

VIREYA VINE

ISSUE #59, MAY 2000

PUBLISHED BY THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE OF THE RHODODENDRON SPECIES
FOUNDATION

R.S.F. PO BOX 3798, FEDERAL WAY, WA. 98063

E. White Smith, Editor

NEW VIREYA CONSERVATORY AT THE RHODODENDRON SPECIES FOUNDATION

From Steve Hootman, Co-Executive Director and Curator, RSF April 2000

For many years now, the Rhododendron Species Foundation (RSF) has been growing, propagating and distributing a relatively good, but always somewhat limited selection of vireya species. This was undertaken in an effort to fulfill our mission of conservation, research, acquisition, evaluation, cultivation, public display and distribution of *Rhododendron* species. Unfortunately, the lack of proper growing conditions and adequate help have always been detrimental in our efforts to substantially increase our vireya collection and its distribution.

Fortunately, conditions and attitudes have changed dramatically in the past several years. After all, we are not the "Hardy Rhododendron Species Foundation". We are now firmly committed to expanding our entire collection including vireyas. A recent major addition to the RSF Vireya Collection was the donation of an amazing selection of vireyas from Mr. Frank Doleshy of Edmonds, Washington. Frank was well known to many of you and many of these plants were from his own collections from the wild. Exciting new species added to the RSF collection from this donation include *pachycarpon*, *lowii*, *longiflorum*, *correoides* and many superb selections of more common species. We are also acquiring many of the new species collected by George Argent of the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE Scotland) and have received several new species collected in Sulawesi by RSF members Hank Helm and John Farbarik. Several of these have already bloomed with *celebicum* and *rhodopus* outstanding and quite growable.

The most exciting development in our quest to cultivate, display and distribute the entire range of vireya species, however, is the soon to be constructed Vireya House. This will be a large enclosed conservatory near the main entrance and gift shop here at the garden.

The interior design and planting will be based upon that of the famous Peat House at the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh which grows and displays many difficult species so effectively. Moss-covered logs, hanging baskets, tree fern trunks and raised mounds of boulders will all be covered with vireyas. From the superb *leucogigas* to the dwarf and difficult *saxifragioides*, representatives of the entire RSF Vireya Collection will be grown either directly in the conservatory or rotated through as they bloom. One section of the structure will be designed as an area to distribute information and sell vireyas to visitors and collectors.

This new temperature-controlled building is being designed for one purpose only, the successful cultivation and subsequent display of vireyas. The improved growing conditions will allow us to cultivate those species which we have had so much difficulty growing in the propagating greenhouse. We will also be able to attain more propagating material from the healthier, free-growing plants.

In addition, we have hired former RSF propagator Dennis Bottemiller to help me curate the vireya collection and see to the day to day operations of the Vireya House. Dennis has seven years experience in conservatory horticulture and is an accomplished propagator.

Obviously, things are looking up for those of you with a strong interest in this remarkable group of plants. We have an architectural design in hand and would like to begin construction of this facility in the fall of 2000. As of this writing we have approximately half of the \$73,000 needed to finish this project. YOU can help us become the center for vireya species display, cultivation, distribution and most importantly, knowledge and conservation. Many of you have already contributed towards this important endeavor. Please, help us develop this collection into one rivaling that of the RBGE but with a policy of distribution. Any contribution is applauded and gratefully accepted. All those contributing over \$25 will have their names engraved on a permanent plaque at the entrance of the Vireya House.

Thanks for your help,

Old Stuff

The next item is a letter written by Hadley Osborne, probably for the California Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society newsletter while he was chapter President in the late 1960's.

Watering Vireya Rhododendrons

Pete Sullivan reports that there has been great interest, some of it questioning, about his practice of withholding water from Vireya Rhododendrons during their more or less dormant summer season. Pete reiterates that those who best adapt their cultural practices to the natural growth rhythms of their plants will be successful in growing and flowering them. Rhododendrons that are continually prodded with water and nitrogen that they need during their first flush of growth will tend to simply keep on growing and not stop to set flower buds.

You can't let germinating seed get dry, but you don't expect flowers from them anyway; of course, if the plants do start to wilt, a little moisture is advisable. Repeated experience, however, does show that Vireya rhododendrons and other plants will bloom much sooner and much more freely if given a chance to rest from vigorous vegetative growth so that they can harden up and set flower buds.

An added advantage is that withholding water for a period encourages the plants to develop swollen, almost carrot-like roots that in turn enable them to withstand future dry conditions better. Plants given a too constant water supply throughout their lives thus react adversely to dry conditions. They seem to enjoy growing in accord to their natural rhythms.

In any event, Pete finds that he has been enjoying his Vireyas more since he's been watering them less.

Great stuff. Yes, history is the great teacher. Hadley now lives in Carmel, California and is still interested in Rhododendrons and Vireyas. Pete Sullivan worked at the Strybing Arboretum in San Francisco as the nursery manager. Pete received and grew many of the Vireya species that came into the USA, some from Dr. H. Sleumer who was working in the south Pacific during the early 1960's. Sleumer's book, 'An Account of Rhododendron in Malesia', has been the Vireya world's text since then. Pete was also encouraged by Jock Brydon, who at the time was Director of Strybing and a dedicated Rhododendron person. Jock was one of the very early members of the Rhododendron Species Foundation.

He grew and held many of the species plants that were later moved to the RSF site in Federal Way, Washington from his home in Salem, Oregon.

Another very important person in *Vireya* history is Bill Moynier from Los Angeles. Bill and his wife Betty had a mail order *Vireya* Nursery at their home and supplied many of the plants in the early years. They still grow and breed *Vireyas* but no longer sell them. In January, 1980, Carl Deul, also from the Los Angeles area, printed an article in the 'Pacific Coast Nurseryman' magazine. The color cover of this issue had nine *Vireya* trusses on it and is quite beautiful. Many more people should be remembered. Pete Schick, who is from the San Francisco bay area but now lives in Fort Bragg, California, gave me a whole flat of species *Vireyas* many years ago and has also had a major influence on the collection at Bovees Nursery. Both Pete Sullivan and Pete Schick have been very helpful and generous in spreading *Vireyas* up and down the west coast of America. Know of some more people? Tell us about them.

We can not say it often enough. Be careful with your watering. Let the plants get light in weight and then give them a good watering from the top. Make sure that they are not sitting in water.

In over 30 years of growing *Vireyas* I have only seen the "swollen, carrot-like roots" twice. The first time was on a seedling collected from the wild. The other occasion is with the plants donated to the Rhododendron Species Foundation by the late Frank Doleshy's wife after he passed away. Frank was a great Rhododendron collector who lived in Edmonds, Washington State. Frank had a small greenhouse where he planted many of his *Vireyas* in the ground. He used very little heat and probably very, very little fertilizer on his plants. They just took care of themselves. Many of the plants from Frank's collection had carrot-like roots. These swollen roots tend to be located both below the soil level and above. You do not need to look hard to see them either. I have seen swollen areas that are about three times the size of the upper stem.

Here is another different thing that we have never seen before. *R. rubineiflorum*, a small growing species from Papua New Guinea sends out branches from above the soil level that go into the soil and form roots. We have seen these rooted branches come back up in other locations in the pots. At first I had thought we had inadvertently pressed a few small branches into the potting mix when we were repotting but that is just not so. A few, not all of the branches just go down. This action is not what I relate to a plant being called stoloniferous like some of the deciduous azaleas are. Although this is not the smallest *Vireya* species it must be one of them. And it is a great little plant with open rose red flowers. Our four year old plants from cuttings are only about 3 inches high. They are also very tough. We have quite a few plants both from cuttings and from seed but never had one die. In its native habit it probably always grows as an epiphyte in trees or other things. It is just too small to compete with other plants on the ground. In fact, it was not discovered until recently even though it grows in a well-botanized area. When it was in bloom it was spotted and collected.

Have any of you seen the swollen roots or branches going in to the soil?

And who is growing seed? Bill Moyles who has the *Vireya* seed, would sure like to see more interest. Bill is always glad to help people with seed growing techniques..

***Vireya* seed exchange. WorldWide. Bill Moyles 4243 Norton Ave., Oakland, CA 94602 e-mail wmoyles@pacbell.net**

From Paul Smith
Dear *Vireya* Vine

Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, Scotland
April 2000

Sulawesi 2000 (formerly named Celebes Island, located south of the Philippine islands and east of Borneo. It is part of the nation of Indonesia)

During February 2000 I visited Sulawesi with 3 other colleagues from the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, (including Dr. Argent). Our aim was to visit 3 mountains, one in the South, one in the Central region and one in the North. The mountain in the North was Gunung Sojol (3000m) and I thought it might interest *Vireya* Vine readers.

Gunung Sojol is in Central Sulawesi region and is located in the Ogoamas Mountains, where the north arm bends and heads east. There are two ways to get to this area. Firstly flying from Makassar (Ujung Pandang) which cost approx: \$120 per person and then hiring a vehicle to take you to Tinombo on the east coast. The second option is to hire a vehicle in Makassar and drive to Tinombo which will take two days and cost approx \$30 per day (with an additional \$ 100 for the whole trip). The advantage of driving means there is an opportunity to collect on the roadside as you travel.

The section of road between Mangkutana and the south end of Lake Poso holds many surprises as you travel north. A large leaved rhododendron can be found here which is probably *R. seranicum*, we did not see it in flower, but from its buds it looks orange in colour and it produces masses of seed. *R. psilanthum* is also common there and it is a good red form. Three other species to look out for in the under growth are *R. bagobonum*, *R. malayanum* and a bi-coloured *R. quadrasianum*. All these species are found between 1000 to 1300m on the roadside.

For our trip to Sojol we headed to a small village called Lombok to the West of Tinombo. The villagers were keen to help us get to the mountain, but we needed a guide from a higher village. It took us the best part of two days to walk through cultivated gardens before we reached untouched forest. The exposed garden sites are warm to walk through and there is no shade from the sun's heat. Once into the forest we started to see signs of rhododendron flowers on the forest floor, *R. malayanum*, *bagobonum* and a large leaved *quadrasianum*. We made camp at 1400m and the porters assured us there were no camp sites higher with a water supply. So we resigned ourselves to camp here and attempt to reach the summit the next day.

Our second day in the forest was hard going as we made slow progress up a ridge that had as many declines as inclines. The rhododendrons were there to be seen, a large leaved rhododendron probably *R. vanvuurenii*, with no flowers, *R. rhodopus*, a great large plant almost 3m high and about 2.5m across, fairly well eaten about the leaves, but producing fine clusters of white flowers. *R. radians* can be found growing all over the place, some on the ground and some as epiphytes all producing a wonderful scent from their long tubular flowers. *R. malayanum* is also well represented here although we only saw the pink form on this mountain. *R. bagobonum* is also easily found growing where it appears to get a bit more light than some of the other rhododendrons.

By the time we reached 2000m we had to make a decision to go on for a short time then turn around and head back to our camp. Just above 2000m there is another camp site which has a water supply and could be used to approach the summit. We managed to reach 2100m and as we turned to return to our camp we came across a good red coloured rhododendron which had strong thick leaves and was growing well on mossy fallen trees. I am sure there are other rhododendrons on this mountain at the higher altitudes and as this is a long ridge leading to Gunung Sojol it provides a large area to be investigated.

On our return down the mountain we were informed that it would take 5 1/2 days walking to reach Gunung Sojol from the south, unlike the 2 1/2 days the porters led us to believe. It was also pointed out to us that an approach from the North side from a village called Palasa may be an easier way of reaching the summit. Gunung Sojol is definitely worth a visit and if anyone was planning a trip to Sulawesi to look for *Vireya* rhododendrons this mountain summit would certainly be worthy of investigation.

News for and about The Hawaii Chapter American Rhododendron Society

April, 2000

Our First Seminar

Over and over, members of the committee were delighted to hear comments from visitors like, "You all are so friendly, and share plants and ideas so pleasantly, sure wish it was more like that at home." One of the committee told your editor that remarks like that were more than

enough reward for the members of the committee on this event.

It was also nice to hear that the program material was diverse enough so that it had interest for even those who attend many garden meetings. This included presentations by Keith Adams from New Zealand, Neil Puddey

from Australia and E. White Smith from Oregon all of whom came here at their own expense for which we are so grateful!

We were also treated to a hi-tec analysis "Identifying Insects and Diseases of Vireyas" led by Brian Bushe, Dr. Wayne and Dr. Arnold Hara of Univ of Hawaii-Hilo. To do this they used a computer connected to a microscope for display on a large screen. Dr. Richard Criley of Univ. Of Hawaii-Hon. discussed growth regulators for Vireyas and how flowering could be made more compact and even regulated for special sale dates. Rounding out the diversity of the program were presentations by our members who garden at different elevations with different rainfall patterns on the Big Island: Richard Marques @ 500', Dennis Rees @ 1000' on the west side, and Marilyn Santos @ nearly 4000' in Volcano.

The second day had a very full schedule beginning with bus tours to the gardens of Charles and Marina Trommer at Ninoole on the Hamakua Coast, Yoshi and Marge Watanabe in Hilo, Nani Mau Gardens in Panaewa and Mitch and Sandy Mitchell at Volcano. They are spread out over a wide distance so visitors got to see quite a bit of the East side of our island enroute.

The busses returned to the hotel so everyone could freshen up for the big evening that lay ahead. That took place in the

Community Center at Keaau and what an evening it was! The dinner was hosted by the chapter and many members brought delicious pot luck assorted dishes. Yoshi Watanabe and Glen Sahara presided at their barbecue grills with skill and finesse. Charles Trommer then showed us his inimitable auctioneering style, and some members were later seen trying to get 6' shrubs(Vireyas) into their cars. Registrations totalled over 70 and included 6 from California, 2 from Michigan, 3 from Washington, one each from New Zealand and Australia, 13 from Oahu, 1 from Maui and 43 from the Big Island. To make a project of this size run so smoothly we owe much to the leadership of Yoshi Watanabe assisted by his wife Marge.

Handling the myriad of financial details, and registration correspondence was our ever-efficient treasurer, Sherla Bertelmann.

The publicity and preparation of the good looking registration kits was expertly done without fanfare by Rene Siracusa

And organizing and coordinating all the volunteers for the feast on Saturday night was done under the direction of Veryl Grace.

What a wonderful experience that was for everyone

The next two items are taken from a small folded flyer the Hawaii Chapter puts out.

Vireyas: in Hawaii

While only a fairly recent discovery Vireyas are now being grown in more than 20 gardens and several nurseries on The Big Island. The Lyon Arboretum in Honolulu has a good collection, and at least one public garden on each of the islands of Kauai and Maui have Vireyas.

By experience we have learned that growing conditions in many parts of Hawaii are ideal for this section of the rhododendron genus. Furthermore, more will be known soon through an on-going research project of the Hawaii Chapter of The American Rhododendron Society.

Hawaii seems to be one of not very many parts of the world where Vireyas can be grown outside the year around. On the mainland, for example, Vireyas in most locations must be grown indoors in the winter and taken outside during the spring, summer and fall months.

If you are interested in growing these delightful plants you'll find them at several nurseries, including H. Eunice Nursery near the city of Hilo. Another source is the monthly meeting (third Sunday at 1 pm) of the Hawaii Chapter, ARS. Flowering trusses are made available as cuttings in a lucky number drawing, and mature plants are auctioned to the highest bidder. You will probably want to begin with some of the beautiful hybrids, and perhaps later on try the species.

Increasingly the Hawaii Chapter is being referred to as The Vireya Chapter and you are welcome to attend our meetings. The membership list now includes people from mainland states as well as Thailand, New Zealand and England.

For the location of monthly meetings call the Chapter Secretary Dennis Rees 808-325 0443

Also from the same handout

Vireyas: What are they?

Vireyas are a kind of Rhododendron that grow mostly in the mountainous regions of Malesia. They are centered around the Equator in Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia and Papua New Guinea. Of the 850 or so species that make up the genus rhododendron almost 300 are classified as Vireya. They are marked botanically by seeds which have tails at both ends, but they are vastly variable in other ways truly a collector's item!

Although they come from a tropical region, a large proportion grow at higher elevations where nights are cool and days are not excessively warm. For instance, in New Guinea 62 species grow in alpine region beginning around 8,000 feet where temperatures are in a cool 55°F to 65°F range. At this altitude night temperatures often drop to 40°F. A few are even found as high as 13,000' where average day temperatures are in the 30's and almost every night drops below freezing.

With a geographic distribution so widespread their diversity is not surprising. Vireyas can be found growing as epiphytes in the moss encrusted lofts of tree branches or on rocks or just growing as terrestrials - on the ground. They grow on the edges of forests seeking light and in open grasslands. They are often the first to colonize areas where the original vegetation has been destroyed

Vireyas come in a variety of shapes and sizes ranging from dwarf mats at high altitudes to all sizes of shrubs and even trees. Some have foliage that could be mistaken for pine needles; some have huge blades a foot long with flowers to match. Their flowers are often fragrant and are the most colorful of all rhododendrons:: vibrant yellows and reds are common. However, shapes vary from small open cups to spidery clusters of long tubes. Flowers are pollinated by birds, butterflies, moths and even bats.

From the brochure prepared by William Moyles for the Lakeside Vireya Collection, Oakland, California

From Keith Adams

New Plymouth, New Zealand

Dear Vireya Vine,

April 2000

I think it's time to pay a tribute to Mitch Mitchell of Hawaii the Big Island. As anyone who has met Mitch and his wife Sandy will testify, there is not a couple in the world more generous and kind. Cuttings of vireyas are freely given to anyone who evinces an interest in growing these plants when they visit the garden.

It was my privilege recently to attend the Vireya seminar organised by the Hawaiian chapter of the American Rhododendron Society, held over a weekend in the city of Hilo on the Big Island (the name of the Big Island is Hawaii). This was a most successful occasion with eighty attendees, including some from the mainland US. Before the official programme got underway, Mitch Mitchell was presented with the Bronze Medal award of the ARS in recognition of his contribution to the furtherance of rhododendron culture in his part of the nation.

The first day was devoted to scientific lectures by members of the faculty of the University of Hawaii, a growers panel and slide presentations by E. White Smith of the Tacoma Chapter, Neil Puddey from Australia and myself. Saturday was occupied by several garden visits, culminating with a visit to the Mitchell's garden at Volcano. Even a light rain failed to dampen people's enthusiasm. The day ended with a fellowship pot luck dinner and plant auction in Hilo.

None of this would have occurred without the foresight of Mitch Mitchell, who almost single-handedly got the Hawaiian Chapter off the ground, and remarkably only three years ago. He gathered together a small band of enthusiasts, and they formed a regular group and applied for membership of the ARS. Thus the Hawaiian Chapter was born, the most recent one of the ARS.

One has to see Mitch's garden to be continually astonished. His situation at 4,000 feet elevation with an annual rainfall of some 150 inches is just about perfect for Vireyas in that part of the world. With a light cover of the native tree fern "hupu", and "ohia" (metrosideros spp) and a free draining volcanic soil, conditions are ideal for vireyas. Proof of the pudding is in the eating, because seedlings volunteer themselves all over the garden. He has an extensive collection of hybrids, and has now begun to establish a species collection - bless him! I have seen Vireya gardens and gardens with vireyas in many parts of the world, and am reasonably confident in asserting that Mitch's garden contains the largest private collection of vireyas in the world grown outdoors.

Keith Adams
12A Sequoia Grove
New Plymouth
New Zealand

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. 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 #56 are:

Richard Aaring	Oregon	Ellen Moon	Washington State
Dorothy Adams	Oregon	Miki Muller	California
Paul Anderson	California	Marleen Neil	Oregon
Australian Rhod Soc	Australia	Don Paden	Illinois
Roger Beck	Hawaii	Cheryl Perkins	Mississippi
David Binney	New Zealand	Reg Pohlmann	England
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VIREYA NURSERIES

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