



VIREYA VINE

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RHODODENDRON SPECIES FOUNDATION

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E. White Smith, Editor

SPECIAL NOTICE

The Vireya Vine in conjunction with District #5 of the American Rhododendron Society (California Chapters) is planning a meeting/get-to-gether in Hawaii for early 1997. The meeting will be on the big island "Hawaii" in the village of Volcano. We have set a date of January 29th to February 2nd 1997. Volcano is located about 30 miles from the city of Hilo where the airport is located, so people will need to rent cars to get there. It also is at nearly 4,000 feet and is only a few miles from "Hawaii Volcanoes National Park", which we plan to visit. We will have education talks, slide shows, roundtable talks, and garden tours. Housing will be at "Bed and Breakfast" in Volcano which has about 25 of them. You probably should also plan a vacation tour of the island while you are there.

WE DO NEED TO KNOW WHO IS GOING TO SHOW UP. Please write me and I will send you more information.

E. White Smith, VV Editor

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The Vireya Vine is financed by its subscribers. The only things you pay for are printing and postage. Fran Rutherford and I do the work for the love of it or for some other unknown reason. We do not have an annual subscription fee. Your mailing label will have a year date on it which shows the last time you contributed to the Vine. We welcome your contributions. You can use your credit card to make payments to the RSF for the Vine.

New subscribers or contributors since issue # 46 are;

David Balint	Washington St.	Jan Oldham	New Zealand
Robert Batts	Florida	Kelly Orr	Oregon
David Binney	New Zealand	Glenn Sahara	Hawaii
Alan Clark	Britain	Paul Smith	Britain - RBGE
Peter Cox	Britain	Mark Sparrow	Britain - Kew
Brentel Hansvorg	Austria	R E Thorton	Britain
Hienz Kratz	Germany	Frank Vandyke	New York
James McKechnie	California	John Farbarik	Washington State
Don Meyer	Michigan		
Erlene Nielsen	Utah		

I had the pleasure of spending over a month in the UK this spring. I went over to attend the American Rhododendron Society annual convention in Oban, Scotland, but real reason was to go and see the wonderful Rhododendron collections and gardens I had read about for many years. And wonderful they were. Rhododendrons are alive and well in England, Wales and Scotland. We didn't see them all but we sure did see a great many gardens and plants. In most cases the plants were very large. I am sure I saw R. arboreum or hybrids of arboreum that must have been at least 70 feet tall. We saw many plants that were thought to be from the 1850's Hooker expedition to Sikkim. All along our route we looked for Vireyas, of course. And we found some -- not many, but a few good collections. At a couple of the large estate gardens we were told that they didn't have any Vireyas but we went looking anyway where they should have been and found a few plants. I will write later about the Vireyas but I must point out a few of the gardens that really stood out in my mind. Exbury was all that I had ever dreamed it would be. The city gardens of Swansea in southern Wales were great with a very high standard of maintenance and plant material. Castle Kennedy was memorable because of the great plants they already have and the new construction and planting they are doing. The Scottish Trust garden of Arduaine which is just south of Oban was quite good and included species plants which we had not seen in other locations. They also had a fancy new show greenhouse and it had Vireyas planted in it (species yet). Peter Cox's garden and nursery was just great. What a collection of good Rhodies! And last but not least, was the Royal Botanic Garden at Edinburgh, Scotland (RBGE). We only spent parts of two days there and a person could spend a week at least. The famous "rock garden" was letter perfect. Not a weed in sight, all of the plants were well labeled, and they all looked healthy. The RBGE had the highest level of maintenance I have ever seen, near to perfect. Of course, that takes people and people cost money, lots of money. From a retired park maintenance superintendent that is a real complement to the RBGE. I have left out many great gardens but we went to at least 67 of them and I was kind of overwhelmed.

And you bet, there are good Vireya Rhododendrons in the UK. Wakehurst had only one in their new display house. Exbury had none that we could find. Chris Fairweather had a bunch and he might sell plants some day??? Reg Pohlmann and John Bodenham had lots of Vireyas that were looking real good. Equatorial Plant Company had about a dozen good looking species and some hybrids for sale. Kew had Vireyas in the Temperate House and they were doing just fine. Peter Cox is growing Vireyas and will have some for sale in the future. Dr. I B Wilson in North Wales has quite a few Vireyas but didn't really want to show them to us because he had some cold damage, but we prevailed and his plants looked fine to me.

Reads Nursery in Norfolk also had poor luck when a heater went down on a cold night last winter and they had lost most of their stock but I think they will try again. Real nice people too. And then there is the Royal Botanic Garden at Edinburgh Scotland (RBGE).

In Britain different gardens have national collections of different genus. RBGE has the Rhododendrons and, of course, the Vireyas. The Vireyas are housed in a big greenhouse with a lot of modern equipment. The plants looked wonderful to us. They have many more different species than anyone else in the world. Maybe Paul Smith who looks after the Vireyas had done a special clean up job but I bet his greenhouse always looks great like we saw it. Nice job, Paul. Dr. George Argent is the tropical taxonomist at Edinburgh who works with Vireyas. George spent a lot of his time with us Vireya nuts, showing us their plants and helping to explain what they were working on. Thanks, George and a "job well done."

I am sure there are more growers of Vireyas in the UK but we didn't find them. If I have forgotten some one I am really sorry. I must say a few more words about Reg Pohlmann and John Bodenham because, besides Edinburgh, they have by far the most Vireyas in Britain. Both of them live near the south coast in Devon and they are Rhodie buddies. John has a new used greenhouse that he had really hurried to finish before we got there. Sure wish I had one that nice. John and his wife Margaret have a special place in our hearts because John picked us up in his car at the London airport, stayed with us and drove us around for six days. As if that wasn't enough, they also went to Oban and traveled with us for another five or six days. John worked in the aircraft industry on the west coast of America for many years and had belonged to the Seattle Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society. REALLY The best thing about growing Rhododendrons is the people. Great friends all over the world. They really make life worthwhile and fun.

On the first of May this year, Keith Adams, our great New Zealand Vireya plant hunter in Borneo and John Farbarik from here in Washington State, were in the Celebes Islands. The Celebes are east of Borneo and south of the Philippines. There are about 24 species in the Celebes and Keith and John collected four. Keith tells me that it is very rough and hard to get up the mountains. Seed of some of these species have been sent on to Bill Moyles for distribution. Most of the species in the Celebes are not in cultivation. The ones they observed are *R. celebicum*, *pubitubum*, *pudorinum* and *quadrasiatum* var. *cuneifolium*. Keith is pretty sure he has the names right but he will let George Argent at RBGE make the final determination. John went along with Keith because he could speak a bit of the language and his wife has a few relatives living there in the islands. Great job, guys.

A friend to many of us Vireya nuts around the world passed away on June 3rd in New Zealand. Joyce Waters lived near Wellington and worked as the editor of the New Zealand Rhododendron Association Bulletin. She had also helped with a Vireya newsletter published in New Zealand, a very nice lady who shall be missed. RIP Joyce.

Your editor of this newsletter is getting married in mid September. My bride is Lucie Sorensen, who is one of the premier propagators and growers of Vireyas in America. Lucie owns Bovees Nursery in Portland, Oregon. I get the best of both worlds -- a wonderful lady and a big greenhouse full of Vireyas to play with. I have even installed a computer at the nursery to work on the Vireya Vine with. If you are in the Portland area, please stop by and say howdy. I am almost always there on the weekends. You can go through the Vireya greenhouse anytime even if the Nursery is closed. I shall try to keep an objective viewpoint, though, for the VV.

My buddy and roommate Dick Chaikin, set up a Vireya meeting that was held right after the Convention in Oban was finished. He had a good turn out and this needs to be done again.

Thanks for the letter Jack. He also sent me pictures of R. disterigmoides and R. javanicum ssp. brookeanum Var. kinabaluense, which is almost a carbon copy of the colour of the photo on the cover of "Rhododendrons in Sabah." Great job. Dick Cavender bloomed one just like it a couple of years ago.

From Clarice Clark

Puyallup, Washington

Dear VV,

June 1996

These are notes from the American Rhododendron Society convention "post tour" of the RBG Edinburgh Vireya greenhouses:

We met with Paul Smith, who works with the Vireyas in the research block. He grows the plants in a mix of screened peat, fine bark and course bark. They try to repot the plants every year. Paul does not use any prilled fertilizers, but uses a dilute liquid feed about every two weeks. He has done some test trials using *R. gracilentum* as test plants because he has lots of them. There seems to have been good success with a Peters style, balanced "house plant" fertilizer diluted to about half strength. He begins feeding seedlings at the first transplanting with foliar feed. They do not do much pinching of new growth because the researchers want to see the plants flower! They grow some big plants as well as small ones on Cork bark and moss tied to fencing. These plants are under an automatic misting system. The plants in pots are watered by hand. Shade cloth and roof vents help keep the greenhouse cool and Paul tries to keep it below 85° F. During days when they have to use heat they keep the greenhouse at 50° F, and lower the heat at night to about 45°.

In the public display area, they attach the plants on Cork Oak bark wrapped around wire forms made to look like trees. The bark is glued together with a foam adhesive. The plants are bound to the "tree" with moss, or grown in raised beds made of peat blocks. The same potting mix is used in the beds as is used in pots. The peat is just cut like a pan of brownies from the peat beds into bricks about the size of cement building blocks. The grower in the display area says that she fertilizes about once a month, with foliar feed. She was having trouble with mealy bugs and was trying biological control, which promptly flew out the roof vents when the vents were opened. She reported the same problems that I have experienced with "Safer" soap style insecticide -- defoliating and poor growth if applied regularly and often enough to control mealybugs. The plants looked generally terrific. I hope other Viners write in about their impressions of the collection at RBGE and any other adventures in the UK.

Clarice Clark

901 16th St. SW

Puyallup, WA 98371 USA

From David Binney

Tauranga, New Zealand

Dear Vireya Vine

August 1996

A recent conference in London gave me the chance to stop off in Malaysia for ten days of Vireya collecting. I had long admired the photographs of *R. intranervatum* in Clyde Smith's book and research showed it was to be found on Gunong Penrissen and Berumput in northern Borneo State of Sarawak. Both of these mountains are on the border of Kalimantan (the name of the Indonesian portion of the island of Borneo) and are between 4,000 to 5,000 feet high. They are also only a four hour bus trip from Kuching.

I left New Zealand at midnight and by 9PM the next day I was in K Padawan. The head man spoke a little English and I arranged for two boys to guide me up the mountains the next day. After a four hour slog up metaled roads we arrived at a large cleared area. It turned out that a joint venture Korean company was developing a golf course at 3,000 feet up G Penrissen.

I'm also working on a parallel watering (mist/drip) for hanging baskets and epiphytic display, but have run out of funding so that must wait. The Cal Chapter of the ARS has been most supportive but there are obvious limits! I may have to sell some seedlings! CheersBill Moyles (wmoyles@surf.com) and maybe a Vireya Web page soon??

Bill Moyles
4243 Norton Ave.
Oakland, California 94602 Tel. 510-531-1375

NOTE:: If you want seed from the Vireya seed exchange you MUST write to Bill and let him know. No charge to growers outside of the USA.

From Jack Wilson
Dear Vireya Vine

Victoria, Australia
August 1996

In 1989 my youngest daughter Helen, then aged 25, together with a friend, Ross Anderson climbed Mt. Wilhelm with touring in Papua New Guinea. Both were recently graduated agricultural scientists and Helen had also served a long apprenticeship tending my Vireya and other rhododendrons in our suburban Melbourne garden. In addition she had been carefully trained from her early teens in harvesting rhododendron seed during my occasional absences from home.

Both young people were able to recognize Vireyas in the field and found three different plants with well-developed seed-pods. They dried and carefully wrapped the seed for the long journey home in a backpack. Some of the seed-pods were not fully developed and required drying when I received them to release the green seed. A reasonable amount of seed was obtained from each collection. I distributed some of the seed under Code numbers 806, 807 and 809 to five Vireya enthusiasts skilled in seed-raising.

I sowed the rest of the seed on 16 January 1989 and raised a good number of each of the unknown species which I grew on in pots in my shadehouse. I do not know the fate of the seed I distributed with the exception that I saw a healthy plant of Code 806 in Dick Cavenders glasshouse in Oregon in 1992. All three types have grown here with no special treatment. Two have small leaves and one has larger leaves similar to *R. macgregoriae*.

In October 1995, two very small buds appeared on a 50 mm high plant of Code 806, which has tough gray-green leaves 18 mm X 13 mm. After watching impatiently for weeks the first umbel opened; four flowers each a deep burgundy, but minute in size with a corolla length of 17 mm. Using Sluemer's keys I deduced with reasonable confidence that it was *R. disterigmoides* (the meaning of which I have been unable to discover). Sleumer states that the species was described in 1960 and was collected once.

This species is not likely to gain popular acclaim, but will attract the Vireya fanatic who must have every member of the Section and the plant breeder who can see merit in its deep rich red colour and small tough foliage. Brian Clancy, noted for his wonderful *R. rubineiflorum* hybrids, has already taken pollen for his breeding program.

Seed of *R. disterigmoides* is likely to be made available through Bill Moyles within a year, as the plant which is flowering now has about ten buds developing. I am looking forward to the flowering of the ten siblings of each of the three collections. Helen and Ross may well have been responsible for introducing this species to the international Vireya community as I have no other knowledge of its existence in horticulture.

Jack Wilson
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Australia Phone (03)9878 4119

From Bill Moyles
Dear Vireya Vine

Oakland, California
August 1996

Wasn't Edinburgh marvelous! And the Vireya meeting that Dick Chaikin set up in Oban Scotland was very nice. I was sorry that there were so few new faces, but the spirit was there and I think we all appreciated Dick's effort! It was a pleasure to meet John Bodenham and Australian Ivor Menzies and wife. The only Vireya flower actually entered in the Oban show was *R. vidalii*, a very elegant white truss. I am happy to say that I have 10 healthy seedlings coming along (from RBGE seed). RBGE did have a very nice display of Vireyas "on stage." Included were plants (in bloom) of another Philippine sp., *R. taxifolium*. Striking yew-like foliage much like *stenophyllum* and open pendant white flowers very nice. Unfortunately my seedlings (again from RBGE seed and on the Vireya seed list) got roasted and I have resown.

Oban was a treat for the general Rhododendron aficionado and much could and should be said especially in behalf of the garden tours. Wonderful. There is something very satisfying about following behind John Basford or Peter Cox and listening in. All dumb questions graciously answered! Then there was Barry Starlings' presentation (my personal hero) of dwarf ericaceous material. He really demonstrated the importance of clonal selection. But the special treat for us was Vireyaland at RBG Edinburgh. It was summertime, and George Argent and Paul Smith made us feel truly welcome. It was like the whole Vireya section was laid out and waiting for our gasps of pleasure! The extent of the variation within the section was amazing. Hybridizers' heaven. And I think I made a pest out of myself continually reminding them of the Seed Exchange. Please, please, self more of those things (especially *R. lineare*). Even o.p. seed. Now that we perhaps have worked through the big trussed konori/leucogigas hybrids and the Halloween yellow oranges we can take a closer look at foliage and the dwarfer (more elegant?) portable hybrids. Given the amount of variation available I can see no reason not to be able to maintain that "species look" while producing vigorous and manageable hybrids. Should note the very fine hybrid at Edinburgh of *suaveolens* x *orbiculatum* (or reverse?) on display, elegant white. I was tempted, I must confess, but only took a picture, and their large *R. polyanthemum*. much to see. And the vacciniums! Striking deep red foliage on several. I think Dick Cavender was quite moved! We had lunch, we talked, we toured the library and herbarium, I picked up reprints, we had tea, we talked some more, we saw the works! David Binney (N Zealand) showed up, and I saw Reuben Hatch from Vancouver, Washington whom I have not seen in eons, what fun. Was even able to criticize RBGE's seed rearing technique! Quite a trip.

I have a new seed list out that includes seed from Keith Adams/John Farbarik Celebes collection. Also a few things from the Brentels, collected in PNG, and wild collected *R. lowii* from David Binney. I'll send a list along to anyone requesting it. I have lots of 2 year old seed -- how viable? Who knows. This may be the last year that I circulate a formal list for the ARS as there seems to be limited interest. I think part of the problem is where to grow these things in the open. RBGE's exploratory plans for a secure repository garden in Indonesia sounds exciting. Note that they just installed a Vireya planting in the newly refurbished glasshouse at Glasnevin (Dublin).

I have high hopes for the permanency of the Vireya garden at Lakeside Park in Oakland, California. I have just finished installing an extension of the automated watering system and now have 60 plants in raised beds and room for perhaps another 8 or 10. Still much to do: additional labeling and handout material (descriptive brochure, etc.). Have used only (99%) Vireyas, big/small, species/hybrids, a mix. I am open to suggestion with respect to herbaceous alpine material from PNG (or down that way). I have no sources here. Much emphasis on Costa Rica and South America, but little from the South Western Pacific. And there is room at Lakeside to expand into new areas.

I had seen no *Vireyas* by this stage so stopped thinking that it would be easier to find epiphytic *Vireyas* on trees as they were felled. The locals were very worried about environmentalists, so were suspicious of my motives and assigned a security person to go with me. No photos allowed. I did find *R. malayanum*, not in flower but a much larger leaved form than the one commonly seen. Onward the next day to the summit. This was a large flat area $\frac{1}{4}$ mile square, heavily covered with rattan. After much searching I found a tree that had blown over. High in the tree I found *R. orbiculatum* and *R. bagobonum*. Then about 10 feet up another tree I found *R. malayanum* again from which I was able to collect about a dozen seeds. On the SW face of the top I found *R. intranervatum*, three plants in total and all about 15 feet from the ground adhering to an otherwise bare trunk. Unfortunately there were no flowers or seed.

The next mountain I wanted to visit was G Berumpit. This is in the extreme SW of Sarawak and was accessed from K Baiwak. It had recently been selectively logged, but to my surprise this left reasonable forest cover and also provided good access along forest roads. The initial days climb was started in the afternoon in temperatures of 35 C (95°F) with oppressive humidity. As we made our way up the mountain the thunder storms developed in the valley below and the rain came as welcome relief. The next day pushing on to the summit I found *R. verticillatum* and ? *R. jasminiflorum* var. *ovalifolium*. Again there were no flowers so identification was difficult but I later found a similar species on Santubong where this form of *jasminiflorum* is known to grow. The summit area itself had been burnt off. It was covered with *Tibouchinas* and a beautiful yellow-flowered terrestrial orchid. In the surrounding trees I found *R. variolosum*. George Argent had warned me that is a very different plant from the *variolosum* I had seen on Mount Kinabalu and Trus Madi in Sabahso. I have sent cuttings to RBGE for further study.. The only other *Vireya* I found was *R. malayanum*, this with even a bigger leaf - about 6 inches x 3 inches. Still no flowers. We descended to the village that night, the guides were keen to get home. That made a long day, 15 hours walking, the last 3 in darkness.

After a couple days rest I made my way to Santubong. This hill is about 2,500 feet high just out of Kuching and is regularly climbed by the locals. It has a well-marked track and I climbed with four boys training for a climb up Kinabalu. We reached the top in about 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ hours, up a steep track with numerous rope ladders. No *Vireyas* until I reached the top - an area of about an acre. There were numerous mounds of sphagnum moss on which grew *R. malayanum* and *jasminiflorum*. And at last flowers and seed. *R. salicifolium* is supposed to grow there but was not found. I did find another species with quite thick hairs ? *R. verticillatum*. This plant was quite different to anything I have seen in cultivation and may be something new. Unfortunately the seed I collected was immature and has not germinated so I will have to return. A quick trip down to dinner at the seafood restaurant at the foot of Santubong. Tiger prawns, sizzling Japanese bean curd and cold beer. At last - *Vireya* collecting in style.

David Binney
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New Zealand

VIREYA NURSERIES

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

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

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

Te Puna Cottage Gardens (John Kenyon)
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Don't forget the Hawaii meeting and write if you want to attend.

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