

THE VIREYA VENTURE No.34 JANUARY 1999

The effects of the August storm are still obvious here in many places - close to home in Cassian St. work on repairs was continuing right up to Christmas eve ending four months of week day noise from Bobcats and other machines. But the Cicadas filled the gap, they have never been as noisy before.

Despite some very erratic weather and little rain lately the garden has flourished (and the weeds too) until we had a very hot, very windy, and very dry 24 hours which even withered the native violet ground cover - it recovered but much of the local dairy pastures have not done so.

We are obliged by Dr.A.C.Leslie, the Senior Registrar of the R.H.S. for the year's Vireya registrations - all Australian this time. However interest is spreading as the comments on Hawaii and Thailand would indicate later on.

The erratic nature of powdery mildew is still puzzling me - with badly affected plants growing alongside others with no sign of trouble.

There is a new Vireya species R.madulidii from the Philipines described in the "New PLantsman" for Dec.98 I have just been told. I may have some details for the next issue, which reminds me that subscriptions are now due for 1999, fees are unchanged at $10.00.

Send your comments with it, and your suggestions to:-
The Editor, P.O.Box 8, Keiraville N.S.W. 2500

J.Clyde Smith.

From Sylia Saperstein, Main Arm, Mullumbimby, N.S.W.:-
" I am proud to announce that Vireya R.searleanum is at last flourishing in Australia!
Lou.Searle discovered this new species in the Highlands of New Guinea in 1970 where he was living at the time. He sent material to Edinburgh Botanical Gardens, Strybing Arboretum, Boskoop and Australian.

According to Lou none of that material has survived in Australia, since no one he has approached knows of its existence. However 1½ years ago Lou received a small plant from George Argent in Edinburgh. He then did me the honour of entrusting it to my care - a bit nerve wracking, I might add. It has taken his namesake a year to acclimatise to N.S.W. conditions.

Even though it has not flowered yet, the uniqueness of its foliage is quite evident. The leaves are very thick, rigid and almost oval. Their colour is the most beautiful pale silvery green. I believe for this alone it would have pride of place in any Vireya collection. Lou tells me he found two specimens in flower growing in poor soil on a clay base surrounded by grass, Casuarina and Lithocarpus, yet the plants were lush.The perfume was of the carnation type, the flowers very much the shape of R.konorii, only slightly smaller. The petals were white, the throat on one plant was almost red,the other slightly paler. Lou is under standably gratified that his treasure has been restored because no one was ever able to relocate the two mature plants named after him". ."

Note: Sleumer's 'An Account of Rhododendron in Malesian' in 1966 doe not mention R.searleanum but his 'New species...in Malesia' from Blumea 1973 has a full description of the species, unfortunately this is in Botanical Latin. Editor.

Also from Mrs Saperstein:-
"Earlier this year I had a visit from members of the Thai Royal family loking for Vireyas. A very ambitious Botanical Garden is being planted in Northern Thailand near Chang Mai. The project was started by the now deceased Queen Mother to give the hill tribes an alternative to opium growing. Huge plantations of macadamias have been established as well, where all the work is done manually.

The Thais were quite enchanted with the Vireyas they saw here and I was able to supply them with a large number of plants. At the same site they are planting 1,000 Himalayan rhododendrons from Belgium. Their climate has a happy combinations of factors that make it suitable for both species. I have been told that the Vireyas have settled in well and are enjoying the Thai winter."

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In case you are wondering - the plants went by air freight.

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Vireya registrations 1 July 1997-30 June 1998

The parents of the immediate cross that gave rise to a newly registered plant are separated by an upper case "×"; where the pollen or seed parents are themselves represented by a parentage the elements within that parentage are separated by a lower case '×'. When the first parent listed is followed by '(s)' this indicates that it is known to be the seed parent. The absence of an '(s)' indicates the direction of the cross is not known.

The following abbreviations are used where appropriate:

R = raised by .... H = hybridized by .... G = grown to first flower by ....
S = selected by .... I = introduced by .... N = named by ....

REG = registered by ....

(v) = a vireya rhododendron

Wherever possible colour references are given to the *RHS Colour Chart* (1966, 1986, 1995) e.g. (58C), the colour description being taken from *A contribution towards standardization of colour names in horticulture* by R.D. Huse and K.L. Kelly (ed. D.H. Voss), published by the American Rhododendron Society in 1984 - e.g. strong purplish red (58C).

(v) 'Alma Blanche'
cv. Lepidote rhododendron: *leucogigas* × *zoelleri* (s) × *leucogigas*
H: G.L.S. Snell (1992), G: N. Puddey (1996), N: N. Puddey (1997), I: N. Puddey, REG: N. Puddey (1997)
Fls 7/flat truss, tubular funnel-shaped, 65 × 70mm, with 7 smooth-edged lobes, buds cream, opening inside cream with a pink blush, outside cream; unspotted; carnation-scented. Calyx 40mm long, red. Lvs elliptic, 240 × 75-90mm, flat or upcurved, apiculate at apex, attenuate at base, scaly (scales reddish when young). Shrub with long internodes, yet still bushy, 0.7 × 0.5m in 4 years; stems and new growth red. December-July (or longer) (Australia).

(v) 'Festive Bells'
cv. Lepidote rhododendron: *lochiae* (s) × unknown
H: G.L.S. Snell (1992), G: N. Puddey (1996), N: N. Puddey (1997), I: N. Puddey, REG: N. Puddey (1997)
Fls 3-6/lax truss, tubular funnel-shaped, 40 × 40mm, with 5 smooth-edged lobes, deep burgundy red throughout (and in bud), unspotted; stamens 10, red; style pinkish red. Lvs broadly elliptic, 92 × 36-40mm, flat to decurved, acute at apex, obtuse at base, glossy green above, scaly. Shrub 0.5 × 0.3m in 4 years. December-January (Australia).

(v) 'Happy Jubilee'
cv. Lepidote rhododendron: *laetum* × *zoelleri* (Irian Jaya form) (s) × *laetum* × *zoelleri* (Irian Jaya form)
H: B. Clancy (1981), G: B. Clancy (1985), N: B. Clancy (1997), I: Vireya Valley Nursery (1997), REG: Vireya Valley Nursery (1997)
Fls 5/flat truss, tubular funnel-shaped, 33 × 80mm, with 5 flat-edged lobes, light yellow (17D) diffusing to strong reddish orange (32B) on lobes in bud, opening inside strong orange-yellow

(17A), diffusing to vivid reddish orange (32A) on lobes; outside vivid yellow (17B), diffusing to vivid reddish orange (32A) on lobes; unspotted; anthers black. Lvs elliptic, 85 × 37mm, margins upcurved, apiculate at apex, cuneate at base, glossy green above, no scales apparent to the naked eye. Shrub 1.4 × 0.7m in 10 years. Spring-summer.

(v) 'King Solomon'
cv. Lepidote rhododendron: *zoelleri* (Mount Hagen form) (s) × *leucogigas* 'Hunstein's Secret'
H: J.L. Rouse (1984), G: B. Clancy (1990), N: B. Clancy (1997), I: Vireya Valley Nursery (1997), REG: Vireya Valley Nursery (1997)
Fls 5/flat truss, tubular funnel-shaped, 58 × 130mm, with 6 flat-edged lobes, buds deep purplish pink (54B) on lobes, shading to pale yellow (11D), opening inside strong red (53D) shading to light yellow (11B) in the throat; outside strong red (53D); unspotted. Lvs elliptic, 140 × 60mm, flat, matt green above, acute at apex, cuneate at base, with light brown scales when young. Shrub 1.3 × 0.7m in 10 years. October-March (Australia).

(v) 'Little Rosie'
cv. Lepidote rhododendron: *laetum* × *aurigeranum* (s) × *rubineiflorum*
H: B. Clancy (1987), G: B. Clancy (1990), N: B. Clancy (1997), I: Vireya Valley Nursery (1997), REG: Vireya Valley Nursery (1997)
Fls 4/flat truss, very short tubular funnel-shaped, 44mm wide, with 5-7 flat-edged lobes, vivid reddish orange (34A) in bud, opening vivid reddish orange (33A) inside and vivid reddish orange (33B) outside; unspotted. Lvs ovate, 28 × 12mm, flat, glossy above, acute at apex, cuneate at base, no scales apparent to the naked eye. Compact, strongly stoloniferous shrub, 0.35 × 0.65m in 8 years. Spring-summer.

(v) 'Royal Bouquet'
cl. Lepidote rhododedron: 'Doctor Herman Sleumer' (s) × *superbum*
H: B. Clancy (1988), G: B. Clancy (1993), N: B. Clancy (1997), I: Vireya Valley Nursery (1997), REG: Vireya Valley Nursery (1997)
Fls 5-7/open, flat truss, tubular funnel-shaped, 55 × 104mm, with 7 flat-edged lobes, buds yellowish white (155B) at lobe edges, pale yellow (8D) at base, opening inside and out yellowish white (155B) at edges, with a pale yellow (8D) throat and with vivid red (52A) at lobes both inside and out; strongly scented. Lvs elliptic, 105 × 50mm, flat, obtuse at apex, cuneate at base, matt and dark greenish yellow (152D) above, with moderate orange-yellow (164B) scales when young. Shrub 0.6 × 0.5m in 8 years. Flowering throughout the year.

(v) 'Royal Gala'
cv. Lepidote rhododendron: *aurigeranum* (s) × 'Gardenia Odyssey'
H: B. Clancy (1991), G: B. Clancy (1995), N: B. Clancy (1997), I: Vireya Valley Nursery (1997), REG: Vireya Valley Nursery (1997)
Fls 10/domed truss, tubular funnel-shaped, 38 × 70mm, with 5 very wavy-edged lobes, pale yellow (11C) in bud, opening inside and out pale orange-yellow (19D) at base, shading to a deep yellowish pink (43C) picotee edging; unspotted. Lvs elliptic, 110 × 60mm, obtuse at apex, cuneate at base, flat, glossy above, no scales apparent to the naked eye. Shrub 0.6 × 0.6m in 5 years. Spring-summer.

(v) 'Ruby Anne'
cv. Lepidote rhododendron: *anagalliflorum* (s) × *rubineiflorum*

H: G.L.S. Snell (1984), G: G.L.S. Snell (1987), N: G.L.S. Snell (1987), REG: R.M. Withers (1997)
Fls solitary, tubular funnel-shaped, 20 × 30mm, with 5 flat-edged lobes, inside pale purplish pink (62D), moderate purplish pink (62B) at lobe edges, strong purplish red (63A) in the throat, outside pale purplish pink (62D); unspotted; stamens 10, uneven, anthers dark red (59A), filaments strong purplish pink (62A); stigma strong yellow-green (144A), style strong purplish red (63A), ovary moderate yellow-green (143D) Lvs elliptic, 9 × 3.5mm, flat, acute at apex, attenuate at base, scaly, glossy green above. Shrub 19 × 35cm. November-December (Australia).

(v) 'Sonny Boy'
cv. Lepidote rhododendron: *zoelleri* (Lou Searle form, LS2) (s) × *laetum* × *aurigeranum*
H: B. Clancy (1978), G: B. Clancy (1987), N: B. Clancy (1997), I: Vireya Valley Nursery (1997), REG: Vireya Valley Nursery (1997)
Fls 9/flat truss, tubular funnel-shaped, 33 × 90mm, with 6-7 flat-edged lobes, lobe edges moderate pink (49B) fusing to brilliant yellow (11A) in bud, opening inside deep pink (50B) at edges fusing to light yellow (11B) in the throat, outside deep pink (50B) at edges fusing to light yellow (11B); unspotted. Lvs ovate, 45 × 23mm, flat, acute to acuminate at apex, cuneate at base, glossy green above, no scales apparent to the naked eye. Shrub 1.3 × 0.7m in 10 years. Winter-spring.

(v) 'Sri Chinmoy'
cv. Lepidote rhododendron: selection from *loranthiflorum*
G: J.L. Rouse (1973), S: J.L. Rouse, N: J.L. Rouse, I: Vireya Valley Nursery, REG: J.L. Rouse (1997)
Fls 4-8/open truss, tubular funnel-shaped (salverform), 40 × 25mm, with 5 smooth-edged lobes, white throughout when open and in bud, unmarked. Lvs obovate, 48-64 × 20-25mm, margins slightly decurved, obtuse at apex, cuneate at base, glossy green, scaly. Shrub 2.0 × 1.0m in 20 years. Irregular flowering all year round.
(Grown from wild-collected seed (Craven (Schodde) 158) from near Lake Loloru, Bouganville, 1964)

(v) 'Sunset Ecstasy'
cv. Lepidote rhododendron: *zoelleri* (Michael Black form) (s) × *aurigeranum*
H: B. Clancy (1976), G: B. Clancy (1980), N: B. Clancy (1997), I: Vireya Valley Nursery (1997), REG: Vireya Valley Nursery (1997)
Fls 8-10/flat truss, tubular funnel-shaped, 30 × 70-75mm, with flat-edged lobes, strong yellowish pink (40D) shading to light yellow (21D) in bud, opening inside and out strong reddish orange (40C), shading to vivid orange-yellow (21A); unspotted. Lvs ovate to elliptic, 140 × 60mm, margins upcurved, acute to apiculate at apex, cuneate at base, glossy and moderate olive green (146A) above, no scales apparent to the naked eye. Shrub 1.3 × 0.6m in 10 years. Flowering throughout the year.

(v) 'The Sorcerer's Apprentice'
cv. Lepidote rhododendron: *konori* × *rhodoleucum* (s) × *konori*
H: unknown G: D. Moodie (1994), N: D. Moodie (1998), I: J. Prentice, REG: D. Moodie (1998)
Fls 7-11/domed truss, tubular funnel-shaped, 115 × 75mm, with 6 wavy-edged lobes, light yellowish pink (37D) in bud, opening yellowish white (155D) inside, outside yellowish white

REGISTRATIONS contd.
(155D) darkening at base of tube to moderate pink (36D),unmarked; style bright candy pink.Calyx 7 mm long, dark yellowish green (189A).Leaves ovate,125x55mm,flat,acute at apex, obtuse at base,matt green above, scaly (scales very pale green (129B)at first, ageing to dark yellowish green (139A). Shrub 2.5x1.2m in 12years. Summer - Autumn.

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From Dick Ottaway, 9 Hesperus St. Pymble N.S.W.:-

HAWAII

"Having recently had a most wonderful experience as the guest, for ten days at the home of Mitch and Sandy Mitchell in Volcano, Hawaii, I thought perhaps your readers might be interested to hear about Mitch's beautiful garden. Mitch, incidentally, is the President of the Hawaii Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society - a most enthusiastic group of Vireya lovers living on the Big Island.

The village of Volcano is situated about about 45Km from Hilo at an altitude of 1,300 m. only a few kms from Volcano National Park H.Q. on the rim of the Kilauea Caldera. With the prevailing N.E.Trade winds dumping their moisture on the mountain slopes, the annual rainfall is from 170" - 250". Being about 20°N. the climate is very mild. The rich volcanic soil, perfectly drained, supports a very diverse and lush vegetation.

Iiwi road, where Mitch lives, is a single lane road, walled on both sides with a dense growth of native and introduced species, many of which have become serious weeds, especially the Kabili ginger and, believe it or not, purple flowered Tibouchina, with growth up to 6 metres. Many introduced trees appear more spectacular than the native species, especially Japanese cypress - Cryptomeria japonica - which has been much planted. The dominant native trees are the red flowered O'hia (metrosideros polymorpha) and the Koa (acacia koa) as well as thousands of tree ferns.

Mitch's house and garden are slmost hidden fro the road by a thick screen of lush growth. His land is a long narrow block, about 140m long and 35m.wide running roughly N-S, and sloping gently to the SW.corner. On the W.Side is a grassed area, between the boundary fence and some native forest. which is part of a cattle ranch.

The house is surrounded by tree ferns and O'hia trees, growing from beds bordered by moss covered fern logs, with a double planting of anthuriums in all shades of pink and red, cymbidiums, azaleas, camellias, hydrangeas, begonias, and many coloured cordylines. The trunks of the tree ferns are covered with bromeliads and other epiphytes. With the use of discreet flood lighting the effect at night is quite enchanting.

From the vicinity of the house black cinder covered paths, bordered with more mossy tree fern logs, meander invitingly in different directions, through gently undulating beds, planted

with a wonderful collection of Vireyas and other shrubs under a varying canopy of O'hias and tree ferns. Several daturas, delicately fragrant, in white, orange and red, were very eye catching. Naturally occurring mounds and hillocks have been cleverly used to highlight certain plants, and several manmade but natural looking pools provide a most attractive water feature. Towards the S.W.corner, a pretty Japanese teahouse, approached over an arched bridge, was a unique and most interesting addition. Our Australian native violet, viola hederacea, has been extensively used as a ground cover.

To attempt to list the Vireya species and hybrids in Mitch's garden is quite beyond the scope of this article, or the knowledge of the writer. Suffice to say, there was a fantastic display, from the vibrant orange/red of Vladimir Bukovsky, the dainty Pink Mist, deep pink Taylori, a gorgeous truss of Dr. Herman Sleumer, golden laetum, the dainty white bells of Silver Thimbles to our own R.lochiae, covered in red bells, plus many, many more, some delightfully fragrant.

Before returning home, I was invited to speak to the members of the Chapter on the growing of Vireyas in Australia. It was a rare privilege and a task about which I felt some what apprehensive in view of my limited knowledge of the subject. However with some borrowed slides from Clyde Smith and reference to back numbers of Vireya Venture, I was able to present a reasonably interesting talk, I think. And for my trouble I was presented with a gorgeous Lei - probably the first ever made exclusively from Vireya flowers.

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Also from Mrs Saperstein:

"in the last year I have been using the Nutricote formulation for native plants, which contains no phosphorous, and I find that they are a far better colour and flower just as well.

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Earthworms are quite a pest for the commercial grower of Vireyas. Even a mild infestation can slow down growth considerably and even make plants unsaleable because the root system is too loose in the pot. A drench of Pyrethrum or Malathion works well but I prefer to soak the pot in Condies crystals (Potassium permanganate) for ten minutes to achieve the same result. And it is more environmentally friendly. Incidentally the extra potash has no ill effect on Vireyas.

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Earthworms in pots are trouble for any grower - here I have had plants affected by poor drainage as the worms will block up drainage holes in plastic pots. They are not always noticed until some damage is done and prevention in very wet weather is not always effective for pots anywhere near the ground.

Editor.

Rh rarilepidotum

From Brian Clancy, 31 Renown St. Bentleigh,Victoria:-
'R.rarilepidotum in cultivation has proved to be an outstanding and floriferous Vireya species with mature plants providing spectacular red, many flowered blooms over several months.

At the International Rhododendron Conference held at Wollongong in October 1988, George Argent described the collection of R.rarilepodotum in Sumatra (Indonesia) in February 1988. He found it growing in open hillside shrubbery close to the summit of an active volcano but away from the sulphurous vent. In the Rhododendron Handbook (1988) it is described as a lovely and vigorous species in cultivation with 10-18 flowers per umbel, more or less horizontal with corollas bright orange to red, often with a darker centre.

Fortunately, I have two seedling plants of R.rarilepodotum; one growing in a fern log and the other in a 14-inch plastic pot in a mix of 80% pine bark and 20% compost. The tags on the plants (GA3/1988) indicate that the seed was collected by George Argent in Sumatra in 1988. One of these seedlings I received from the late Bill Mearns and, no doubt, others shared in his generosity. Both plants first flowered for me in 1997 and during 1998 both plants have been outstanding in flower. Each plant has displayed this season, 15 trusses with 8 or more buds still to flower. The colour has been a bright orange-red with a deeper throat.

At the October 3-4 1998 Show at the National Rhododendron Garden, Olinda, a 24-flowered truss of R.rarilepidotum won the best Vireya species, whilst at the Annual Rhododendron Show at the same location 31 October to 3 November 1998, a 21-flowered truss of R.rarilepidotum was awarded the trophy for the best Vireya Species.

R.rarilepidotum has very good foliage, is easy to grow and flower and is a highly recommended species for all Vireya growers.

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