



VIREYA VINE

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PUBLISHED BY THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE OF THE RHODODENDRON SPECIES FOUNDATION

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E. White Smith, Editor

From E. White Smith

On September 25, 2010 the new Rutherford Conservatory at the Rhododendron Species Foundation in Federal Way, Washington was dedicated and opened to the public. I had the honour of being the last speaker at the dedication ceremony. Here is some of the things I talked about.

- (1) In the beginning of the RSF at this location there were only a few of us volunteers. The Tacoma Study Club had about 20 members. There were probably 5 or 6 of us who helped unload the trucks that brought the first loads of species up from Oregon. Fran Rutherford was there helping. I am probably the only one left from the original membership.
- (2) When we first arrived here the office building had been built, the greenhouse and lath houses were finished, the main road was done and Weyerhaeuser was dumping raw sawdust out of very big 80 yard trucks four to eight feet deep on the grounds.
- (3) An Education Committee was formed here at the RSF quite early on and we were searching for a project. We developed the Species Study Program with each person writing up a series or two. At that time the Rhododendron species were still divided in to groups called "Series". All of the Education Committee members were also members of then Tacoma Study Club.
- (4) In 1978 while we were at an Ed. Committee meeting, a French wine box full of "collected in the wild" Vireya cuttings arrived direct from New Guinea. The wine box was big and strong and the cuttings were in good condition. Because no one else wanted to try rooting them Fran and I took them to my house in Tacoma and divided the cutting up between us. We rooted most of the cuttings and gave many of the plants to the RSF later.
- (5) At one of the Ed. Committee meetings I suggested that we start a world species newsletter. That turned out to be the 'Vireya Vine Newsletter'. The first 4 issues of the Vine were done on an early Apple II computer by Bob and Marge Badger. When Fran and I took over the Vireya Vine at Issue #5 we changed to Kaypro II computers. At one time we were mailing over 400 copies around the world, eight pages, four time a year. Now we only do about 250 copies and many are sent out by e-mail.

And we did the Vine cheaply, \$10 for ever or if we did not hear from you for 10 years, you would be dropped from the mailing list.

- (6) Issue #1 of the Vireya Vine newsletter was published in mid 1982 by Bob and Marge Badger. Fran and I took over in 1985. 28 years later I am working on Issue #92. During these 28 years Fran took the finished copy to print shops and then stapled, folded and added address and stamps. Four time a year was a big job that often took three or four days to complete. I never knew how much work it was until Fran passed away last fall and I had to do the mailing myself. Thank goodness for e-mail which cuts the mailing down to about 150 hard copies.
- (7) In 1986 Fran went on a plant hunting trip to New Guinea with a group of New Zealanders and Australians. He did a great write up of the trip in VVs # 12 and 13. He also introduce a couple of species or natural hybrids from that trip.
- (8) Fran was president of the Tacoma Chapter ARS in 1978 and 1979. He also helped with the original RSF garden planting which was laid out by the Tacoma Study Club. Because of his interest in Vireya Rhododendrons Fran ended up being the main source of money for the new Rutherford Conservatory at the RSF. Fran also served on the RSF Executive Committee for may years and was a long time member of the Board of Directors. Fran was a retired WWII naval officer and also a retired Kitsasp County Elected Assessor.
- (9) Let's talk a bit about the cold tender plants we are going to grow in this Conservatory. We are planting big leaf rhododendrons, Maddeniis and other frost tender groups. But the main species in here will be the Vireyas. Of the 1,000 or so rhododendron species in the world over 300 of them belong to the Vireya section. They are native to the South Pacific islands of new Guinea, Sumatra, Java, Sulawesi, Malaysia and the Philippines. There are also a few Vireyas native to China, Vietnam and Taiwan. The Vireya group makes up about 1/3rd of the entire Rhododendron family so they are important plants. Vireyas are still being discovered and introduced into cultivation. The planting here in this building looks small and scattered right now but just wait a few years. This will be one of the best Vireya display houses in the world someday. We are very fortunate to have the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden and the Rutherford Conservatory here in the Pacific Northwest. It joins the Vireya display house at the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, Scotland, the new house at the Rhododendron Garden in Bremen Germany, and the wonderful display structure at the Pukeiti garden in New Zealand.

OK that is about what I said at the dedication. After all of the speeches people wandered through the building, and enjoyed treats and drinks. There was a large crowd so we all were able to meet old and new friends.

The plantings in the Conservatory look a little thin and small right now but just wait. We think we have figured out a good planting mix and the plants should grow very well in this wonderful building.

As I have said before, Fran Rutherford passed away last fall. He left almost all of his estate to the RSF, so there should be enough money to maintain the Conservatory building for many years. BUT please remember you can also donate to the Vireya Endowment fund for the future. I hope you still send money to the Vireya Vine even though you might be getting it by e-mail. Any extra money collected I plan on applying to the Vireya collection at the RSF.

From Bill Miller

Tacoma, Washington / Big Island of Hawaii

September 2005

Anecdotal evidence for “An Aspirin Every Quarter”.

I read several months ago in The Avant Gardener newsletter about studies showing salicylic acid (aspirin) boosting the immune systems of many plants. A light went on and I recalled a story about my grandfather's use of cut up and smashed willow branches in a five gallon bucket to root plants. Willow tree bark tea was used by Native Americans to cure headaches because it is full of salicylic acid.

So armed with this article and my own genetic history of the use of aspirin water I proceeded to add one 325 mg aspirin pill to my regular foliar feed. I normally use a scoop of “Peters Professional Soluble Plant Food Acid Greening 17-6-6” in a gallon of water. I foliar spray this combined solution on the tops and bottoms of the leaves of every plant in the greenhouse every three months.

I honestly noticed a difference in a month, a lot of the fungus had disappeared and new buds were appearing. By the second spray, in the dead of winter, I started getting blooms on my Vireyas. Some had never bloomed before this.

I am moved to write this now because I have just come out of the most incredible fragrant greenhouse. I have a R. konori that was grown from seed in 1993 that has bloomed for the first time and my 24' x 26' greenhouse smells wonderful. Also, the new foliage is amazing. I am taking cuttings again (yes, I spray all my cuttings). This year the Vireyas have grown an average of six inches and are putting out side branches.

It costs me exactly four aspirin every year and a LOT of eyeball rolling whenever I tell any of my gardener friends. So I keep it quiet but thought I should let the other readers of the Vireya Vine give it a try and see if it was worth four aspirin a year to get incredible growth and fantastic blooms. (I see your eyeballs rolling!)

Bill Miller, Tacoma Washington/ Hawaii, Hawaii

Small Quantity Liquid Equivalents

Milliliters	Ounces Decimal	Ounces Fraction	Spoon Volumes	Number of Drops
30ml	1.0 oz.	1 oz.	2 tablespoon (tbsp)	360 drops
22ml	.75 oz.	$\frac{3}{4}$ oz.	1 tbsp + 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp.	270
15ml	.50 oz.	$\frac{1}{2}$ oz.	1 tbsp	180
10ml	.34 oz.	$\frac{1}{3}$ oz.	2 teaspoons (tsp.)	120
7.5ml	.25 oz.	$\frac{1}{4}$ oz.	1 $\frac{1}{2}$ tbsp	90
6.0ml	.20 oz.	$\frac{1}{5}$ oz.		
5.0ml	.167 oz.	$\frac{1}{6}$ oz.	1 tsp.	60
4.0ml	.125 oz.	$\frac{1}{8}$ oz.	$\frac{3}{4}$ tsp.	45
3.0ml	.10 oz.	$\frac{1}{10}$ oz.	$\frac{2}{3}$ tsp.	
2.5ml	.08 oz.	$\frac{1}{12}$ oz.	$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp.	30
2.0ml	.06 oz.	$\frac{1}{16}$ oz.	$\frac{1}{3}$ tsp.	
1.2ml	.04 oz.	$\frac{1}{24}$ oz.	$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp.	15
.6ml	.02 oz.		$\frac{1}{8}$ tsp.	7-8
.3ml	.01 oz.		$\frac{1}{16}$ oz.	4
.15ml	.005 oz.		$\frac{1}{32}$ tsp.	2

1 level tablespoon = 3 level teaspoons

1 fluid oz. US = 2 tbsp or 29.57ml

1 cupfull = 16 tablespoons or 8 fluid oz. or .5 pint

1 fluid oz. Brit = 28.41ml

From Patrick Vettling
Dear VV,

Wyoming, Minnesota
July 2010

I am a new member to the Vireya Vine. I am also fairly new to growing Vireyas. I have mostly been growing Orchids with only a few Vireyas in my indoor/outdoor collection of plants.

The Vireyas in my collection were *R. jasminiflorum* and a couple of hybrids. I never thought I could get hooked on Vireyas until I purchased a plant of *R. 'Queensland'* from Bovees Nursery. It came to me with a flower bud and when the flowers opened I could not believe it. The fragrance was incredible and the colour and size of the flowers were fantastic. I was hooked.

I live in the state of Minnesota, 35 miles north of Minneapolis on the border line between USDA (US Department of Agriculture) growing zones 3 & 4. The coldest temperature I have seen here in 20 years was -34F. I grow many hardy magnolias and rhododendrons in my garden. The large leaf rhododendrons are mostly *R. brachycarpum* *V. tigerstedii* and three hybrids. *R. 'Helsinki University'* *R. 'Haaga'* and *R. 'St. Michel'*. I also have many of the small leaf varieties consisting of species and hybrids of *R. dauricum* and *R. mucronulatum*.

Now here is the incredible thought that started running through my head. Would it be possible to cross *R. 'Queensland'*, a Vireya, with any of my very cold hardy rhododendrons? I was successful in crossing *R. dauricum* with *R. maddenii* last year. The seeds germinated fine, but I lost them all to wilt. I will be trying that cross again but will change my growing conditions to prevent the wilt problem.

So what do I cross vireyas with? Is it my large leaf rhododendrons or my small leaf ones. I realize if there is a chance for cold hardy Vireya type rhododendrons in my cold climate it would be a few generations down the road. I am willing to try and who knows given enough time it just might work.

Patrick Vettling
20761 Viking Blvd. NE
Wyoming, MN 55092

Well, Patrick. My answer is no. But I have never tried to cross a vireya with another type of rhododendron. Has it ever been done? Yes, sort of. Dr. John Rouse in Melbourne made a cross with an American species azalea, R. nudiflorum, and got good seed, at least one plant grew on and bloomed and then died. Rouse had at the time probably one of the best Vireya species collections in the world and he was a very smart and good grower. You can read all about it in our book, 'Vireya Rhododendrons An Anthology of Articles from the Journal of the American Rhododendron Society, 1954 – 1998' The article is from the Summer 1988 Vol. 42, #3 of the ARS Journal. If people are interested, since my wife Lucie and I self published this anthology. We can and do get copies made up on request

If you want a copy they are \$22 US post paid in the Lower 48 states. We make almost nothing and maybe don't even break even printing and selling this book, but this is a great collection of information. There are even colour photos of John Rouse's hybrid cross.

BUT please try to make a cross, it costs you almost nothing and some day you might really be famous. You have nothing to lose, so try. And then tell the Vireya Vine what you tried because life is just a learning experience. E White Smith

Now look at this photo. It was taken from the November 2010, Hawaii Chapter Newsletter. The photo was taken near the city of Hilo on the Big Island of Hawaii. The citation said "Got a phone call from Spike Werner (a chapter member) regarding a jasminiflorum 'pink' hybrid hedge in bloom in the Sunrise Ridges subdivision off Komohana St. He said it was "spectacular". I beg to differ... it was beyond 'spectacular'... in full bloom. The plants are about 2' to 3' apart and are maintained just as one would a mock orange hedge." A man named Rod came out of the house and said they'd nurtured the plants for 20 years. He called them something like "Pink Delight". I'm sure I got the name wrong, but hopefully you can put the right name on them.



Wow, now that is really something. Where did they get the plants to start with. They could have gotten them from Bill Moynier who had a mail order Vireya nursery in Las Angelas or maybe even from Lucie at Bovees because she has been selling and shipping Vireyas for a long time. Or the plants could have come from Dick Chaikin (Cape Cod Vireyas, not in business now) Or maybe the people picked up some cuttings in Australia or New Zealand at one time. Vireyas grow very well in parts of Hawaii. Jane and Peter Adams at White Cloud Nursery in Hawaii tell me that they have a whole tray of R. jasminiflorum var. punctatum ready and they might plant a hedge. Great Fun.

I have looked at the photo on Chris Callard's web site and his photo of Pink Delight has a full truss. See www.vireya.net E White

A letter to the Vine taken from VV#8

From Robert 'Mitch' Mitchell Jr.

Big Island, Hawaii, USA

Dear VV,

October 7, 1985

You may remember that my wife and I attended the International Symposium (RSF in Seattle) and some of the sessions of the ARS annual meeting on our way to England last April. We have just returned after having had a wonderful time cruising more of England's beautiful waterways on our Narrowboat "Kimalia". During the last three summers we have discovered more than 1500 miles of canals and rivers from York in the north to Godalming in the south.

And of course we took advantage of every opportunity possible to visit many beautiful gardens. We got to Harlow Carr (Northern Horticultural Society) in time to see a beautiful Rhododendron display, but they were all gone when we reached Kew and Wisley in July. Now I am reviewing my Symposium notes and find many mentions of how well Vireya should do in our garden.

Here is a brief summary of our growing conditions: our home is in a rain forest filled with giant tree ferns, some of which are 25 feet high, and many ohia trees; the rainfall is about 170 inches a year, the temperature very rarely goes below 35F in the winter or above 90F in the warmer periods (we are at 4000 feet) (1312 meters) on the mountain of Mauna Loa and two miles from Kilauea Crater at the latitude 19.16N), and the soil is acid. We have a number of camelias and azaleas and are experimenting with Rhododendron species and hybrids with plants from nurseries in Oregon and Illinois. We also have two Vireya R. aurigeranum from Lyon Arboretum in Honolulu. My notes say that according to Dennis Harris the Maddenii series should do well here. Bill Jenkins thought I should order plants from Vireya Specialties Nursery in West Los Angeles. John Womersley from Australia spoke highly of R. leptanthum, macgregoriae, Taylorii, superbum and zoelleri. Another person suggested crosses with R. laetum, konori and leucogigas and these hybrids, Narnia, Calavar and Lazarus.

Robert Mitchell

Volcano Hawaii 96785

USA

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170 inches of rain is over 14 feet or 4.3 meters of rain. This letter is from 1978, and the last time I was in Mitch's garden it was crammed full of Vireyas growing like crazy.

The International Rhododendron Symposium that Mitch talks about was held at a Hotel on US Highway 99 in Fife Washington by the RSF. While standing around having a beer a few of us were talking Vireya Rhododendrons. I said that I lived just 10 miles away and had a small greenhouse full of Vireyas and then someone said lets go see them. So we piled into some cars and drove to my house in Tacoma. I think there were 6 of us including John Womersley from Australia and Bob Malone from Tasmania, Australia. Also a couple of people from California. Great Fun. I did not have a big collection but they were happy to see it anyway. I had been growing seed from Jack O'Shannessy in Australia so I did have a lot of small plants.

E White

Copied from VV #29

From Dr. George Ryan

Tacoma, Washington, USA

Dear Vireya Vine,

March 9, 1991

The questions in your December 1990 issue about naphthaleneacetic acid have prompted me to make the following comments. Naphthaleneacetic acid is one of the two active ingredients in the liquid rooting preparation Dip n Grow (and Jiffy Grow, no longer available?). Indolebutyric acid is the other active ingredient.

Naphthaleneacetic acid has long been the active ingredient in RooTone (in the amide form, naphthalenacetamide). Indolebutyric acid was added to RooTone #10, giving it greater root-promoting activity than the original formulation. Some formulations of RooTone currently available in the garden stores in our area contain both chemicals.

Early comparisons of these two chemicals showed that generally Indolebutyric acid was more effective than naphthaleneacetic acid. My earliest reference is from B.W. Doak in Palmerston North, N.Z., who came to that conclusion in 1940. Pierik and Steegman in Wageningen, The Netherlands, working with rhododendron stem segments on agar in test tubes, came to the same conclusion in 1969, he also suggested there may be cultivar differences in response.

The concentration of the chemical, the form of the chemical (acid, potassium salt, amide, methyl ester, etc), and the method of application, all can affect the results, so these should be taken into account in any comparisons. James Wells at Red Bank, N.J., stated in 1969 that the most effective treatment for really difficult rhododendrons was a powder containing 10 mg/g of the potassium salt of indolebutyric acid and 0.25 mg/g of naphthaleneacetic acid. Others have reported this combination, in various ratios, to be very effective; for example, Warren Berg in the ARS Quarterly Bulletin of October 1970.

As noted above, Dip n Grow (and Jiffy Grow formerly) contains this combination, and it has been used extensively for many years. I have not heard of a commercial formulation of naphthaleneacetic acid in paste form. Lanolin paste forms of the various growth regulators, or "hormones", have been used experimentally, permitting precise placement on various plant parts to observe the response, but a paste would not be a practical method for large scale treatment of cuttings.

Dr. George F. Ryan

Tacoma, WA

George Ryan was a retired researcher from the Washington State University, agricultural station in Puyallup, Washington. George has also been active in the Tacoma Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society for many years. George only had one Vireya, R. kawakamii, which he grew in a hanging pot and overwintered in his garage. He asked me if kawakamii was a Vireya. I said "sure, probably", at least the RHS species handbook list it as a Vireya.

If you can remember that far back in Vireya time, I planted a R. kawakamii outside in the ground at my home in Tacoma. Lived outside for 3 years but it did not make it through one winter. The temperature was down to +5°F. Not only was the outside kawakamii gone but so are many so called hardy Rhododendrons. The good part is "more room for new things now".

One of the few plants I was never able to keep alive is Lewisia rediviva, the Bitterroot native to Western US states. George had in his back yard a circle of about 10 feet full of pure sand. In this circle grew hundreds of these Lewisias, blooming and happy as a Lark. E White

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They have bought and are growing John Kenyon's plants in Kerikeri
where they have established a wholesale tree and shrub nursery.

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