VIREYA VINE

ISSUE #76, August 2005

PUBLISHED BY THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE OF THE RHODODENDRON SPECIES FOUNDATION

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

From Lyn Craven Melba, Australia
Dear Vireya Vine, May 2005

Autumn-flowering *R. macgregoriae*

My greenhouse contains three forms of *R. macgregoriae*. One, a pale yellow-flowered, and very mildew-prone, forms flowers in late winter. [Often I have thought about using it as a parent with the objective of getting a good, bushy yellow but the memory of the mildew always stops me. What terrible genes to pass on!!!] Then a plant that appears to fit the common form of the species (as far as one can determine this from herbarium collections) has orange corolla lobes, a yellow tube, and is winter/spring-flowering.

The third form I have has slightly more intensely-coloured corolla lobes (near enough to salmon in colour), more narrow leaves, and is autumn-flowering. The last form is quite an attractive plant with foliage that is quite different from that of the common form. To my mind, this would be an excellent plant for use as a parent in crosses with other autumn-flowering species. In general, *macgregoriae* has excellent flower form, and is not too open a grower, and the autumn-flowering plant demonstrates these features also.

This autumn, I went to self the plant so that I would have seed available for anyone interested, and for the Vireya seed bank. Wouldn't you know it? No pollen, at least nothing that I could readily see. With some doubts as to whether the time was being invested wisely, I self "pollinated" a couple of inflorescences. I had planned to do four or five inflorescences, but ---- "No pollen, no seed". Looking at the plant a few days ago, to my surprise one of the inflorescences now has four or five strongly expanded ovaries, to the point that they really should be called young fruit. The other inflorescence does not look so good and I think it highly likely the developing ovaries will abort. While I doubt that I will have much seed for sending overseas, I hope that there will be some, and next year is another matter. Let us all hope it will be the "Year of the Pollen".

Lyn Craven, Melba, Australia (average winter minimum for July is -0.2 °C (about 32F); average summer maximum for January is +27.7 °C (82F))

Also from Lyn at the same time

Why should anyone bother to grow *leucogigas*?

Quite some years ago there was an item in VV that, if my memory serves me correctly, was either querying why people would want to grow *R. leucogigas* or pointing out the impracticality of growing it. I cannot remember, but maybe White has a better memory and can dig out the reference and put the record straight. The general thrust of the argument still sticks in my mind and I have been intending to write a few paras for VV on the topic ever since. That I cannot actually remember the precise topic is only a minor inconvenience.

In my greenhouse there are two reproductively mature plants of *leucogigas*. One is the type form from the Cyclops Range in Papua (formerly Irian Jaya), Indonesia, and the other a cutting-grown plant from the original plant introduced by me from the Hunstein Range, East Sepik Province, Papua New Guinea, the line that has been given the cultivar name 'Hunstein's Secret'. Very frequently, each time the plants flower there is no pollen. Whether this has some physiological explanation, or is a more simple nutritional problem relating to nutrition per se, I have no idea. [And it is not unique to *leucogigas* either. My feeling is that it is more likely to be a physiological matter as general growth appears to be satisfactory.] Whatever the cause, one has no pollen and one cannot self the plant (or have pollen for other crossing either).

My greenhouse also contains a medium-sized seed-grown plant of 'Hunstein's Secret' and five smaller plants of it, also seed-grown. These are not very thrifty and I have often wondered if there is a loss of vigour due to the selfing. What is needed is to have the seed-grown plants flower and then be crossed to siblings and, for comparison, selfed. [No matter if the siblings do not flower synchronously. As long as one obtains pollen it can be stored and used when the next sibling flowers.] The (fingers crossed) resultant seedlings can then be compared for relative vigour in growth. If it eventuates that crossed seed gives more vigorous progeny than selfed seed, then propagation of more vigorous lines of species such as *leucogigas* can be expedited through using crossed seed.

As it takes space to grow on some of the slower growing species, and greenhouse space is usually at a premium in temperate zones, it may be that people living in optimal regions for their growth outdoors, such as Hawaii or some parts of Australia could volunteer to grow on the necessary stock of plants to act as seed and pollen parents. Obtaining a stock of plants is the second hurdle to overcome. I would be quite happy to strike cuttings from my seedlings so that a stock of unique genotypes was available, and there may well be growers in the US who have seedlings grown on from the seed that John Rouse so freely distributed. I suppose that I should have taken cuttings long ago to hasten the production of flowers, for earlier flowering seems to be one consequence of adventitious root development. It appears there is a "juvenile" effect with seedling Vireyas that delays flowering; this is apparently negated by the production of adventitious roots when cuttings are taken from the seedlings. Such phenomena occur in other plants too.

A friend in north Queensland, Australia, prefers to grow the rainforest tree *Syzygium* (Myrtaceae, the guava and eucalyptus family) from cuttings as they come into flower many years before seedling-grown plants.

Rhododendron leucogigas is far too beautiful a plant, and far too important for hybridising, for it to be allowed to disappear from horticulture. We should collectively work towards its secure, and widespread, cultivation.

Lyn Craven, Melba, Australia (average winter minimum for July is -0.2 °C; average summer maximum for January is +27.7 °C)

Copied From the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh
Taxonomy of Rainforest Trees of Central Kalimantan
(Southern portion of the island of Boreno)

Kalimantan supports the largest expanse of tropical rainforest in SE Asia, with an estimated 500,000km2 area. It is made up mainly of lowland mixed dipterocarp forest, although there are also extensive mangroves, peat and freshwater swamp forests, and the largest heath forest (karangas) in SE Asia. The forests of Indonesia as a whole are incredibly rich, with about 10% of the world's plant species (many of which are endemic) being found in 1.3% of the Earth's total land area.
Deforestation is a major threat, with the rate being second only to that of Brazil. This is, however, all the more serious since so few collections have been made in Kalimantan, with an average of only 12 collections being made for each km2, compared to 199 in Java and 126 in Sabah.

The role of the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh
As a founder member of the Edinburgh Centre for Tropical Forests, the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE) has been involved in a large-scale project funded by the Department for International Development (formerly the Overseas Development Administration, ODA) to promote and develop sustainable management and conservation of tropical forests in Indonesia.
The major output of RBGE in this project has been the production of the two-volume Manual of Larger and More Important Non-Dipterocarp Trees of Central Kalimantan. This covers some 1000 tree species representing 72 families. It has been designed to be useful to foresters and environmentalists with a basic biological training and to be both a field guide and a bridge to the more detailed scientific literature. It is hoped that this will facilitate further study of these poorly known forests and help foresters and environmentalists make more informed decisions on development and conservation issues.
A checklist of the economically important trees of Central Kalimantan containing 76 families, 276 genera and 963 species has been produced.

Over the past five years over 10,000 leafy twigs and detailed bark descriptions have been collected from trees within the project's experimental plots, and a further 7000 fertile collections have been made from the surrounding area. The identification of these trees has produced one of the most detailed data sets of virgin forest in SE Asia and has already been included in the Manual and been used as baseline data for growth modeling studies being carried out by Edinburgh University. Detailed ethno botanical information has also been collected from the rainforest surrounding the research site and has provided valuable additional information from an area where very few studies of this type have ever been carried out.

Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, Inverleith Row, Edinburgh EH3 5LR, United Kingdom

From Brian Clancy Bentleigh, Vic. Australia (Melbourne)
Dear VV May 2005

R. 'Gardenia Odyssey' is one of the most outstanding Vireya introductions from the wild in the past thirty years notwithstanding that it is of hybrid origin. Mature plants produce fabulous, spectacular trusses of up to 29 creamy yellow, scented flowers every two to three weeks for three to four months.

'Gardenia Odyssey' was received as R. gardenia by the late Bill Mearns in 1973 from Welensky a forester in Irian Jaya. Bill first flowered the 'so called *R. gardenia*' in 1981. The same year he donated 12 large plants propagated from the original to the Victorian Branch of the Australian Rhododendron Society. The first flower of this consignment was exhibited and awarded "best of night" at the 1986 monthly meeting of the Victorian Branch. It was obvious to all that the magnificent truss of 26 creamy-yellow, scented flowers indicated five-star potential but no pollen was available as the flower was to be photographed the following day. The fabulous 26-flower truss bore no resemblance to *R. gardenia* and the 5 and 6 petals on the flowers of the truss indicated a sure sign of hybridity.

From the 12 large plants donated to the Victorian Branch in 1981, one year old struck cuttings of the 'so called *R. gardenia'* were made available at $10 each, one to each member who attended a garage sale in February, 1988. From this distribution John O'hara was the first member to flower and exhibit the cultivar at the November 1990 monthly meeting of the Branch. Notwithstanding that the benches were overflowing with the peak exhibition of all rhododendrons, the exhibit of the so called *R. gardenia* with 23 creamy yellow flowers with a lovely scent was sensational and clearly voted best of night.

In the Rhododendron Year Book 1993, Lyn Craven, in his article "Bringing a conclusion to confusion; R. 'Gardenia Odyssey'", determined that Bill Mearn's *R. gardenia* was neither *R. gardenia* Schlechter or a species and the plant is of hybrid origin.

He registered the name 'Gardenia Odyssey' to reflect the nomenclatural journey on which the plant had been. He then suggested that the plant was introduced to Australia from the Netherlands but this is not correct.

For more than 15 years there had been no doubt, whatsoever, that the plant originated from Welensky, a forester in Irian Jaya in 1973. In this latter regard, it is significant that World Authority on Vireyas, Dr. H. Sleumer noted in 'Blumea 21 (1973)' 357 - 376 that *R.gardenia* Schlr was collected on 18-3-1973 by Sauver and Sinke East of Bailem R.Valley and East of Western Sepik District, Telefomin, Oksapmin, 1585 m. in mixed forest with Fagaceae and Araucaria, fr. NGF 41542. It should be noted that both collection dates are simultaneous and confirm without any doubt that the magnificent 'Gardenia Odyssey' originally came from Irian Jaya as *R.gardenia.*

As an amateur back-yard gardener, I have been growing species and hybrids rhododendrons intensely since 1952 and Vireyas since 1955. I have my own glass house, heated benches artificial lighting to extend the length of daylight. For best results, I have always maintained for more than 50 years the philosophy of growing and hybridizing the best. To illustrate this idea, I have frequently said that to create racehorses you do not start with donkeys, why start with 'donkeys' when you can start with the best available! Ordinary plants take just as much effort as the best but the results bear absolutely clear results.

The moment I first saw the 14-inch wide truss of the so called *R.gardenia* in May 1986, I was certain that I had seen the "El Dorado" of Vireya flowers rich in hybridizing possibilities. Since then I have used 'Gardenia Odyssey' both as a pollen parent and as a seed parent in 68 crosses. With the exception of three back-crosses the majority of the 68 crosses have produced very good to outstanding off-spring but too many to list in a short article. The three back-crosses to 'Gardenia Odyssey' surprisingly produced a small percentage of floriferous dwarf plants thus proving the hybridity of 'Gardenia Odyssey'. Probably the best of my crosses with 'Gardenia Odyssey' is that with a very good R. javanicum. I have flowered 77 siblings of this cross and 34 of the siblings can only be rated as well above average to outstanding. Cutting grown plants of this cross have flowered from 7-inch high and the number of flowers in the truss have varied from 10 to 13. As the plants increased in size the numbers of flowers increased appreciatively up to the best of 35 flowers in the truss. The colour of the flowers varied from rich orange, vivid red, pink, yellow and various shade in between.

Relevant highlights of recent Rhododendron Shows at the National Rhododendron Garden, Olinda, Victoria, as published in Branch Newsletters are:

2002 1. The highlight; Brian Clancy's "Certificate of Merit" winning truss of 'Gardenia Odyssey' x *R. javanicum* ball-head of bright orange containing 35 flowers.

2003 Brian Clancy's 'Gardenia Odyssey' x *R. javanicum* truss winner in C17 with 34 Red-orange flowers, proving last year's "Certificate of Merit" of the same variety was no fluke.

2004 Brian Clancy's 'Gardenia Odyssey' stood out like a beacon and was awarded the "Certificate of Merit" and the prize for the best Vireya in the Show.
(it should be noted that the Society's Certificate of Merit is the highest award in the Show and can only be made for an entry of exceptional merit).

Brian Clancy
31 Renown Street Bentleigh Vic. 3204
Australia.

(Next page see some of Brian's photos)

In VV 75 I asked the following; How many of you do foliar feeding of your plants. Does anyone use controlled release fertilizer? At Bovees we use only our "mostly organic" fertilizer that we mix up in a cement mixer. It is mostly canola and alfalfa meal, with iron chelate, some super phosphate, and a bit of potash and dolomite and other things. We also use a water soluble 20-20-20 at ¼ strength along with a surfactant(to help weet the potting mix) a couple of times a year put on through a siphon system. What do you use? EWS
Here is a good question. But really what do you use/do???

From Jack Goertzen — Riverside, California
Dear VV, — June 2005

Here are some answers from the question on page 7 of the last VV, which I enjoy especially because I am a native Oregonian (for the rest of you that means we come from Oregon). There was an extensive answer in the March 2002 Vireya Vine. but having just returned from Australia where I visited four growers, I can add some more info.

One grower uses non-composted pine bark media. He put slow release fertilizer on the small pots and cuttings.

Another grower uses coor only for potting.

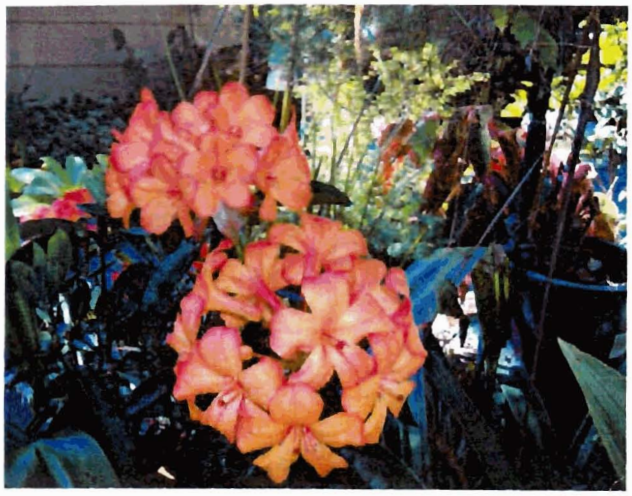
And yet another also uses non-composted pine bark.

All are very successful!

Ron Moodycliffe took me to the Olinda Garden (Australian Rhododendron Society garden) where there must have been over 1,000 Rhodos of different kinds in bloom.

Jack Goertzen
8407 Raintree Ave.
Riverside, CA 92504
Phone 909-785-0746

We (the Vireya Vine) do not do color very often 350 copies world wide and color cost us $0.30 each.



R. 'Orange Queen', From Christy Hartsell, Palo Alto, California

In front are Julie & Bill Miller, vireya growers from Tacoma, Washington (my daughter EWS) at their wedding dinner with Sandy and Mitch Mitchell, in Volcano, Hawaii.

R. leucogigas blooming in our greenhouse at Bovees Nursery in Portland, Oregon

R. 'Gardenia Odyssey' x javanicum #26. one of Brian Clancy's great hybrids. Bentleigh, Victoria, Australia (Melbourne area)

R. 'Gardenia Odyssey' x javanicum #26. another one of Brian Clancy's great hybrids.

R. 'Gardenia Odyssey'. Photo from Brian Clancy photo looks white but it really is a nice cream color.

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

VIREYA NURSERIES

The Bovees Nursery (Lucie Sorensen-Smith)
1737 SW Coronado (E. White Smith)
Portland, OR 9721 9 USA
(503)-244-9341 or 1-800-435-9250
E-mail info@bovees.com www.bovees.com
Catalogue is $2.00 (Mail Order)

Glendoick Gardens (Kenneth & Peter Cox)
Glendoick, Perth Mail Order
Scotland, U.K. PH2 7NS www.glendoick.com
Phone Nursery 073 886 205

D. & PJ. Brown
Vernom Road www.homepages.ihug.co.nz/~brownnz
Te Puna, Tauranga E-mail brownz@actrix.co.nz
New Zealand Phone (07)552-4966

Mark Jury
Tikorangi, RD 43 E-mail jury@xtra.co.nz
Waitara, North Taranaki
New Zealand

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

Neil & Kathryn Puddey Nursery
PO Box 126, Woolgoolga, NSW
Australia E-mail puddey@bigpond.com
www.vireyaworldwide.net.au

Rhododendron Species Foundation
PO Box 3798 www.rhodiegarden.org
Federal Way, WA 98063 USA
(253)-838-4646 Mail Order
E-mail rsf@rhodygarden.org

Christopher Fairweather
The Garden Centre, High Street
Beaulieu, Hampshire www.vireya.co.uk
England SO42 7YR E-mail chrisfairweather@waitrose.com

Te Puna Cottage Gardens (John Kenyon)
Te Puna Road, RD6 E-mail TePuna.Cott.Gdns@xtra.co.nz
Tauranga, New Zealand web site at www.vireya.co.nz
Mail Order NZ only Phone (07)552-5756

Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust
Carrington Rd. RD4
New Plymouth E-mail pukeiti@pukeiti.org.nz
New Zealand web site at www.pukeiti.org.nz

The Vireya Venue
2 Clifford Street www.vireyavenue.com
Maleny, Queensland 4552
Australia Phone (07)5494-2179

Pacific Island Nursery (Sherla Bertelmann & Richard Marques)
P. O. Box 1953 E-mail pacislenursery@interpac.net
Keaau, HI 96749 (808)966-9225
www.pacificislandnursery.com
They also handle the Vireya seed exchange. WorldWide.

VIREYA VINE
RHODODENDRON SPECIES FOUNDATION
P. O. BOX 3798
FEDERAL WAY, WA 98063