VIREYA VINE

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

Consider this. It is said that people are remembered by what they give, not what they have. The Species Foundation just finished a challenge grant fund raising drive to enlarge the Endowment Fund. The challenge or matching amount was $400,000. Over $400,000 was raised from members so the matching amount was forwarded to the RSF. I asked for Viners to help out by sending money to the RSF in care of the Vireya Endowment Fund. That was also matched and now there is about $90,000 in the special Vireya Endowment Fund. Wow. Thanks a great big lot to all people who helped. It really will make a difference someday.

Another thing: You might never be able to give money but you sure can give your thoughts and ideas. The Vireya Vine has been printed and distributed since December 1982. Four times a year to over 300 people around the world. I like to think that we have made a difference. This is a newsletter. It should not be my ideas or writing. It should be yours. People say to me that what they have to say has already been said. Come on now! Good ideas and things need to be said many times. Just because something works for you doesn't mean it will work for everyone else. We need your letters, or maybe only one paragraph. We do need them if the Vine is to continue. It really is easy to do; just sit down and start writing. If you say something dumb I will change it for you (or leave it out). Please leave your words and thoughts for others to use.

Remember how we always notice that flower color is brighter when plants get a lot of light? A bright spring seems to cause better flower color. In the "Carnivorous Plant Newsletter" Vol. 27, #3 there is a technical article about plant pigments called Anthocyanin. Anthocyanins are water-soluble, terrestrial plant pigments. They are found in most land plants. They contribute colors to flowers and other plant parts. Anthocyanins have two very different plant process roles. First; the pigments absorb strongly UV (ultraviolet), which insects that see UV use for finding the flowers. Second; Anthocyanin-related pigments serve as a protective UV screen. The pigments are produced in response to UV exposure, and protect the plant's DNA from damage by sunlight. It's not quite all that simple but I understand a bit better now why colors are brighter. .

There might be another special meeting in Hawaii during February 1999. It will be on the big island hosted by the Hawaii Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society. More information in the next VV.

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 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 #54 are:

Sherla Bertelmann	Hawaii	Bob & Jay Murray	New Jersey
John Bodenham	England	Jan & Brian Oldham	New Zealand
Bob Franz	Washington State	Ernesto Rodriguez	Florida
Paul de Jager	South Africa	Peter Stevens	Massachusetts
Melba Johnson	BC Canada	Charles Zentgraf	California
Lynn Marcy	Georgia		
James McKechnie	California		
Tadao Miyashiro	Hawaii		
Erhard Moser	Germany		

From Hank Helm — Bainbridge Island, Washington
Dear Vireya Vine — February 21, 1998

Some eight months after John Farbarik and I visited Sulawesi and the publication of our brief description of the trip in the 50th Issue of the Vireya Vine, August 1997, I feel it is perhaps time to write a follow-up. First, many thanks for the publication of the letter and particularly for the publication of the photographs taken on our trip. The Vine provides a terrific service to those in Rhododendron Land interested in these plants. I do need to make one correction. The photograph of the dark large red plant is mislabeled. I am very sorry for giving you the incorrect information. At the time I was spending a great deal of time trying to identify for sure the things we had seen and I simply gave you the wrong name for this plant.

As I am sure many of your knowledgeable readers have known, the plant is actually R. leptobrachion. R. lompohense is white rather than red. Steve Hootman, Curator and Co-Director of the Rhododendron Species Foundation has looked at all of the material we brought back and has confirmed eleven species as we had identified them. The others did not have enough material to make positive identifications. The species identified are: R. rhodopus, R. zollingeri, R. malayanum var. malayanum (pink and pale yellow forms), R. quadrasianum var. celebicum, R. celebicum, R. leptobrachion, R. lagunculicarpum, R. nanophytum var. nanophytum, R. eymae, R. impositum and R pseudobuxifolium. We have confirmed that the small leafed plant found on G. Sesean is R. quadrasianum var. celebicum and not R. cuneifolium. We believe this is the same plant as found by John Farbarik and Keith Adams in 1996.

It is still early to say for certain what has rooted and germinated as some things may be lost; however, I believe it is safe to say there will be several new things introduced into cultivation and others reintroduced into cultivation from the trip.

It appears that R. celebicum, R. zollingeri, R. rhodopus, R. quadrasianum var. celebicum, R. leptobrachion and R. malayanum will most certainly make it. R. nanophytum var. nanophytum, R. eymae, R. pseudobuxifolium and a couple of other unidentified species may make it. As is usual for Vireya seed, the germination results are very mixed with only about fifteen percent or so making it. For those interested, an account of the trip has been posted along with photos of R. malayanum var. malayanum (pale yellow form), R. eymae, R. lagunculicarpum (orange form) [we found forms from orange red to orange to yellow] and R. pseudobuxifolium on the World Wide Web. It is at httm://members.aol.com/INDOFORUM/1997/index.htm. The Australia Rhododendron Society Yearbook also published an account of the trip and included two photos. The photo labeled R. zollingeri is actually R. malayanum var. malayanum. I had sent them a photo of R. zollingeri, however, it was not published.

Mr. Hansjorg Brentel of Austria visited Sulawesi in January of 1998 and climbed the same mountains, using Acho as guide as John Farbarik and I did in May of 1997. He found R. rhodopus in bloom on G. Sesean and five species in bloom on Mt. Rantemario. There was apparently a large fire raging on the top of Mt. Sesean. He also describes the one form of R. malayanum var. malayanum as yellow as we did. Given the economic situation in Indonesia now and the resulting political uncertainty, there may be some reluctance on the part of plant hunters to travel to Sulawesi. I am just very happy to have had the opportunity to go when we did.

Henry R. Helm
10674 N.E. Manor Lane
Bainbridge Island, WA 98110
E-mail

Erhard Moser — Chemnitz, Germany
Dear Vireya Vine — August 1998

In the year 1974 I got some Rhododendron species from the Botanical Garden Liverpool/ England. A few species were wholly unknown for me and I couldn't find anything in my literature. I sowed out the seeds in the greenhouse and watched the further growth of the plants. They developed in a whole other way than the usual Rhododendron-species. The fragile growth and for me the unknown names let me suppose that the plants are not really hardy in Germany. It was a few years till I found the "Flora Melanesia" by Dr. H. Sleumer in a library.

There was an exact description of the unknown species. The plants were my first Vireyas. The works of Prof. Sleumer excited my enthusiasm.

There were so many interesting species but it was very difficult to get them in East Germany. Sometimes I got some seed from a friend which works for the international seed-exchange of the Botanical Gardens. Not until I became a member of the American Rhododendron Society and I contacted Bill Moyles in Oakland, California could I get good seed. I owe Bill very much. Many new species that I now have came from his seeds. Here in the continental Germany with cold winters you can only grow Vireyas in heated greenhouses. Especially in winters with temperatures below -20 Grad Celsius it can be problematic. Thereby in one year the young seedlings were killed by frost because they were in polystyrene-boxes directly under the glasspane. But bigger plants tolerate a bit of frost without damage. They must have less water during low temperature. Important for the health of the plants is a perfect drainage. Otherwise the roots will be damaged and that can also kill big plants. In this way big plants (50cm diameter) of Rh. lochiae - hybrids began to winter. Suddenly they were resplendent blooming in the summer.

The reason: The water drainage in the pots was not perfect and the soil was not loose. Again, critical for the success is the substratum-mixture which must be permeable and airy. I do use a mixture of small pieces of pinebark, polystyrene-flakes, sphagnum and coarse-fibrous peat and to it a breeze of dolomite-lime. I also use orchid-mixture with pinebark. During the growing period the well rooted plants get liquid-fertilizer. With a very good success I use "Wuxal" and in the summer a nitrogen-fertilizer with a magnesium-share too. Small plants and seedlings get their fertilizing with a sprayer. In the winter the temperature is often below 10 Grad Celsius. Sometimes sensitive species incur a chlorosis but if the plants were sufficient fertilized in the summer then the symptoms disappeared in the warmly spring. On hot summer days the plants must be sprinkled so that the air is moist enough. The greenhouse only must be shaded in the summer if the sun is shining very hard. I think bright light is important for a good flowerbud development. I do water the plants in a way that they are dried off again in the night. The flowering time of the Vireyas starts in March/April when the sun warms up the house and for some plants there is a second flowering time in the late summer. Last year a plant of Rh. lochiae x gracilentum (Valentine?) with a diameter of 30-40cm has 190 blossoms. It was a dream! My special interest is in the pure species although the hybrids are easier to grow. Who is interested by an exchange of plants and cuttings? The resplendent blooms reward all efforts, which are necessary in consideration of our climate.

Erhard Moser
Uritzstr. 6
09117 Chemnitz
Germany E-Mail: andrew01@t-online.de

R.(konori x laetum) x brookeanum 'Mandarin'

R. phaeochitum

R. tuba

R. aurigeranum x laetum

R. Harry Wu

R. konori

Editors note from E. White Smith. The next letter is taken from a personal communication from Brian Oldham.

From Brian & Jan Oldham Auckland, New Zealand
Dear VV, September 1998

This last summer was a record hot, with occasional temperatures over 30C (86F) and rather dry overall. The high temp. did burn some leaves, strangely enough the worst effected were the Sleumer – leucogigas hybrids.

We also had a problem with watering. There were no restrictions but our beloved City Council came up with a new scheme wherein, they not only charged for the water metered to the property, but put on an extra charge of 80% of usage for alleged treatment of waste water. That really knocked back yard gardening in Auckland where summer watering is necessary.

The other negative development in the Auckland Vireya world has been the appearance of Botrytis petal blight. A particularly vicious form swept through time after time. The summer showers were just frequent enough to keep it going. There doesn't seem to be any effective control apart from the totally impractical, almost daily spraying with fungicide. On the bright side the years growth has been phenomenal and we have tried to cope on our tiny plot.

I have had great success with a batch of R. Gardenia Odyssey x laetum – a great range of colours on the first flowering and one brilliant orange/tangerine quite unlike anything else. I am taking cautions about first flowering now though. In the past the first have often been rather less than the potential but in a recent grex of R. tuba x (Dr. Sleumer x leucogigas) the initial crop was wonderful but the second was only a pale shadow of the former.

This has been the mildest winter ever recorded. No frost at all. The spring so far has been a bit windy and cool but it won't last.

Brian Oldham
102 Meadowbank Rd.
Meadowbank, Auckland 1005
New Zealand

Thanks, Brian. Funny how governments can find ways to get more of our money. Maybe it doesn't just happen in America.
The problem with petal blight is everywhere. This was a bad year in the NW USA also. We talked to an Oregon Nursery Inspector and he stressed cleaning up all of the old flowers. They must get picked up and taken away or the disease will be back again. There is a fungicide that can be sprayed under plants in very early spring but I have lost the information. Try contacting an Agricultural Agent for information.

Brian asked us about the cuttings we brought home from New Zealand a couple of years ago. 80% of the cuttings rooted and Lucie is busy taking more cuttings so these wonderful NZ hybrids should be available in a couple of years. Yes, we imported the cuttings legally. We had an import permit and the cuttings were inspected.

If you are on the Internet take a look at Societe Bretonne du Rhododendron from France at http://perso.wanadoo.fr/s.b.r./
Also check out Chris Callard's Vireya Web site from England. It is very nice. At http: www.bigfoot.com/~vireya
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.
EWS

My wife, Lucie Sorensen-Smith and I took a Vireya display to the American Rhododendron Society Western Regional meeting in Florence, Oregon on October 1st. In the lobby of the City Convention Center we placed about 15 blooming plants and some with just foliage. The plants were staged on stands and big plastic pots covered with black plastic. Some of the Vireyas used included a big flowering plant of R. 'Cecilia' (phaeopeplum x leucogigas), a fragrant and beautiful hybrid of (phaeopeplum x leucogigas) x phaeochitum, and 'Carillion Bells' a New Zealand hybrid. Species used were R. loranthiflorum, lochiae, cruttwellii, beyerinckianum, stenophyllum, rarum, commonae, and retusum.

The display was well received and was fun for us to provide. This is the fourth time we have done this at a Western Regional. It really provides non-Vireya people something colorful to look at while standing around in a lobby.

We also took 90 small plants for the plant sale. They were well received by the people many who had never seen Vireyas or had an opportunity to buy any. That is one of the big problems with Vireya Rhododendrons. Where do you get them? There are more outlets now but in the past there were very few and new plants were hard to come by. The folks at the Rhododendron Species Foundation tell me that the Vireya species are big sellers and an important part of their plant distribution.

Every one of you Viners should be ordering seed from Bill Moyles. There are sometimes new species and many hybrids offered by Bill's seed exchange. You must write to him to get his list. Also think about sending him some seed to distribute. Learn how to "hand pollinate" in order to produce good seed.
Bill Moyles -Vireya seed exchange 4243 Norton Ave., Oakland, CA 94602-
E-mail wmoyles@pacbell.net
You must write to Bill to get seed. He has very good seed and really needs to give it away. (Free outside the USA)

VIREYA NURSERIES

The Bovees Nursery (Lucie Sorensen-Smith)
1737 SW Coronado (E. White Smith)
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(503)-244-9341 or 1-800-435-9250
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Rhododendron Species Foundation
PO Box 3798
Federal Way, WA 98063 USA
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England

Glendoick Gardens (Peter Cox)
Glendoick, Perth
Scotland, U.K. PH2 7NS
Phone Nursery 073 886 205
Web Site www.glendoick.com

Jan Oldham
102 Meadowbank Rd.
Meadowbank. Auckland 1005
New Zealand

Mark Jury
Tikorangi, RD 43
Waitara, North Taranaki
New Zealand

Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust
Carrington Rd. RD4
New Plymouth
New Zealand

Vireya Valley Nursery
Woori-Yallock Road
Cockatoo, Victoria 3781
Australia

Christopher Fairweather
The Garden Centre, High Street
Beaulieu, Hampshire
England SO42 7YR

The Vireya Venue
2 Clifford Street
Maleny, Queensland 4552
Australia

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You must write to Bill to get seed. He has very good seed and really needs to give it away. (Free outside the USA)
Are you selling or giving away Vireyas or even cuttings. Let us know and we will list you.

VIREYA VINE
RHODODENDRON SPECIES FOUNDATION
P . O . BOX 3798
FEDERAL WAY, WASHINGTON 98063
U .S .A.