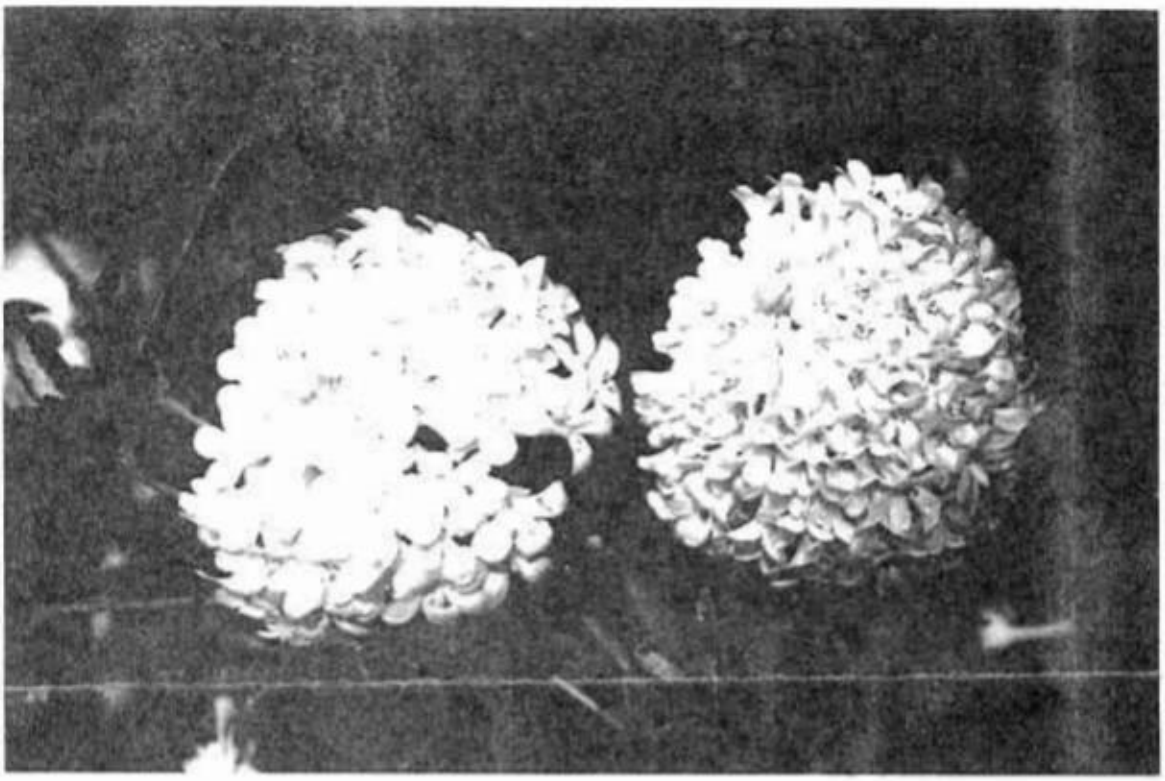


THE VIREYA VENTURE OCTOBER 1999 No. 37

The colour photo that Lou Searle included with his note on fasciation - see later- reproduced miserably in black and white, above, but it will give some indication of the many flowers in each truss.

The weather always seems to dominate our local happenings but this time it can only be praised - the autumn rain and then the warm winter resulted in the best Spring show of flowers that we have had here - not just Vireyas which flowered as usual and included the biggest ever 120mm flowers on Hunstein's Secret x zoelleri.- but also the Asiatic rhododendrons ciliatum and ciliatum, bothe old plants that have hardly flowered at all before. The azaleas had good shows with Meicho in particular covering itself, the camellias came early and larger than usual, magnolias followed and the whole garden enjoyed the weather.

Unfortunately September only had nuisance drizzles apart frpm two showers and the ground is cracking in the unwatered areas.

The Royal Horticultural Society of Australia had a Spring Show at Bowral on 25/26 September and this was a well attended show with an extraordinary display of Daffodils (which barely exist here) and a section for Vireyas but no exhibits unfortunately. The many stalls with a great variety of garden requirements were also very interesting.

This is the last issue for the 19 hundreds - Your comments and suggestions for the year 2000 will be welcomed.

The Editor, P.O.Box 8, Keiraville, N.S.W. 2500

J.Clyde Smith.

From Lou Searle, 686 Bellangry Road, Mortons Creek, N.S.W.2446.

"Some years ago Arthur Headlam had an article on the fasciation of stems on Vireyas published in the journal of the Australian Rhododendron Society. As far as I can recall there was no mention of these fasciated stems flowering.
Recently a plant of 'Sweet Cherubim' in my garden produced trusses on several such stems - I counted the seed capsules on three of these heads,viz:-172, 138, 38!
In case of doubters , I have kept those capsules in three paper bags. I enclose a picture of two of those trusses.

Yesterday Glenys (our local Nursery Lady) started potting up garden seedlings. She says there are hundreds and she hopes to do as many as she can.

xxx

Lou is rather resticted in his garden because of ill health, the seedlings referred to are those described in the July '97 issue which were self sown in the rotting Pinus patula pine logs on the sawdust covered Vireya bed in his garden.

While selfsown seedlings are rare several other cases have been reported in the A.R.S. journals, the earliest in the June 1970 issue :-

Malesian Rhododendrons at Palm Beach, N.S.W.
by A.W.Headlam.

"Last Spring we had a quite unexpected visit from Mrs K.Fairley, well known in the Australian Camellia research Society for her ability in the field of grafting and propagating.
She had become interested in Malesian rhododendrons and was endeavoring to obtain some plants - I was able to give her a R.laetum x R.macgregoriae cross (made by Brian Clancy) and assist her in obtaining several other plants to take back to her home in Palm Beach.
In a letter recently received she mentioned that most of the plants have already trebled in size, although none have flowered yet - her garden at Palm Beach is on the end of a narrow peninsula overlooking the Pacific Ocean, where the climate is warmer than Sydney and the last frost occured some 30 years ago.
A large plant of R.lochae, growing under a Jacaranda tree, flowers profusely and in the chopped up Stag Horn fern used as a mulch around the plant, a number of seedlings has appeared. Nothing is done to help the process other than the placing of the fern-mulch around the plant. The seed capsules ripen, split of their own accord, and in due course the seedlings appear.

It is most interesting that by using chopped-up fern as a mulch and with the assistance of the favourable climatic conditions prevailing in the area, it has been possible to induce R.lochae to increase naturally in this way."

xxx

Other examples in the Journal refer to the growth of self sown Vireyas in fern logs - Dicksonia antactica, which is common in the cooler victorian forests.

From Cheryl L.Perkins, 541 W.Taylor Ave. Calhoun City, Mississippi 38916 U.S.A. July 28th !999.

"I first discovered Vireyas at the Opryland Hotel in Nashville, Tennessee, the Country Music Capital City. The Hotel is enormous with several atriums filled with streams (you can boat ride in them!), waterfalls, and countless huge tropical plants. The Horticulturist has done an amazing job - I met with him and asked many questions while I was there. He had used pink,white, yellow, red, and orange mature Vireyas along the stream which meandered through an entire section of this enormous hotel. Once he told me that they were epiphytic, I was hooked - a large part of what I grow in my north Mississippi greenhouse is epiphytic - orchids,bromeliads,aroids,gesneriads,epiphylliums - many others.

The temperature is 91°F now, 67% humidity, heat index of 109°F right now - night lows are in the mid 70's now - it should be about 97°F tomorrow. This is our hottest weather - we need rain -temperatures will moderate in Sept.- Oct., first frost usually mid October,but last year it was not freezing until the Monday night before Christmas! We had an ice storm then and no electricity for several days - we had to rough it. I had vented gas heat in the greenhouse so the plants did better than we did.

I found Vireyas at Orchids Ltd (4630 N.Fernbrook Lane, Plymouth, Minnesota 55446) and later bought one from a Florida nursery that was badly shipped and had scale. I had to put this interest on hold due to family illness, but when I saw the book 'Vireys a Practical Gardening Guide' byJohn Kenyon and Jaccqueline Walker I bought it and here I go again!.... I am trying to learn as much as I can before I get inyo the actual growing of Vireyas. My yard is home to hundreds of native and hardy azaleas and camellias - they also like porous soil and not too much fertilizer, slightly acid soil, regular watering but not wet feet. I plant them in 3 parts pine bark mulch,1 part sand and 1 part peatmoss, they have shallow roots and prefer mulching. They also prefer to be out of direct sun.....

PS - To date I know of no others in my state or outside of the above mentioned sources who know of or grow Vireyas.

xxxxx

The use of the term 'heat index' is intriguing - the only index that has been used before to my knowledge was that used (many years ago, at least) was developed to determine a 'comfort factor' for the miners working at extreme depths in the South African gold mines. This was based on the air temperature, its velocity, and humidity all of which could be controlled to some degree. However I do not now have the formula.
The other factors that are of significance are the daylength and the amount of direct sunlight, certainly selected Vireyas do take a remarkable range of climates when compared with the high altitude conditions of the P.N.G. highlands.

xxxx

From the catalogue of Neil and Kathryn Puddey,P.O.Box 126 Woolgoola,N.S.W.2456.

LANDSCAPING WITH VIREYA.

Vireya flower through much of the year, those gardeners lucky enough to have extensive collections will see blooms almost every month of the year. In our own nursery where flowering records are kept, autumn and spring are very colourful but even May, June and July are blessed with up to ten varieties flowering. This almost unseasonal flowering habit will give landscapers, who make specific hybrid choices,the opportunity to put colour into their gardens throughout the year.
The growth habit of Vireya varies from bushy 30cm.miniatures with very small foliage to 3m. open shrubs, this variation gives the landscaper many opportunities.

ROCKERIES and BORDERS

The smaller almost prostrate forms work well in rockeries or as border plants. Hybrids such as :- 'Lochmin','Charming Valentino','Jasminiflorum', 'Little Pinkie','Lochae', and the compact miniatures work well.

HEDGES

The bushier medium sized plants of 1.5m, closely planted will grow into a colourful hedge. 'Haloed Gold','Sunset Fantasy', 'Rosie Posie','Gossamer White','Princess Alexandra','Sweet Amanda','Sebastian',and 'Highland White Jade' could be used in this way.

BACKGROUND AND SCREENING

Some varieties will reach 2-3m and can provide useful screens.To name a few:-'Hari's Choice','Pink Pizazz',Simbu Sunset','Pindi Pearl','Elegant Bouquet','Bold Janus','Shantung Rose','Shantung Pink','Iced Primrose','Buttermilk' and 'Eastern Zanzibar'.

HANGING BASKETS and GROUND COVERS

Some quite prostrate forms of Vireya can be used in hanging baskets with stunning effect and will also spread over banks or retaining walls.
'Tropic Fanfare','Coral Flare','Arthur's Choice','Bob's Crowning Glory','Lochmin' and Jasminiflorum can all be used in this way.
A variation on the hanging basket idea is to put these forms of Vireya behind or into the top of elkhorn ferns. The ferns seem unaffected and the Vireya love it, provided there is enough light.

POTS AND TUBS

All Vireya can be used in large pots or tubs under pergolas or on paved areas very successfully.

These suggested uses are not exhaustive,the key to success is to find an area in the garden with excellent drainage that has good full morning , and afternoon filtered sun, with protection from frost and strong wind.

xxxxx

In the last issue the list of species introduced to Australia with those used for hybridizing being underlined,was very extensive, but looking at the old records of species that been grown at Keiraville showed that many were lost cayses in our warm climate. Nevertheless there were some real successes and the best six of them for growth and flowers are javanicum konori, laetum, notiale, orbiculatum, and sessilifolium.

Of these there are some forms of konori that are not so good here and although notiale has flowered magnificently it is now rather shy.

It would be interesting to compare these with other grower's choice in different areas and your lists would be welcomed.

xxxxx

There are many recommended suggestions for the reproduction of plants, not all suitable for Vireyas, seeds, cuttings, and grafts are all possible but the method of taking small tip cuttings is probably not so well known. This was the subject of a detailed article in the September 1971 issue of the Journal of the Australian Rhododendron Society by Brian Clancy. In his opening paragraph Brian says:-
"Outstanding results have been obtained in the past two years in the propagation of rhododendron and other genera from small tip cuttings measuring from a quarter of an inch up to a maximum of one and a quarter inches. The percentage of germination has frquently been of the order of one hundred percent and the resultant plants have made more compact and sturdier bushes with appreciably quicker growth than the original seedlings".

His article then details the history of the process as reported by John patrick in the January 1969 American Rhododendron Society Bulletin, and Brian's adoption of this method in preference to his own system of taking cuttings from seedlings that had grown to 9 - 12 inches high. Cuttings in any form have always flowered much sooner than the parent and this system is applicable to many other genera.

For Vireyas tip cuttings from 1/4"to 1"!/4" are taken from seedlings, dusted lightly with cutting powder (this is not necessarily required) then placed in damp sphagnum moss, packed loosely in small plastic pots which are placed in polythene bags, sealed, and if necessary placed under additional lighting. Roots may be visible very quickly - seven to fourteen days - and then when they have a good root system thay may be transplanted into a very loose mix. They are then placed back in sealed polythene bags for some three weeks before hardening them off . John Patrick's procedure was to pot them up after 30 days, but this may be varied.

xxxxx