VIREYA VINE

ISSUE # 5 FEBRUARY 1985

AN INTERNATIONAL GROUP OF "VIREYA BUFFS" - PUBLISHED BY THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE OF THE RHODODENDRON SPECIES FOUNDATION

HERE WE GO AGAIN. The Vireya Vine is back in service. It will be put ou by the Members of the Committee. The members are, Bob & Marge Badger, Ar Dome, Fran Rutherford (chairman), E. White Smith, Herb & Betty Spady Steve Whitcher and Bob Wright. (and anyone else who wants to help)

We will try to keep with the original format, but will not write as man comments as before. We may not include some or all of what you send in. ie personal things, but then again we may decide to include them. We do ask tha you be careful with your writing so that we can read it. This issue is bein done on a KAYPRO II computer using the "WORD STAR" word processing program.

So, lets get those letters coming again. Please note the letter from Bob dger. We all thank him for the work that he has done so far.

Mailing address for Rhododendron Species Foundation is-----
Vireya Vine @ RSF
P.O. Box 3798
Federal Way, Wa. 98063, USA.

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From Bob Badger
Members of the Vireya Vine,

Over a year has passed now since you have heard from the Editor. A explanation as to why you have not heard from us is certainly in order.

If I was involved in an Academic pursuit, then it would have been ver easy to say that I have been away on a years sabbatical leave. That is a interesting parallel as to why you have not heard from me, but it is not quit accurate. The actual reason is this:

I was contemplating moving my nursery to a new location as I was no pleased totally with that location and like the rest of the world we had jus been through a recessionary period.

Suddenly an extraordinarily unusual proposition was made to me a year ag September to complete a 5 acre Botanical Garden that was to feature all of th unusual fine plants available for Horticultural use in the Western Unite States and Canada. As in many parts of the world, not always the finest plan for size, habit, flower or foliage is used for the landscape, but rather a inferior more widely propagated plant is found because it is available.

All of September and October found our entire family working, moving ou own nursery and stock plants and preparing planting beds for display in th new garden. November arrived with very heavy and continued rains for five o six weeks. Then on December 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 and 25, our area had a winte blast that "oldtimers" compared to the chill of 1955. We had constant Easterl (continental) dry winds of 20 to 35 miles per hour with gusts between 50 an 70 miles per hour. The temperature never warmed above 25 F (-4 C) while th lows ran between 18 F (-8 C) to 4 F (-15 C). The roof blew off a nearb greenhouse where I had stored my Vireya collection and about 700 Vireya proved that they could not survive a temperature of 14 F (-10 C). Ho disheartening! While the final gasp of El Nino dumped rainstorm afte rainstorm on our area from December until July--50% more than normal--w struggled through the mud, building beds, buildings, etc.

One of the buildings which we completed late this spring was th conversion of a 2500 square foot, tin covered structure already existing c the property. It is now a Solar Tropical House for the displaying of Vireyas Orchids and associated plants.

Then this July and August we suddenly were blessed with between 60 to 70 days of continuous fine warm, hot summer weather and the 2 acre "World Garden" has been constructed and is nearly 60% planted. We now have 7000 square feet of ponds and waterways and have added nearly 1200 cubic yards (918 cubic meters) of soils and planting soils. Two new Garden Shelters are being constructed.

Bob Badger
P. O. Box 6486
Kent, Wa. 98064 USA

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From E. White Smith, Washington State, USA
Dear VV, 8-24-83

I would like to give some of my observations of potting mixes I have tried in the last ten years. As all non Australians know, the preferred planting mix is (ten years ago?) tree fern. Well in many places of this world you can't get or even find out what" tree fern" is. I tried real hard and even used the fern poles that florist have to tie up Philodendron plants in house plant planters. These poles are real hard to grind, or cut up and stuff into a pot. It was hard to grow in was hard to keep wet, lasted forever and was hard to trans-plant out of. The next thing I tried was native fern root. I work for a city park department and we are always digging things up and moving things around. I had read that the Orchid people use Osmunda fern root for potting. Some of our native ferns have this kind of a root system so the next time we dug up fern plants I really confused my fellow workers by washing the soil off of roots and cutting them up with an ax. I ended up with cut up sections about a foot square which I further cut up and planted Vireyas in. About this time Don Stanton sent me some cuttings and plants which caused more potting. Now Osmunda fern root is kind of like real course steel wool, lasts forever, doesn't hold water well, falls out of pots and is a bitch to work with.

In ones wanderings in the Rodie world we make many friends. We were at Dr. Mossman's one day to look at what he was doing and of course he dropped everything to show us his Vireyas. I asked what the pile of stuff was for out behind his office. Frank said that's what we pot with, it's Redwood Hair (bark which had fallen off Redwood trees on U.S. 101 in Northern Calif) they gather it up and plant in it. I said" does it work?" Frank got me a plastic bag to take some home and try. I was real busy for a few days transplanting again. Yes it works. It's a bit hard to transplant out of, but if you have it close to use it may be good. I soon ran out of hair and I think my wife would have wondered why we were driving to Northern California for Redwood Bark. What would I have said?

Next I tried forest moss which we have lots of around here. I even gathered up six large bags from under R. macrophyllum hoping to get some of the soil organisms which Rodies like, fat chance they would be the same ones that Vireyas have in the South Seas. The moss worked good for a while but it would break down after about a year and become a wet, sloppy mess. Moss is good in an emergency as it is easy to pull away from the roots when repotting. Next I went down to the soil supply firm and shoveled my Van full of pumice. This is nice stuff, much like 1/4" minus crushed rock, clean and light weight. I now use 1/2 pumice and 1/2 peat. This works good, holds water but not to much, stays in the pot, is easy to transplant out of, is clean and easy for me to get. What do other Viners use these days?

E.White Smith
4317 No. 18 th.
Tacoma Wa. 98406, USA

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From Maurice H. Sumner, California, USA
Dear VV, 9-26-83

There is a lot of excitement in our family. R. hellwigii is in bloom. Pete Sullivan says that this is the first time that it has bloomed in California. Sleumers book reports it as the largest red Vireya blossom. The flowers are funnel shape with five florets to the truss. The individual flowers are 3 1/2 inches across with 11 to 13 stamens. The buds formed six months ago and took their own sweet time to burst into a delightful bloom.

R. buxifolium is another Vireya that I have not seen mentioned in the Vine. It has just finished blooming and has the finest velvet red flowers that I have ever seen. It is a little hard to root and grows slowly, but is worth waiting for. I have enjoyed reading the four issues of the Vine and it hasn't cost me a cent! However, my conscience is beginning to bother me, so I enclose a check to help with the overhead.

Maurice H. Sumner
350 Edgehill Way
San Francisco, Ca. 94127, USA

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From Mrs. Ann McLeod, So. Africa 7-24-83
Dear Sir,

What a fantastic surprise to receive the "Vireya Vine". I read it from ginning to end as soon as I received it and would be more than delighted to ve future copies sent to me. I enclose my $10.00 for postage, etc.

I have been battling to grow Vireyas for a few years now. The seeds (sent to me from Australia) came up beautifully but I have very few that have survived after that. I grow the seeds in wattle tree 'peat' mixed with sand (sterilizing the mixture of sand and peat) and watering well (borehole water). I enclose the pots in a plastic bag until well up. It's when I think that the seedlings are big enough to remove from the plastic that I have problems. If anyone can give me a few pointers I would be more than grateful. Our climate is ideal for larger Rodies of which I have a few hundred-- summers here are quite hot--35'C the hottest with a heavy rainfall (48"). We do get slight frost (-2') in the winter but not every day and no rain. At the moment we are experiencing a tremendous draught so it is quite difficult to keep all the Rodos watered on 2 1/2 acres. Altitude 3500 feet, Lat. 29's.

At the moment I have only a shade house with a fiberglass roof and shade cloth sides but am seriously considering putting in a small plastic tunnel with mist spray as I think my Vireyas dry out to much. I must emphasize that I am a complete beginner and would be more than grateful for any Vireya seed from any other Viners. I feel that there are quite a few areas in S. Africa ere Vireyas would do well and would love to build up my stock of these nderful plants. Thank you and best wishes.

Mrs. Ann McLeod
P.O. Box 461
Hilton 3245
Natal, South Africa

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From Stan Eversole, M.D. California 10-6-83

I like Rhododendrons with character and with that in mind I want to discuss one of my favorites, namely, R. aequabile, which I raised from seed collected by Dr. P. Valder in Sumatra. It is so scaly that the leaves are almost chocolate brown. It is so temperamental that it has to be grown in the loosest and airy media; for me, very coarse osmunda fiber. No plastic pot for this temperamental one, but a pulp pot with multiple holes in the sides and chunks of broken up styrofoam blocks in the bottom for drainage and air at the base. When watered it receives Peter Schick's "prescription" of very dilute high phosphate but complete fertilizer with trace elements. Then it is happy and is so characteristic that one can recognize it at a glance. The flowers are orange-yellow, about 2 inches across, 2-3 to a truss. I have distributed many seed and seedlings because it is a rare plant here-abouts.

Dr. Stan Eversole
P.O. Box 4186
Mountain View, Ca. 94040 USA

rom Bill Mearns, Australia Aug-1-83

Thanks for number 4 Vireya Vine, full of news from all over. To the list dd D.B. Stanton, registered by Royal Botanic Gardens Kew from seed supplied y Don Stanton. The cross was R. lochae crossed christianae, a beautiful red. t was planted in the newly revamped temperate house at Kew last year for the pening by the Queen in May, just after the Conference at Edinburgh. Find nclosed some more seed for you to give to those interested. F2, all are rosses selfed, should prove interesting, our experience with F2 has been that hey have larger flowers than the original F1 and have proved strong growers. e have also been crossing back to both parents.. none of them have flowered et.

Since I last put pen to paper some very interesting plants have flowered or the first time. R. konori, pure white, 5 1/2 inch flowers, pink pistil, nd good texture that lasted outside for over one month. R lochae X eucogigas, a lovely deep pink with up to 12 flowers per truss, very strong rower with beautiful foliage. We selfed R. triumphans, the seedlings are all dentical with the parent, not only are the flowers the same but the growth is he same, so is it a hybrid or a species? To put the records straight the late on Stanton found the R. triumphans in a orchard growers glass house and ought the whole plant for 5 pounds, which was what the gentleman originally aid for it. He did not know whether it was a species or what. When D rought it home it was almost dead and it was a miracle that it survived ll. It was more dead than alive but by careful attention it survived and fter time it was planted out in the garden. Then cutting material was istributed to Australian and overseas growers. Another lovely first bloomer s R. jasminiflora X christianae X pink seedling, it has lovely pink petals ith a white tube and dark stamens, 8 florets to the truss. In our hododendron Park we have over 200 Vireya species and hybrids, some are over 7 eet tall and blooming their heads off. The soil is volcanic with plenty of umus in it.

W. F. Mearns. Bill
155 New Pleasant Rd.
Mt. Pleasant. N. S. W.
Australia, 2519

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rom Peter Schick, California USA Aug 11-1983

I bloomed some first timers this spring, R. wrightianum X Belishar, howed up with very clear orange red flowers bigger than Valentine with xcellent foliage color on a small plant. Valentine F2 is now producing so 3 seeds, plus other crosses. 2 plants of Gardenia X konorii, budded and ve ood prospects. I bloomed a R. laetum outside that had 9 trusses on it over a eriod of two months, with no less than 13 and up to 16 flowers per truss. The lower count is just a question of patience, maturity is the key.

Peter Schick
17455 Ocean Drive
Ft. Bragg, Ca. 95437 USA

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rom Ian Wilson, No. Wales U.K. July 27-1983

Just above 53' N but with maritime conditions and warmed by the Gulf tream.

I have only recently caught the Vireya virus after about a decade's xposure to the common Rhododendron bug. Two species, so far, have favored me ith their flowers, lochae and laetum. They spent about five months outside is summer and are kept warm in a pool enclosure the rest of the year where ey seem to enjoy the humidity. The laetum plant was certainly not very happy en kept in the house over one winter- leaves went brown and dropped. I have out thirty lots of seedlings growing, but none yet more than a few inches igh- the growth rates that have been mentioned in recent notes in the 'Vine' eem just amazing but they acted as a spur so now I am using artificial light o extend the day and I'm giving regular foliar feeds and the differences are ery pleasing.

early all of these seeds have come from generous people whose names have lready appeared on your pages. First with Mrs. Esther Berry acting as the ind distributor and recently Peter Schick has been sending quite a variety. nless the pool enclosure is to be lost to swimming as it gets taken over by ore of these tender beauties (and there could be some complaints about that! early the whole garden outside has been taken over by more hardy members of he genus so my wife and family are perhaps naturally suspicious of my new ntentions!). I shall soon have to say 'Enough'. Of course, if some vireyas hould prove able to stand our normally relatively mild winters under unheated lass, with the lowest recorded in an unusually severe winter about 27'F, then hat sad decision could be postponed awhile.

I have tried selfing the laetum plant but it refuses to respond to it's wn pollen. Having seen the recent exchange of ideas on 'outcrossing' vireyas ith rodies from other sections I tried this with the only one flowering at he time to fall in a possible category, this is R. oldhamii, quite a nice ompact plant with brick-red flowers, from Taiwan, and if I understand the new lassification, then I think it is in the Tsutsutsi group (the old obtusum in art). Well the capsules developed and I have just sowed some of the seed--- nd now I wait. Assuming some of the seed is viable, it may be hybrid with the ollen from R. oldhamii contributing fully. But perhaps the foreign pollen has r'y acted as an 'activator' without contributing any genes to the seed, which then be pure laetum. This 'apomixis' phenomenon has been reported in t er Rhododendrons and I wonder whether there is experience of it in the ireyas.

This Vireya Vine, published over 5,000 miles from where I write, is an xtraordinary organism. I see the name of another enthusiast given as Brother incent of North Wales. This gentleman might well be living within a few miles f me and yet I have to enquire of you, the editor, for some more details of is address so that I can contact him and, if he wishes, pass on some of the enerous supplies of seed winging their way over the Atlantic. Thank you all or donating seed so freely and best wishes.

Dr. I. B. Wilson
Cartrefle, Holthead Road,
Menai Bridge. Anglesey. U. K.
North Wales.

It is now Feb. 1985, I wonder what Dr. Wilson's R. oldhamii seedlings are oing now? Don Stanton in 1973 sent me a cross of R. laetum X R. johnstoneanum eed that he had done. It turned out to be the only R. laetum that I have loomed so far and it is not a cross. (E. White Smith)

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rom Dick Lynch, L.A. California, USA 10-20-1983

I have been growing Vireyas for eight years or so here in Palos Verdes ust south of Los Angeles, overlooking the Pacific. I have thirty or so lowering hybrids in peat beds in the garden facing east, these range in eight from two feet to over six feet and are quite healthy. They are watered nce a week for 40 minutes and have a very acid type fertilizer about every ix months with exception of any plant with R. konorii in its ancestry--which urns.

I have constructed a special 'lath' house to hold the large number of otted Vireyas. This consists of an open construction having a translucent lastic roof topped with 50% shade cloth, one solid side (the windy side) and hree 50% shade cloth sides. My reason for the roof is that the potted Vireyas n the L.A. have problems in our rainy season--October to April. Being soggy or weeks at a time is deadly. I water the potted plants lightly once a week nd add dilute liquid fertilizer and "Superthrive" (a Vitamin B1 formulation) t the same time. I find that "Superthrive" encourages branching to produce ore shrubs and less vines! My problem time, however is July, August and eptember when the temperatures range from the 80's to the 100's and with the umidity usually in the 20's and 30's. This is the time of high plant loss over 40 plants in 1979) when I cease using fertilizer and use an overhead ister daily.

hite, ventilated pots are a must because even filtered sun will boil the oots of a Vireya in a black pot which is facing the sun and which has been ecently watered.

At this time I would like to thank Bill Moynier of Los Angeles for all is help and encouragement to all the ARS Chapter members in L. A. I would lso like to thank Brian Clancy and Arthur Headlam for all their wonderful rticles in the ARS Journal over the years, especially on white ventilated ots and fern logs.

Richard E. Lynch
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rom John Rouse, Australia Aug 7-1983

To answer your question in issue # 4, in making crosses Vireya X Azalea omplex, we have used no secret incantations, no chemical solvents or eutralizers nor other such potions to overcome incompatibility, just made the ollinations in the normal fashion usually during warm weather and taking recautions to exclude unwanted pollen from the female parent stigma. In the oming year, we may well look at the effectiveness of some of the various echniques for overcoming incompatability when the pollen tubes are arrested t some point in the style.

Seed resulting from the above type of cross which has been sown recently ncludes: R. lochae X R. championiae which has resulted in 26 seedlings whose ybridity is confirmed by the presence of glandular hairs and the absence of cales on the first leaves. The seedlings appear normal but it is at yet too arly to comment on their vigor except to say that it is not above average. lthough we have made many crosses between subsection Euvireya X section honiastrum, this is the first time that we have obtained viable seed; usually o seed is collected. R. lochae X R. simsii, 22 of the seeds obtained ontained developed embryos, 4 seedlings resulted, 1 of which died. The ybridity of the remaining three has been confirmed but they lack vigor and ill probably expire.

R. lochae X R. tashiroi has resulted in 17 seedlings, 6 of which appear ormal with green cotyledons, the remainder having white cotyledons. Oddly nough, the cotyledons mostly have short adpressed hairs round their rim, hich is characteristic of the cotyledons of R tashiroi. R. lochae X R. chlippenbachii produced seeds, only 11 of which contained developed embryos. owever they were inviable.

You mention that you have a plant of R. ovatum which flowers freely. I ind this species also grows quickly from seed. Try this pollen on a Vir(urrently I have seedlings of a few of which are now 15mm tall from the cross .'Arthur's Choice' X R. ovatum. The seed parent is a Vireya hybrid (R. hristianae X R. lochae) F2 raised by Brian Clancy. I have a feeling that this ype of cross, if both parents are evergreen, the seedlings will also be vergreen, whereas if the pollen parent is deciduous, I am uncertain how to reat them as I do not know if they will be evergreen, deciduous or somewhere n between.

John L. Rouse
House 8, Stoneheaven Court
Toorak
Victoria, 3142 Australia

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rom Pat Halligan, Washington State, USA Aug, 9-1983

I wrote to Dr. Mossman about the same time I wrote you, and he sent me wo seedlings of R. lochae X R. saxifragoides which seem to be growing appily. You said you'd like to hear how people fare with different ways of rowing Vireyas. I used to grow mine in pots in the medium suggested by the So. California Chapter of the ARS. I kept the plants outdoors during the frost ree months where they promptly drowned in the rain and got root rot -- all except R. laetum which seems to be especially resistant.

Now I grow the plants in raised beds in soil that I collect in the woods where ferns are growing. It's almost 100% organic. The root rot has disappeared and the plants are growing and flowering better.

From mid April to October I grow the plants under outdoor conditions. In the winter I put a skin of plastic over the greenhouse that covers the beds. I ventilate down to 35' F and heat only to keep the plants above freezing. The early flowers don't open properly, but the maddenii's and choniastrums love it.

P.S. Could we hear about Choniastrums in the Vine? I hear so little about them elsewhere. I would guess that the same people who grow Vireyas tend to grow Choniastrums as well.

Pat Halligan
5837 w. Useless Bay Ave.
Langley, Wa. 98260, USA

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From Norman Cruttwell, Papua New Guinea 10-26-83
(in answer to a question in "Vine" #4)

1 CLIMATE

We only have 2 seasons, a wet and a less wet (called 'dry'!). Whereas last year was exceptionally dry, this year has been exceptionally wet. This has prevented the completion of the road, encouraged depredating pigs and insects but on the other hand encouraged the Vireyas.

Temperature-wise we have our 'winter' according to S. Hemisphere laws in June-July-August. The temperature may descend to freezing above 5,500 ft. On Mt. Wilhelm in July we experienced a night temperature of 18'F with heavy frost in the morning, at 11,500 ft (3,550 m). On the other hand in December, January, February our summer is hot and humid with temperatures in the 80's and 90's at Goroka, though less in the Park. This season the wet season started in September and we are getting very heavy rain now. Night time cloud cover rarely disappears and only at the hight of the 'dry'.

2 LIGNO-TUBEROUS ROOTS

Yes they are undoubtedly a device to store water. They are only found in epiphytes. Species such as R. macgregoriae, R. herzogii and R. rarum will develop them when growing epiphytically but not when they are growing in the ground.

3 With regard to the variety of species in the Park. Of the 6 unidentified species, one has affinity with R. maius, and may prove to be a form of that species. Another (N.122) seems quite on it's own with tubular bright pink flowers. The other four appear to be hybrids with possible parentage as follows: R. macgregoriae X dielsianum (pretty salmon pink)
R. macgregoriae X rarum (clear pink with narrow leaves)
R. culminicolum X dielsianum (scarlet)
R. rarum X dielsianum (bright pink, narrows)
they are growing amidst the parents. Not far from Goroka I have also found R. macgregoriae X phaeochitum (Daulo Pass) and R. macgregoriae X zoelleri (a very beautiful thing).

I am writing an article for "The Rhododendron" on natural hybrids I have seen. There are many more.

The Rhododendron Society from Australia led by Dr. J. Womersley recently visited our Park and brought me some other New Guinea species and hybrids raised in Australia. I think the natural hybrids of R. mac X dielsianum is fertile, as it occurs in abundance, sometimes even out numbering the parents. It may be a tetraploid.

Curator- Lipizauga Botanical Sanctuary
Mt. Gahavisuka - GOROKA

Norman Cruttwell
Post Office Box 961
Goroka, Papua New Guinea

From Clive Justice, Canada Aug 16-1983

Subject Vireya Vine-- it's a great idea, concept. By putting all the communications you receive on the W.P.-- it should be possible to develop a program that can access and print out all sorts of detail--from culture, names, colours to add into so that it becomes the knowledge bank for the Vireyas. In this light I send along some list of Vireya names from old books that I have for entry into the bank-- many are repeats probably, but as much as possible of the little historical base these have should be inventoried and banked for future reference and for those who would research into this interesting Section of the Genus. I don't see why they can't become everyday pot plants like the Azalea. Maybe not as floriferous. I remember the first Vireya I ever saw was R. macgregoriae (1968) at Longwood Gardens. We've got to find something to replace that "bloody" Poincetta (so mad I can't even spell it right!) Who do you know who could get an A.R.S. Research Grant to work on this? Not to completely replace the Poincettia (still haven't got it right) but give it a run for its money. A small red like R. lochae might be a start. I have a feeling as a pioneer species, the Vireyas are tough.

Clive Justice
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Canada

The education committee now has an "Independent Study Course" on Rhododendrons. The course consists of slides and descriptive material on one or more of each species in each subsection except for Vireya. We are now expanding this program to include Vireyas and urgently need copies of slides of Subsections Malayovireya and Albovireya. Later we will develope a complete program on Vireyas. If you have some good slides that you would be willing to share, please let us know. We are interested in slides of trusses, plant habit and native terrian. (Fran Rutherford)

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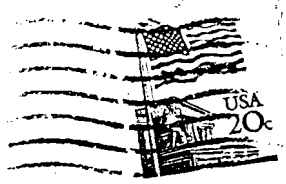

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