

# VIREYA VINE

ISSUE #84, OCTOBER 2008

PUBLISHED BY THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE OF THE RHODODENDRON SPECIES  
FOUNDATION

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

***OK LOOK, here is the deal.*** *The Vireya Vine Newsletter cannot go on forever without subscribers writing something for it. Newsletters are a community effort, or at least they should be. People who are interested in the subject are expected communicate their ideas and thoughts every so once in a while. Get the idea? I cannot do it all, and even if I could, it would not be good for you to only get my ideas and thoughts. SO, if you don't really start writing to the Vine it might end. What do you think?*

[**From Lucie Sorensen-Smith;** I just can't resist offering a personal comment! Many VV articles have been about exciting plant collection trips, or were technically oriented, and, frankly I was intimidated. I am suggesting a special section for people like me to contribute a few paragraphs about some helpful cultural practice we may have stumbled upon, or something that does not work. We could possibly write a paragraph about the virtues of a particular hybrid or species from our point of view. Another reason to write in would be to ask for help in solving a problem you are having. Let us know your thoughts about this.

P.S. Be sure to mark your offering very clearly "For The Vireya Vine". Paper gets lost around here. As an example, see the article by David Fluharty, dated March 18, 2001, which just surfaced. Sorry Dave.]

*Here are some facts about the Vine:*

*Issue #1 of the Vireya Vine came out in October of 1982. #2 was done in December of 82 and Issue #3 was March of 1983. Now here we are in the year 2008 and after 26 years there have been 83 Issues of the Vireya Vine. Maybe that is enough, maybe the end is near?*

*Bob and Marge Badger, who belonged to both the Tacoma and the Seattle Chapters of the American Rhododendron Society did the first four Issues of the Vine. Quite an undertaking. Issue #4 came out in June of 1983 and was 20 pages of small print full of good stuff. 33 people had items in Issue #4. WoW*

*Myself, Fran Rutherford and my wife Lucie Sorensen-Smith have done the Vine since then. I write and edit, Lucie does the proof reading and Fran gets it printed and does the mailing. Before Lucie and I were married Fran did the proof reading also.*

*Right now the Vireya Vine is mailed to about 325 people around the world. 89 people outside the USA including 20 different countries. 190 people in the USA excluding Washington State. And 44 people who live in Washington State. These are all people who have contributed at least \$10 or have written a letter to the Vine in the past 10 or so years. The Vireya Vine does not collect subscriptions but if I don't hear from a person or if they don't send in a few dollars every once in a while, then after 10 years I drop them from the mailing list. At one time we had over 400 Viners.*

*Bob and Marge Badger used an Apple II computer and I do not know what kind of printer they had available. I started out with a Kaypro II computer (CPM operating system) using the WordStar program and a not very good dot matrices printer. Then I went to a KayPro IBM compatible computer (no hard disk yet) and a much better dot printer and still using the WordStar word processor program. Now we use a modern high speed computer, MicroSoft Word and LaserJet printers. Great Fun, I just love using computers.*

*Over the years there have been four different Vireya Newsletters in the world. The Vireya Vine started in 1982 after an education committee meeting at the Species Foundation. The Vireya News started in 1987 by Michael Cullinane in New Zealand and went until about 1992, The Vireya Venture started in 1990 edited by Wendy Snell and J. Clyde Smith in Australia and now it is still going thanks to Graham Price. I think that the Vireya Venture is a struggling but it is distributed by e-mail so the cost is not high and they do not charge a fee anymore. There was also a very nice newsletter published in Germany by Martin Montholer. Martin really tried but I think he stopped because he could not get people to write.*

*EWS*

From David G. Fluharty

Mexico

Dear Vireya Vine

March 18, 2001 (*sorry Dave, I just missed this*)

### **The Impossible Dream**

Most everyone thinks of Mexico as a desert that can only grow Cacti or other xerophytes.

I retired to southwest Mexico, which is anything but a desert. My home in Taxco, Gro., Mexico is at 55 hundred feet altitude, which makes the area very temperate. The temperature rarely exceeds 75 degrees Fahrenheit or goes below 60 degrees F. There are 2 seasons – rainy in the summer and dry in the winter. Many of my friends from Hawaii have told me that the climate in Taxco is very similar to the climate in Hawaii.

I have read in the A.R.S. Bulletin how well Vireyas do in Hawaii. I could not imagine a standard Rhododendron in my area surviving the dry season. But a Vireya in a container seemed possible with a hose. Accordingly, I set out to try them.

I have used large clay pots of approximately 14 inches in diameter with lots of crocking and filled with “tierra de hoja”. “Tierra de hoja” is leaf litter collected in the mountains. I add 50% by volume perlite and top the mixture off with a little medium bark on the surface to hold the roots in place.

Ready to roll, I purchased some Vireyas. I placed them on a high patio underneath the bows of a Cedar tree. In the dry season, I tend to sprinkle them lightly morning and night. In the rainy season, it rains nearly every night. I tend to sprinkle a mixture made up of a teaspoon/gallon of Peters 20/20/20 fertilizer once per week.

In the patio I grow a lot of other epiphytes including Orchid-cacti, some collected locally. I also grow local Laelia orchids and Oncidium orchids on the same patio. I grow a lot of Primula and a few tree ferns and some azaleas and gardenias nearby. Initially my Vireya were placed in a shady area of the patio. When I noted that the ones with the most sun did the best, I moved them all into a 40% sunny area. Between the latitude, the altitude, and the clear air, my Vireya get a lot of radiant energy. My Vireya seem happy. They are growing. Most of them have approached the 18-24 inch size in one year. The growth rate is variable depending on the parentage or the species. All of them went through the dry season without apparent stress. Laetum and its hybrids seem to grow the fastest. They are regularly pinched. I have used plastic pots of a 14-inch diameter when I didn't have clay pots. My opinion is that clay pots do better, but they certainly do well in the plastic pots. My soil mixture drains virtually instantly.

I am afraid to try my plants in my regular garden since we have a leaf eating terror in the form of Army ants, who can strip a good size hibiscus in one night. I have used all sorts of insecticides on their nests, and have made a dent in their numbers. I am searching for a locally available systemic insecticide. In the meantime, I am afraid to put anything out. The ants seem to love azaleas which augers poorly for Vireya. Perhaps somebody has successfully dealt with this sort of problem. If so, I would like to learn what they did.

Most of my plants were brought in with the idea of making crosses as they bloom. Obviously I will create a Mexican line of hybrid Vireyas, I hope sooner rather than later.

Respectfully submitted,

David G. Fluharty

Apartado # 47

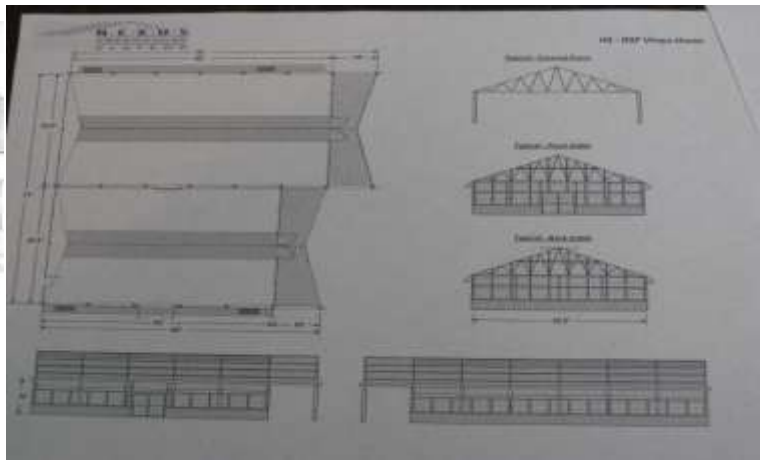
Taxco, Gro, 20 Mexico 20 400

**Here is some really good news for Vireya Rhododendrons.** The Rhododendron Species Foundation is going to build a tropical display greenhouse structure near the garden entry gate. It will be a commercially build structure with double walled plastic sides, and tempered safety glass on the top.

SOME FACTS are

Two structures hooked together 4,615 square feet inside  
19 feet high at the roof peaks Automatic inside shade system  
Peak and sidewalls auto-venting Cooling with a fog system  
Propane heat Computer controlled environment system  
Hopefully a water feature

Here is what it will look like. It will be named the 'Rutherford Conservatory' because Fran has been the major contributor and the driving force behind the project. Besides Vireyas the building will have all kinds of tropical and exotic plants. It will also be a place for us to display some of the spectacular "big leaf" rhodies and some of the wonderful maddenii species. **I am excited!** Lucie and I have already started saving larger sized species for the conservatory. IF you want to contribute money to the operation of this structure please send it in and say where you want the money to be used. Use the address on the front of this newsletter.



The length of one house is 60 feet and the other is 50 feet. They are both 35 feet wide. And there is a covered area in front of each house. Nice. Wish I had a house like that to grow Vireyas in. Lucie and I are starting to save big species to go in this greenhouse. It's going to need a few bigger plants to start out with. *We have tagged a couple of R. superbums, a rugosum, a sheilae, and a big quadrasianum. We took them a big plant of superbum and a big crassifolium already. E White and Lucie*

*From Dennis Bottemiller*

*September 22, 2008*

*Nursery Manager/Propagator RSF Federal Way, Washington*

*Dear VV,*

This summer past I had the opportunity to travel to northern Germany to the Bremen Rhododendron Park to see Botanika, the great display house for vireya and other sub-tropical rhododendrons and companion plants. The purpose of my travel was to gain some understanding of how to set up and operate a display such as this and the team of people who manage this operation were gracious hosts and very helpful.

First let me say that this conservatory is fantastic and amazing and much more than just a display of our favorite genus. It is also a hands-on educational science center with all kinds of interactive exhibits from the rhizosphere to the jungle canopy explaining how plants work in a way that is engaging and downright fun.

One can easily spend a couple hours in this visitor center learning about all aspects of how plants work and interact with their environment. You emerge from the visitor center onto a large elevated platform from which you can view the canopy of the forest below which is planted to simulate the sino-himalya. In addition to the plantings there is a beautiful Chinese pagoda with a glazed ceramic roof, prayer wheels, a Mani wall, a Nirvana Buddha and a great waterfall with a path leading behind the fall itself. It is truly breath taking when you first walk into the conservatory. From the platform above the canopy you descend a stairway into the forest where you can explore along beautifully cobbled trails. The main attraction is rhododendrons and there are many very large specimens interplanted with a tremendous variety of companion plants from ground covers to 30 – 40 foot trees. About three quarters of the building represents the sino-himalya and you can hike through Tibet, Szechwan, Bhutan, Sikkim, Nepal, Yunnan, Burma and Arunchal Pradesh and stop to stamp your passport at the beginning of each section before viewing the great diversity of plants and habitats. Moving from the Himalya through a chamber containing a giant clanging prayer wheel and pushing aside a heavy curtain you step into the steamy world of Borneo and the vireya and orchid jungle. The first thing I noticed was the soaring replica of Mount Kinnabalu with all manner of plants growing on it. A winding trail leads you up into the mountainous epiphyte zone where vireyas and orchids grow beautifully right on the surface of the rocks and all over the tree ferns and trunks of the other trees, quite spectacular! The main man of vireya culture Martin Monthofer gave me a top to bottom tour of the Borneo section and we talked about every aspect of growing vireyas in a conservatory setting and all of the maintenance and operation of such a house.

In fact I spent most of four days looking at all aspects of the entire operation with the excellent staff and directors of the garden. Here I will list some of the very interesting things I learned about Botanika:

-The plant display area is 2500 meters sq. and if my calculations are correct that translates into 26,896 sq. feet, that is a lot of indoor planting space!

-The building height is 17 meters or 55 feet.

-The rock in the display is all hand made and supported by a custom built steel frame unimaginably complex.

-Rainwater is collected from the roof of the building and all the surrounding support buildings and directed into 2 enormous tanks and then to an over-flow pond before it is filtered and heated to 16 degrees C (~ 60 F) before it is used for the plants and fog in the Borneo section.

-The whole conservatory is computer controlled from an office and there are 2500 parameters of control.

This indoor garden exhibit is one of the most amazing and well-done things such as this I have ever seen. Plus, it is but a small part of the Bremen Rhododendron park which is huge. Four days was enough to really learn about the Botanika but I could have been a couple more days in the greater garden. Bremen Rhododendron Park is hosting the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the German Rhododendron society meetings in 2010 and I hope to go back there and I would encourage anyone interested in Rhodos and especially vireyas to go for these meetings, it is well worth seeing!

*Dennis Bottemaller*

*Rhododendron Species Foundation*

*Many of you have known Peter Schick over the years. Peter was one of the very early Vireya people in the United States and had a very nice collection at his home in Fort Bragg, California until a bad freeze came along and killed them all. My wife, Lucie, called Peter the 'Vireya Johnny apple seed' because of the way he went up and down the US west coast distributing vireya plants. Peter made a big contribution to my collection when I lived in Tacoma, Washington, by giving me a large flat of species, probably 20 different ones that he had grown from cuttings. That was back in the days when if I got one new species a year I was running around the house waving my arms. EWS*

## Peter Schick

Born September 11, 1915, Peter died in Fort Bragg on August 5, 2008 with his family at his side.

A knowledgeable and avid plant collector, Schick acquired species of rhododendrons and other interesting plants from around the world. Over time, he donated over 1,000 plants to Mendocino Coast Botanical Garden (MCBG). Schick, a Canadian by birth, moved to Fort Bragg with his wife Lorraine in the late 1970's from Berkeley.

Along with his love of rhododendrons, he brought his organizational skills, energy, and plant collections to the Mendocino Coast Botanical Garden as a volunteer starting in 1986. Lorraine and Peter were married for 60 years and raised five children; Peter built their Fort Bragg house himself.

Peter Schick was well known for his love of the subgenus *Vireya* (or section *Vireya*). Peter was instrumental in bringing *Vireyas* to the public's eye throughout the West Coast and Hawai'i. Along with *Vireyas*, Peter's support at MCBG led to a rhododendron collection that includes nearly one hundred species of *Rhododendron*, mostly species in the tender subsections of *Falconera*, *Grandia*, and *Maddenia*.

In addition to helping develop the plant collections, Schick served on the MCBG Board of Directors, supervised construction of redwood bridges over Digger Creek, designed and built the lath house, the restrooms, and the original Garden's Store. He was involved in MCBG operations up to his passing. In recognition of the many ways Schick has contributed to the plants and development of the Gardens, MCBG dedicated the Tender Rhododendron Species Garden to him in 2007. The American Rhododendron Society (ARS) awarded him its highest honor, the Gold Medal, which is given to honorees who have made national or international impact on the world of rhododendrons. The citation states that his generous distribution of seeds, plants, and cuttings had earned him the title of "Johnny Appleseed" of *Vireyas*. The award was given at the ARS annual conference in 2007, held in South San Francisco.

In November, 2008, the Mendocino Coast Botanical Garden will be selling a DVD, "A Passion for Rhododendrons". Dedicated to Peter Schick, this film explores the history, cultivation, propagation and culture of rhododendrons, specifically the story of rhododendrons along the Mendocino Coast. If you are interested in purchasing the film, please use the contact information below.

In June of 2008, prior to Peter's death, Mendocino Coast Botanical Garden undertook an initiative to honor his legacy by creating the Peter Schick Gardener position. The funds raised for this position will go directly towards maintaining, augmenting, interpreting and curating the collections under the gardener's supervision; which include the Fort Bragg Rhododendron Collection, Tender Rhododendron Species Collection, the North Forest, Conifer and Magnolia Collections and the Woodland Garden.

Upon his passing and in accordance with his wishes, his family has given to the Garden hundreds of additional rare, exotic and wonderful plants he had collected throughout his life. Mendocino Coast Botanical Garden is now just beginning the exciting and daunting task of assessing, cataloguing and eventually preparing habitats and planting. If you wish to contribute to this grand botanical and historical endeavor, Mendocino Coast Botanical Garden asks that you contact them at: 707-964-4352, ext. 19, [development@gardenbythesea.org](mailto:development@gardenbythesea.org) or visit them on the web at: <http://www.gardenbythesea.org>.

*We come from the earth, we return to the earth, and in between we garden.*



See Chris Callard's wonderful Web site at [www.vireya.net](http://www.vireya.net) (it has been redone and is very nice. Good job Chris.

Get into this group and let's talk about Vireyas [www.groups.yahoo.com/group/vireya](http://www.groups.yahoo.com/group/vireya)

**VIREYA NURSERIES**

The Bovees Nursery (Lucie Sorensen-Smith)  
 1737 SW Coronado (E. White Smith)  
 Portland, OR 97219 USA  
 (503)-244-9341 or 1-800-435-9250  
 E-mail [info@bovees.com](mailto:info@bovees.com) [www.bovees.com](http://www.bovees.com)  
 Catalog on the internet (Mail Order)

Glendoick Gardens (Kenneth & Peter Cox)  
 Glendoick, Perth Mail Order  
 Scotland, UK PH2 7N [www.glendoick.com](http://www.glendoick.com)  
 Phone Nursery 073 886 205

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

Mark Jury  
 Tikorangi, RD 43 E-mail [jury@xtra.co.nz](mailto: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 Mail Order  
 Australia E-mail [npuddey@bigpond.net.au](mailto:npuddey@bigpond.net.au)  
[www.vireyaworldwide.net.au](http://www.vireyaworldwide.net.au)

White Cloud Nursery, Pete & Jane Adams,  
 PO Box 1387 Phone 808-345-3345  
 Pahoa, HI 96778 Mail order  
[www.whitecloudnursery.com](http://www.whitecloudnursery.com)

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

Vireyas NZ Tim & Yuan Edgecombe  
 PO Box 48 Waipapa  
 15 McCaughan Road, Kerikeri New Zealand web site at [www.vireya.co.nz](http://www.vireya.co.nz)  
 Phone 09 407 5020  
 Mail Order NZ only E-mail [info@vireyas.co.nz](mailto:info@vireyas.co.nz)  
 They have bought and are growing John Kenyon's plants in Kerikeri  
 where they have established a wholesale tree and shrub nursery.

Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust  
 Carrington Rd. RD4  
 New Plymouth E-mail [pukeiti@pukeiti.org.nz](mailto:pukeiti@pukeiti.org.nz)  
 New Zealand web site at [www.pukeiti.org.nz](http://www.pukeiti.org.nz)

The Vireya Venue  
 2 Clifford Street [www.vireyavenue.com](http://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](mailto:pacislenursery@interpac.net)  
 Keaau, HI 96749 (808)966-9225 Mail Order  
[www.pacificislandnursery.com](http://www.pacificislandnursery.com) They also handle the Vireya seed exchange. WorldWide.

Multiflora Enterprises William Skimina  
 PO Box 556 Phone 760-723-8886  
 Bonsall, CA 92003 [www.multifloraplants.com](http://www.multifloraplants.com) Mail Order

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