

VIREYA VINE

ISSUE #51, DECEMBER 1997

PUBLISHED BY THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE OF THE RHODODENDRON SPECIES
FOUNDATION

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

Its subscribers finance the Vireya Vine. 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 is 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 recent contributors since issue #49 are:

Dick Chaikin	Massachusetts	Hadley Osborne	California
Charles Chisari	Hawaii	Russell Redler	Louisiana
Jim Crawford	Washington State	Robert Schraitle	Texas
Lindsay Davis	New Zealand	Don Selcer	California
Margaret deWeese	BC Canada	William Skimina	Florida
Don Dulac	California	Theo Smid	California
Lurnine Elliott	California	Clyde Smith	NSW Australia
Ruth Funder	Vict. Australia	W. S. Smith	Pennsylvania
William Greer	Oregon	Ulrich Spies	Germany
Ken Gross	New York	John Spring	California
Hank Helm	Washington State	Joan Steele	Oregon
Ann Janzen	Oregon	Bill Taylor	Vict. Australia
Adele Jones	Oregon	Wes Tarpley	Washington State
David Leach	Ohio	Marjorie Thomas	California
Elaine Leahy	Washington State	Charles Trommer	Hawaii
Ellen Long	Florida	Mary Tye	California
Pat Mansfield	Washington State	Dick Warren	England
James Middleton	Washington State	Tom Walsh	California
Len Miller	Oklahoma	Patty White	Oregon
Mitch Mitchell	Hawaii	Gloria Wildharber	California
Dan Morris	Arizona	Donna Wood	Oregon
Erhard Moser	Germany	Milton Zipper	New York
Mark Nixon	B.C. Canada		

A little history, a few facts and a small plea from your editor, E. White. The Vireya Vine started in 1982. We try to do four, eight page, issues a year and have threatened to do less than four if we don't get enough letters from you readers. There are 291 subscribers to the Vireya Vine. 79 outside of the USA, 66 from Washington State, and 146 from the rest of the USA.

In the above list of names I use the word "State" behind Washington to separate it from the US national capital, Washington DC. I spend a lot of effort trying to keep things clear for you readers. Sometimes I have trouble with address. In other words, I sometimes can't understand how they are to be written or even sometimes can't read your handwriting. North American addresses are easy because I know their format, and Australian and New Zealand addresses are OK too. Usually addresses from the UK are easy enough, but are sometimes too long for my data base fields. The hard ones are from Europe. Every one there does it differently and sometimes we get the address in the language of that country. But I work that out and haven't needed to go to library or a language teacher for quite a while.

So here is the deal. Of our 291 subscribers, probably 10 are libraries or societies. Another 10 to 20 are good friends of White and Lucie and subscribe because of that or just because they like to learn new things. I don't know how many of you do not grow any Vireyas but it is probably about 50 people. So that leaves over 200 who grow these plants and know how to do so successfully. With that many people being very interested you could hope that we would get 12 or so letters a year to print. And to keep the Vireya Vine going we will need your letters and thoughts. Harry Wilka's letter to the Vine in Issue #50 is a good example of a letter that we can learn from. He asks questions and makes comments that we can think and talk about. It would be very difficult to learn about these new and special plants all alone. That is what the VV is here for. To help all of us learn. Way back in an early Vine I wrote about insecticides and the problems I was having with a little pill bug that lives in the bottom of my pots. They bothered me because they eat my potting mixes. Leslie Riggall from South Africa wrote for the next issue about these bugs being a benefit and he also talked about having frogs and other insect catching animals in a greenhouse. My wife, Lucie Sorensen-Smith is very careful and protective of the small green frogs in our Vireya greenhouse at Bovees Nursery. When we need to spray we look for them and avoid them. In 1993, Russell Redler wrote from the state of Louisiana about growing his Vireyas in pine bark. He gets very hot, damp, conditions and we all learned from his letter about perfect drainage and air circulation. We need you all. We need your thoughts and questions. There are many new species about to show up around the world and there are many wonderful new hybrids coming along that we need to learn about. This is one of only two Vireya Rhododendron newsletter sources in the world. So get with it you Viners.

I have never bothered you with information about "how much money we have to print and distribute the Vine", but maybe it is important sometimes. We have gotten great responses about Vireya Vine # 50 (the last one with the full color page) but won't do that very often because of cost. Issue #50 cost us \$557US. The color page alone cost \$0.85 cents each.

Postage for the USA is only 32 cents and postage outside of the US is \$1.00 airmail. We think the postage rates are reasonable and Fran Rutherford works to keep that cost down. He even has heated the copies in his microwave oven to remove moisture from the paper to keep the postage down. We normally have about \$2,000 in our account at the Rhododendron Species Foundation. As you can see from the new subscriber/contributor list on page one, we do have an interested membership. We have only a very few people who have not contributed for a long time.

Enough of that! Your letters are what I really do need. Letters about anything. What is your potting mix, how about your in-ground planting mixes? How often do you fertilize and what with, why do flowers split? What do you think about the way Vireyas are classified. Do you understand the Sleumer system of classification. Which are your favorite species or hybrids? And so on.

From Fran Rutherford

Port Orchard, Washington

Dear Vireya Vine,

October 1997

The following are hybrids that perform well for me. Most are easy to propagate, are floriferous and have good plant habit. *Silver Thimbles* - (*Orania x anagalliflorum*). This small compact plant covers itself with white flushed purplish pink flowers in June. *Elizabeth Ann Seton* - [(*Dr. Sleumer x Pink Delight*) x (*Pink Delight x jasminiflorum*)]. This slow growing medium-sized bush has pink/white flowers in May and June. *Narnia* - (*aurigeranum x zoelleri*). Eight to nine large buttercup flowers with orange lobes in March and August. Better plant habit than parents. *Triumphans* - (*Duchess of Edinburgh x javanicum*). This Veitch hybrid is still the best scarlet flowered Vireya. *Silken Shimmer* - (*konori x Dr. Sleumer*). One of the better konori hybrids. *Marshal Pierce* - *Madison* [(*Triumphans x javanicum*) x *leucogigas*]. A fantastic truss of 14 to 16 pink scented flowers. My plant bloomed as a first year cutting but I would not be too surprised if it did not bloom again for several years. *Lucie Sorensen* - (*macgregoriae x bagobonum*). Orange flowers cover the entire plant in November with an occasional flower off and on during the year. Responds well to frequent pinching. Good plant habit. A similar plant in Australia is known as *Pennywhistle*. *Valentine* - (*lochiae x gracilentum*). The perfect small plant for new growers of vireyas. Small bright red tubular campanulate flowers cover this plant in August with an occasional flower during the rest of the year.

The following species are easy to grow and flower. *R. macgregoriae* - (pink form). My plant is grown from a cutting taken on Mt. Yakopimanda PNG. Very floriferous plant with ten pink flowers to a truss. Main bloom occurs in March/April.

The small yellow forms are as attractive in flower but are more difficult to grow well. *R. phaeochitum* - This is fairly rapid grower with tubular pink flowers in July/August. *R. javanicum* - A very easy species to grow with red to orange flowers blooming in February-June. *R. alticolum*. - Mine is the RSF form 85/048. Very good plant habit and is apt to bloom anytime from December to May. *R. beyerinckianum* A small plant with reddish purple flowers and interesting foliage. *R. caliginis* - A small plant with interesting white tinged yellow flowers. *R. dielsianum* - A slow growing plant with attractive salmon-pink flowers and good plant habit. Mine does not have a set blooming period but may flower anytime from November to May. *R. herzogii* - Medium sized shrub with white scented flowers blooming in May and June. *R. laetum* - By far, the best yellow flowering species. Unfortunately, its growth habit is leggy. *R. leptanthum* - A small shrub with good growth habit. Handsome red indumentum on the new leaves. Main blooming period occurs in March/April. *R. loranthiflorum* - A medium size shrub with white scented tubular flowers. This is one of my favorite. Vireyas. *R. phaeopeplum*. - A small version of konori but much easier to grow and flower. The white suffused with pink carnation scented flowers make this a must have Vireya. Apt to bloom at anytime during the year. *R. scabridibracteatum* - Mature plants are very floriferous and make a brilliant display in April/May. My form has 6-9 scarlet flowers but some forms have up to 16. *R. stenophyllum* - This is a collector item with very narrow and beautiful orange flowers in April to June. Unfortunately, the plant tends to be straggly with age. Fortunately, this species can be severely pruned without harm.

For the past six months I have been using coconut fiber in place of sphagnum peat moss or milled sphagnum moss as a growing medium for Vireya seed. So far the results have been outstanding. To date I have not had any problems with fungus, etc. It can be used straight or mixed with perlite. I have not tried it with cutting but it should work as well. In 1995/1996 the RHS conducted trials on various composts in an effort to determine if there is a good alternative to peat based composts. They used salvias and pansies as test plants. They found that sphagnum moss peat and loam gave the best results but that coconut fiber and loam were almost as good. Of interest to Vireya growers, the best root systems were produced in the coconut fiber and peat media. Coconut fiber is a little more expensive than peat

Fran Rutherford
6301 Clover Valley Road
Port Orchard, WA 98366

VIREYAS for sale from Rhododendron Species Foundation. You need not be a member to buy these plants.

See RSF address on page one and pay with Visa or Master Card

Qty.	Accession and Species Name	Price	
	87 037	armitii	18.00
	78 104	aurigeranum	9.00
	85 024	aurigeranum	11.50
	82 210	brookeanum	17.00
	80 141	bryophilum	15.00
	85 049	carringtoniae	8.00
	87 040	carringtoniae	8.00
	82 208	christianae	10.00
	78 103	gracilentum	18.00
	83/053	goodenoughii	9.50
	89/004	herzogii	11.00
	89/008	herzogii	11.00
	83/064	hyacinthosmum	15.00
	78 102	jasminiflorum	9.50
	78/089	javanicum	20.00
	79/026	kawakamii	11.50
	79/036	konori	15.00
	80/143	konori	18.00
	79/156	laetum	12.00
	78/088	laetum	16.00
	80/144	laetum	12.00

Qty.	Accession and Species Name	Price	
	85/043	leptanthum	12.00
	87/042	leptanthum	14.00
	83/058	loranthiflorum	11.00
	89/006	maius	20.00
	79/032	macgregoriae	8.00
	84/165	x nervulosum	16.00
	83/067	pauciflorum	16.00
	87/044	phaeochitum	10.00
	83/065	phaeopeplum	15.00
	94/333	polyanthemum	30.00
	87/045	praetervisum	11.00
	86/022	scabridibracteum	10.00
	80/148	searleanum	15.00
	88/051	solitarium	13.00
	85/046	stenophyllum	18.00
	80/004	suaveolens	15.00
	94/375	wrightianum var. wrightianum	20.00
	83/071	zoelleri	15.00

From Glenn Sahara

Keaau, Hawaii

Dear VV,

October 2, 1997

It all began several decades ago in the San Francisco Bay Area when I first purchased a spectacular, orange-flowered shrub from Berkeley Horticultural Nursery. I remember dotting over this exotic Rhododendron and the excitement when fat buds would burst forth with tangerine-colored blooms.

In 1984, I packed my sunscreen, rubber slippers and Felcos, and made the move to the Big Island of Hawaii. It was sad to leave behind Daphne, Boronia and of course, Rhododendron Else Frye and her relatives, but also exciting to know that there would be all sorts of new, fragrant finds.

Yes, Hawaii is a great place for plant enthusiast, but there is a heck of a lot of green. I began collecting unusual fragrant tropicals, cycads, palms and bromeliads, but decided Vireyas were needed to brighten up the place.

I still remember calling Bovees Nursery and torturing the kind woman at the other end with my seemingly endless questions. Lucie Sorensen was then and is still today, one of those wonderfully enthusiastic and patient souls. I blame her for my addiction.

The East Hawaii temperature combined with volcanic "soil" and + - 175 inches of rain per year makes for ideal Vireya growing conditions. Those living at higher elevations have even greater success with their plants - especially those finicky species, many of which I suspect time their flowering to coincide with the emergence of 17-year periodical cicadas.

Fortunately, we on the west side of the Big Island have few pests on our Vireyas. I have heard that mites are a serious problem for people in dryer areas of the state, but our annoyances seem to be limited to the occasional aphid, hopper and lace bug. I should mention that any slugs are immediately dispatched with the slap of the aforementioned, rubber slipper.

Cuttings are easily rooted in pots of volcanic cinder - or by shoving them into the ground. We all routinely dip cuttings in rooting hormone, but I have a feeling that powdered milk would produce the same result.

So, what are my favorites? Well, CALAVAR and CECILIA are two great plants. Both have sturdy deep green foliage, a good growing habit and sweet smelling flowers. Red Cavender's CALAVAR x goodenoughii is another spectacularly fragrant bloomer.

The local interest in Vireyas has increased tremendously. For this, we must credit the boundless energy of the small town of Volcano residents, Mitch and Sandy Mitchell. Sheltered under mature ohia (*Metrosideros xollina*) and Hawaiian tree ferns (*Cibotium chamissoi*), the Mitchell garden contains the most Vireya varieties in the state. For people coming to Hawaii, I hope you will take time to see us on the Big Island. I know we local growers would enjoy the visit and swapping stories.

P.S. Now prior to a garden tour, I cannot promise freshly squeezed passionfruit juice, but you will receive a beer, and perhaps a slightly gooey rubber slipper for the other hand.

Much Aloha

Glenn Sahara
PO Box 520
Keaau, HI 96749 USA

From Harry Wilka
Dear Vireya Vine,

Co. Dublin, Ireland
September 18, 1997

May thanks for the reply to my letter in VV 50. Last April, I prepared a deep gravel/peat bed in a very sheltered position behind a south facing high wall and plunged all the pots, to the brim, into this bed. The result is very encouraging. Plenty of new growth and loads of buds.

I propose to leave the plants in this position for the winter but fabricate a good protection with fleece horticultural that can be taken away if weather conditions permit.

I visited friends in New Zealand who live south of Auckland. They grow Vireyas outdoors without protection and winter temperatures fall well below zero C at times. Can anyone explain?

I have seen the Vireyas in the Dublin Botanic Garden and nothing special to report. I shall pay other visit and let you know. Mitchell from RBCS promised me some Vireya seedlings. I did get some plants from Cox in Scotland, which had been imported from South Africa. Nobody grows or sells Vireyas in Ireland. The fertilizer I use is Ericaceous Slow Release from Zanka. I have to spray three times a year and have found lately that Nimrod is very effective.

Harry Wilka

Kinvara

Killiney Hill Road, Killiney

Co. Dublin, Ireland

Thanks Harry, about below freezing temps. As far as I know – Vireya Rhododendrons will stand very little freezing. Jim Gerdemann who lives on the Oregon coast has developed some hybrids of R. commonae, which he thinks will stand temperatures down to +26 °F. We don't try that in the Portland or Seattle area though. One point is that Jim's cold doesn't last very long. Yes there are reports of Vireyas being frosted in their native areas. Plant explorers talk about water being frozen in the mornings and the Vireyas not being hurt. Cold is a funny thing to deal with. What are we really talking about? Does the soil in New Guinea warm up enough during the day for the frost not to do damage at ground level? Does the frost extend clear up the edge of the forest where the Vireyas might be growing? Is there overhead protection for the plants? Lots of questions. Growers in the San Francisco bay area have lost Vireyas from freezing many times. Often though, all the plants need is a little protection or a cover of some kind. Your sinking the pots into your gravel/peat bed is great because Vireyas are Rhododendrons and Rhododendrons like cool root areas. You can have trouble with Vireyas if the root system stays too warm. Maybe Jan Oldham could give us some answers about the cold conditions in the Auckland area. When, how bad, and what to do about it? Glad you got some Vireyas from Cox in Scotland. I spent some time with Kenneth Cox at the American Rhododendron Society Western Regional Meeting in San Jose, California month and he told me that they are sold out for now. That is a very good sign when a grower sells out. Maybe they will have some more Vireyas available soon. If you are ever in Scotland and you don't stop at the Cox Garden/Nursery, then shame on you. Surly one of the great Rhododendron collections in the world. (E. White)

VIREYA NURSERIES

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1737 SW Coronado (E. White Smith)
Portland, OR 97219 USA
(503)-244-9341 or 1-800-435-9250
E-mail - bovees@teleport.com
Catalogue is \$2.00 (Mail Order)

Rhododendron Species Foundation
PO Box 3798
Federal Way, WA 98063 USA

Te Puna Cottage Gardens (John Kenyon)
Te Puna Road, RD6
Tauranga, New Zealand
Mail Order NZ only Phone (07)552-5756

Equatorial Plant Company
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Jan Oldham
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Mark Jury
Tikorangi, RD 43
Waitara, North Taranaki
New Zealand

Bill Moyles - Vireya seed exchange 4243 Norton Ave., Oakland, CA 94602-

Bovees Nursery has a Home Page on the INTERNET. www.citysearch.com. And at
www.teleport.com/~bovees/home.html To find these spots search for rhododendrons or maybe even try vireyas.
The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh has a good Home Page up with lots of information.

Are you selling or giving away Vireyas or even cuttings. Let us know and we will list you.

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