



VIREYA VINE

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E. White Smith, Editor

Right now: Steve Hootman along with a few other hardy plant hunters are right now entering Papua New Guinea to look for and collect Vireya rhododendrons. They had wanted to explore the southern side of the large mountain range that runs through the western side of the island of New Guinea (Papua). but they could not get permission to go there. SO, they are going to have a look at the mountain area north of Lae, PNG. This is the area that Rev. Canon Norman Cruttwell lived in and collected Vireyas for many years. Norman Cruttwell was a great contributor to the Vireya Vine. R. cruttwellii was named after him. He also named R. christiana after his mother who lived with him for a while. Norman introduced or reintroduced many other species from the area. E White

From Chip Lima
Hi

In Scotland, UK

I've got little new to say about vireya. I've grown the same 20 or so for 9 years now in a heated greenhouse, they don't do much compared to California, really most only bloom once, except for the sax hybrids and Richard Marcques. The colours are different here too. Surprised that suaveolens does so well. I have a plant now of Cephus 1 foot tall, but the cutting took 3 years to root! It is growing fast now, mixed in with *R. nuttallii* and its hybrids in a raised bed. I find that they need air blowing through the greenhouse or the flowers get botrytis early so that they only last a week. A cross I made 12 years ago of zoelleri x Saxon Dawn is a very deep orange and can take the cool, I have lost all zoelleri's.
Chip

From Charles Trommer,
Dear VV,

Ninole (big Island) Hawaii
April 2011-04-21

In regarding Clarice Clark's experience with washed out flowers. A mature plant of *R. Aleksandr* produced several trusses with very pale and thin textured petals. The plant was normal otherwise and I dismissed it as a aberration, probably due to climatic conditions. Subsequent blooms were normal.

Other Vireyas blooming at the same time showed no abnormalities.

In regard to Graham Price's experience with cuttings from small seedlings growing better than the parent plant. Many, many years ago a friend, Guy Nearing routinely took cuttings from young seedlings claiming that the cuttings grew better than the parent seedling and hastened blooming. Thanks and here is \$20 to help with the VV cause a bit.

Charles Trommer
PO Box 118
Ninole, Hawaii 96773

Thanks Charles. Charles has a great garden right on the ocean just north of Hilo on the big island (Hawaii is the name of the big island). Along with a very nice collection of Vireyas he also has a wonderful collection of Palm trees. Thanks for the contribution, Charles and also to Charles Martin for his contribution, who has way more plants than he needs but keeps getting more. My daughter, Julie Miller, who with her husband is in the process of moving to the big island from Tacoma, Washington, has gotten a lot of wonderful plants and cuttings from Charles Martin. That is just what is meant to happen; the love of great plants is the love to share. EWS

From Don Selcer
Dear Vireya Vine,

Oakland California
March 2011

I saw Clarice Clark's letter regarding losing flower buds on *R. pseudobuxifolium*, and wondering if cold weather could account for this. I have that species also, and have had it for about 5 years. It seems to set flower buds a couple times a year, starting in spring. The first set of buds usually aborts in fall. The second set seems to be able to winter over and flower in spring. I'm sure this is not due to excessive cold, since I haven't had a freeze here in Oakland for many years. All my vireyas stay outdoors, many in the ground, although *R. buxifolium* is in a pot where it does well except for the flower bud loss. I can only guess what the cause of this might be.

Don Selcer
Oakland, CA

Here is a thought. Life goes on, but still ... All any man can leave behind are the memories that his friends carry. He really is not gone until they are.

I am not really sure what that means, but I really feel honoured to know all of you Viners, well almost know you. I do know a few of the people who get the Vine, probably quite a few. Going on 28 years of doing this newsletter, it has always been great fun and an honour for me to be able to do it. People must still like the Vireya Vine because over the years I have had less than 10 people ask to have the Vine stopped for them. And over the years I have dropped a lot of people after I have not heard from them for over 10 years. Wow, 10 years. Time really does fly by. We still send the Vireya Vine to over 300 people around the world and over one

half of them get it by e-mail which really saves money and work for me. Folding, addressing, stamping the printed copies takes a lot of time. I wonder how Fran Rutherford did all the mailing when we mailed out about 400 copies years ago? Remember we still need your financial contributions.

And we need your letters to the Vine badly. Any kind of letter. People love the stuff about what plants you are growing, what potting mix you use, about watering and fertilizing, about your growing area or greenhouse, and on and on and on.

Speaking of Fran. The Rutherford Conservatory at the Species Foundation is just doing great. The plants love being out of pots and into the planting mix -- they just love it. Everything is growing and looking so good. I have not seen any plants looking unhappy yet.

My Wife Lucie and I here at Bovees in Portland, Oregon have been taking a lot of our duplicate *Vireya* material species up to the Conservatory to be planted, some of which were over 25 years old and up to seven feet tall. We were happy to do it and it sure helped make room in our greenhouse. Some of these species we can't remember where they came from but one of the plants was *R. macgregoriae* that was grown from a cutting that I got in New Zealand that came from a plant that Felix Jury collected in New Guinea way back in the late 1940s. The plant at Jury's Nursery was at least 12 foot tall when I saw it 20 plus years ago. E White

OK this is interesting. We have several *Vireya* hybrids that have double flowers. This is very rare in *Vireyas* and in *Rhododendrons* as a whole. Ours are *R. 'Will Orange'* (V558 our number) and *R. 'Will Silent'* (V553). Photos just don't do these flowers justice. They are very bright and strikingly coloured. The hybrid cross is '*Salmon Sensation*' x *javanicum*. *R. 'Salmon Sensation'* is *aurigeranum* x (*Dr. Sleumer* x *leucogigas*). But is sure does make you wonder, like how do you get a bright orange-red out of a cross like that. Yes the *R. javanicum* could have been one of the real dark orange flowered forms. *R. aurigeranum* is yellow and '*Dr. Sleumer*' is a light pink with a yellow centre and *R. leucogigas* is white with a little pink or light pink. Where does the bright orange-red come from? We got our plants from cuttings brought back from New Zealand. Don't know who did the cross but maybe Richard Currie. Richard did a lot of nice things. O Great Mystery of Life.

R. 'Will Orange'



R. 'Will Silent'



OK some things from the past. The first one from John Rouse was printed in VV14, August 1987. EWS

From John Rouse
Dear Vireya Viners,

Melbourne, Australia
June 29, 1987

In September 1981 the pollination *R. retusum* X *R. nudiflorum* (*R. periclymenoides*), was made as part of a program that Professor Bruce Knox and Dr. Elizabeth Williams were working on to investigate sexual compatibility barriers in *Rhododendron*. The female parent is evergreen in section *Vireya* and the male parent is a deciduous *Azalea* in section *Pentanthera*.

The cross spans the breeding barrier which separates the lepidote from the elepidote *Rhododendrons*. Seed was collected and sown in January 1982 and the few seedlings which resulted were reported as being 4 to 5 inches tall one year later in *Vireya* Vine #3, March 1983. Hybridity was confirmed soon after the seed germinated by the characteristics of the juvenile indumentum on the first true leaves (presence of glandular hairs and absence of scales).

During the last five years most of the hybrid seedlings died. They never looked particularly healthy and it was as if they could not make up their minds whether to be evergreen or deciduous. One seedling, however, has shown better form and vigor, producing many new shoots from the base. It now is 36 inches tall and a few weeks ago - after 5 1/2 years - a flower bud, dormant for the last few months showed some pink at the top. Slowly the bud burst and all but one of the flowers are now open. The flowers have pink 5-lobed corollas and there are 14 of them in the truss. The corolla length is 27 mm long, diameter at the base 4 mm and 20 mm across the lobes. The pedicel is 10 mm long.

There are (5) 6 (7) stamens per flower and the pollen tetrads are shriveled, only 30 mm in diameter even when hydrated and completely sterile. No part of the flower, or the bush itself for that matter, could be found showing scales like those to be found on the flowers of *R. retusum*. The style length is 24 mm and the pistil length 27 mm.

Back crosses with fresh pollen of *R. retusum* and stored pollen of *R. nudiflorum* have been made to determine the fertility of the hybrid as a female parent and hopefully to get seed. Because of its suitable style length, 32 mm, and the availability of fresh pollen, *R. laetum* has also been tried as a male parent. If seedlings should result from any of these pollinations, one wonders what form their juvenile indumentum will display on their first true leaves!

R. retusum appears to be compatible as a graft on *R. 'Fragrantissimum'* as well as hybrid *Vireya* stock. Only time will tell if *R. retusum* x *R. nudiflorum* is compatible on *R. 'Fragrantissimum'* and even if it is long term incompatible it may, as Leslie Riggall suggest in *Vireya Vine* #12, January 1987, hasten the production of further flowers.

John Rouse
Victoria, 3142
Australia

And from Vireya Vine Issue #50, August 1997

Years ago I attended a Rhododendron Convention in San Francisco. The convention chairman, or maybe he was just the local chapter President, was Hadley Osborne. Hadley, along with Peter Sullivan, introduced many of us to Vireyas. I don't remember if there were any plants at the convention hotel but a few of us were allowed to see the Vireyas at the Strybing Arboretum. My father-in-law, Elwood Budil, talked Pete out of a rooted cutting.

We took it home to Tacoma and grew it for many years. In a recent letter from Hadley he has offered letters for our use from Michael Black, an early collector from England. I shall try to extract useful information from his letters to Hadley. Because it is difficult to quote from other people's letters, I shall try to paraphrase things that might be interesting. E White

Letter from Michael Black to Hadley Osborn dated August 27, 1968. Black had just returned to England from the West Coast of the U.S.

How very much I enjoyed meeting you all. I was amazed not only by your terrific enthusiasm but also the plants you have – most people here have no idea of the splendid things in your area. Coming back here to the Rhodo world is almost like a return to the middle ages – we're not nearly so "with it" as you. *R. konori* flowered here for the first time in the UK, but Tom Lelliott in Australia pipped me to the post by a month.

From a letter to Michael Black from Hadley dated October 4, 1968.

Thanks for the package of seedlings and cuttings. The biggest surprise was the tremendous foliage of your #81, *R. culmicolum* var. *culmicolum*.

You'd said earlier that our var. *angense* was inferior in foliage and it clearly is.

Unfortunately, Jock Brydon has resigned as Director of Strybing Arboretum, but with another excellent rhododendron man, Roy Hudson, as the new Director and with Pete Sullivan still around, the outlook there for rhododendrons continues excellent.

Bob Scott bloomed NFG 11735, which we had received with the mistaken designation of *R. macgregoriae*. I keyed it out tentatively as a variety of *dielsianum*, which coincides with your guess. Another of our members bloomed a *R. konori* from Sleumer's 1961 expedition. This collection has stiffer and better foliage than others we have received, and though the flowers were a littler smaller than *R. konori* apparently can be, they were magnificently modeled and magnificently fragrant.

Letter from Black to Hadley written in Cambridge, October 31, 1968.

I'm stuck at this Academic Stronghold just now so I can't send any cuttings to Strybing, but will do so when I get home to Grasmere. Sleumer was up to see me last week – the Prof. Of Tropical Botany and I entertained him to a luncheon in Semi-Mediaeval splendor at the college. I think he enjoyed it despite the portrait of Oliver Cromwell glaring down upon him.

All of my Malesians are under cover now, of course, but so far they've not had any heat – daily reports come down my 'hot line' from home so I know exactly what's going on. While I remember; you know the bronze foliage *R. lochae*, well on looking through my plants I found one almost identical grown from Lelliott's seed as *R. lochae* x *christianae*. Wonder which label is wrong. PS. Sleumer brought me a Rhodo from the Philippines – *R. subsessile* – interesting.

Letter from Black to Hadley dated November 20 1968. With some cuttings through the mail.

Here are a few bits and pieces. Strangely enough most of the plants have wood that is too hard for cuttings. At the moment, probably as a result of the hot summer we have had. But here are some details:

#B 7 is *R. pleianthum* from Kerrigomna Sia at about 10,000 ft. I made mention of this in the article in the RHS Yearbook for 1966. It's really a winner.

#B 126 S/Sect. *Phaeovireya* aff. *beyerinckianum*. Western Highlands, forest edge in deep shade. Locality Wazbag District, 8,500 ft/.

#B 160 *R. beyerinckianum*. Identified by Sleumer. Nondugl, at edge of Al River, 9,000 ft. in fairly deep shade. Growing epiphytically, but has been down to earth since collection.

Stoner #4. Read about this in Stoner's article in one of the old RHS yearbooks. There seems to be a bit of a balls up here. As a lot of his things don't correspond with his herbarium material.

I got it from the RBG Edinburgh, and identification by Sleumer from my plant as *R. commonae* / *R. stonori*, but a plant from the same source at Brodick is identified as *R. versteegii*. It hasn't flowered anywhere yet so it is difficult to check out.

#B 150 *R. culminicolum* var. *culminicolum*. I think that this is the thing that John Patrick told me over the phone that you had lost. It's from the banks of the Fatime at about 8,500 ft. It's a damn good ornamental in full bloom. It is often epiphytic in the wild and not terribly shade tolerant.

#B 167 Is a yellow form of *R. macgregoriae* from the banks of the Al River at Nondugl at about 8,000ft. Not a bad representation; flower perhaps a little larger than most. You name it, it grows there. On rotting trunks, rocks, terrestrially on clay banks etc.

#B 128 is the form of *R. macgregoriae* which I got a Preliminary Commendation for at the RHS in July which I have named 'Sirunke Orange'. 6

It was a seedling collected near the superb plant I mentioned in the 1966 RHS article. It flowered for the first time this year and I have hopes that it will with age become even better.

Letter to Hadley from Black dated 22 October, 1969

Preparations for next year's expedition are well under way, though I do wish some idle clerk in Calcutta would get the lead out and send a permit for Assam. Sumatra should be interesting, and I've been promised maximum cooperation from the authorities by the Indonesian Ambassador, which should ensure I get to the north, where there are apparently the most interesting things. I have a notion to climb Mt. Kinabalu; everyone else seems to have been up there, and then I will go on to Hong Kong to pick up what species I can, before they are all swept away by enormous buildings. I found that another Veitch hybrid exists over here; Hydon Nursery's, near Godalming, Surrey, stock it – it's called Sybil, and a truss they exhibited a few months ago looked presentable.

Bruce Duffy, who belongs to the ARS Chapter in Salem, Oregon comes by every now and then and takes photos of hardy Rhododendron species and Vireyas. We have a plant of R. inundatum in bloom right now and I tried to get a good photo, but it just did not look right. So I had Bruce take one for me send to by e-mail. Very nice Bruce. This is R. inundatum grown from a cutting, given to us by David Binney in New Zealand probably 12 years ago.



George Argent's book, 'Rhododendrons of subgenus vireya' says this plant is a shrub to one meter. Native to Indonesia (Papua) New Guinea West, mountain valleys. From a temporarily flooded grass-plain on peaty soil at 1650 meters (5,200 ft +/-). George says it flowers regularly at least twice a year at The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh and is powerfully scented.

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

We welcome your contributions to the Vireya Vine. One of these days we are going to run out of money for printing and postage. Printing and postage is for the people who want their VV mailed to them instead of by E-nmail

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

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