand Vireya Newsletter), as well as those who have, or will subscribe is a member of the IVG. Even the person who is interested in Vireyas, but who misses the boat by not wanting to ever own one, is a member. That last class even includes those who think they cannot grow them, and also those who explore for them, but never have owned one themselves. In summary, anyone who has even the slightest grain of interest in Vireyas, is a member of the IVG!

Since this is a not for profit group, the cost of membership will be directly proportional to participation. For example, at the Tacoma American Rhododendron Society National Meeting in 1993, the group met at a restaurant, and the cost was shared by each attendee. The Oban meeting will be done in the same manner financially.

However, the Oban meeting will differ from the previous ones, in that it will seek to replicate the Western Regional Meeting in Monterey California several years ago. That particular meeting nurtured the glowing embers within me, in that it provided the first real knowledge I got about Vireyas. At some point during that Regional Meeting, all the people interested in Vireyas got together into a formal round table discussion, similar to those done on hybridizing. I, for one, got so much out of that meeting, I cannot begin to relate to you. I had been introduced to the world of Vireyas by a couple of people, but I did not know enough to ask questions, my knowledge was so rudimentary.

The Tacoma meeting was fine for a get-together, but there was no real Vireya talk because people were spread out at various tables at the restaurant. So this is my attempt to get back to a meeting that is more than just social. That is, we will meet for lunch, with each person paying for their share.

In addition, each person will be asked to share more than money; knowledge for others to learn. E White Smith will speak, as well as Dick Cavender from Red's Rhodies in Portland Oregon, Mitch Mitchell from Hawaii will tell and show how he grows the plants there, Jim Gerdemann will talk about his quest for the hardy Vireya - he is now down to 23 degrees F, I hear tell. A group from RBG Edinburgh will be present, but George Argent has asked to be the very first speaker, as he must hastily return to RBG to host the people going there after the meeting. Therefore, his staff, Dave Mitchell, Paul Smith, and Maureen Warwick will speak on Vireya species cultivation at the RBG. As soon as I find out who else will be at Oban, I will also pressure them as well. As a matter of fact, it will be a successful meeting only if every one present has something to say, as well as show. We will have a projector and slide trays for each person to show a few slides. If we get everyone to go for 5 - 15 minutes, we should be able to learn a lot from each other, especially with discussions and questions that would follow. The format is very much like the Vireya Vine, but with pictures and the opportunity to discuss, and not just read.

This IVG Meeting in Oban is an attempt to get some real interaction, and perhaps some progress, between us. While I myself have borne the cost of the advertising, that contribution ends here. Admission will be by ticket only, and the cost of that ticket will be the cost of your lunch. That seems fair. That cost has been estimated to me, by the locals there, to be about 10 Pounds. I would ask that each reservation be made as soon as possible for us to estimate the size of the crowd, as well as the number of lunches to be served. When you get your ticket at Oban, the money will be due. Remember: no ticket, no lunch, no entry.

If each one of us tells what they do, and better yet, shows it via slides, we may all learn. As a novice, I got the strange idea of growing Vireyas on trunks of tree ferns. Now I see that copied many times by some of the leading experts. Just maybe you can get some other pearl of wisdom, not that I would presume to say mine was a pearl of wisdom, just a flash of an idea.

In closing, let me implore each one of you attending the Oban meeting to join with us by presenting a few slides and a few words, for each of us to digest. But contact me as soon as possible to let me know of your interest.

Cape Cod Vireyas, Richard W. Chaikin
7 Whittier Place
Boston, Massachusetts 02114
(617) 742-4747 fax (617) 742 4749
or 405 Jones Road
Falmouth, Massachusetts 02540
(508) 548-2233

From Walter Mills
Dear VV,

Chappaqua, New York
May 4, 1995

I have enjoyed reading the Vireya Vine over the years and have nothing but envy for those who are successful at growing Malaysians from seed. I have recently received five packets of seed from Bill Moyles who persists that I become successful. This time he mailed the seed in an aluminum foil sleeve to protect them from the harmful rays in the PO equipment.

I sterilized my pots for 24 hours in a 50% Clorox solution bath, then filled the pots with milled sphagnum moss which was dampened.

After putting in the seed I wrapped the pots in plastic sandwich baggies secured with rubber bands. A book I have says that Rhodies in general like light for germination, so I have these pots on an east windowsill where they will get not more than a couple of hours of filtered sun. I roughed up the surface of the wet moss, sprinkled the seeds over it, sprayed them down with plain water, and then patted the surface down. Now I shall see what happens and will keep you advised.

I have propagated Clivia from seed (4 years to bloom). I have crossed and grown African Violets from seed successfully - so much it became a bore. Currently I have about 100 Orchids growing very nicely - but not from seed though. I buy small plants (compots) because growing Orchids from seed is too far out. Another plant I am still working on is the Canada Lily (*Lilium canadense*) which is really tough. I currently have a batch of seed that have been quadruple stratified (cold, hot, cold, hot, etc.) then packed in moistened moss for 3 to 4 months. I have recently detected signs of germination. I know that these Lilies are out of the Vireya field, but I have a lot of Canada Lily seed that were gathered in the wild if any Viners would like some. It's a real challenge to get them to germinate.

But my one major hurdle is still to successfully grow blooming Vireyas from seed. Perhaps this batch will be the one.

Walter S. Mills, Jr.
PO Box 52
Chappaqua, NY 10514
Phone (914)238-3665, or 238-8470

Thanks Walt. For most of us Vireya seed is slow but not real hard if you wait long enough. Remember that the sphagnum moss has no nutrients. Try using a VERY weak fertilizer solution after the seed is up and hardened off a bit. Also watch out for fungus gnats, the little insects that fly around seedlings. They love peat moss and stuff like that. I think that the gnats eat small seedlings. I like to use a dust made by the Ortho Company which is produced for use on vegetable gardens. It has an insecticide and a fungicide in it. Walt, your use of Clorox is a good idea but you don't need that much or for that long. At the Rhododendron Convention in Portland Oregon this May I listened to a researcher from Oregon State U. He said to use Clorox at 10% for 10 minutes. 1 part to 10 parts water for 10 minutes. He said that 10 minutes was needed but more time didn't help. The 10% solution is right out of the jug that we buy in the grocery store. Don't worry about the concentration in the jug. Clorox or bleach is pretty neat stuff and 10% bath will clean our dirty gardeners hands and finger nails quite nice. It will also make designer clothing for you if you are not careful. A lady asked this researcher if you could pour the same solution on soil and he said that it shouldn't hurt as long as plants were not in the soil. Remember that Clorox or household bleach is a type of chlorine and is volatile in that it dissipates quite fast into the air like it does from drinking water.

Here is another tidbit: Josef Halda, the famous plantsman from Czechoslovakia spoke at our Tacoma Rock Garden Society meeting in May. A member asked about breaking through the hard seed covering of some seeds. He said to try a 25% solution of peroxide in water for 15 minutes. Be careful because you can cook the seed. Check them and see if the hard shell is soft or loose. AND do not do this to Rhododendron seed. I just might try the Peroxide because I have become interested in the Genus Lewisia but have had little luck germinating seed. A friend just throws his seed outside and it grows but not for me does this happen.

*I had a flat of planted *Lewisia cotyledon* seed in and out of my refrigerator and no luck. OK sure, professional plant people know about all of these things but people who grow plants for fun have a lot to learn*

*We had a good turn-out of *Vireya* people at the American *Rhododendron* Society Convention in Portland in May. I had made up 85 special buttons for *Viners* and gave them all away. Only a few went to non *Vireya* Vine people because they really wanted one. The button is about 2 1/2 inch round and says "I Love *Vireyas*", "Prepare for Global Warming, Grow *Vireyas* Now." And of course in small letters it said "*Vireya* Vine Newsletter." I had lots of fun doing them and it only took me about 100 hours to figure out how on my computer. But then again, life is just a learning experience.*

*There is a new (to me) disease that we all need to keep an eye out for. It causes reddish/brown spots on the top of *Vireya* leaves and causes a raised area in the bottom of the leaf. Dr. Bob Ticknor from Oregon State U. looked at it and thought it was what they call "holly pimple", and that it had bothered the commercial holly growers for a long time. The control is said to be a chemical called 'Kocide' which is a copper fungicide. The chemical name is 'Copper Hydroxide' 61.4%. I have very little of this problem but will keep my eyes open for it. It doesn't seem to kill the plants but it could if it got really bad. Maybe this is what we have been seeing on *R. lochiaie* for years and thought it was caused by cold weather?*

I have been trying a new pesticide spray surfactant. It is called Sylgard 309 Silicone Surfactant from the Dow Chemical Company. This type of silicone is probably packaged under different names by many companies. At two teaspoons per gallon of water it really spreads pesticides. Roundup can be used very effectively at 1 1/2 oz of product per gallon of water. The real good feature is that the applied spray will become active in only 45 minutes and you can then have rain without washing it off.

From David Binney

North Island, New Zealand

Dear VV,

May 17, 1995

*I thought I would write and give a few details of *Vireya* growing here in New Zealand (the new home of the America's Cup). I was interested to read in a previous Vine that you used Roundup to control *Vireyas*, their growth being so vigorous. Well, I hate to disappoint you all because the growth this year is so vigorous on my plants that they have developed a resistance and I am looking for a stronger herbicide.*

**Vireyas* are grown throughout this country but mainly in the northern and western areas of the North Island. New Zealand is long and thin and the climate is quite moderate with winter temps rarely below 25°F and summer highs in the high 70's°F. As a result plants can be grown outside in many areas. They are just planted in the ground with no extra frost protection needed. When the temperature drops though, growth slows down and my plants are semidormant from mid June to mid August. But that doesn't seem to stop them from flowering. Peak flowering is in our autumn (fall) though there is always something in flower the year around.*

We have a reasonable selection of plants here. In the past we have had a few people collecting seed and plants from the wild, especially Sabah, Sarawak and Malaysia so we have many species from these countries.

The species from PNG etc. are less well represented especially when compared to the Australian collections. A reasonable number of hybrids have been raised but currently there would be only a handful of people actively hybridizing and raising seed. Vireyas don't seem to be a raging commercial success so with most nurseries they are sidelines after camellias, Magnolias and temperate Rhododendrons.

My own collection consists of about 50 species, though I have about the same number coming from cuttings. The potting mixes are all radiata pine bark mixed with pumice (a natural volcanic rock like perlite), and tree fern fiber added to keep the mix open. Most people use slow release fertilizers - either in granule or pellet form. Rust and powdery mildew do exist in NZ but spraying generally keeps them under control.

David Binney
85 Castles Rd.
Oropi, RD 3, Tauranga
New Zealand

From Bill Moynier
Dear VV

Los Angeles, California
June 6, 1995

In early May, Bette and I took one of our periodic pilgrimages to the beautiful Northern California coastal region, in particular, Fort Bragg, then back home through San Francisco and the recently flooded Monterey area. The highlights related to Rhododendrons were a visit to Peter Schick's garden and the Mendocino Botanic Garden, both in Fort Bragg. We also had an update tour of the really fine Vireya garden established by Pete Sullivan at his church just south of San Francisco proper.

Pete Schick's garden is always a pleasure. It's a bit overgrown with many mature species and hybrids, and many things in bloom at that time of the year. Unfortunately, he now has only a few Vireyas (in his greenhouse) due to the severe freeze several years back which wiped out the large majority of his plants, which were outside. Pete's other Rhododendrons were beautiful as usual and he gave us a full tour of the garden, including views of several large evergreen trees which had blown down onto some choice plants.

After the tour of his garden, Peter, now officially "Curator of Rhododendrons" at the Mendocino Botanic Garden, took us on a two hour tour of that garden. What a change from ten years ago when we were last there. It has now matured into an outstanding garden, especially in regards to the large number of Rhododendrons. Most of these plants have been supplied by Pete, but a few plants were donated by others through a bit of "arm twisting" by him. He led us through the upper garden down towards the westernmost spit that juts out into the Pacific Ocean. He pointed out what we agreed would be a very suitable hillside along a creek where he wants to establish a Vireya planting. It looks ideal, with good lighting and dappled overhead shade from the canopy of native pines. I suspect that it will not be long before I and others of you who have good collections of Vireyas, experience firsthand, Pete's "arm twisting". But what a great place to send your plants!

In San Francisco we were treated to a guided walk through by Pete Sullivan of his Vireya garden at St. John's Catholic Church. This is a fairly small garden along the west side of the church. It is the repository for most of the best of Pete's original plants, some now 20 to 25 years old.

This is undoubtedly the best collection of mature "bell-ringer" Vireyas in America. Included are the (mostly) original plants of *R. Marshall Pierce Madison (* means that these were in near prime bloom during our visit), Semper Fidelis, Athanasius, Cephas, *John Henry, Cristo Rey, *Leonore Frances, *Leon Bloy, Elizabeth Ann Seton, *Lawrence, *Clare Elsie, *Edith Stein, Avalon, and "Sunny's brother" (just a pet name for another beauty from the same seed pod as Sunny. This was the first time I had seen Leon Bloy as a mature plant. It was seven feet tall and in peak bloom. It is clear to me that it is every bit as beautiful as Calavar (its sister) and perhaps of a better plant habit. Although some of the above clonal names have not been registered, all are included in the "Vireya Names" book, second edition dated 1992-1993, published by Jay Murray (21 Squire Terrace, Colts Neck, New Jersey 07722). I have omitted the parentage of these hybrids in the interest of minimizing tediousness. I asked Pete if the church cares if people drop by and wander into the garden for a look around. He assured me that the church most definitely does not mind. He hopes that many Vireya fanciers who happen to be in the area would indeed drop by the garden for a self guided look. St. Johns Catholic Church is located at 19 South St. Mary Ave. That's 1/2 block west of Mission Street, several short blocks north of the I-280 freeway (after it heads west from US 101 highway a few miles south of San Francisco proper).

Our garden here in Los Angeles continues to mature even as I keep moving things out to make room for more recent hybrids of possibly greater merit. I am still making crosses and raising seed from the ARS/Bill Moyles Vireya Seed Exchange and have new things coming into bloom year around. What a lot of fun! One thing I have noticed is how some plants when they are younger have a sporadic, unpredictable pattern of blooming. As they mature (15-20 years), they gradually exhibit a more mass blooming characteristic. One planting of George Budgen, Jock's Cairn and NePlus Ultra now puts on quite a showy late summer/fall mass bloom, very much like the spring temperate Rhodies.

I hope this note might inspire some of you to plan to visit the Mendocino Botanic Garden and St. John's Church gardens when you are in these areas. I am sure you will be glad you did.

Bill Moynier
2701 Malcolm Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90068

From Peter Sullivan
Dear Vireya Friends,

San Francisco, California
July 1, 1995

It's now thirty years since I planted my first packet of Vireya seed. After that period and after handling some thousands of these Prima Donnas there should be a bit more sharing of information. One thing to keep in mind; when I walked into the nursery at Strybing one October afternoon in 1965, Jock Brydon, mindful that up till then these plants were victims of the conservatories of Europe, told me, "Peter, these plants have a future in the gardens of America and we will make the effort here at Strybing to see to it." That has been my intent for three decades, to make terrestrial plants out of them, building into them vigor by hybridization. We have succeeded to some extent but it has been a laborious and challenging trail. As far as I have knowledge, the garden of mine at the church on St. Mary's Ave. in this city is to date the only evidence of the process.

Peter Sullivan
221 Richland Ave.
San Francisco, CA 94110

Thanks, Bill and Pete. I have been to Moynier's garden twice and to Pete Sullivan's Church twice. Even though Fort Bragg is a bit out of the way, because you really need to want to go there, the Botanic Garden is a pure joy. No, there are not any Vireyas growing there yet but Pete Schick probably has planted the best collection of the tender Maddeniis in America. On a sunny spring day this garden is wonderful.

ARE YOU GROWING AND SELLING VIREYAS?????

Anywhere in the world!!!

The Vireya Vine, would like to print your name, address, telephone number and other information about what you have. No extra charge of course. Many people write to me and ask where that can buy these plants. I do not want to list you if you do not want to be listed. BUT, I do not know everyone in the world growing these plants.

Here are some Vireya sellers. I wish the list was twice this long.

The Bovees Nursery (Lucie Sorensen)
1737 SW Coronado
Portland, OR 97219
(503)-244-9341 or 1-800-435-9250
Catalogue is \$2.00

Te Puna Cottage Gardens
John and Merrill Kenyon
Te Puna Road RD 6
Tauranga, New Zealand
Ph. (07)552-5756.

Cape Cod Vireyas (Dick Chaikin)
405 Jones Rd.
Fallmouthm MA 02540
(508)548-2233 leave a message

Rhododendron Species Foundation
see return address on VV
Catalogue sales to members

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

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