VIREYA VINE

ISSUE #93, MARCH 2011

PUBLISHED BY THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE OF THE RHODODENDRON SPECIES FOUNDATION

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

In the past I have had a notice in the printed issues of the Vireya Vine about donations to the Vine. Our policy has been "$10US forever, or for 10 years if I don't at least hear from you". We mail and e-mail the Vireya Vine to about 300 people around the world (about ½ & ½). Even using e-mail to send the Vine we still have the cost of the printed and mailed copies which comes to about $150US per issue. On the printed and mailed copies there is a year date showing when you last contributed. But I don't know how to do that with the e-mailed ones. I just deleted over 30 names that we had no contact for over 10- years. Wow, 10 years is a long time to get a newsletter and to give no feedback of any kind.

SO, we are ok with money funds right now, but everyone should send in at least something once in a while. You can also get $$ credit for sending a letter to the Vine which would be much better than just money. If you send money, please send it to the RSF at the above address and mark it for the Vireya Vine and they will tell me. You can send checks (USA) or credit card numbers. If you send a credit card number, send it by mail, not e-mail please

It is interesting to note that some people, maybe 10 to 20, send in a contribution ever year or two. A couple of people have contributed over $300US during the years they have gotten the Vine. So do something or at least say that you don't want the Vine anymore. Please if you change your address or your e-mail address, please, please let me know. Wrong address is really a pain for the editor. Really E White

NEED YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS

From Clarice Clark — January, 2011
Dear VV, — Puyallup, Washington

Wanted: Advice on flowering problem: 1-25-2011

I was very disappointed recently when the first flower on my R. pseudobuxifolium failed to open. Last month, the florets dropped and drooped, but the color failed to develop and the lobes did not open up and flare out. The flower seemed to atrophy. I have one theory and one fear: My theory is that it got too cold. I keep my greenhouse at about 40° F (approx 5° C) minimum in the winter. The outside temperature during this period was in the range of 16° F (-9° C) to about 40° F, so the heater was working pretty hard.

I am reluctant to settle for this explanation as R. pseudobuxifolium occurs in the wild at 3300 meters (approximately 10, 800 ft) in open areas of a mountain summit. But maybe trying to flower in December, rather than the more natural springtime was part of the problem. 1

My fear is that I have a habit of removing the bracts on the flower buds when they look hard and shiny. I usually spray them with a fine mist of water to keep them from drying out and "trapping" the flower, but sometimes I just can't keep from removing them and trying to help out the flowering process. I know these bracts are a protective modified leaf but how essential are they to the ripening process?

Anyone have experience in this? Do you remove the bracts with fingers or tools if they appear to be drying out or failing to fall off in a timely manner? Suggestions appreciated.

Clarice Clark, Puyallup, WA

From Graham Price January 26, 2011
Dear Vireya Vine, Melbourne , Australia

For some time I have been struggling to understand what to me appears to be the erratic growth behavior of vireyas. I am sure that other collectors and hobbyists have made similar observations, but so far I am not aware of a sound explanation.

What I am talking about is the tendency of vireya plants, mostly seedlings, to just 'sit still' and for a seemingly long time not to grow. I have seen it with very small seedlings, 5mm (1/3") or so in height, germinated in small pots or trays. When eventually they are 'picked out' one discovers that many of them have virtually no roots at all and assumes they must have been surviving on moisture drawn in from their leaves. Apparently they can live like this for years.

I have also seen it with seedlings that are potted-on, say into small 50mm (2") tubes. The plant just sits there and nothing changes much for what seems like a terribly long time. I have one of these plants in front of me now, a seedling of the species *R. majus* given to me by Andrew Rouse back in July last year when he was distributing a range of species he had grown. It was repotted then from among its siblings into a 50mm tube but has not grown any larger over the past 6 months.

A month ago I repotted this small seedling into fresh soil mix but the change did not spur it into growth. All the other small seedlings I got at that time have leapt ahead and are now 200+mm tall and are looking like they want to be planted in the ground. This 'no-growth' behaviour can also occur with larger plants, though I think less often.

From my experience eventually most of these stagnant plants just wither and die so I move on to their larger and more vigorous siblings.

Only once have I been able to make a difference and get them to begin to grow. This was after I discussed the issue with the late Graham Snell and he told me that in his opinion the key problem was with the roots – or lack of them. Without a strong root system a plant just cannot be vigorous so the key is to do something to stimulate root growth. We should concentrate on growing roots, not the above ground parts, as these will simply follow.

Graham said he found the fertilizer "Hoof and Horn" to be beneficial in developing roots and getting plants to 'move ahead'. I checked on the Web and found that 'Hoof and Horn' is an old fashion style of fertilizer consisting of flakes of animal hooves and horns sourced from abattoirs. It has a high nitrogen content intended for plants with abundant green leaves, but it has a slow release rate and it also contains phosphorous for root growth. I bought some 'Hoof and Horn' (it is not widely available and I had to put an effort into getting it) and sprinkled some on the soil around my vireyas in pots. I had a lot of vireyas in pots at that time, several hundred large ones 0.5-1m (20-40") tall and a couple of hundred small ones I had grown from seed. I got the result I was looking for – almost all plants leapt ahead, even those that had been stagnant. I was very pleased with the effectiveness of 'Hoof and Horn' and for years after used it consistently, at least until my supply ran out.

My changed circumstances in recent years caused a severe reduction in vireya numbers, complete transfer to plants grown in the ground and no more growing-on from seed. Consequently, I no longer worried about stagnant seedlings. Recently I re-started striking vireya cuttings and in a small way collecting species – hence the plants from Andrew Rouse. I plan to put them all into the ground when they get large enough but until then they must remain in pots.

This was how I came to face the problem again and remembered the struggle I had and its eventual resolution. With only 6 or so plants in small plants pots it didn't seem worth while getting another supply of 'Hoof and Horn' so I turned to other root stimulants, mostly the seaweed-based liquids, but so far they have not done the trick. I will keep trying.

This led me to wonder what other growers were doing to address the problem (is it a problem or just my imagination?) and what was it about vireyas that caused this, to me, strange behaviour. I understand that plants grown on their own roots can display odd behaviour and this can be overcome by taking early cuttings (even while the plant is still only a centimeter or so high) and producing roots on the cuttings. Apparently the roots on seedlings generate hormones that regulate plant growth and other aspects of behaviour, but roots on cuttings produce different, or different amounts of, hormones and so produce a different behaviour – faster growth.

So, what is it about seedlings, and the evolution of vireyas in general, that would cause such behaviour to be adopted and apparently provide an evolutionary advantage, or at least not be an evolutionary disadvantage? One might think it had something to do with their ability to grow epiphytically, but in my opinion this is probably an accidental behavior that arises from their seed being wind-dispersed. Vireyas do not seem to be well-designed for life as epiphytes, not like ferns, orchids or bromeliads.

Vireyas are early colonisers – pioneer plants on disturbed soils, no doubt a consequence of their seed being wind-dispersed.

But, what advantage could there be in the roots of seedlings limiting their growth? Maybe something about competition among neighbouring seedlings struggling for dominance? Something about slight differences in environmental conditions triggering a different hormone balance and thus different growth rates?

I really would like to get a little more understanding of what are the factors that control plant behaviour in general and seedling growth in particular. If any readers know about these things I would love to hear about it. A stream of letters to Vireya Vine would be great to see.

Regards Graham Price Email: lithic01@bigpond.net.au
Graham is the Editor of the 'Vireya Venture' newsletter out of Australia

Note: I do not change how other people use the English language or how they spell words. Remembering that there are other ways to do things. EWS

From: HENRY LIMA <chipmad@btinternet.com>
To: Vireya Vine Newsletter
Subject: electronic Vireya Vine only
Date: Aug 1, 2010 Scotland. UK

Please stop sending me hard copy and only sent it electronically if you can.

I'm not growing a lot of vireyas anymore, maybe 30. They are so slow to come into flower from seed here in Scotland! I have some that took 11 years! They weren't even *luecogigas*, only *zoelleri* x 'Saxon Dawn', which turned out a very good thing. All the orange *zoelleri* hybrids die for me in the cold winter, greenhouse goes to 28 F some nights and the northern light is not warm, but this hybrid is strong and cold tolerant. I've killed *zoelleri*, 'Cristo Rey', 'Narnia', and more. The best for me for repeat flowering are 'Coral Sea' though it is not a good colour here as it is further south, and many of the *saxifragoides* hybrids. The best for me is Rouse's cross grown on by Pete Sullivan of ('Hot Tropic' x *saxifrigoides*) F2 in three colours, apricot, red (now called 'Lava Drops') and orange. They all bloom all year even when it is dark and cold. A surprise is Mitch Mitchell's M12 a.k.a. 'Richard Marques' hybrid which blooms 3 times a year and keeps growing.

R. ‘Margaret Lorraine’ does well too though you wouldn't think it should. *Suaveolens* flowers well all summer and my cross between it and ‘Jiminy Cricket’ does too, like a pink *suaveolens*. All the other hybrids give me one big bloom in July, so not worth heating a greenhouse in my case. I would love to know about others in cold places that get them to repeat when the temperature is kept just from freezing. I’m still waiting on about 10 plants of the cross ‘Little Bo Peep’ x (‘Hot Tropic’ x *saxifragoides*) F2 apricot to bloom after 7 years. They are nice tiny little domes. Fred Renick’s plant of ‘Blush Tumble’ which he gave me 15 years ago blooms a lot here too, it is a sax hybrid too.
Chip

Hi Vireya Vine March 13, 2011 From John and Margaret Meyer, Auckland, NZ

Christchurch Earthquake

You will have probably received some news items about the earthquake in Christchurch which has devastated quite an area of the city. There is up to half a mile of river gravels and silts underneath the city which obscure the fact that there were faults in the structure underlying that material which had come down from erosion in the mountains and from any filling of swamp ground.
Interestingly information has come out that in 1996 a documentary was made indicating that when an earthquake occurred in Christchurch the eastern suburbs would suffer significant damage from liquifaction, making the ground unstable and that many heritage buildings were needing earthquake proofing. This prediction was uncannily correct. The CBD (Central Business District) received much of the publicity but many of the outer suburbs, particularly the eastern suburbs, have been damaged extensively, or people have left because of the repeated after-shocks.

Unfortunately all of NZ is located at the edge of tectonic plates and has a major fault line running the length of the South Island and on through the capital city, Wellington, in the North Island.

There has been a real appreciation of the help received from overseas, from countries as wide-ranging as USA and China and places in between and beyond.

However, enough.

Since my secretary, Margaret, has drafted this letter we have had news of the even more horrendous earthquake in Japan. Christchurch was very fortunate that there was no tsunami sweeping through in the aftermath of the earthquake as that would seem to have been cause of most of the loss of life in Japan and the totality of the destruction. It is also fortunate that we don’t have any nuclear power generators in New Zealand so we have been spared that complication.

The Rugby World Cup matches scheduled for Christchurch later in the year have been rescheduled to other places. The venue itself had some building damage and the liquifaction would have required extensive grounds reworking. While New Zealand as a whole has been very supportive of Christchurch, many people have left Christchurch for as far afield as Australia, certainly some of them not to return.

That will have an overall adverse effect on the economy of the whole country as Christchurch is considered to be the second largest city in New Zealand.

Thirty or forty years ago the idea of relocating Christchurch to more solid ground was postulated. This idea has been reconsidered but does present significant difficulties.

Brian Coker, the NZ Rhododendron Association Registrar of new hybrids, was trapped and had to have both legs amputated in order to release him from the building. I believe he is still in Waikato Hospital where he was transferred immediately afterwards.

DR BRIAN EDEN OLDHAM - 7 August 1930 – 24 January 2011

Brian was a very good rhododendron person in Auckland, NZ. These are some of the remarks said at his funeral. EWS

We would like to acknowledge the presence of members of Rhododendron Auckland Group and other plant group persons who have come to show their respect to Brian, and their support and regard for his wife Jan and family.

It was in 1985 at a medical class reunion in Rotorua that Brian and Jan visited Dr John Commons' garden, where they saw rhododendrons growing and subsequently made their first purchase of a temperate rhododendron.

In 1986 they joined the New Zealand Rhododendron Association and also met the late Michael Cullinane and the late Os Blumhardt, both of whom introduced them to vireyas, subtropical members of the rhododendron family. In 1988 at a NZ Rhododendron conference they were introduced to reproducing and growing rhododendrons from seed – following this Brian subsequently tried his hand at hybridization and raising rhododendrons from seed. One of his first successes from cross pollination of rhododendrons, which just happened to be flowering at the time, was "Larissa" named after Brians daughter. Unfortunately very few of Brian's hybrids are commercially available in New Zealand, although at least one, "Larissa", is available in America. During the 1980's Brian and Jan met the late Chris Timms with his planting of temperate rhododendrons in the Waitakere Ranges. Following meeting Chris Timms, and together with some other rhododendron enthusiasts Rhododendron Auckland Group was established in 1989 and still continues to this day. While at Rangitoto Avenue they set up a boutique nursery and garden centre, "Garden Creations" run by Jan and it was here that she developed and refined the planting methods still used to this day, and so successfully that in 1995 the move from Rangitoto Avenue to Meadowbank Road required a 10 tonne horticultural transporter and some trailer loads to move their plants.

Brian systematised his hybridization and also refined a propagation system, the method of which has been passed on to members of RAG through newsletter and to NZRA members. They made a good team.

As I said, some of Brian's hybrids are available in America from Bovees Nursery, Portland, Oregon, run by White Smith and Lucie Sorensen-Smith, and I would like to read a statement which they have sent, together with his condolences:

> "A good friend has left us, and our thoughts and love go to our good friend Jan. We have known Brian for about 14 years although we had only met him twice in New Zealand. Brian was very generous with cuttings from their plant collection. Brian's and Jan's hospitality during our visits was so welcome, along with memories of plant and people-based conversations around their kitchen table. Brian wrote many letters to our Vireya Vine Newsletter which must have helped people around the world understand more about what was going on with Rhododendrons plants in New Zealand.
> Rest in Peace Brian. You were one of our good friends.
> E White Smith and Lucie Sorensen-Smith, Portland, Oregon, USA."

As stated before, Brian was a regular contributor to *Vireya Vine* and also our Rhododendron Auckland newsletter and articles for NZRA Bulletin and Newsletters, as well as being a resource of knowledge.

John A. Meyer, Former NZRA Council member, former Rhododendron Auckland Group president and former co-editor of the RAG newsletter.

Rhododendron Auckland:

"In April 1989 Brian and Jan and Brian Oldham, responding to strong suggestions from the New Zealand Rhododendron Association, formed our informal group by sending out invitations to (1) the 15 members of a West Auckland group of Rhododendron enthusiasts originally founded by Chris Timms in November 1988 (2) all known Auckland members of the N.Z. Rhododendron Association and (3) people known to be interested in the cultivation of both conventional and Vireya rhododendrons."

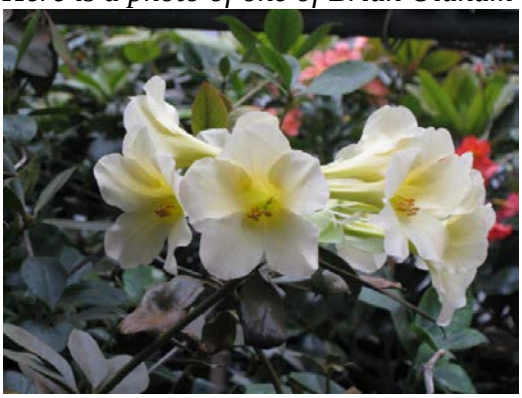
Dr Brian E. Oldham's registered Vireya hybrids:-

"Larissa"	(2004)	"Blushed Spice"	(2004)	"Brazen Beauty"	(29.6.09)
"Rowena Knight"	(29.6.09)	"Pastel Splendour"	(29.6.09)	"Olivia Knight"	(13.7.09)
"Rangitoto Glow"	(10.8.09)	"Rangitoto Sunrise"	(10.8.09	"Rangitoto Sunset"	(10.8.09)
"Stellar Flare"	(10.8.09)	"Oldham's Theressa"	(25 10.10)	"Lydia Ellen"	(26.10.10)
"Rangitoto Dawn"	(1.11.10)	"Rangitoto Blush"	(1.11.10)		

The last four hybrids have been registered as shown in 2010 but have not yet been published in the NZRA Bulletin. Dr Brian E. Oldham was Chairman in 1992 to July 1993 and again became president in 1995, 1996 and 1997.

Records are being researched to check the various important dates in the organization and structure of the Rhododendron Group in Auckland. We want accurate archival records as the 25th year of Rhododendron Auckland is fast approaching. Anyone who has details or memories of who were the officials of the group over the years please phone John or Margaret Meyer, 838 7900 as various reports cover the activities without giving all these details.

Here is a photo of one of Brian Oldham's hybrids blooming in our greenhouse. R. gardenia Odyssey x laetum



Now this is interesting information sent out by Lyn Craven in Australia

Title: A Topical Spray to Enhance Plant Resistance to Cold Injury and Mortality
Authors: Francko, DA; Wilson, KG; Li, QSQ; Equiza, MA
Author Full Names: Francko, David A.; Wilson, Kenneth G.; Li, Qingshun Q.; Equiza, Maria A.
Source: HORTTECHNOLOGY, 21 (1): 109-118 FEB 2011 **Language:** English **Document Type:** Article
Abstract:

A novel topical spray was developed to increase resistance to both cold damage and cold mortality in plant foliage, flowers, and fruits. In environmental chamber experiments, application of the spray to monocot and dicot foliage lowered the environmental temperatures associated with the first onset of cold injury and with cold mortality from 2.2 to 9.4 degrees F, compared with controls sprayed with tap water, over an effective temperature r ange (depending on species) of approximate to 0 to 32 degrees F. The threshold temperature for flower mortality was lowered from 2.2 to 3.2 degrees F depending on species. Mature fruit suffered significantly less freeze damage when pretreated with the spray formulation. The spray is composed of ingredients that are non-toxic to plants, humans, and other animals. The patent-pending formulation has been commercialized under the trade name FreezePruf.

Fahrenheit and Celsius (Centigrade) Scales

Below is information about the Celcius and Fahrenheit Scales, including the degrees for boiling and freezing, absolute zero, and the related Kelvin Scale.

Celsius	°Fahrenheit
–273.15	–459.67
–250	–418
–200	–328
–150	–238
–100	–148
–50	–58
–40	–40
–30	–22
–20	–4
–10	14
0	32
5	41
10	50
15	59
20	68
25	77
30	86
35	95
40	104
45	113
50	122
55	131
60	140
65	149
70	158
75	167
80	176
85	185
90	194
95	203
100	212

Zero on the Fahrenheit scale represents the temperature produced by the mixing of equal weights of snow and common salt.

	°Fahrenheit	°Celsius
Boiling point of water	212°	100°
Freezing point of water	32°	0°
Absolute zero	–459.6°	–273.1°

Absolute zero is theoretically the lowest possible temperature, the point at which all molecular motion would cease.

To convert Fahrenheit to Celsius (Centigrade), subtract 32 and divide by 1.8.

To convert Celsius (Centigrade) to Fahrenheit, multiply by 1.8 and add 32.

Read more: Fahrenheit and Celsius (Centigrade) Scales — Infoplease.com
http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0001731.html#ixzz1GDcTIUg1

Other newsletters and things.

Graham Price is the Editor of the 'Vireya Venture' newsletter out of Australia, started in September 1990. Email: lithic01@bigpond.net.au Free by e-mail.

See Chris Callard's WEB site at www.vireya.net

Chris has all of the 'Vireya venture' newsletters from Australia posted on his Web site and now has all of the Vireya Vines posted. www.vireya.net

Remember we need your e-mail address so you can get the Vine in Color.

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