VIREYA VINE

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

Vireya Rhododendron Seminar March 17 – 18 Hawaii 2000

The Hawaii Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society is planning a weekend get-together on the big island of Hawaii. It will be headquartered at the Naniloa Hotel in the city of Hilo. There will be discussion sessions in the mornings and tours of member's gardens in the afternoons, plant sales, etc. They hope to have many visitors from the mainland US and other countries. The registration fee of $50US includes the sessions, two lunches, and busses to the gardens. Great gardens, great people, great climate.

Registration Form

Vireya Rhododendron Seminar March 17 – 18 Hawaii 2000

Name_____

Address_____ **E-Mail address**_____

City_____ **State, Prov. Etc.**_____ **Postal Code**_____

Country_____ **Telephone #**_____ **Number of persons attending**___

What name/names for your name tag?_____

Please mail this form with your payment to: $50.00 US
Sherla Bertelmann, Treasurer, Hawaii Chapter ARS
P. O. Box 508
Mountain View, HI 96771 USA
Phone 808-966-9225

The Vireya Vine is financed by its subscribers. The only things you pay for are printing and postage. I do the "finding stuff" and editing. Fran Rutherford has it printed and does the mailing. My good wife, Lucie Sorensen-Smith, does the proof reading 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.

Rhododendrons Down Under Australia 2000 Conference Melbourne, Australia 13-16 October 2000

Venue selection is expected to be finalized soon. It will be close to Mount Dandenong, and a number of visits will be offered to gardens in the ranges. Basics of the program are settled, and key speakers have been engaged, including;

Peter & Patricia Cox - from Glendoick Nursery, Scotland; Graham Smith - Director of Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust, NZ; George Argent - Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, Scotland;
Dr. Ross Macdonald - (Victoria Branch member) Rosemont Nursery, Montrose;
Sue Wells - (Southern Tasmania Branch ARS) formerly of RBG Hobart.

The Conference will include varied content, but with several main themes:
Vireyas from Rainforest to Garden. Vireyas are clearly still under-appreciated by gardeners. Let's do something about that! Latest info on plant collections in the wild.
What's "state-of-the-art" in management of botanical collections? And are we interested in where developments might lead?
Australian-raised hybrids - a celebration of achievements from the past and a talk about the future.
Rhododendrons and the media - do they get a "fair go"?

"Indoor proceedings" will be on the Friday afternoon and all day Saturday (with the Official Conference dinner to follow). The Conference will begin on Friday morning in the National Rhododendron Garden, Olinda, and conclude on Monday afternoon, with the Sunday and Monday devoted to garden visits and associated touring. Pre and post-Conference excursions will also be offered.

It is intended that separate components of the program will be bookable separately: Pre and post-Conference excursions; Friday daytime; Saturday daytime; Saturday dinner; Sunday daytime excursion; Monday daytime excursion.

Fees for each component won't be set until later. We expect to issue the official Conference brochure and invitations to attend in September 1999, and would expect to close "early bird" registrations around the end of July 2000.

A special message from the Azalea & Rhododendron Web site run by Betty Spady of the American Rhododendron Society: August 30, 1999
Dr. Gustav Mehlquist of Storrs, Connecticut, passed away on August 28 at the age of 93. Born in Sweden, he immigrated to the United States in 1927. After graduating with Highest Distinction in Botany from the University of Connecticut, and after receiving his Ph.D. in Genetics at U. C. Berkeley, Dr. Mehlquist became the research horticulturist at Missouri Botanical Gardens. He later became a full professor in botany at Washington University in St. Louis. In 1952 he returned to the University of Connecticut as professor of plant breeding and biology systematics and evolutionary biology.

As a member of the American Rhododendron Society, Connecticut Horticultural Society and Connecticut Nurseryman's Association he published many scientific papers. Well known to us as a plant breeder and lecturer, several of his rhododendron hybrids have been distributed commercially in recent years. It is with great devotion that we remember this outstanding member and contributor to our Society.

Respectfully, Lynn Watts, President, American Rhododendron Society

From Brentel Hansjörg Austria
Dear Vireya Vine, April 1999

Trip to the rhododendrons of Irian Jaya

A few years ago I happened to receive information about "Vireya" species from the American Rhododendron Society. Because I could not find any literature concerning Vireyas in Austria, I asked the German Rhododendron Society for help. Mr. Erhard Moser of Chemnitz was very helpful and in an Australian and New Zealand book about rhododendrons I found some useful information.

By accident I found "Rhododendrons in Indonesia" written by Dr. Sleumer in Holland. Since my wife and I always liked hiking and traveling, we decided to spend our holidays on the various islands of Indonesia.

Our first trip was to Mt. Kinabalu in northern Borneo, where we had difficulties in finding the plants we were looking for in the lush green of the mountain forests. It was an unforgettable experience to see *Rhododendron lowii* in full bloom. Trips to Sumatra, Java, Sulawesi and Papua New Guinea followed. In doing so we obtained a good general overview of the islands. Finally we made it to Irian Jaya (western New Guinea), an area that is home to about 160 different species, a "Vireya dreamland" in January 1999.

After 40 hours of exhausting traveling we finally got to Jayapura, where we went through all the formalities necessary for a flight to the highlands. The next day we flew in a Fokker aircraft to Wamena in the Baliem Valley. This is a very wide valley situated at a height of 1600m , at the foot of Mt. Trikors (4760m) and offers a wide variety of trekking tours. Our goal was Lake Habemma, which is located at a height of 3200m. It is home to a lot of small growing rhododendron species, among them *caespitosum* the smallest of them all. We were very disappointed to learn that Lake Habemma has been closed for tourists since a hijack took place a few years ago. The bribe demanded by the police was beyond our means.

Paul Smith (RBGE) wrote about the Vireyas in the Ibele Valley in the RHS yearbook of 1994. This is why we decided to change our route and organised guides and carriers for our new destination. The Baliem Valley, which was first discovered in 1938, has still remained quite untouched. The men of the tribes "Danis" and "Lanis" are mostly naked, only wearing a peniscane. For this reason our carriers are also mostly naked. We started our trip after a short car ride to the Ibele Valley from where we wanted to get to the Dani village, Tailarek in 2 days. The Dard tribe does not only cultivate the valleys but also the steep hills of the surrounding mountains. They grow sweet potatoes, bananas, sugarcane, peas, beans and tobacco.

Our carriers cooked rice and vegetables for lunch in the shade of the trees at the river. On a strong branch above the river I counted 10 different orchids, among them a Dendrobium species with hairy yellow panicles.

After lunch we climbed higher and higher up the mountain, and I tried to discover the first vireyas in the deserted fields. Rhododendrons grow very quickly in the deserted fields, but so far we had not seen any. We camped in the teacher's house in Ibele.

The next morning we spotted the first yellow blossoms of *Rhododendron macgregoriae*, which are very common here. A few 100 meters further up we see a huge rhododendron (three meters high) with big leaves and new felty brown shoots. A little later we also found the

blossoms, which have a diameter of 12 cm (4 1/2+ inches), some have a pink spot inside, others are completely white, *Rhododendron superbum.*
It is a great view and the smell is breathtaking. Hundreds of them are growing in bright sunshine, they are bushy and in great shape. A little higher up we find the white trumpet-like blossoms of *Rhododendron inundatum.* In between them are a lot of natural hybrids of all different forms. It is very hot and the sun is burning down from the blue cloudless sky. We get to a meadow where the grass is 1/2m high. It is covered with *Rhododendron maius.* Among the many sweet smelling white blossoms I am also able to discover a pink blooming species.

We nearly overlooked a species with small leaves, which was growing up to 2m with red 2 cm long tube-like blossoms. Maybe it is *Rhododendron vitis idaea*, which is known to grow in this area. I am not a botanist and it is hard to identify all the different species of rhododendrons in this natural environment. We crossed a little brook with crystal clear water, which springs from the rhododendron forest. A little bit higher up I discovered another kind of rhododendron whose leaves are a little bit smaller than those of the *Rhododendron superbum* and which has big white, very intensely smelling blossoms. Maybe it is the *Rhododendron gardenia*, which was discovered here about 50 years ago.

After a 2 hour hike we get to Tailarek. On the way we come across a lot of *Rhododendron macgregoriae.* Our carriers often sing a rhythmical canon-like song, that is answered from the opposite side of the valley. We crossed the river Bele with the help of a suspension bridge made out of Lianas. We spent the night in the house of the teacher next to the church. The majority of the Danis are Christians.

The next day we return to Wamena to take cuttings from different plants. A little bit outside of Wamena, we found a rhododendron with white trumpet-like blossoms and brown stamens growing on the softly rising hills. It has round oval leaves, but we cannot identify the species. Thousands of them grow here together with *rhododendron macgregoriae.*

After one day of relaxation we organized a taxi and tried once more to get to Lake Habbema. We drove for about one hour on a gravel road towards the lake. Then we get out of the car and hike for 2 hours. Suddenly we see *Rhododendron haematophthalmum* with 5-6 cm long lightly red and inclined blossoms in full bloom. We tried to get to the forest which is not an easy enterprise because dead trees, bushes and moss are all over the floor. We found a small trail, but on some parts we sink deep in the moldy ground. Three meter high rhododendrons with red blossoms grow everywhere between the trees.

On a bright spot in the forest we could see a beautiful bushy plant, which is about 30cm high. It is *Rhododendron wrightianum* with crimson hanging blossoms and dark green leaves. It is very hot and our guide told us that it did not rain in the Baliem Valley last year. Here at a height of 2000m the temperature never falls below 20+ (68F), even during the night. The sky got cloudy and it started to rain for the first time in 6 days.
However, we had to return to Wamena. I think of the rhododendrons at home in my greenhouse, which I keep very cold in the winter at only 8+ degrees C (46F) during the night.

We hope that a few of our cuttings take root so that we will have a living memory of our trip to Irian Jaya.

Brentel Hansvorg
Schloglstrasse 30, 6060 Hall, Tirol
Austria Phone 0043 5223 47323

From Clarice Clark via e-mail — Puyallup, Washington
Letter to the Editor: Vireya Vine — August 1999

I read with great interest in the Summer 1999 issue of the Journal of the American Rhododendron Society about the new Vireya hybrids registered by the Bovees Nursery. I remarked to Rick Peterson at the Rhododendron Species Foundation that this is the only time in my memory that lepidotes outnumbered the elepidotes in the Plant Name Register!

Note: Some of these new hybrids have their photo posted on the Bovee Web page: http://www.bovees.com

From Keith Adams, — New Plymouth, New Zealand
Dear VV, — August 1999

As a sometime plant hunter in Borneo, Malaysia and Indonesia, it's a natural enough thing to acquire a collection of species. People who know my garden in NZ are aware that Vireyas have a hard time there. It is a long time since I gave up my nursery business; I don't even have a greenhouse anymore and because of my absence from home for frequent, considerable periods, my plants are left to look after themselves. This is fine for hybrids and a lot of the more vigorous species. The difficult species I lose on a regular basis.

What I have discovered is that these more difficult species do much better and survive when they are grafted onto a vigorous hybrid stock. Through the good offices of Os Blumhardt and David Binnie, I have strong plants now of *R. himantodes, hyacinthosmum, ericoides.* I saw during a recent visit to David Binnie a really good plant of *R. lanceolatum* that he had grafted. My own cutting grown specimen from material I had collected on Batu Lawei in Sarawak (north Borneo) several years ago is still a miserable specimen. The next ones to work on are *R. buxifolium, womersleyi, cuneifolium* and *borneense* for my open ground garden situation.

On a recent visit to Lucie Sorensen and E. White Smith in Portland, Oregon, I saw a nice little plant of *R. celebicum* which John Farbarik and I collected on Gunong (Mt.) Klabat in Northern Sulawesi in 1996. I am not sure if even the Royal Botanic garden Edinburgh, Scotland has it.

Keith Adams
"Redwoods", 12A Sequoia Grovew
New Plymouth, New Zealand

It has flowered at Bovees and the RSF from their cuttings. Nice hanging rose-pink flowers on a small plant.

PS. Grafting is really easy. Get a strong growing plant to graft onto and make the graft. Cover the graft with a plastic bag out of the sun and wait. It will probably work out OK. You can look up grafting methods in lots of books. The only hard part about grafting Rhododendrons is getting to do it. Just do it. It almost always works.

The following is from the Internet site maintained by the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, Scotland

Rhododendron Research at RBGE

Introduction

For most of the 20th century the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE) has played an important part in the study of the classification of the genus *Rhododendron*. A large living collection has been built up at Inverleith and the three Specialist Gardens (Younger, Logan and Dawyck) which has been used extensively in this study. This collection contains most of the temperate species and over a third of the tropical species, mostly the unusual and spectacular *Vireya* rhododendrons.

Temperate rhododendron research

The study of the temperate rhododendrons was started at RBGE by Sir Isaac Bayley Balfour (Regius Keeper 1888–1922) and was at first based on the collections, both living and dried, made by George Forrest in China between 1905 and 1931. Since then these collections have been (and continue to be) extensively augmented by other collectors. Research into temperate rhododendrons was also supported by Balfour's successor as Regius Keeper, Sir William Wright Smith (Regius Keeper 1922–1956). Between 1933 and 1949 a series of Chinese botanists worked at Edinburgh; one of these, Professor Wang Wenpei, went on to become one of the foremost experts on *Rhododendron* in China.
Between 1950 and 1973 this work was taken over by J. M. Cowan and later by H. H. Davidian, both of whom have made important contributions to the published work on the genus. Between 1971 and 1988 research was continued by J. Cullen and D. F. Chamberlain, culminating in a series of monographic accounts of various groups of rhododendron species. Current research is exploiting a variety of experimental techniques, including molecular tools.

Tropical rhododendron research

Most tropical rhododendron species belong to the section *Vireya*, which contains about 300 species and probably shows the greatest range of form of any section, particularly in flower colour and shape. Research into the *Vireya* rhododendrons of SE Asia originated from the material collected on the expeditions mounted by B. L. Burtt and P. J. B. Woods to West Malaysia, Sarawak and Papua New Guinea in the 1960s. It was found that living plants were particularly suited to, and grew well in, a cool glasshouse environment in the Scottish climate, and several new species were collected and grown for the first time.
G. C. G. Argent took up an interest in tropical rhododendrons following the 1977/78 Royal Geographical Society Expedition to the Gunong Mulu National Park in northern Sarawak. Over the last 25 years RBGE has sponsored many collecting expeditions to SE Asia and Dr. Argent has collected with other members of staff in Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea and the Philippines. This has resulted in the most comprehensive collection of these beautiful plants ever brought together anywhere in the world.

A colour illustrated field handbook for Sabah Parks was produced in 1988 (out of print), and a new subsectional classification was presented to the Fourth International Rhododendron Conference at Wollongong, Australia in the same year. Work continues towards a revision of the section.

For further information please contact David Chamberlain (temperate rhododendrons; direct line +44 (0)131 248 2869; d.chamberlain@rbge.org.uk) or George Argent (tropical rhododendrons; direct line +44 (0)131 248 2929; g.argent@rbge.org.uk).

Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, Inverleith Row, Edinburgh EH3 5LR, United Kingdom
Tel +44 (0)131 552 7171 ~ Fax +44 (0)131 248 2901

In the same vein; I am working on a major list of Vireya species in cultivation, world wide. Dr. Argent sent his list from the RBGE and to that list I have added. ***If you are growing species Vireyas, please send me your list. The easy way is to send your list by E-mail and then I just print it out from my computer. My E-mail address is bovees@teleport.com*** *At this time I have recorded 179 species, subspecies and varieties. E. White* ***Please Help***

Note from Brian Clancy — Melbourne, Australia
Dear VV, — March 1999

In 1983 I wrote an article about propagating Vireyas. Shortly after that my source of Gibberellic Acid gave out and I have found it impossible to obtain more. Therefor I have not used GA for 15 years. It does work but for the amateur it is no better than artificial lighting.

GA was used by the late David Leach to initiate growth on azaleas and rhodies which became dormant in the winter without making some growth the previous autumn. He found that a single spraying of GA at a concentration of 200 part per million (ppm) with a spreader sticker, produced growth 19 to 22 days after application. David Leach added that it works well even with R. schlippenbachii.

During the winter in my small greenhouse, I use three TRULITE twisted fluorescent lamps (made in the USA) to extend the daylight to 17-18 hours. This is now my standard practice and with this method I double the size of Vireyas in the 3 to 4 months of winter.

In Another Note Brian writes,

The Arfak Mountains in Iran Java (north west New Guinea) are very rich in Vireyas. The only collection of *R. laetum* was collected there by Dr. Sleumer in January 1962. Over a period of four weeks he collected nine species of Vireya. These included *R. arfakianum, erosipetalum, konori, laetum, inconspicuum, asperum, zoelleri, macgregoriae*, and *phaeopeplum*. Sleumer found *R. konori* in the more open places in devastated *Nothofagus* forest. It had corollas 9-12 cm long on the lower parts of the mountain and 12-14 at higher altitudes. Most were pure white or pinkish and rarely pink all over. They often had a pink blotch at the angles of lobes and 6-12 flowers per truss. The corollas are heavily scented (carnation like) especially during the night. He considered it one of the finest (and biggest) rhododendron in NG.

Brian Clancy
31 Renown St.
Bentleigh, Victoria 3204
Australia

Does anyone know how much 200 ppm is? 1 milligram per 1 kilogram = 1 ppm. Anyone know how to do this type of math? How much is 200 ppm in a quart or liter? At Bovees, George Watson spray's Lucies azalea cuttings with a product called "Pro-Gibb" 3.91% gibberellic acid. He mixes it at 1 to 39 parts of water.

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 - bovees@teleport.com www.bovees.com
Catalogue is $2.00 (Mail Order)

Rhododendron Species Foundation
PO Box 3798
Federal Way, WA 98063 USA
(253)838-4646 Mail Order

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

D. & P. Brown
Vernom Road
Te Puna, Tauranga
New Zealand

Equatorial Plant Company
7 Gray Lane, Barnard CastleGray Co
Durham
England DL12 8PK
Phone / Fax 01833 690519

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

Jan Oldham
102 Meadowbank Rd.
Meadowbank, Auckland 1005
New Zealand

Mark Jury
Tikorangi, RD 43
Waitara, North Taranaki
New Zealand Mail Order

Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust
Carrington Rd. RD4
New Plymouth
New Zealand

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

Christopher Fairweather
The Garden Centre, High Street
Beaulieu, Hampshire
England SO42 7YR E-mail plantdoc@martex.co.uk

The Vireya Venue
2 Clifford Street
Maleny, Queensland 4552
Australia

Vireya seed exchange. WorldWide. Bill Moyles 4243 Norton Ave., Oakland, CA 94602 e-mail wmoyles@pacbell.net

VIREYA VINE
RHODODENDRON SPECIES FOUNDATION
P . O . BOX 3798
FEDERAL WAY, WASHINGTON 98063
U .S .A.