

VIREYA VINE

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FOUNDATION

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

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New subscribers or contributors since issue # 45 are;

Jose Almondoz	Spain	Nan Ray	California
Pat Bender	Washington State	Conrad Selfors	Washington State
Chris Blom	California	Clyde Smith	Australia
Barbara Campbell	California	Parker Smith	California
Lindsay Davis	New Zealand	Charles Trommer	Hawaii
Gladful Der Sarkisian	California	Gloria Wildharber	California
Jungle Jewels	Hawaii		
Leon Kubala	Texas		
Deborah Law	Australia		
Mitch Mitchell	Hawaii		
Helen Moodie	Washington State		

I hope I don't miss anyone with the above list. If that happens, please let me know. E. White Smith

Tropical rain forest once covered 14% of the land surface and now only covers 6%. A rain forest may have several thousand tree species. Some of these species may be 10 million years old (not individual trees but the species). Some estimates say that there are 20,000 species of flowering plants in the rain forests.

One of the useful fungicides we use for control of root rot on Rhododendrons is a product called 'Alliette'. It is a "Tris Buffered Phosphate" and is sprayed onto the foliage of the plants. One of Alliette's actions is to promote good root growth, which cuts down on the ability of the root rot fungus to do harm. It has been recommended that it be used soon after transplanting rooted cuttings to keep the problems from ever getting started.

From Chris Blom
Dear Vireya Vine

Kentfield California
December 1995

I live the mild bay Area of San Francisco, Kentfield to be exact. I wanted to let the Viners know that I have planted out in raised beds, two Vireya Rhododendrons. They are planted in a mixture of coarse and fine fir bark, ¼ inch lava rock with some gypsum and other nutrients added. One plant is blooming! The plants were planted about a year ago. I receive less than 5 days of frost a year and live on a hill which helps drain the cold away. The letters to the VV are fun reading.

Chris Blom
512 Goodhill Road
Kentfield, CA 94904

From Lorraine Tellei
Dear VV,

Republic of Palau
December 1995

I got my first issue of the Vireya Vine #44, in the mail today. Bill Moyles sent me five kinds of seed and a small box of seedlings. The seedlings were potted by the Palau Department of Agriculture in their orchid mix (what ever that is: some kind of peat moss mixed with silica sand, I think). They kept six of the seedling plants and gave me the rest. The seed from Bill was sprouted in milled sphagnum sent to me by my father, Clarence Smith of Gaston, Oregon. Two plants have sprouted from the seed which was sent here in September. The seedlings are now lined out beside the north side of my house, where they get lots of indirect sun and a little direct sun in late afternoon. My daughters (age 5 & 8) take turns watering them with Miracle Gro, ¼ teaspoon per gallon of water from a spray bottle. Two seedlings are kept in my air-conditioned office by the window and are watered the same way. They are growing.

I gave about a dozen seedling plants to the School of Field Studies in Ngaraard (north Babeldaob Island) and a couple of other ones to my in-laws. As far as I know these are the only Rhododendrons in Palau.

The seed list is: Buttermaid selfed #95-09, laetum x superbum # 95-20, superbum x Trivgham x ssp brookeanum #95-30, superbum x goodenoughii # 95-31, and R. culminicolum # 95-36. Thirty plus seedlings arrived here on November 13, 1995 and they were R. superbum x phaeocephalum # 95-27?

Lorraine Tellei
PO Box 1396
Koror, Palau (PW) 96940

And then I wrote to Lorraine and asked her to tell us a bit about Palau and here is her answer.

7° N, 135° E. Let me tell you and the readers a bit about this place. The population of the whole country is about 15,000 people. There is no mail delivery, one simply drops by and checks their box or leaves letters. There is no outside mail drop and letters can only be mailed at the Post Office which is open 50 hours per week.

We use US currency. Palauan money is "stone" beads worn on black strings around women's necks and exchanged or displayed at "customs" like funeral payments, first-child-ceremonies, or house (payment) parties (instead of mortgages.)

Before my parents forwarded seeds from Bill Moyles last September, there were no Rhododendrons in this country. It should be a good place to grow them, since this Island, named Babeldaob "up out of the ocean" is volcanic in origin. While some islands in this country like Peléliu (a WW II battle site) and the Rock Islands "Chelbacheb" (world famous scuba diving tourist area) are uplifted coral and are too salty or alkaline for Rhodies, most of Babeldaob is weathered basalt and acidic red clay. The highest point on the island is 200 meters above sea level.

We get about ten feet of rain a year. Usually the tropical storms or typhoons are relatively small when they pass by us and then gain power to cause the trouble you hear about in China and the Philippines. We average fewer rainy days in February which is our 'drier season.' The temperature rarely gets below 75° F and never gets above 100. Since the people here were educated by Americans after WW II, we think in Fahrenheit, pounds, miles, gallons, etc. We drive on the right side of the road, often in Japanese cars with the steering wheel far from the road's centerline.

Hibiscus and bananas bloom every day, and many people grow orchids in their yards. The only potting soil available is at the Ministry of Natural Resources and Development store. It is a prepackaged "Orchid mix" of bark chips and silica sand. Not wanting to buy potting soil if I could find a local substitute, I have been using old sawdust from a local sawmill mixed with washed, crushed pumice collected on the beach. The pumice is probably from an underwater volcano near Saipan. The sawdust is mostly mahogany, teak, ironwood, mangrove or larch trees locally grown and used for house construction. For pots I use aluminum or plastic containers with holes poked in the bottom.

So far I have ten kinds of Rhodies, none yet ankle high: The previous list plus a few new ones. Some of the seed sprouted in just three weeks. I'd like to get some plants big enough to bloom in order to spread the interest around. Import of seed is no problem, but plants need a \$2.50 permit per shipment from the Division of Agriculture. Plants also require some certificate of origin that I understand will cost me more at the US side. Plants must be bare rooted; no soil allowed. We don't want to accidentally import something nasty. No airline flights go south from here and most of our flying traffic comes through Guam.

Good letters, Lorraine. Rhododendron growers and collectors are always interested in learning about new places. I had asked in one of the Vines about a plant named 'Scotchburn White' and a native species in Australia called R. notiale. Here are some answers from Viners.

From Jay Murray (Rhododendron Register of Plant Names for the American Rhododendron Society)

New Jersey State

Dear VV,

January 1996

My husband, Bob, and I truly enjoyed reading about Mitch Mitchell, sticking his Vireya prunings into the ground and using them for ground covers (VV #45). We should all have such problems.

It is not surprising that you could not find "scotchburn white" listed among Vireya species. The name 'Scotchburn White' was registered in 1992 by Graham Snell for what was described as "probably a natural hybrid." The seed was collected by G.L.S. Snell in New Guinea as ANRS 136.

Jay Murray

21 Squire Terrace

Colts Neck, NJ 07722

The Murray's have a new and easier to use registration form available. Write to them and get one.

From David Binney
Dear Vireya Vine,

New Zealand
January 1996

Season's greeting from the sunny Southern Hemisphere. About R. 'Scotchburn White.' This is a natural hybrid named by Graham Snell in Australia. Graham thinks it is possibly a R. macgregoriae x. I brought back some cuttings on a recent visit to him and have a couple of small plants growing.

I didn't know Norman Cruttwell but I have met Gopsy who currently looks after the Mt. Gahavisuka Rhododendron and Orchid collection in Papua New Guinea. He was over here in NZ to spend a year working and learning at Pukeiti. I gather that things went back while he was away, that there was a continual shortage of money for the garden and indeed his position may no longer be funded. Doesn't sound very promising does it? I had hoped to go to PNG but all reports coming back are of ever increasing rascal problems. Eastern Malaysia is much more hospitable.

David Binney
85 Castles Road
Oropi, RD 3, Tauranga
New Zealand

From Brian Clancy
Dear VV,

Victoria, Australia
January 1996

Concerning the question about our native Rhododendrons R. lochiaie and R. notiale. In my opinion, R. notiale is only a variation of R. lochiaie that is just different enough to get its own name. It is very similar to lochiaie in colour and habit, but with recurved zygomorphic flowers and different leaves. It is a better grower than lochiaie and strikes more readily from cuttings.

I noted and studied E. White's photo of the wonderful Vireya display house at Pukeiti in New Zealand from the Spring 1995 issue of the American Rhododendron Society Journal.

Experience has shown that a Vireya display house in the Australian Rhododendron Garden at Olinda would provide an outstanding tourist attraction every week of the year. A display house would enable the general public and members to see and study outstanding flowers which would last longer in better condition. Much better than in the rain, hail and inclement weather.

Vireyas grow quite well outside at Olinda in the ground, in pots and in fern tree logs. Once they reach four years of age they grow and flower without any trouble, withstanding neglect and drought. The problem is where to find the plants in a 100 acre garden. This involves walking 400, 600, and 1,000 metres in various directions and in all weathers.

Brian Clancy
31 Renown Street
Bentleigh, Victoria 3204
Australia

Andrew Biles from Seattle Washington sent along a photograph of a pink Vireya blooming and a nice note about the Vine. He had the Vireya planted in a blue and white Chinese ceramic pot and the photo was taken outside on a large rock in front of what looks like R. Unique. Thanks, Andrew

From Nan Ray who lives south of San Francisco, is a newspaper clipping about the great windstorm in December 1995. The 75 acre Strybing Arboretum in Golden gate Park, San Francisco was damaged severely by this storm. They lost 37 major canopy trees each 80 feet or taller. Many of large falling trees crushed smaller plants in their way down. Two redwoods collapsed onto the planting of Vireya Rhododendrons. The Arboretum staff estimate the storm did \$1.5 million in damage.

Nan adds to the story saying that the Vireyas survived mainly by just bending over, with the branches from the big redwoods doing some cushioning. She says that with no supervision in the Arboretum there are a lot of thefts. They can't seem to keep R. Marshall Pierce Madison in the collection. Someone knowledgeable keeps taking them. Paul Molinari of Enjoy Rhododendrons in Occidental, California has given Strybing a wonderful donation of rooted two year old cuttings. (Paul's is one of our good VV subscribers) Once again it is just a shame that people steal plants from public gardens. The hybrid, R. Marshall Pierce Madison is really one of the outstanding Vireyas. It is R. (Trumphans x javanicum) x leucogigas. The cross was made and named by Pete Sullivan in San Francisco and introduced by Bill Moynier in Los Angeles. MPM is strong pink in color and has a huge truss of flowers. Very good plant.

From Parker Smith
Dear Vireya Vine,

Bodega, California
February 1996

I find lots of interesting information in the Vireya Vine that is often helpful in regard to growing Maddeniis, the Vireya's first cousins, a challenge in which I am deeply involved.

As for growing Vireyas in my area. I am 75 miles north of San Francisco in the coastal hills. It is quite different from the areas around San Francisco bay or within sight of the ocean along the northern California coast where the milder climate allows Vireyas to be successful outside most of the time. Here the winter temperatures are cooler (28°+F a few times) and rainfall is two to four time higher (50 to 100 inches per winter).

Even when protection from the frost is provided, the quantity of cold rain makes most of the plants slowly die.

I have found that by just putting plastic over them during the winter and letting them remain quite dry during these 4-5 months works quite well. For a couple of years I completely enclosed the plants in a temporary plastic house and kept the night temperature above 50°F and they performed wonderfully, blooming heavily during December through February. Perhaps a structure like Graham Smith has at Pukeiti in New Zealand, would be idéal here also for growing Vireyas.

Parker Smith
North Coast Rhododendron Nursery
PO Box 308
Bodega, California 94922

From Don Selcer
Dear Vireya Vine,

Oakland, California
February 1996

I've enjoyed subscribing to the Vine for a number of years, and love growing Vireyas. Here in Oakland, close to sea level, Vireyas do well outdoors in the ground, except for the minor problem that about every 25 years a freeze kills most of them. The last such freeze was about six years ago.

In between rare freezes, they can grow as well as other Rhodies with no special attention. I really believe that the constant admonitions about not overwatering over potting and providing very good drainage, soil, air circulation, etc. from growers in climates unlike ours stem from growing plants that are beyond their zones of adaptability. We can't grow *Neriiflora* or *Taliensia* plants well here, but can grow *Maddenii*'s without even trying. So people in less favorable climates can afford no margin for error with Vireyas.

My Vireyas in the ground are on the same drip system as other Rhodies. They have grown into some of the clay of the native soil, and get good but not sharp drainage in many cases. The initial soil mix is 1/3 sphagnum, 1/3 fir bark, and 1/3 small particle clean red lava rock. Plants in pots get watered before they dry out, but don't care if they are over potted, and are freer of pests than most other Rhodies. If only the rare freeze would never come, some of these plants would grow into large, dense, gorgeous shrubs and small trees. In some very protected places in the Bay Area that is already happening.

We have warm but not hot summers with quite a bit of fog, cool evenings. We get about 20 inches of rain per year, almost all between November and April, and generally low humidity during the days of summer. Here is a list of plants in my yard – north-facing on a hill below the dappled shade of conifers. They have been in the ground from three to fourteen years, and seem to be happy:

- R. dielsianum* -- lovely open shrub, pink zygomorphic flowers
- R. retusum* -- dense small plant with dark red flowers
- R. pauciflorum* -- dense, spreading and hanging. Flowers from October through June with small pretty red flowers.
- R. beyerinckianum* -- gorgeous scaly arched dark green leaves, upright. No flowers yet.
- R. scabridibracteum* - large plant, fuzzy then shiny green foliage. No flowers yet.
- R. phaeocephalum* -- slow growing, low unattractive plant, reliable with elegant, fragrant flowers.
- R. suaveolens* -- slow grower with round leaves, many long white flowers per truss.
- R. caliginis* -- open plant with very narrow scaly leaves. Buff flowers shaped like those of *dielsianum*.
- R. Calivar* -- does extremely well. Pink/cream fragrant flowers.
- R. dielsianum* x *macgregoriae* -- it's much like *dielsianum* but with peachy, outward facing trusses and non-scaly leaves.
- R. wrightianum* x *Belisar* -- Bill Moyle's cross with flowers like St. Valentine but redder and slightly larger.
- R. leucogigas* H.S. x *konori* -- truly spectacular fragrant white/pink flowers in trusses of 6-8 on a tall very slow growing plant.
- R. Kurt Herbert Adler* -- glossy foliage, great looking plant, electric pink, fragrant trusses of 9-10 flowers. Survived the freeze.
- R. Kurt Adler* x *superbum* -- quite variable seedlings usually fragrant and soft pink, fairly dense plants, often with purplish winter foliage.

Don Selcer
928 Alma Place
Oakland, CA 94610

From Conrad Selfors

Bainbridge Island, Washington

Dear VV,

January 1996

I did have a nice starter collection of Vireyas that were given to me by Dr. Frank Mossman and Dr. Bill Cooley many years ago. I was also collecting as many different varieties of Rhodies that I could get my hands on. I kept the Vireyas in a cool greenhouse and put them outside in pots in the spring and summer. I was a school teacher and worked at commercial water related jobs in the summers. I usually gave my wife clear instructions on the care and watering prior to leaving for the summer, and "Bless my ex-wife's soul", she usually neglected to do the chores. This became a losing battle. I am now the owner of "zero" Vireyas. I dream of one day building a very modern greenhouse that has automatic watering, automatic shading, automatic lighting and even automatic androids to help clean and organize things, and then starting another collection of these wonderful plants.

As for all of the other Rhododendrons I started years ago, I at times think that they are lifting my house right off the foundation. I am now a part owner and captain of a tour boat out of Seward Alaska, M/V Northland. Be happy to take Viners on a boat tour.

Captain Conrad "Cormorant" Selfors

8822 Fernclift Ave. NE

Bainbridge Island, WA 98110

From Deborah Law

Queensland Australia

Dear Vireya Vine,

February 1996

My major passion is Fuchsias. Over the last 10 years we have been growing a myriad of different kinds. Graham Snell gave me my first two Vireyas nearly 20 years ago. They are extraordinarily beautiful and the plants are very bushy. They flower on and off all year. I am only growing hybrids at the moment, 'Sunbird' is my favorite - 8 years old.

My nursery is 1,800 feet above sea level, one hour's drive from Brisbane and ½ hour from the Gold Coast. Tamborine Mountain is a volcanic plateau, light frost only, and summer temperatures rarely exceed 30°C (86°F). My mother plants are out in the garden protected by the tall trees of the National Park next door.

In November of 1995 I spent a few hours at Mark Jury's Nursery in New Plymouth New Zealand, looking at their breeding. Their patience astounds me. I loved going over their extensive Rhodo gardens, an absolute picture in bloom.

Deborah Law

Tamborine Mountain Plants

Eagle Heights, Queensland 4271

Australia

Strybing Arboretum in San Francisco sometimes sells Vireyas. Call Nan Ray at 415-322-5688 or Karen Morebeck at 415-282-6120 for more information.

If you want Vireya seed -- then you must write to Bill Moyles and tell him so. There is no charge for seed sent outside of the USA. Americans pay directly to the ARS seed exchange person. Bill Moyles

ARS Vireya Seed Exchange

4243 Norton Ave.

Oakland, CA 94602 USA

Bill has, with financial support from the California Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society, installed a Vireya garden in Oakland, California. It is in a steel lath house in the big downtown city park. The plants will be fairly secure because the area is locked during closing hours. Nice job Bill, and fine support from his local Chapter.

Our friend Hugh Caldwell in Florida has some rooted cuttings he would like to sell or trade for different plants or cuttings. He is interested in getting some of the more rare species.

Hugh Caldwell

187 Brickyard Rd.

Middleburg, FL 32068 (don't know Hugh's phone number)

I hope to see some of you Viner's in Scotland this May. E. White

And I am going to need some more letters from you people for the next Vine.

VIREYA VINE

RHODODENDRON SPECIES FOUNDATION

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USA