

VIREYA VINE

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FOUNDATION

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E. White Smith, Editor

SO how about some letters. Letters about anything to do with Vireyas. Anything, anything, anything. You must be doing something out there in Vireya Land??? EWS

From Brian Oldham

Auckland, New Zealand

Dear VV,

October 2004

Taken from the Auckland Rhododendron Society newsletter

**“FOOLPROOF” PROPAGATION OF TEMPERATE RHODOS,
VIREYAS AND OTHERS FOR THE HOME GARDENER - by Brian
Oldham**

Many of us home gardeners occasionally want to propagate one or two cuttings of some acquired treasure but don't have any sophisticated facilities, no bottom heat, no ultraviolet 24 hour lighting and no misting. The cutting stuck in a pot of potting mix in the shade does not always work. The mortality is high.

A few years ago I read somewhere of a simple technique for rooting difficult conventional (temperate) rhododendron cuttings using 2 litre soft drink bottles. With experimentation I have further refined and simplified the process with near 100% success for vireyas and temperate rhodos. Being rather short of space I use a soft drink bottle, 1.5 litre. washed and clean.

Method

- 1) With a saw blade (a hacksaw is ideal, but a bread knife will do), put a cut radially in each of the knobs at the bottom of the plastic bottle, this is for perfect drainage.
- 2) Saw through the bottle at the top rung, some two thirds up the bottle but leave a small uncut hinge of half a centimetre.

3) Fill the bottom portion of the bottle to about 2/3rds with whatever propagation mix you use.

I find that about 2 parts of perlite or similar to 1 part of Dalton's potting mix is excellent. Even pure potting mix is successful but with higher levels of failures for the more difficult specimens. (You can often find a pile of river sand or pumice on the roadside if they have been doing gas or water-main work in your area. They would never miss a liter or two from their pile.) If you can bear it you can sterilize the potting mix in the microwave by dampening it and cooking it on high for 30 minutes. Warning! – the smell is awful, but there is less likelihood of any early fungal infection destroying your cutting before it is rooted. What ever you mix, it must be very open in texture and thoroughly wetted.

4) Take your cutting from actively growing semi-hardwood, i.e. it must be firm but supple, bending easily. Cut very cleanly with a very sharp knife or a razor blade just below a node. I use an old surgical scalpel but most of you will not have one of those.

5) It helps to trim up the side of the cutting in a shaving motion for approx. 1 cm. Cut just through the outside layer but not into the woody layers (cambian layers). This is not essential. Avoid damaging the node in any way.

6) Growth hormone powders and gels, with or without fungicides, are expensive, have short expiry dates and are not very effective. A simple rooting enhancer is to steep your cutting in water to which you have added half a Dispirin (or half an aspirin) per litre for 6 to 12 hours. This also ensures your cutting is fully hydrated.

7) Firm the mix in the bottle. Water well then push a hole into the mix centrally. Put the cutting into the hole. Do not force it into the mix or you will damage the delicate layers at the cut end and that is where the rooting will take place. Firm the cutting in place with your fingers.

8) Flip the top of the bottle back into place and seal completely with Sellotape. Keep the lid screwed on.

9) Label the bottle with a garden pen - both name and date. This is important.

10) You won't remember what it is or when you did it otherwise.

11) Place in well lit warm position, inside or outside, but not in direct sunlight.

12) Dependent on temperature open the top and spray or run in a little water about once every 2-3 weeks.

Good luck. Have fun!

Auckland, New Zealand 1005

Taken from the Southern California Chapter, Rhododendron Society Newsletter

From the President's Desk

branch. In any event the water drains away from the plant.

The same is true for those vireyas which grow terrestrially: rainwater drains away from the plant.

About fertilizers: sometimes this depends upon to whom you are talking. A regular plan for fertilizing your vireyas is a worthwhile plan. Devise one for yourself and, then, FOLLOW it. If that means a light fertilizer once monthly, then do it. If it means every two months, then do that. For those who want to promote leaf growth, a fertilizer with a higher nitrogen content works best. The numbers run in the order of nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium, so the NPK factor. A fertilizer which says 30-10-10 is one which contains more nitrogen than either phosphorus or potassium and will promote leaf growth and will certainly be acidic. One which says 10-30-10 will contain proportionately more phosphorus and will promote more flowering. Regular foliar feeding seems to promote excellent growth and flowering as well. However, that should be done when the plant leaves are not expected to be exposed to water for at least 12 hours. That's necessary for the plants to be able to absorb the liquid through their leaves before water comes along and washes them off.

Outdoors, as most of us here plant our vireyas, care should be taken that they are not planted in a location which is too shady too much of the time. That tends to produce "legginess" on the plant and at the same time reduces the chances for the production of flowers. "Legginess" is best prevented by planting the vireya in a location which provides enough sun without leaving it to the mercies of the blazing unmitigated afternoon sun during the summer months. Pinching the plant is also very helpful, especially if the plant is a young one. Fullness of growth can be encouraged by doing this. Usually two or more branches will grow from the point where the plant is pinched. Over time a very full plant growth can be achieved.

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*OK, now there is another Vireya newsletter alive and well in the world. The Australian Vireya newsletter is up and going again, it's called 'The Vireya Venture'. Graham Price and his wife Janet are doing it from their apartment in Melbourne. Good for them and I wish them good luck. They would like to distribute the newsletter by E-mail (no charge but if you want hard copy mailed there has to be a cost to you). Send your request to E-mail address ***lithic01@bigpond.net.au*** I have their issue #55 in hand and it is very well done with good color photos.*

The following is from a great little newsletter about all kinds of interesting things. If you should subscribe please say that you heard about the Avant Gardener from The Bovees Nursery and we will get a couple of dollars and will donate them to the RSF.

Reprinted with permission from the “Avant Gardener”,

(Also go back to VV73 and read about this same issue on page #1)

SUPER PLANT PROTECTOR

Many biostimulants, designed to improve the growth, health and yields of plants, are on the market. One of the best is also the cheapest.

As we reported just a year ago, watering and spraying plants with a very dilute solution of aspirin in water (1:10,000) can produce remarkable results. Aspirin is salicylic acid, a substance that plants make to trigger natural defenses against bacteria, fungi and viruses. Applying aspirin speeds up this “systemic acquired resistance” response.

Tests at the Demonstration Organic Vegetable Garden at the University of Rhode Island (Kingston, RI 02881) show the value of aspirin water. The Garden's Director, Master Gardener Martha MacBurnie, tells us:

“The biggest surprise of the 2004 season was aspirin water. I read about it in THE AVANT GARDENER last winter and we just tried it as a lark - we didn't think it would really do much. The results were amazing - improved vigor and yield compared with the other treatments. Tomatoes and basil, especially, looked bigger, and healthier. Pole beans and eggplants produced significantly more with aspirin water.’

The vegetables were grown in compost enriched and drip-irrigated raised beds. Beds of the same variety were sprayed (plants and soil) every three weeks with either aspirin water (1.5 aspirins to 2 gallons of water) or one of three commercial biostimulant products. Tomatoes showed the greatest benefits from aspirin water treatment:

“We grew ‘Sungold’, ‘Red Cherry’, ‘Blight Tolerant’ and ‘San Marzanov’. The aspirin water plants were the most vigorous, the healthiest, and produced about twice as many tomatoes as the second best (a commercial biostimulant). We saw no aphids, whitefly or early blight on the aspirin water plants - the three big problems with tomatoes in years past”.

Some things you always wanted to know.

Speaking about bark, sawdust, soil mixes. At least here in the western United States bark mulch, sawdust and mixed soil is often sold by the "Unit". *sf=square feet*

1 Unit = 7.4 cubic yards 1 Yard = 27 cubic feet 1 Yard = 202 US Gallons

1 Unit will cover, 2,400 sf 1 inch deep, 1,200 sf 2 inches deep, 800 sf 3 inches deep

1 Yard will cover 324 sf 1 inch deep, 162 sf 2 inches deep, 108 sf 3 inches deep.

Apologies to folks in places other than the USA, we still use inches, feet, yards, pounds, miles, gallons, etc.

Like fancy glass? Have a look at this Internet web site. He is even going to try Vireyas.
www.natureglass.com

The Vireya Vine is financed by its subscribers. The only things you pay for are printing and postage. Fran Rutherford and I and my wife Lucie, 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.

We print this list because we think people are interested in who is getting the VV and growing the plants. We say Washington State so that you do not confuse it with the US capital. **Remember that a letter to the Vine gets you a free subscription upgrade.**

New subscribers or recent contributors are.

Peter Adams	Hawaii
Roger Beck	Hawaii
Simon Bees	Australia
Walt Brooks	Washington State
Mark Colombel	France
Jane Foster	California
Scott Ginther	Oregon
Bill Greer	Oregon
Christy Hartsell	California
Hawaii Chapter	Hawaii
Tom Just	Denmark
Heinz Kratz	Germany
Helen Krayenhoff	California
Mogens Rasmussen	Denmark
Loretta Welsh	Oregon
Charles Zimmerman	New York

Long time VV readers will remember Leslie Riggall who wrote to the Vine from South Africa. Within the last two years they had relocated to the country of Panama and started their garden up again. The sad news is that Leslie passed away on November 23 of this year. RIP Leslie, we will miss your wisdom about growing Vireyas

New Vireya book. 'Vireya Rhododendrons' by Christopher Fairweather, Hants England This is a small booklet with 45 pages and lots of color photos. Included are history, cultivation hints, pest and diseases. A short list of species is included, and a list of hybrids with descriptions. Very nice. Chris holds the National (UK) collection of Vireya Rhododendron Hybrids (They do things like that in England which I think is a very useful idea).

I have 20 copies and will sell them for \$12.00US postpaid, here in the USA.

If you want a copy please send a personal check for \$12 made out to The Bovees Nursery and yours will be in the mail the next day (until I run out and order more, also please send your e-mail address). See Bovees address on the back page of this newsletter.

*Other people around the world should order direct from Christopher Fairweather at;
The Garden Center*

High Street, Beautlieu

Hants, England SO42 7YB

You can also get it from their website

www.vireya.co.uk (secure website)

Telephone 01590 612113 or e-mail chrisfairweather@waitrose.com

You know the old saying, "it really is a small world"? One time 12 or so years ago I was walking through the domestic terminal at the Auckland, New Zealand airport and someone called my name. Now E. White is different enough that I turned around and there was a rhodie friend from up north in Washington State. You can't get much farther from Tacoma, Washington or Portland, Oregon than New Zealand. Small world.

Last time Lucie and I were in Hawaii on the big island, we were at a secluded National Park beach, and I had been in the water snorkeling around. The beach had very little shade so I was walking around looking for a tiny bit when some one said "Hi White" and there sitting under a dab of shade were Chris Fairweather and his wife. Small world.

We are all getting a bit older also, I turned 70 in 2004. Got a Christmas card from my old friend Ralph Sangster who lives in the Melbourne, Australia area. Ralph says he is 92. Wow. For many years Ralph tried and tried to start an organization called the "International Rhododendron Union". It was to be a loose knit group of Rhododendron societies from around the world, formed to pass information and to help the societies and groups keep up with what was going on world wise. Great idea, but that never came about because maybe no one else cared. At least the national groups did not care enough. Maybe someday???

Anyway, I met Ralph over 34 years ago at a Rhododendron conference in NZ and Australia. From then on we met many times over the years. When a bunch of us were getting ready to go on a plant (rhododendron) hunting trip to Sikkim in 1973 I wrote to Ralph because he had been there already and walked many of the trails we planned on doing. Ralph mailed back to me his slide collection of his trip. At that time Sikkim was truly the end of the world so the slides really gave us a good insight of the area. EWS

See Chris Callard's wonderful Web site at www.vireya.net

Get into this group and let's talk about Vireyas www.groups.yahoo.com/group/vireya

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They also handle the Vireya seed exchange. WorldWide.

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