

VIREYA VINE ISSUE # 25

MAY 1990

From Richard Chaikin, Boston, Mass.
Dear Vireya Vine, February, 1990

I now have some of the named vireya cultivars from Australia and New Zealand. I would like to start to distribute them as soon as possible. I think that the best way may be to do it in the VV. I want to take reservations for rooted cuttings now, and then send them out when they are ready. The plants I have now are:

Amber Lights	Apricot Charm	Bellenden Coral
Bulolo Gold	Buttermilk	Coral Chimes
Coral Flare	Cordial Orange	Craig Faragher
Flamenco Dancer	Golden Charms	Kisses
Liberty Bar	Lulu	Minnie Mouse
Pendance	Popcorn	Queen of Hearts
Red Rover	Rob's Favourite	Rosie Chimes
Silken Shimmer	Simbu Sunset	Stanton's Glory
Star (Pink?) Posy	Sunny	Tropic Fanfare

I do have another which MAY be Tropic Glow, but that will not be released until it is positively identified by flowering.

The plants will be free to any VV subscriber in the USA as previously published in the VV last year. All others will be charged \$8 each and will not get the same priority as that VV subscriber. Being an individual, I am not in the position of being able to get a phytosanitary examination, so I cannot ship overseas at this time.

I hope this is the most equitable solution. I want to get these out as quickly as I can, but I do want knowledgeable growers to get them first, to make sure that they are not lost to us in the USA. I would appreciate it if Viners do not send a blanket order for all of the list, but are rather selective. I think that this may be the first distribution of these plants in the US. It seems that they are importing from us, but we have not imported from them, unless it was by way of seed. So this may be the first time to see what the NAMED cross really is. We all probably have plants with the same cross, but this will be the actual clone, and thus, may be different from the ones we know. Supposedly, they named the best of all of the seed lots, and the best was really worth naming, otherwise, why name it. So this may be a real opportunity. Now, hopefully, there won't be any orders, so that I won't have to take any cuttings, so that I will get a chance to see what I really do have here. Obviously, if there are so many orders, I will be constantly chopping them up, as the Bowhans mentioned in one of the early VV's.

They said that they were so busy making cuttings at that time, that they had not seen many bloom. Now that they have gotten out of the Vireya business, I guess they are back in the same situation.

By the way, I am still looking for some vireyas. If you can get some cuttings, or plants, I would be most appreciative. I am looking for:

Anatta Gold	Belisar	Fireplum	Jean Baptiste
Petra	Pink Seedling	Ravalac	San Gabriel
Sir George Holford	Tashbaan	Terebenthe	Thomas Becket
Wentworth	Cyril	Lawrence	Carmel
Cephas			

If any of the readers can send me some in exchange for the ones I have, it will be duly noted and with my utmost appreciation.

Dr. Richard Chaikin
% Cape Cod Vireyas
7 Whittier Place
Boston, Ma 02114

Come on you Viners, lets take Dick up on his very generous offer and get the plants spread around so that they do not get lost to cultivation. If you have some of the plants on Dicks "want list", how about dropping him a note and make an offer.

The following letter is one that I sent to the Smithsonian Institution magazine about an article in the April 1990 issue. What the magazine article, and my letter to them really shows is, "how little we really know about these plants". I suspect that the photo in the magazine is something in the Rose family but with out seeing a leaf it could be anything (but not a Vireya Rhododendron).

Smithsonian Associates
900 Jefferson Drive
Washington, DC 20560

April 8, 1990

Letter to the Editor;
Dear Sir,

Your article on Page 218 of the April 1990 issue caught my eye when it showed a picture of a rose colored flower, and labeled it "Singapore Rhododendron". The photo just did not look right to me. There are about 900 species in the genus Rhododendron. Nearly 300 species belong to the Section of Rhododendron known as 'Vireya', formally known as Malaysian Rhododendrons. This group of Rhododendrons is limited to the South-East Asian islands and the Malay Peninsula with a few species native to the Himalayas, China, and Vietnam. One species (*R. lochae*) is native to the mountains of northeast Australia.

I am almost sure that the picture in the article is not a Rhododendron. I am not sure what it is but, Rhododendron species normally have 5 or 7 flower (corolla) lobes, not 6. If the color of the photo is accurate then we have another problem, because the deep rose color suggests some blue pigments that are not present in the Vireya Rhododendrons. The name "Singapore Rhododendron" is not known to me and has never been used by Rhododendron fanciers for this group of plants. Singapore is a small island at the southern tip of the Malay Peninsula, and has to my knowledge, no native species Rhododendrons.

The Vireya Rhododendrons are a very diverse group of plants. Many are very showy, with bright colors and wonderful fragrance. The largest flowered Rhododendron specie in the genus is *R. leucogigas* that is native to West New Guinea (Irian, Cycloop Mts.).

There are Vireya Rhododendrons in the Mulu National Forest of the Malaysian State of Sarawak, on the north coast of the island of Borneo. These species include *R. lanceolatum*, *R. exuberans*, *R. yongii*, *R. stapfianum*, *R. quadrasianum* var. *villosum*, *R. himantodes*, *R. micromalayanum*, and probably many more species that have not been found or identified.

Sincerely Yours,

PS. There are very few reference books about this group of Rhododendron plants. One good book, printed recently is, 'Rhododendrons of Sabah'. It is available from the Massachusetts Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society for \$16.00 post paid.

ARS Mass. Chapter
Mrs. Henry Wrightington
571 State St.
Hanson, Ma 02341

There are about 125 Vireya Rhododendron species in cultivation around the world. Many are easy to grow as greenhouse plants and some are very difficult. The Vireya Vine Newsletter was started as a format to supply information to growers around the world. The VV started in 1982 and is now going into it's 25 issue. I am busy working on putting all the previous issues into book (edited, bound?) format so that the information will be available to new people interested in this group of plants. If the Smithsonian would like a copy of the book form of the Vireya Vine I would be happy to send a copy when it is done. Where would I send it to and to whom?

E. White Smith
4317 No. 18th
Tacoma, Wa 98406

The answer to the above letter could be interesting if they do answer. My real hope is that they send or offer much more of the information that they probably have and that we can all learn from it.

From Peter Cox Glencarse, Scotland
Dear VV, November 26, 1989

I must admit that I have partially lost interest in Vireyas. This is almost entirely because I find them so difficult to grow well. I just do not like growing plants that invariable look sick. We have a small but steady demand for Vireyas and the answer is always, "some will hopefully be available next year". Next year comes along and our stock of young plants still look sick. The symptoms are the same as are printed in the Vireya Vine, chlorotic foliage, leaf tip burn, and frequent die back. I am now trying all new bark (pine) compost, plus magnesium lime, and liquid feeding.

Perhaps the liquid feeding is not regular enough. There are just too few Vireyas here to warrant the attention that they need. They are shoved into the corner of one small greenhouse. We now have a new greenhouse for both the stock and saleable plants of Subsection Maddenia, Edgeworthia etc. and their hybrids. These are generally much easier to grow and to satisfy.

My collection dwindles each year. I did flower a superb R. superbum hybrid last year for the first time. It was collected by the late Michael Black. The R. superbum hybrid is actually healthy, planted in a raised peat bed.

Also I believe I am the first to flower R. lowii in cultivation. I have 2 plants of lowii, one planted in a pot and the other in the same peat bed and neither are healthy.

If I could discover or be told how to grow Vireyas well, they might get a house of their own, if their sales could pay for the house. It does seem to me that they all suffer rather similar symptoms so perhaps a cure might make them all healthy. I am not prepared to give them much heat, just frost free will have to do. Is it sufficient?

Peter Cox
Glendoick Gardens
Glencarse, Perth, PH2 7NS
Scotland Tel (073-886)205

Thanks for the letter Peter. How about you Viners giving some ideas. Heat, fertilizer, root rot, day length, light? We do not want one of the famous Rhododendron Nursery's going out of the Vireya growing business. But then they need to be able to grow the plants and make money doing it.

From Steven Trout
Dear Vireya Vine,

Oakland California
December 7, 1989

In the most recent issue of the VV, E. White asked about the rootability of *R. fallacinum*. I had a cutting of that species and it nearly drove me crazy --- it sat for months in the rooting mixture and did not wilt, and did not root. I got so frustrated with it that I took it outside to the bench last summer and watered it like the established plants. No wilt, no root. A year later, on one of those "housecleaning" fits we all go through with plants, I picked the damn thing up and tossed it into the trash heap. I decided, however to retrieve the clay pot and Miracle of Miracles the cutting had established a small root system in spite of my neglect. At the present time it is making a slow, measured spurt of top growth.

The potting mix that I use consists of various ratios of 1/4 inch fir bark, 1/4 inch lava rock chips, coarse perlite, peat, and sometimes coarse sand or pea gravel. I always place my clay pots on top of small wood strips to assure absolute drainage. Our summers here are comparatively benign, with temperatures between 60 and 75°F. We usually have morning and evening "high" fogs that insulate us from the sunlight. I have to protect most plants from afternoon sunlight and I am planing to use lath in the future; I, too, have found that shade cloth restricts air circulation and encourages mildew development. So far (fingers crossed) I have only lost a few of more than 100 plants to phytophthora root rot. With my smaller plants, I take advantage of limited space by mounting them in "wall pocket" type containers on the patio and on fences. These plants are first planted in a pot and then placed into the "wall pocket" and then the roots are covered with basket moss to retain moisture. So far they seem to relish these living quarters.

One problem many Viners seen to share is chlorotic foliage. I also had a problem with this until recently. I found that foliar applications of "Ortho" chelated iron material to really solve the dilemma. I have a plant of the hybrid Ne Plus Ultra that was completely chlorotic and dying back.

Even iron chelate applications to the soil did not help it. A "last chance" shot of foliar sprayed iron produced dramatic results: the plant is now pushing new growth, setting buds, and is a lush spinach green.

I am most interested in species and primary hybrids and really adore the foliage plants like *R. rugosum*, *beryerinckianum*, *konori*, etc. The recent book 'Rhododendrons of Sabah' is magnificent! Certainly we need to explore the possibility of getting some of these gorgeous plants into cultivation.

Steven N. Trout
89 Yosemite Ave.
Oakland, Ca 94611

I must agree with everything that Steven says. I think that the iron spray really works. I also like fish fertilizer even if it does make the greenhouse smell bad for a while.

*I agree with the statement about the 'Rhododendrons of Sabah' book. I would like to have a plant of *R. himantodes* that is shown on page #91.*

*Yesterday I was out at the Rhododendron Species Foundation and looked at a plant of *R. carringtoniae* in bloom in the greenhouse.*

*It was a Vireya nut stopper. Very different than anything that I had seen before. I have a struggling plant of *carringtoniae* and have dug it out and will pet and give it some tender loving care from now on.*

From Glenn Sahara
Dear VV,

Keaau, Hawaii
October 24, 1989

Although I have about a dozen different Vireyas, I doubt if I qualify as a real "Vireya Person". I collect fragrant tropical plants, so that the Rhodies are just one of the many species that I have in my yard.

I do plan to extend the Vireya growing area, and I would like to try growing a few epiphytically. Any suggestions as to the varieties that will adapt well to this type of culture? Currently I have only the Bovees catalog and the Vireya Specialties Nursery catalog. Thanks to the VV, I will soon have Red's Rodies catalog also (Dick Cavender).

My Vireyas are grown in volcanic cinder mixed with wood chips and are foliar fed whenever I get the energy. I use what ever fertilizer happens to be on sale. It rains almost daily here so I don't worry about burning any of my plants. In fact, the Hilo airport has recorded 155 inches of rain so far this year. When I do water, rainwater from a catchment system is used. Temperatures reach a high of 85°F here during the days and drop to 58 to 63° at night. I often wonder if there are varieties that require a greater chilling period in order to set buds. I really would like some information about epiphytic culture. I know that some "real Vireya folk" must have some answers.

Glenn Sahara
P.O. Box 520
Keaau, Hawaii 96749

Vireyas can be grown as epiphytic plants. Just get something to hold the plant and find a place to hang them. Some moss to put around the outside would help keep the plants from drying out too fast. If you belong to the Rhododendron Species Foundation, you will get their distribution list yearly and they have many Vireya species for sale. I do not know what they do about overseas orders though.

From Charles Trommer
Dear Vireya Vine,

Ninole, Hawaii
February 22, 1990

I recently bought the Australian Vireya Book and grow about 20 varieties. I purchased them from a California Nursery, and they have thrived in our sub-tropical climate. I am especially interested in locating sources of plants, varietal information, and hybridizing techniques for them.

As an academic exercise, I am attempting to tissue culture one variety in the laboratory at the University of Hawaii - Hilo.

Charles R. Trommer
P.O. Box 118
Ninole, Hawaii 96773
Phone (808)963-6340

From Graham and Wendy Snell
Dear VV,

Queensland, Australia
January 29, 1990

We are now established (well, almost) at our new home and Nursery site. We are situated about 60 miles north of Brisbane, Queensland, at approximately Latitude 27°S, (ie., equivalent to Palm Beach, Florida in the northern hemisphere) at an altitude of 1,500 feet and about 20 miles inland from the East Coast.

We experience warm summers and mild winters, without great extremes. Most of our rainfall would be in the Summer months. This, we hope, will add up to a climate that is very well suited to the Vireyas, as well to ourselves.

Our move from Melbourne produced several temporary setbacks and some losses. Our plants are now growing well and flowering profusely, with much larger and more deeply coloured blooms than we have previously experienced. A great deal of exciting new hybrid material is coming into flower for us now. We recently flowered (the first time for us) *R. baenitzianum*, (*R. zoellegi* like) but with 15 florets per truss. Visitors to the Wollongong conference may remember Canon Cruttwell's slides of this plant in P.N.G.

We are gradually getting the nursery back into production, but it looks as though 'Mail Order' and shipment overseas will not be practical for the time being at least. Best regards to all of our Vireya Vine friends.

Graham & Wendy Snell
The Vireya Venue
7 Lawrence Place, M.S. 16
Maleny, 4552
Queensland, Australia
Phone (071)942 179

From Sheldon Ofshe
Dear VV,

New York State
February 25, 1990

I wrote to the Vireya Vine about a year ago and indicated that I was new to Vireyas, and asked a number of questions that have been answered since then. Hugh Caldwell in Florida initiated a correspondence with me from that published letter and has been extremely helpful with his advice and tips.

One tip that I picked up at a Rhododendron Society seminar was; When rooting cuttings, a potato peeler can be useful to slice off about 1/4 inch of the outer layer on the opposite side of the cutting. I tried about a dozen that way and got much better results than when not doing it.

I belong to the Hobby Greenhouse Assn. and at our next meeting, the subject for discussion will be Vireyas. I hope to have a number of mine in bloom for that meeting. R. 'Valentine' and 'Red Prince' X lochae should be ready. R. macgregoriae has just started with a good many more buds showing. Last year it flowered in February and March. That was the first time and the buds are much more abundant this year. I have made a number of cuttings and shall distribute them at the meeting. I know that they will generate a lot of interest. A much greater interest is developing in Vireyas here on the east coast of the USA.

Sheldon Ofshe
1989 Wilson Ave.
Bellmore, NY 11710

From Bill Moyles
Dear Vireya Vine,

Oakland, California
January 14, 1990

It has been a really marvelous fall/winter for Vireyas here. We have had little rain and it's been quite cool. I am always amazed at the growth that the Vireyas put on during Nov/Dec when the temp is around 35°F at night! And they get very little water. I agree more and more with Dick Cavender's point of view, that these are tough babies that tolerate neglect. At the same time some attention paid to a modest (organic) feeding program pays off (ex Riggall), as does foliar feeding of seedlings.

The Halloween (red/orange) season is just about over and the "new season" should begin in a month or so. We are going through a period of bad-mouthing the R. laetum/zoelleri/etc's but when you get some R. javanicum mixed in the really big red/oranges are impressive. R. javanicum improves the foliage and gives that shiny dark bud color ... and very vigorous. I have a lot of seedlings of R. Valentine (selfed) X javanicum that I am looking forward to seeing mature.

I am also struck by the vigor shown by Vireyas (sp and hybrids) when they get into "the ground". Ground for me means a foot or two of gravelly (red lava ^ to 1" in size), bark (fir, redwood), and humus "junk" (pine, rough peat, etc.) over good California clay. This is watered only when needed. We don't have much water anyway and it cost \$\$\$. The only problem seems to be occasional chlorosis that eventually goes away when the soil/nutrient balance is achieved. To see real vigor in action, one needs only to visit the Rhododendron Dell in Golden Gate Park. Two years ago they planted out some old R. laetum/zoelleri/konori/lochae etc. hybrids that had been grown for years in the park nursery. The growth is marvelous.

For me, "good air circulation" (see Wilson, VV23) does not guarantee mildew free plants - at least not here in California. Under our conditions, mildew generally comes in the fall (dry) and seems to appear on R. konori and aurigeranum hybrids (probably others, but especially aurigeranum itself and its hybrids).

It is easily controlled with Ortho's Funginex (triforine). My plants go outside, semi protected, as soon as possible in the spring. As long as the temperature doesn't drop below 28 or 29°F for too long I can get away with it with my seedlings. Unfortunately, I didn't get away with it last February (1989) when the temp dropped to 27/28°F for 2 days. I lost 30% of my 2 to 4" seedlings and cuttings.

Rust comes and goes in the spring. I alternate with "PlantVax" and "Benlate". Rust can be lived with. I operate a very loose, open lath structure with outdoor tables.

In VV23, Roland Perry (one of our good seed customers) mentioned the American Rhododendron Society Quarterly Journal article by Dr. Fred Coe. Fred wrote that article almost 20 years ago and it is still one of the best introduction for neo-Vireyites (new word?). I can send a Xerox copy to anyone who does not have access to the early Journals. Fred has recently retired, and will be the new President of California Horticulture, and is now on the Board of Friends of the Univ. of Calif. Botanical garden in Berkeley. With respect to Roland's interest in doubles and semi-doubles, I have what I think is a fine semi-double orange/red (R. zoelleri X javanicum) that Pete Sullivan gave to me years ago and it is now large enough to take some serious cuttings from. It blooms profusely each December and is just now going out of bloom.

Bill Moyles
4243 Norton Ave.
Oakland, Ca 94602

There is more to Bill's letter but it will need to wait till next time. It is about how to handle seed and how he does it. I hope you all know that Bill Moyles does the Vireya seed Distribution for the American Rhododendron Society. Bill would appreciate receiving seed from you and for a small fee, he will send you any seed that is "on hand". This is a thankless task and Bill has taken it on with gusto. Pay attention to what Bill says. They grow a lot of Vireyas in the San Francisco / Oakland area. He has seen a lot of plants and knows how to grow them well.

Here is a list of Vireya Nursery's in the USA. There must be more???

Cape Cod Vireyas
Dick Chaikin
405 Jones Road
Fallmouth, Ma 02540
Ph (508) 548-2233 leave a message

Roslyn Nursery
211 Burrs Lane
Dix Hills, NY 11746

The Bovees Nursery
1737 S.W. Coronado
Portland, Or 97219
Ph (503) 244-9341

Red's Rodies Ph (503) 625-63
Dick Cavender
15920 SW Oberst Lane
Sherwood, Or 97140

Bill Moynier
Vireya Specialties Nursery
2707 Malcolm Ave.
Los Angeles, Ca 90068

The Lyon Arboretum
Honolulu, Hawaii

Rhododendron Species Foundation
(shipping to members only)
(some plants in "Plant Sale Area")

Pukeiti in New Zealand sells Vireyas

Michael Cullinane, sells Vireyas and has moved to the south of t
Rose Tree Gardens
Michael Cullinane
P.O. Box 631
Levin, New Zealand 5500 Tel (069) 83120

Oz Blumhardt in Whangarei, NZ (north of Auckland) sells Vireyas