VIREYA VINE

ISSUE # 6 APRIL 1985
AN INTERNATIONAL GROUP OF "VIREYA BUFFS" - PUBLISHED BY THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE OF THE RHODODENDRON SPECIES FOUNDATION

From Walt Mills, New York State, USA
Dear Vireya Vine, 2-19-1985

Many thanks for keeping me on your mailing list and for sending me Issue # 5.

Best issue yet. I am not sure of the nomenclature of "Vireya Vine" but I trust it has to do with the Malaysians which I have been trying to propagate from seed for quite some time— with no success. In this issue (# 5) it appears that others have had a similar problem finding the proper starting and potting mix for these seedlings.

Here's my problem, and I wish I could get a tip from someone. I have used a combination of spaghnum and peat mosses which I have soaked thoroughly, then sterilized by baking at 350' in the oven for one hour. I put this in sterile containers which were kept covered with Saran wrap until the seeds germinated which takes quite some time. So far all is well, except that some of the yellow seed packets I used to get produced nothing at all. However, those that did germinate produced very tiny little plants, almost microscopic, perhaps 1/8 " tall— and these would last for perhaps a week or two and then just wither away. I wish someone could tell me what I am doing wrong.

I would like to receive more of the little seed packets and get started with the Malaysians again. The check inclosed is a donation for your fine publication, and I will send payment for the seeds immediately upon advice of how much and where to send it.

Walter S. Mills Jr.
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Walt, your flusterations with seed is well known to all of us. They are very-very slow and small. I use only peat moss. I do not like spaghnum moss (No Damp Off) because it dose'nt seem to do any good and is hard to get the small seedlings out of it to pot up. The small seedlings need some plant food. There is now in the garden stores a small sprayer that is made of plastic and pumps up. It only holds a quart or less. I use this sprayer with a very small amount of soluble fertilizer added and try to spray the small plants often.

Thanks for the donation. I think that Esther Berry is still sending out the Vireya seed. (E. White)

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From Leslie Riggall, South Africa "Fern Valley Botanic Garden"
Dear VV, August 15, 1984

I am introducing Vireya Rhododendrons to South Africa, where they were completely unknown, and they are a very great success in this garden. Judging by American descriptions they apparently grow twice as fast here. I have actually flowered open-pollinated hybrids in four years from seed.

I still have ten species on my want list, as follows:
R. beyerinckianum R. dianthosmum R. hellwigii R. hyacinthosmum R. leptanthum R. lowii R. pachycarpon R. suaveolens R. superbum and #354775 (USDA #). If you can get any of these for me I will be much obliged.

I was on Mount Kinabalu earlier this year, but controls are now very tight, and my allowance of two cuttings of each of these two species failed (R. lowii & R. suavoelens). Inevitably these were the two species I wanted most. I did bring back a little pollen of a 22 flower truss of R. lowii and have sent Dave (Goheen) some seed of a controlled cross I made here.

Leslie Riggall "Curator"
Fern Valley Botanic Garden
Igwababa Road
Kloof 3610 South Africa

If some Viner could write to Lesie, it sounds like he may have something to trade if you have something on his want list. I would like to know more about the Fern Valley Botanic Garden. What is it and where. Some people go to South Africa and sure don't want to miss seeing some Rhodies.

This is a good time to ask the Viners around the world about maps. We need maps (some of us) of the areas where Vireyas grow. In the North West of America, maps of the south sea islands just do not exist. If you go in to a map company and ask for maps of Java or Borneo you can get some pretty funny looks. Has any one ever seen a good map of Western New Guinea. How about you Australian Viners, you must have some maps. We will try to put together a collection of good maps and make them available to Vireya Vine readers. We need good maps—ones with rivers, places and mountains on them so that we can look up where plants come from. (E. White)

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From Os Blumhardt, New Zealand
Dear VV, August 21, 1984

I first met R. lochae in the early 50s, when an apprentice in New Plymouth, and was given a seedling not long after. This was the only Vireya I had till about 1970 or so and being a "compulsive hybridist" I tried to cross it with a few lepidote Rhodos, but with out success. Some crosses appeared to take and pods to develop for a while and then dropped off. I figured I might be able to trick the plant into ripening some seed for me by first crossing it and then a day or two later selfing the same flowers and so getting perhaps enough selfed seed developing to make the pods stay on until maturity. Hybrid seedlings, I figured, would be fairly obvious. R. lochae normally only flowers in the autumn, so I didn't have much choice for pollen parents. About 1964 I carried out the above trial with pollen from a out-of-season bloom of R. virgatum and succeed in getting seed. One of the resulting seedlings was an obvious hybrid. It has 2-3 bell shaped orchid-pink flowers per cluster on the tips and in the axles of the leaves.

Unfortunately it was very prone to root rot. I and those I have given it to, keep losing it, but I repropagate bits. It has also not gained much in hardiness and seems completely sterile. I call it "Little Pioneer".

Having heard about the Vireya Rhodos on Mt. Kinabalu in Borneo, I went there in May of 1979 and spent five days in the Kinabalu area. I brought back about 12 species and also a number of natural hybrids. I had permission to take a few cuttings of species, but when I came to R. lowii, with great shoots like lettuces, and not many per plant, I decided to try for seedlings.This is how I came to get the natural hybrids, as I pulled small seedlings where they were growing on the steppes of the track and some were of types that I had not seen in mature plants. Three of these hybrids are different crosses of R. stenophyllum, one is R. lowii X R. rugosum and some were crosses or intergrades between R. rugosum & R. buxifolium. R. stenophyllum and R. retivenium have flowered and I also have buds for the first time on R. rugosum. Some plants like R. lowii, R. buxifolium and R. fallacinum are very slow. I lost R. ericoides with die-back.

I have also flowered R quadrasianum var cuneatum and the plant which is called R. quadrasianum var villosum, but which is to me so distinct it would have to be a species (different ?). The latter is a cute little shiny-leafed plant that looks nearer to R. ericoides than R. quadrasianum and is almost always epiphytic at lower altitudes more than the other, which is normally ter[illegible]al. Both of these plants have proved very difficult

[illegible] very prone

I aim to get a satisfactory stock plant of each established by grafting them onto something more reliable, such as R. macgergoriae or R. inconspicuum. I have made a few successful grafts on R. macgregoriae from some plants of which I was given just one cutting. In these cases I took just a single leaf and made a veneer graft (or would you call it a chip-bud with a leaf attached ?).

I made a second trip to Mt. Kinabalu in April 1983 and brought back 4 more species and two more natural hybrids, as well as some orchids and other plants collected in two places outside the National Park.

Plants in the wild were mostly on ridges, on banks of the streams or epiphytic. Some of the healthiest plants we saw on my second trip were on hungry clay on road side banks, in full exposure to the sun etc. (though they would get shade or cloud cover for part of the day) In cultivation here they seem to prefer full sun on a warm aspect and preferably on raised or sloping ground. Our garden is on a low ridge of volcanic ash and is almost frost free in most years. My wife and I run a small nursery specializing in Camellias, Magnolias, Azaleas and Vireya Rhododendrons, for which the demand is snowballing. The demand for these plants is centered on a R. laetum X R. zoelleri hybrid (crossed by Tom Lelliott, raised by Ewen Perrott and now registered by us as R. Tropic Glow) of which we can't get enough yet.

As mentioned before, I am a "compulsive hybridist", so our place is cluttered with seedlings of Rhododendrons, Magnolias and Camellias. Some worth while results have been achieved. I grow Vireya seedlings to blooming in containers, pick the winners (if any), sell the majority in bloom and through out or graft new varieties on to the poor ones.

Oz Blumhardt
No 9 R.D.
Whangarei
New Zealand

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From Bill Miller Portland Orgon USA
Dear VV, Oct. 23, 1984

Have been raising Vireya seed on rotten wood, nothing else, works great.

Bill Miller
3974 S.W. Wapato
Portland, Oregon
USA

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From Ramon Reyes New Jersey USA
Dear VV, Dec. 21, 1984

As an indoor light gardener for the last five years, I have been successfully raising bromelias, philodendrons, hibiscus, cacti, succulents and other tropical houseplants. Lately, I wanted more color in blooms, more epiphytes, more exotic and robust foliage, as well as the challenge of raising tropical alpines. Due to limited growing space, I had to choose between primulas and vireyas; so I chose vireyas, and have been growing them for the last six months. As a avid and persistent indoor light gardener, I will not fail to bloom my vireyas. In fact, I anticipate my someday, encouraging outdoor growers to grow vireyas indoors, as well as encouraging other indoor light gardeners to make vireya additions to their gardens. Imagine, vireyas blooming as houseplants—under lights—throughout the gardening world!!!

I grow my plants under four, Vita-lite, power-twist fluorescent lights. I use Vita-lite because their illumination is the closest approximation to the suns natural light spectrum, and I use the power-twist because it provides 30% more light intensity than the standard fluorescent tube. During the winter, the little heat produced by these light fixtures keeps the plants and growing area warm. During the summer, this little heat is counteracted by air-conditioning. However, my plants do "summer" on a shady terrace where they receive daily drenchings and breezes.

I am very happy with the way the plants are growing for me, in my twelfth story apartment. I now have to work on getting them to bloom. I should mention that I will have to give them more time to grow since they are recently acquired rooted cuttings of four to six inches in height. Eventually, however, I will want to discourage vegetative growth, and encourage flower bud formation. I hope to facilitate flowering by cutting down on the water drenchings during August and by shortening indoor lighting durations during the Autumn and early Winter months. What do you think?

Right now my medium consists of equal parts of osmunda fiber, peat moss and shredded orchid bark. However, after reading Norman Cruttwell's description of natural growing conditions in Papua New Guinea, I think I might experiment with a new medium of equal parts humus, leaf mold, sphagnum moss, peat moss and shredded orchid bark.

I've already learned so much from reading issue #4, and would really like for you to double-check me on the following pointers which I picked up in issue #4 of the Vireya Vine; (1) I must not keep my medium too acidic, or I will unintentionally starve my plants regardless of my fertilization regimen. (2) I must be very careful about high temperatures. (3) I should use a high phosphorous fertilizer. I'd also like to know how high temperatures adversely affect vireyas? Is it mere heat exhaustion that does them in? Or is it fungi proliferation that kills them? Does it really get cold in those mountains of tropical New Guinea?

Eventually I hope to be able to answer the following questions as a result of my one indoor light gardening; Is there a difference, between species and hybrids, in their degree of amenability to indoor light culture? Also, what specific vireyas bloom more readily and consistently under fluorescent lights? In any event, I also look forward to learning the names of all vireya species and hybrids that have a tendency to bloom more in the orange and/or peach range of colors—especially the names of those vireyas that tend to be everblooming or "easier" to bloom. I find orange blooms most spectacular!

Desiring to learn more about vireyas, I've ordered Royen and Kores's book Ericaceae of the High Mountains of New Guinea. I ordered the book from the Rhododendron Species Foundation of which I am a member. I'd like to learn about other vireya publications and/or photo-copied vireya literature that I may be able to buy. Also, has Timber Press put out that book on vireyas yet? How can I get it? If not printed yet, how is that book coming along? (Ed note- the main reason we are putting out the VV is because not much Vireya literature is available. Tom Tatum we hear is working on a book again and we wish him good speed. The RHS hand book is also a good vireya book EWS).

I'm also enthused about researching the pioneering importation and hybridization that the Veitch growers did during the 1800's. I will share whatever I learn. One important question that I have is— why have I heard that vireyas have only recently been discovered? Did the plants cultivated in the 1800's drop out of sight for a while, and suddenly re-emerge in the 1960's? Is there a "mystique" surrounding the recent introduction of vireyas to cultivation?

I wish to buy more vireyas, so I would appreciate receiving all catalogs and/or price listings of vireyas that are for sale, as well as receiving names and addresses of nurseries and growers which will sell and ship me plants. Since I have a permit to import admissible nursery stock into the U.S. I would appreciate the names and addresses of foreign sellers as well.

Ramon Reyes
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USA

We think that most of Ramon's questions may have been answered in VV# 5.

How about some one out there sending him some good plants and letting him work out the light problem for us. EWS.

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From Fran Rutherford Port Orchard, Washington USA
Dear VV, Feb. 14, 1985

Growing Vireyas from seed is often very frustrating. Seedlings will grow to 1/4 inch and then become dormant for months on end. During the past three months, I have been spraying them, once a month with a solution of Gibberellic acid. The strength of the solution is 100 parts per million. The small plants have more than doubled in size with no ill effects. The original idea is from Brian Clancy of Australia. Any other ideas???

The American Rhododendron Society Journal Vol. 39 1985, reports on success using Alfalfa as a growth stimulant for Rhododendron seedlings. (starting with plants that are 4 to 6" tall). I have been adding Alfalfa cattle-feed pellets to my propagating bed mixture with good results. I will now try using Alfalfa water (1 1/2 cups of pellets for 5 gallons of water); Each 4" pot to be watered twice with 1/3 cup of solution. Hope to have good results in a later issue of the Vine.

Fran Rutherford
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USA

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The following list is from Clive Justice, Vancouver B.C. who has a fabulous collection of old Rhododendron Books. Some one out there needs the project of taking a list like the one that follows, check and see if the names are valid, locate them on a map and hopefully encourage some one to go and get some plants from the wild.

This list is from the book "Rhododendrons and Azaleas" by Clement Gray Bowers. Printed in 1936 page 472.

RHODODENDRONS FORM THE PHILIPPINE ISLANDS

R. apoanum	quadrasianum, f. halconense
bagobonum	quadrasianum, var. malindangense
brachygynum	rosmarinifolium
catanduanense	Schadenbergii
Clementis	spectabile
Copelandii	subsessile
Kochii	subsessile, var. baucoense
leytense	taxifolium
lo oense	Vadalii
Loheri	Whiteheadii (Currainii)
mindanaense	Williamsi
Nortoniae	zanthopetalum

If you are going to work on the above list how about adding the ones that are missing (if any?). Also would the Philippines be an easy place to go looking for Rhododendrons?

Hear's another list from the same book for plants from the Island of Java. Peter Valder from Australia has looked around Java and told me at the last ARS National Meeting in San Francisco that Java was easy to get around if you tried real hard and waved your arms a lot.

RHODODENDRONS FROM JAVA

R. album	malayanum (syn. lampongum)
apoanum (syn. jasminiflorum)	retusum
citrinum	Wilhilminae
javanicum	Zollingeri (syn. tubiflorum)
Loerzingii	

Now really, I sure would like to have a nice pink form of R. retusum. Or even a picotee form. Some one sure should go find these plants. E.White Smith

ANOTHER project we need to work on is a good list of clonal forms of real good do'er plants. As we all know, every plant is not a good one, it may bloom early in life but the flowers do not last, it may grow rank and not break from leaf buds and on and on and on!!! I will start the list with two plants; #1 is R. christii which came to us from the Wau Ecological Institute in New Guinea as cuttings. Roots easy, blooms young, flowers last and is good color. #2 is a plant I have that came from Peter Schick; R. jasminiflorum v punctatum (with a label from Australia). This plant was in bloom for two weeks in the greenhouse before I brought it in to the house three weeks ago. Some plants do not like to be taken into the house from the greenhouse and will kick the flowers off quickly. This plant of R. jasminiflorum has not even wilted the first flower yet and I think that is a sign of a real good plant.

O K out there in Vireya Land, send us some more good do'er names and if you would be so generous you may want to send a cutting or two on for the Rhododendron Species Foundation to grow and distribute. The RFS only source of plants is from people who have the good ones. They make a great effort to grow and distribute the very best forms of all Rhododendron species. The RSF will also soon have a area in the cool house for Vireyas to be displayed and studied. This is something that may never be practical for other tender Rhodie groups like the Maddenii's because they get so large.

We are now current with all correspondence and all requests for back issues are in the mail. We have sufficient funds on hand to publish several more issues of the "Vireya Vine" providing we eliminate those who do not choose to provide financial support. The Rhododendron Species Foundation will continue to provide supporting services but can not under-write the cost of this publication. SO, our records may not be perfect and if you are a non contributor your issue (this one) will be marked "COMPLEMENTARY". If we are in error let us know or if you wish to continue to receive the "Vine" please send $10 US. The "vine" will be published four or more times a year. Fran.

Have you sent in your Registration for The International Rhododendron Species Symposium to be hosted by the Rhododendron Species Foundation yet? For all of you Vireya "Nuts" there is going to be a lot of Vireya people there. Graham Smith from Pukiti in New Zealand will be there. Pukiti has a good collection of Vireyas.

LET'S GET SOME LETTERS IN TO THE VINE ABOUT WHAT YOU ARE DOING

VIREYA VINE
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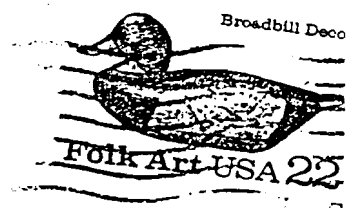
TACOMA WASH. MAR 1985



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