

VIREYA VINE

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PUBLISHED BY THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE OF THE RHODODENDRON SPECIES
FOUNDATION

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E. White Smith, Editor

For the last year the Rhododendron Species Foundation has been involved in a major fund raising activity. One of our very good RSF members put forward a challenge to the RSF. He would match money donated to the RSF endowment fund up to \$400,000. WOW What a chance to help the Foundation finally get its feet on solid ground. Most of us can just about figure out what an Endowment Fund of about a million dollars would mean. The interest proceeds from the Fund would be used to help finance operations. The Fund itself would not be touched, only the proceeds. The \$400,000 has just about been reached.

*How does this effect Vireya Rhododendrons and us Vireya growers? One of our good Vireya Vine people gave a substantial amount to the Endowment fund with the stipulation that it be in a separate (paperwork) account and that it is was to be used for Vireya Rhododendrons. Another Vine member also gave a substantial amount to the same cause. These amounts also qualified for the matching funds. **I now estimate that the RSF Endowment Vireya Fund has about \$80,000 in it. WOW** That is a great happening in my mind. Proceeds from the Fund can be used for anything relating to Vireya species. I have not even tried to think of all the uses. Some use might be to expand and protect the Vireya species collection at the RSF. **And you can also help.** If you send money to the RSF Endowment fund and want it to be part of the Vireya Endowment you need to write that down. What a great chance to support our cause.*

During the middle of April, Dr. George Argent, taxonomist at the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, Scotland, was in the San Francisco area talking Vireyas to Rhododendron Chapters there. He went as far south as the Monterey Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society and north up to the Eureka Chapter. Then he flew to Portland, Oregon and was our guest for a few days at Bovees Nursery. I drove George up to the Species Foundation and he had a good look at the Vireyas, talked to Steve Hootman, the curator, and put on a slide show for the RSF staff. I also took George to see my daughter, Julie Feste, in Tacoma and over to see Fran Rutherford's Vireyas at his home in Port Orchard. Julie is very interested in Vireyas and has a nice large greenhouse.

Fran is my partner with the Vireya Vine and was in Papua New Guinea in 1986 with Graham Smith from Pukeiti in New Zealand. Fran has quite a few Vireyas that he collected in PNG and George was interested in seeing them. Back in Portland we held an evening party at Bovees and invited a few of the local Rhododendron people. Frank and Doris Mossman and Dave and Betty Goheen were among those invited to attend.

Both of these couples had been on a plant-hunting trip to Mt. Kinabalu in Northern Borneo many years ago. George showed slides and talked about collecting in the wilds of the South Pacific. On his way back to Scotland, George stopped in Los Angeles, where Fred Renich showed him around with the help of Bill and Betty Moynier. He also spoke to the Rhododendron Chapter in the LA area. What a great chance for us here on the West Coast of the US to have George here with us. George Argent is the main Vireya Rhododendron research/taxonomist person for the world. He is the author for the Vireya section of the new "The Rhododendron Handbook 1998" from the Royal Horticultural Society. The Vireya section is now separate in the handbook and also includes 8 pages of color photos of species. Very nice. Much of the credit for his trip to the West Coast of the U. S. must go to Barbara Campbell in California for arranging and hosting him in that area. I hope some of the people in California write something for the Vine about his stay there. I understand he spent a day with Bill Moyles who took him to see Pete Sullivan in San Francisco.

If you are in Washington State you should stop at the Rhododendron Species Foundation and look at the Vireya collection. At Bovees Nursery in Portland we have had a very busy Vireya spring. At the early spring truss show of the Portland Chapter ARS we won the trophy for the best hybrid truss with a Vireya. In mid April we put in a plant display (55 blooming Vireyas) at the Puyallup Fair grounds in conjunction with the Tacoma Chapter Rhody show that lasted three days and drew over 77,000 people. We also had a plant display at the Salem, Oregon fair grounds and another at a Master Gardener show and sale near Portland. We did not sell plants, just talked to people. Guess what? Almost no one had ever seen or heard of Vireya Rhododendrons before. During the three days that I was at the Tacoma display I got one exciting surprise. A nurse from one of the local hospital displays came by and said "Oh! Vireya Rhododendrons!". She had lived in New Guinea for many years when it was still safe to travel the Highland trails and roads as a Visiting Nurse. She said there were many plants growing where she traveled and knew them well. She was delighted to see them again.

On May 16th I picked David Binney up in Seattle and took him to Portland to see the Vireyas at Bovees. He is a medical doctor on the North Island of New Zealand and has a great species collection started. David had just been on Sulawesi Island (Celebes) looking for Vireyas. It surely was our pleasure having him visit us because he plans on doing a lot more exploring in the wild areas of Vireya Land in the future. On Sunday before leaving him off at SeaTac airport for his return to NZ, we stopped at the Species Foundation. David spent some time with Steve Hootman (RSF Curator) looking at the herbarium sheets from the collection of John Farbarik and Hank Helm last year in Sulawesi.

From Bryan Merrett
Dear Vireya Vine,

Derbyshire, England
March 1998

I first became interested in Vireyas during January 1997 when I considered it a good idea to widen the general interest I already had in propagating and growing Rhododendrons. We live in the English Midlands in a small village called Littleover, 4 miles SW of Derby and are situated in a valley which in the winter can become a veritable "frost hollow". As I write it is the first week in March and I can see the results of frost damage on early R. Cilpinense and R. Praecox even through layers of fleece protection. A heated greenhouse is therefore a must to over winter tender plants.

Having decided that I had suitable facilities to attempt to grow Vireyas, I contacted Bill Moyles in Oakland, California for some Vireya seed. I explained that I was an enthusiastic novice and left the choice of seed to Bill. Seeds of *R. culminicolum*, *lochiae*, *superbum*, and *Dr. H. Sleumer x (Dr. H. Sleumer x leucogigas)* duly arrived and were sown in a mixture of equal parts of Cambark and moss peat, in pans, and placed in a heated propagator. After the resulting seed appeared and started to grow, I felt I needed some guidance regarding their aftercare, i.e., when to pot on, potting medium, temperature, humidity, etc.

A friend, a fellow member of the RHS Rhododendron and Camellia Group suggested that I contact John Bodenham who lives near Plymouth, Devon. John was described to me as an English Vireya grower of considerable reputation and experience and that he would have the answers to most of my queries. My friend was right, and during the course of our discussion John suggested that to supplement my interest in seedlings, and seeing that I had suitable facilities would I care to try some cutting material which he would be pleased to provide.

I gratefully accepted his offer and very soon after our conversation a mixture of species and hybrid material arrived by post. These included *R. phaeocephalum*, *leptanthum*, *loranthiflorum*, *Calavar*, *Periwinkle*, *Little Ginger*, *Princess Alexandra*, *Vladimir Bukovski*, *christianae x jasminiflorum*, and *laetum x javanicum*.

Several of the pieces were large enough to make two or more cuttings, which were wounded, treated with hormone rooting powder, and set into a medium of equal parts Perlite, Cambark Fine, and Moss Peat. All the cuttings were then placed into a heated propagator. The cuttings were set in July 1997 and all but two varieties produced side shoots and have been potted into similar compost and appear to be flourishing. However, *R. phaeocephalum* and *Calavar* although making considerable amounts of roots, neither has made any side shoots, eight months after being set. Both sets of cuttings are still green, healthy, with no signs of die back or rot. All the cuttings have several leaf joints with dormant buds, and at least one cutting of each variety has a dormant terminal bud.

John Bodenham has suggested that with the onset of longer daylight the buds may break into life. Is this just a one off, or a phenomenon of these two varieties, and will they grow eventually? Has anyone else experienced this? I would welcome any comments.

Regarding the seedlings, all are growing except *R. culminicolum*. After reaching about 1/4 inch high, one by one they turned brown and died. Subsequent examination of the compost by the naked eye revealed nothing untoward, and to date the other seedlings appear completely unaffected. I can only assume the problem could have been due to fungal disease, Scarab Fly, root rot, or something equally nasty. Very frustrating!!

As a enthusiastic novice, rapidly approaching the addiction stage, I find the Vireya Vine is very interesting and informative, and the fact that the experienced growers readily share views and opinions with the novice is extremely helpful to me. Please keep up the good work.

Bryan Merrett
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From Joan Steele
Dear Vireya Vine,

Ashland, Oregon
March 24, 1998

Although I was born in Portland, Oregon, I have lived and worked most of my life in California, in a climate inhospitable to Rhododendrons. When I retired and moved to Ashland, I began to remember the beautiful rhodies of my childhood, but it wasn't until quite recently that I became an addict.

For the past seven years I have been spending a week on the central Oregon coast each June. About three years ago I chanced upon Mike Bone in Florence, Oregon, who sent me in the direction of Evelyn Thompson of Waldport, and also for the Vireya virus, to Jim Gerdeman in Yachats.

Jim and Janice Gerdemann graciously showed me through their sumptuous forest and Jim presented me with two seedlings; one may be a *R. brookeanum* Vireya (he wasn't sure), and the other one was a *maddenii* hybrid he had named "Myra Monte" after a grandchild. Jim told me about Bovees in Portland, so I have been pestering them -- ordering plants and getting advice by mail. (I bought a hybrid named "Candy" from Greer Gardens in Eugene and am nursing along "Felicitas" and "Flamingo Bay" from Bovees in sunny windows along with Gerdemanns cutting) Soon it will be time to introduce my delicate kids to the great outdoors. Because of Ashland's climate I had to bring the Vireyas inside fairly early in the fall and I am eager to see how they will do in a sheltered spot with morning sun once they reemerge to nature outside.

I live in a condominium development with very limited ability to plant in the ground and no space for a greenhouse. All my rhodies are growing in -pots. I have no idea if I can succeed with Vireyas in this type of cultivation, so I am wondering if the Vine readers have any advice to share. I haven't had any flowers yet but the plants are growing new leaves and seem healthy now.

I enjoy the VV, though lots of it is too advanced for me. The color issue was great; I hope you can do it again. So here is hoping I can learn more about pot culture and indoor wintering from the readers.

Joan Steel
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Phone 541-482-7019

Here is some good news from the UK. Christopher Fairweather is now offering Vireyas for sale. He says the plants are; 20 to 30 cm high (8 to 12 inches), most with 2 or 3 breaks. They are planted in 10cm pots (4 inch). You will need to call or write for more information. Here is a list of the plants available at this time: Coral Flare, First Light, Littlest Angel, Rob's Favourite, Iced Primrose, Great Scensation, St. Valentine, Highland Arabesque, Popcorn, Princess Alexandra, Fireplum, Just Peachy, Java Light, Red Rover, Golden Charm, Alisa, Nicole, Silver Thimbles, lochiaie, loranthiflorum. A nice selection to start off with.

Hilltop Nursery
Beaulieu, Hants
England, UK SO42 7YR
E-mail plantdic@martex.co.uk

Vireya Care Instructions from the Rhododendron Species Foundation WEB Page

Biology: Species rhododendrons are those plants that are found in the wild. There are more than 800 species found around the world. They are native to the temperate regions of North America, Europe, and Asia, as well as the tropical regions of southeast Asia and northern Australia. The majority of species that grow in the tropics are a group within the Genus *Rhododendron* called *Vireyas*. There are more than 300 species of *vireyas* and within this amazing group of plants is a variety of sizes, shapes, flower colors, etc.

Site Selection: **Light Conditions:** Being close to the equator, the length of daylight in the tropics remains close to 12 hours of light every day. Many *vireyas* grow as epiphytes (plants growing on other plants) high in the treetops as well as terrestrially (in the soil of the earth) in open areas; therefore, bright light is essential for the health of the plants when grown indoors. Greenhouses or solariums are excellent indoor locations. For a home situation, choose a window with plenty of light but not direct sun. *Vireyas* may be grown outdoors in climates where the temperature does not drop near or below the freezing mark (32F / 0C).

Drainage: The potting media for *vireyas* must be extremely well-drained. One example of a suitable mix consists of one part (25%) coarse peat moss, one part (25%) medium coarse bark, and 2 parts (50%) perlite or pumice.

Planting: When transplanting a *vireya*, first remove it from the container and check to see if the rootball is dry. If it is, soak in water until thoroughly moist. Plants that are root or pot-bound should be scored. This means to scratch the outer surface of the roots with your fingers or a sharp instrument. Never bury the top surface of the rootball, but rather bring the potting media up to the edge and firm in gently with your hands. Water thoroughly again.

Watering: The growing media should be allowed to dry out moderately between the times of watering. One way to tell if it is time to water is to lift the pot and determine how heavy it feels; a pot with media that is dry will feel much lighter than one with plenty of moisture in it. Do not allow the media to become totally dry.

Nutrition: A half-strength solution of a liquid synthetic fertilizer, such as 20-20-20, or organic fertilizer should be applied at the beginning of the growing season. Fertilize young plants once a year; mature plants with a well developed root system may be fertilized every three or four months.

General Care: **Pinching/Pruning:** Disbudding, or pinching, is removing the leaf buds from a plant. The main leaf bud at the tip of a branch is removed allowing side buds to grow. The purpose is to encourage branching, which increases foliage density and eventually the potential number of flowers. The immature, developing branches of many *vireyas* tend to grow very long and are often somewhat lanky; hence, it is especially important to pinch when the plant is young. Many older *vireya* plants that have not been pinched and have grow too tall and lanky may be pruned to reduce their height and increase branching.

Deadheading: The removal of faded flowers is called deadheading. The cluster of flowers at the end of one branch is called an inflorescence, or truss. The truss is snapped or cut off just above the leaf collar, which is something like a pedestal and sits just above the whorl of leaves. Deadheading results in a plant directing energy into new growth and flower bud formation rather than into seed production.

Pest Control: Plants that are in good health are more resistant to invasion or infection by pests.

Insect: Thrips, mealy bugs, aphids, and mites are the most common insects causing injury to vireyas. For chemical or biological control contact your county cooperative extension agent or local plant professional.

Fungus: Several kinds of fungi may cause injury or death to rhododendrons. Phytophthora, commonly called root rot, is a group of fungi that causes damage to the roots. The major symptom is all of the leaves wilting on a plant as if the soil were dry although it is actually moist. Poor drainage is the major contributing factor to root rot and often by the time the damage is evident it is too late to control. Therefore, prevention by planting in well-drained soil mix is the best control measure.

Fungi that affect the leaves of some vireyas are referred to as powdery mildew. The mycelium, or vegetative part of the fungus, is visible on the leaf surface as a white, powdery substance. Small spots form at first and eventually the entire leaf may be coated with mycelium. Good air circulation may be helpful in reducing the rate of infection or chemical controls are available.

For more information check your local bookstore or library. One excellent reference is *Vireyas: A Practical Gardening Guide* by John Kenyon & Jacqueline Walker available through the RSBG Gift Shop.

The RSF Staff

Dr. Alan Leslie, Senior Register for the Royal Horticultural Society reports two new Vireya registrations this year.

'Pukeiti Skyrocket', it is possibly a hybrid involving *R. herzogii*, collected on Mt. Maip, Papua New Guinea in 1986. Collected, grown, named and registered by Graham Smith, Pukeiti, New Zealand. 10 to 15 flowers per truss, salver shaped, deep pink in bud, opening fuchsine pink inside, deep pink and covered with brown scales outside; scented.

'Yellow Fire', (*laetum* x *zoelleri*) (s) x ((*konorii* x *zoelleri*) x *zoelleri*). Hybrid from John Rouse, 1989. Grown, named & registered by H. Holmwood 1996. 5 to 7 flowers, brilliant greenish yellow at base in bud, shading to deep yellow pink and to a blushed brilliant greenish blue, opening inside vivid yellow and graduating to strong orange; outside vivid reddish orange.

If you happen to have a Vireya species plant labeled R. vidalii you should probably change the name to R. rousei. Reference to "The New Plantsman" March 1998. R. rousei is a new species named for our long time Vireya friend, Dr. John Rouse, Melbourne, Australia. You should read the article in the publication to find out more or if you are really interested I will try to explain why the name is being changed. Dr. Rouse has many friends in the Australian Rhododendron Society and around the world. He has been one of the most serious collectors of Vireyas for many years and has one the best species collections.. John has also been a great supporter of the Vireya Vine over the years.

The next issue will have letters from Keith Adams of New Zealand and Yolanda Pedraza Gaitan, from Colombia, South America Ran out of room which is wonderful.

I am starting a new project. We are going to try to collect information about Vireya plant collectors (1900 on). People who have collected in the wild. We will need to know names, dates, places, species seen and collected and anything else that would be interesting. This is important so that the information doesn't get lost forever. You can and should help. Get it written down. Look up your records. Talk to people. Want to help? Send it to me. Please. Please help, only you can make a difference in your part of the world.

The Vireya Vine is financed by its subscribers. The only things you pay for is 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. E. White Smith

Recent Contributors

American Rhododendron Society District # 5	
Jennifer Adams	Washington State
Keith Adams	New Zealand
Allan Anderson	New Jersey
Pat Bender	Washington State
Felice Blake	Australia
Nancy Callaway	Georgia
Jozef Delvaux	Belgium
Dee Deneri	California
Frank Doleshy	Washington State
Nancy Ellis	Oregon
Jerry Fickes	California
Jane Foster	Washington State
Yolanda Pedraza Gaitan	Colombia, S.A.
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Robert Gust	Washington State
Jerry Hooper	Florida
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August Kehr	North Carolina
Heinz Kratz	Germany
Robert Lamb	Oregon
Ralph Love	California
Jim Middleton	Washington State
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Bill Moynier	California
Marlise Mueller	California
Jay Murray	New Jersey
Howard Oliver	California
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Leslie Riggle	South Africa
Arnold Silverman	Colorado
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Daniel Tyson	California
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Catalogue is \$2.00 (Mail Order)

Te Puna Cottage Gardens (John Kenyon)
Te Puna Road, RD6
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www.glendoick.com

Mark Jury
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Waitara, North Taranaki
New Zealand
www.vanplant.co.nz/markjury/nursery.htm

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

To find areas on the INTERNET 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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