

The Rhododendron

The Australian Rhododendron Society Inc.



2012

Volume 52



Jury vireya rhododendrons, 'Mango Sunset' (above) and 'Sweet Cherry'. See pages 39–46.



Front Cover: *R. himantodes* × (*macgregoriae* × *rubineiflorum*). Photograph by Andrew Rouse, whose story about hybridising with (*macgregoriae* × *rubineiflorum*) starts on page 22.

The
Rhododendron
Official Journal of the Australian Rhododendron Society

2012

Volume 52

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The Rhododendron, the journal of the Australian Rhododendron Society Inc., is published annually by the Society. Material for publication in The Rhododendron is welcomed and contributors are requested to note that the closing date for each issue is August 1.

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The Australian Rhododendron Society Inc.

Aims

The Society's objective is to encourage interest in and disseminate information and knowledge about the genus *Rhododendron* and to provide a medium by which all persons interested in the genus may communicate and co-operate with others of similar interest.

Membership

Membership of the Society is open to all persons interested in the objectives of the Society upon payment of the annual membership subscription. For further information contact Branch Secretaries or the National Secretary.

Subscriptions

Annual subscriptions cover the period 1 July to 30 June, and vary up to \$25 (single member) and \$35 (member & partner) depending on the Branch selected. (Branches set their own level, out of which an amount is paid to the national Society). The annual journal *The Rhododendron* is included as a benefit of membership.

Overseas members may nominate for affiliation with any of the Branches. The base annual subscription for membership of the Victorian Branch is AUD \$25. This covers dispatch of *The Rhododendron* by airmail in the last quarter of the calendar year and other communications by email (if there is a preference for receipt of other communications in hard copy form, an additional subscription amount of AUD \$15 applies to cover airmail cost). The Victorian Branch accepts Visa or Mastercard payments. Overseas subscriptions to other Branches may vary from these rates and require to be paid by bank draft or cheque payable in Australian dollars. Contact the ARS National Secretary.

Contact details

Details of local Branches, along with Office Bearers of the Australian Rhododendron Society, are listed on page 76.

Editorial

BARRY STAGOLL

This year, once again, we go around the world – in more than one sense – to bring you news and stories about rhododendrons.

Jeff and Gill Jenkinson recount their experiences on a spring trip to the USA to attend the 2012 National Convention of the American Rhododendron Society and Azalea Society of America, and tour the botany-rich Appalachians, with their abundant native rhododendrons. Jeff also contributes a piece about *R. catawbiense*. During the same time of year Jenny and Ian Chalk visited gardens in the UK, and in their article they discuss a number of those they chose to see.

At our invitation, Marc Colombel offered an article, which we're pleased to include, on using peat as a propagating medium. Marc runs a website, as a personal project, dedicated to all things rhododendron from his home in France (there's a link from our national website – should you visit you'll see that you click on a Union Jack to access the captions in English).

Neil Puddey returns to our list of contributors with a follow-up to his stories in Vol. 47 2007 and Vol. 48, 2008 about the foreshadowed adoption of vireyas for display in the Gardens by the Bay horticultural park planned for Singapore. The 0.8 hectare Cloud Forest Conservatory in the park, which will maintain a cool tropical mountain climate, is now the home for vireyas supplied by Neil. He tells the story of their export in his article. The park sounds very interesting – reason to consider a Singapore visit, perhaps?

We're also most pleased to include The Jury vireya legacy by Abbie Jury, republished with her kind permission and likewise that of the Royal Horticultural Society UK, which first published this article in *Rhododendrons, Camellias and Magnolias 2012*. I should like to record my gratitude to Honorary Editor of the RHS Rhododendron Camellia and Magnolia Group, Pam Hayward, for her kind assistance in facilitating republication.

Still on the subject of vireyas, we're grateful that Andrew Rouse continues to provide meticulous reports on the results of his hybridising work with vireyas – this time discussing interesting results from crosses made with (*R. macgregoriae* × *R. rubineiflorum*).

Back home, Lesley Gillanders chronicles a 'moving home' story. Lesley and husband Ken decided to 'downsize' to a smaller home and garden, but took a considerable slice of the latter with them – and their ensuing saga of heroic proportion makes a good read. Dedicated gardeners don't surrender quietly!

Of course, Ken also found time still to look after registrations for new hybrid rhododendrons.

Whilst talking of Ken and Lesley, perhaps like me you were fortunate enough to see the ABC TV ‘Gardening Australia’ episode earlier in the year where they were able to show and talk about numbers of the fine plants that they had collected over the years on travels abroad and brought into their garden. And whilst on the subject of ‘Gardening Australia’, it was also nice to see that the National Rhododendron Gardens, Olinda, received some positive coverage last autumn, with presenter John Patrick interviewing the Parks Victoria NRG team leader Glenn Maskell about the very fine collection of ‘autumn interest’ trees in the Gardens.

Readers will have noticed that last year we included a report by the Blue Mountains Rhododendron Society (BMRS), a New South Wales group with kindred interests to the Australian Rhododendron Society. This year, in addition to BMRS, we also carry a report from Tamborine Mountain Botanic Gardens, situated in southeast Queensland, which incorporates a Rhododendron Garden containing vireyas and an enthusiastic volunteer group having strong interest in vireyas. We’re pleased to welcome them to our pages. ❁

Correction

Two errors were noted by Mr Harry Ronken in figure 4 included in the article ‘Australian Hybrid Rhododendrons’, by Graham Price, which appeared in *The Rhododendron*, Vol 51, 2011.

Mr Ronken contacted Graham Price to advise as follows:

- (1) Don Dosser appeared in the list of Australian hybridisers credited with 125 registrations, but as he actually received 143 rhododendron registration certificates it can be assumed 143 registrations should be attributed to him.
- (2) Mr Ronken himself was credited in the list with 22 registrations. However, he hybridised only eight of those, whilst registering the other 15 for the late Australian Rhododendron Society member Bob Malone (of those 15 registrations, seven were for Bob’s hybrids and eight were from American Rhododendron Society “Seed exchange” seed, mainly from foremost American hybridisers). Consequently, Harry Ronken should have been credited with eight hybrids, and Bob Malone should be included in the list of Australian rhododendron hybridisers with seven.

The President's Report

ROBERT HATCHER

This year has proved to be somewhat frenetic in pace. I don't believe the second we gained or lost, depending on your point of view, had much to do with it. There has been a fair bit of action occurring at a national level. Changes to national levies and trying to engender enthusiasm for a search for *Rhododendron lochiaie* and *viriosum*, in Far North Queensland, have been a couple of the things that have been dominating our time at a national level.

Unfortunately our plan to collect plant material has met with the obstacle of the Queensland authorities denying our permit application. The chance of collecting in 2012 remains slim and by the time this Journal comes out we may or may not be collecting. Regardless of this, we will be travelling to the Atherton region to find and catalogue populations of these species. GPS and digital images will be the order of the day if nothing else. An article for next year's Journal in the offing, no doubt.

There are also several other projects under scrutiny, including one that we will be attempting here in South Australia to get some tissue culture technology operating. This may enable us to get the Inkarho group of rhododendrons into the country. These are lime tolerant and would widen the range of growing zones for rhododendrons.

Our treasurer Peter Wiadrowski has been negotiating to get ARS information included on Norwood Press plant labels.

There is a perception within the community that rhododendrons are difficult to grow and we need to try to turn this around. At a time when interest in gardening is growing again, especially with the "grow your own veggies" push cropping up everywhere, we should be capitalizing on this and promoting rhodos as a lifetime interest again.

Here in South Australia we have a slight increase in membership at the moment. This may be as a result of an increase in vocal public support for Mount Lofty Botanic Garden which has been happening in the last 12 months. Let us hope this can continue.

Another interesting development that will be announced in September will be the release of a new organic-based fertilizer for rhododendrons and camellias from Neutrog. Marketed under the interesting branding *Kahoona* it will be on garden centre shelves soon.

I would like to close with an exhortation to members of all branches to get out and promote the value of growing rhododendrons in any way they

can. At a time when we hear reports of vitamin D deficiency growing and the increase of obesity and diabetes, promoting gardening and engendering interest in rhodos should be easier than in the last ten years, especially with watering restrictions being eased.

I thank all members for their continuing membership and look forward to catching up with as many of you as I can while I am President. Please feel free to email me with any thoughts you may have on anything Rhododendron Society related (email: hatcherhouse@internode.on.net). ❀

The Vireya Venture

... an international quarterly newsletter for people interested in vireyas.

Distributed by Email for no cost.

The Vireya Venture is produced by Graham & Janet Price in Melbourne.

It includes letters, emails and articles about vireyas from around the world, many with colour photos.

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Reports – Australian Rhododendron Groups

Emu Valley Rhododendron Garden Inc.

The past twelve months has seen unprecedented growth at EVRG! Our flowering season for 2011 was launched on September 17th by Premier of Tasmania, Lara Giddings MHA, accompanied by Braddon member and deputy premier the honourable Brian Green.

The opening, which coincided with our 30th birthday, was followed by brilliant spring weather which attracted record visitors to the garden – in fact an increase of 50% very happy visitors over the preceding year.

One of the most significant challenges for those of us involved at EVRG has been the transition from primarily developing a rhododendron garden to positioning ourselves to successfully run a growing business venture. Our organisational restructure is now completed, which provides for a committee system to cover all major garden and operational responsibilities. A unique concept has been the recent establishment of an advisory board chosen from senior respected local business people.

We are delighted that Mr Ken Cox of Glendoick ,Scotland has accepted our invitation be Patron of EVRG.

Ken kindly describes EVRG as ““a unique garden in that the Tasmanian temperate climate combined with a reliable rainfall climate makes Emu Valley suitable for growing virtually all rhododendron species and hybrids outdoors. The garden’s excellent design and its amphitheatre setting makes this garden one of the most important of its type created in the last 30 years anywhere in the world. As long as development continues, it should become a widely recognised, world class, woodland garden”.

Our honorary curator, Maurie Kupsch, is to be commended for his continual passion and devotion to EVRG. Maurie, on last count, has 450 rhododendron species (including vireyas) at EVRG. We believe this to be one of the larger collections in the southern hemisphere, and it is still growing.

We were successful in obtaining a grant from the Ian Potter Foundation to secure the long-term sustainability of EVRG by transferring the intellectual property about our rhododendrons contained in various places, including our curator’s head, onto a database that is then able to generate plant labels for placement in our garden.

In conclusion, I wish to thank and congratulate the ARS and its members for their continuing support and encouragement. We look forward to hearing about the outcomes from the north Queensland expedition as they further research Australia’s very own *R. lochae* and *R. viriosum* later in 2012.

Terry Shadbolt -Chairman, Management Group

South Australian Branch

Our group has continued to thrive with an enthusiastic membership, welcoming ten new members over the last 12 months. Our formal monthly meetings commence in March each year, with our AGM being held each August. There are usually quarterly meetings of the executive. Normally we have members attend the annual convention of the Australian Rhododendron Society in whatever State it is held, as well as international conventions. We have members present at least one illustrated lecture per year covering convention highlights.

Our lecture program in the last 12 months has been practical, informative and educational. We have learned about irrigation for our gardens, and had two presentations by garden product manufacturers – *Manutec* and *Neutrog*. We ran a technical workshop on how to describe and identify rhododendrons, and on another occasion used photographs to help us identify rhododendrons. We also had a joint propagation day with the *Camellia Society* to share knowledge.

We have tried to encourage more public interest in growing rhododendrons by having an information booth at the Stirling street market in September each year, prior to our annual October plant sale at the Mount Lofty Botanic Garden.

The Grant Memorial Lecture was given by Dr Peter Donaldson of Sydney, who kept us enthralled by his passion, having personally traced the life and times of the famous plant collector Joseph D. Hooker, who died 100 years ago.

We are keen supporters of Mount Lofty Botanic Garden, and enjoy having guided visits by Mr Robert Hatcher to its important rhododendron collection.

Mr Chris Thomas has consistently produced a quality monthly newsletter which always has something interesting and is well illustrated.

I have had a very supportive Secretary Mrs Janie Smylie and committee and I thank them. I think one of the most important roles the Society has is to encourage its members to share their gardening successes and failures and keep trying!

Jeff Jenkinson, President

Southern Tasmanian Branch

Oh, how quickly the time comes around to remember all that has happened during the last year. A year that has seen good support from the members and many interesting topics and activities covered to keep them interested.

Although the Southern Tasmanian Branch may be small in numbers, the knowledge, commitment, generosity and friendliness is unbounded. The passing on of this incredible store of knowledge, I feel, is paramount and is one of the most important reasons for continually striving to recruit new members who will come to love the rhododendron genus and continue to grow them in their gardens.

New innovations, streamlining of meetings, good speakers and garden visiting all help, and to this end the committee came up with quite a few different ideas, a number of which have been trialled through the course of the year. Round table discussions, where we can tap into the wealth of members' knowledge, always seem to be successful as was evident at the meeting where the members were asked to comment on their favourite rhododendron. It was quite fascinating when the very varied range of rhododendrons of all shapes and sizes were commented on.

Branching out and discussing different plants to combine with rhododendrons was also a great hit with Ken Gillanders guiding us through the most desirable of Tasmanian natives which would be complimentary to rhododendrons. Barry Davidson reminded us once again not to forget the virtues of the vireya and the important role they play in extending the time when rhododendrons bloom. He once again brought along a huge selection of cut flowers, which I know all went home with members. I wonder how many cuttings struck?

The monthly "Garden Gatherings" bring together many members who are not able to now attend the night meetings. The social aspect of this is always such fun, we all end up much heavier after eating scrumptious afternoon teas, and of course we see some lovely gardens and store away many ideas to try in our own little bits of paradise. One very memorable garden visit was to that of Sally Johannsohn, where on arrival, we were asked to select a plant then find a prominent position for it where Sally would come and plant it later. Quite a novel approach but we all enjoyed the challenge. The annual mid-winter luncheon was also well supported and enjoyed by all. I'm sure this luncheon will remain on our list of activities for some years to come.

Thanks must be given to all members who bring along items for the sales table and auction. The monies made certainly help keep the society in the black. The auction is certainly a highlight of each meeting and there is much hilarity at times as the bidding gets more and more animated. Such fun!

Thanks must go to all the committee members who are always so supportive and willing to help in any way they can and to all our members whose smiling faces are always worth looking out on.

Lesley Eaton, President

Victorian Branch

The most significant activities to take place in the Victorian Branch this year revolve around us getting our house(s) in order. We have taken big steps toward improving the facilities at the National Rhododendron Garden at Olinda. The aim of these improvements is to provide better facilities for the members to work in, both for their own benefit and to advance the Gardens.

We have significantly improved the nursery area so as to give us better stock control and improve the quality of the plants we can offer to the members and the public. We have established a new propagation facility, which is already showing signs of improving our ability to propagate particularly difficult subjects and produce better plants. We encourage members to use this facility.

Our major focus, at the Garden, is the refurbishment of the old glasshouse. As a typical example of history repeating itself we are turning the glasshouse back in to a vireya display house, as it had been 20 or more years ago. The glasshouse will contain what we hope will be a collection of world significance. We have the plant material in various members collections, what we are hoping is that the Olinda Vireya Display house will provide a means of better securing that material within Australia. We will work towards making the display attractive for the general public and we are keen that it shows how interesting and diverse this sub-genus is. We do naturally hope that it also attracts interest from potential new members. This work in the Gardens highlights the excellent working relationship between the Australian Rhododendron Society and Parks Victoria, with both parties recognizing the mutual benefits achieved by working together.

With our Branch being the age that it is and with the recent loss of members such as Ruth Funder and Ralph Sangster, we have only a few of the founding members left. We must now look to grow for the future. Replacement and renewal of our membership is now becoming critical, so whereas this year has been spent on rebuilding our facilities, next year will be spent concentrating on building up our membership.

John O'Hara, President

Blue Mountains Rhododendron Society

After the doom and gloom of last year's report we have a lot better news this year. Sure, after every strong wind we still get a few branches (and trees) coming down that no doubt were compromised in last year's huge wind storm. However, we do have most of the garden open to the public, and hopefully all will be open for our fast-approaching flowering season.

One never stops learning about plants and how they react to seasonal conditions. Most rhodos set their flower buds at the end of January-early February, and we put on our potash in December. We use a mixture of soluble and granular Sulphate of Potash – the soluble for immediate uptake and the granular for a lasting build-up in the soil. This year we noticed that we had a lot of bud set over all varieties in December. Did the plants know that we were again going to have a wet January and February with a lack of sunshine? Whatever the answer, this spring is going to be spectacular, which is great news for us.

Last year we also had a good one financially – donations were up (entry to our garden is by donation), our sales of souvenirs, plants, etc. were as good as were our tea room sales, and indeed our calendar sales were excellent, with everyone commenting on the quality of the production. We will again be producing a calendar for sale this spring and summer.

We are really blessed with both the number and quality of our volunteers joining our ranks regularly. Weather permitting, the volunteers work in the garden every Monday, except public holidays. We can have up to 12 or more volunteers turn up.

For the last few years we have had jazz in the garden sometime during autumn, down in our valley area which acts like a large amphitheatre with the music rolling around the valley. This year we have decided to hold the jazz afternoon at the height of our flowering season and we will have it, weather permitting, on Sunday 21st October. At a cost of \$10 a head (plus a BYO lunch, the necessary bottle or two and a chair) a great afternoon is had by all. We are blessed with having some marvelous local musicians.

Should any of our interstate friends be visiting NSW during spring a visit to the Campbell Rhododendron Gardens is a must. Our details can be found on our website <http://rhodogarden.org.au/>.

Dick Harris, Gardens Supervisor

Tamborine Mountain Botanic Gardens

Tamborine Mountain is in the hinterland of the Gold Coast. It is mainly a basalt mountain formed from the ancient lava flow of Mt Warning in NSW approx 30 million years ago. Some of the lower areas of the Mountain consist of much earlier volcanic soil. Being about 500 metres above sea level and positioned in the SE corner of Queensland, we have a subtropical climate but being cooler than the lower areas of SE Queensland we are able to grow many cool temperate plants.

The 11-hectare Botanic Gardens have a mixture of about half exotics and half natural sub-tropical rainforest. The Gardens are positioned in a valley that is, fortunately, frost free. The soil is acidic and of the older, non-basaltic type, as mentioned above.

Rhododendrons, including vireyas, were first planted at the gardens about 18 years ago. These were allowed to become lanky and unfortunately, uncared for. About four years ago, a visit by Simon and Marcia Begg energized our enthusiasm to salvage what we had and to plant-up a large area that we

dedicated to rhododendrons, vireyas and azaleas. Simon also arranged a small collection of vireya species for us, which have a prominent position at the start of the rhododendron garden.

We are still at the experimental stage of development, finding out which rhododendrons like our climatic conditions and soil. In the main, most plants have survived but a few have died, mainly from fungal problems.

We have a couple of other limiting factors. We have large native trees that grow in the area forming a top storey. These include rainforest trees such as black bean and brush box but the main problem are the two local eucalypts, *E. grandis* (flooded or rose gum) and *E. microcorys* (tallowwood).

Whilst looking beautiful, the flooded gum in particular is a nuisance tree to our endeavours. It has allelopathic qualities and tries to prevent anything from growing near it via its habit of annually shedding tannin-laden leaves and bark and robbing the soil of nutrients with its roots. Plants do not do well under these trees. The other issue we are coming to terms with is the high level of nutrient leaching caused by our high rainfall. We need to mulch frequently (much to the delight of the scrub turkeys), and apply various organic fertilizers to keep the micro-organisms active.

When the flowers appear on the bushes we are delighted and many comments are made about them but we have a way to go before we can come anywhere near the floral displays of the southern states. We will keep trying.

Pictures of the TMBG are available on www.tmbotanicgardens.org.au

Brian Davison, Honorary Curator

Appalachian Spring

*The ARS/ASA National Convention
Ashville, North Carolina 4–7 May 2012*

JEFF AND GILL JENKINSON
STIRLING, SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Eight members of the Australian Rhododendron Society South Australian Branch attended this Convention at the Crowne Plaza Resort, Ashville, North Carolina, USA. There were delegates from across North America and Canada, as well as a few international delegates.

The Convention was an opportunity for the American Rhododendron Society and the Azalea Society of America to have their annual meetings – each at a dinner with guest speakers, one of whom was Don Hyatt who inspired our visit when we met him at a previous international rhododendron meeting.

There was also the annual flower show of rhododendrons, azaleas and companion plants. There were no academic lectures, with days filled with a wide variety of garden visits.

The big attraction for most of the delegates was the substantial plant sale (over 5,000 plants) at moderate prices. It was not surprising that many delegates travelled long distances with caravans and trailers so that they could take plants home. For the Australian visitors it was very much “look and appreciate”, but not acquire the plants.

The garden visits ranged from a small suburban-sized allotment to large multi-acre estates. The largest and most impressive garden, of more than 75 acres, was Biltmore Estate – a century old garden of formal design and part of an 8,000 acre estate with the chateau-style 250-room family home still in private ownership.

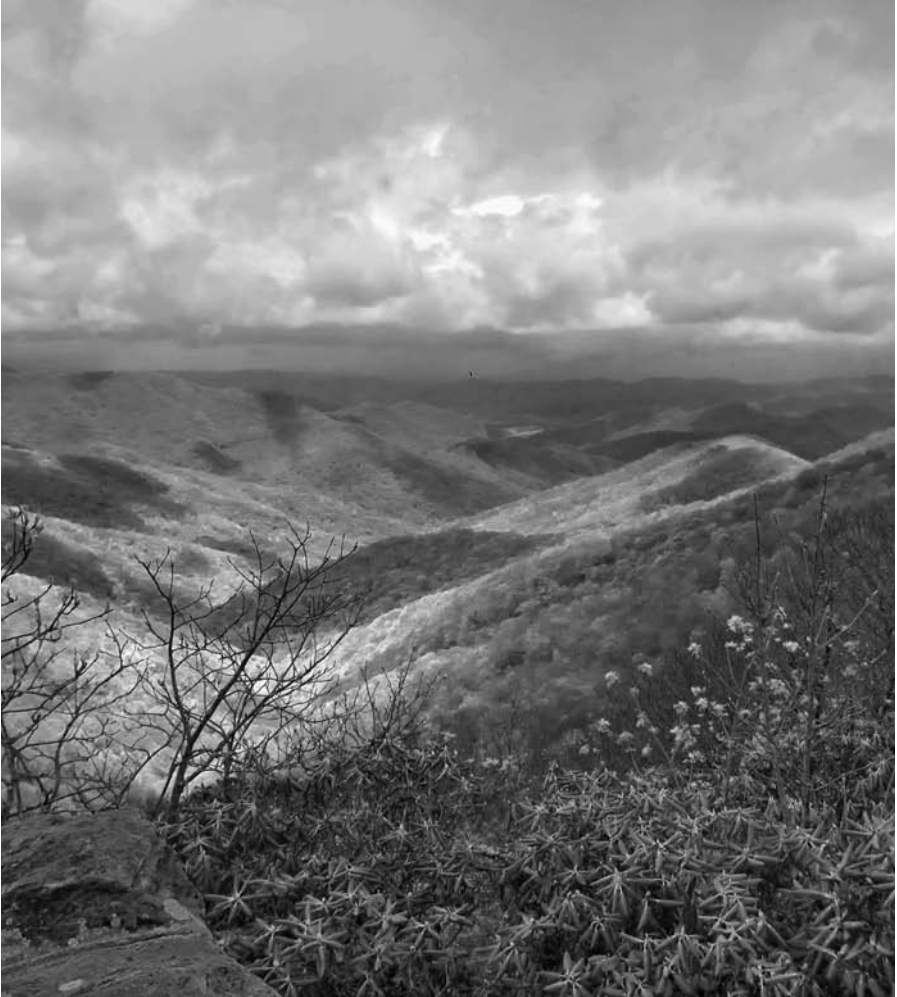
The Biltmore Estate was built by George Vanderbilt, and was everything you would expect from one of America’s most wealthy families with no expense spared. The house is open to tourists. The family still live in part of the house.

One of the main attractions for the Australian delegates was a visit to the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area and a drive along the Blue Ridge Parkway which is part of the Appalachian Mountains. As is so often the case, the famous flame azaleas and rhododendrons were not at their peak flowering near Ashville at the time of our visit – we were a few weeks too early.

However, four of our group took two days after the Convention to drive the Blue Ridge Parkway up to Charlotteville. It is one of the great road trips, and we were fully rewarded with a diversity of flame azalea blooms, rhododendrons in early flower and masses of coloured trilliums. The tulip trees were in full flower.

For most of us it was the first time that we had seen rhododendrons in their natural habitat. These were mainly *Rhododendron catawbiense* and *R. maximum*, which we in Australia are more likely to recognise as parents of some of our hybrids rather than grow them as species. ❀

Along the Appalachian Way, North Carolina.



Is it a dream or a nightmare?

LESLEY GILLANDERS

At the end of 2011 Ken realized that it would be best for us, at age 81 and 80 respectively, to consider a “downsize” while we were still reasonably fit. The plan was to sell our property of 18 acres and move to Kingston, where hopefully we would find a four bedroom house – to cater for visits by family and friends; a largish garden area – for Ken to continue gardening; and a level block of land – so I could cope with no steps and still be near shops, doctors, etc. Impossible? Well, Kingston is one of the fastest-growing areas south of Hobart but only ten minutes from the city and hospitals. We favoured this area as it was only ten minutes from Longley and we were familiar with it.

The estate agent, being a gardener, appreciated what we were selling and confidently presented the property on the internet with a reasonably quick response. The second client to view the property within two weeks decided to buy it. He is not a gardener but his partner has horticultural experience and was keen. Since then he has had health problems, so we wonder what will eventuate with the garden. Meanwhile we desperately searched Kingston for what we wanted and went to “open homes” to see what we could find – nothing suitable.

Finally Ken found a house available on the internet. House size – right; land size at two thirds acre – right; price – right. So an inspection was arranged – we were impressed. Not completely level but Ken suggested I stay with the house and utilize the very wide patio at the back of the house, while he made the garden which would be at a slightly higher level. There is a small creek running through one section, which is a bonus. All settlements were finalized and came the time to move.

Now Ken had been potting plants and bulbs for several months ready to take with us. These had accumulated to several hundred and as the numbers increased daily he said it was going to be a nightmare moving them. Several friends had offered to help with this project and two weeks before the main move Ken organized one friend, Gordon, to come with his ute and trailer and they would start transporting the plants, also using Ken’s one tonner. Two more friends, Finton and Ruth, heard of this project and said they would also come and help, and bring another friend with them. We finished up with two one tonner utes, a three ton truck and large trailer, a large ute and enormous trailer, a smaller ute and after half an hour another friend, Barry turned up with his one tonner. At the end of the day all plants were sitting in rows at the Kingston garden – unbelievable! We were so grateful to know we had such good friends. That was a dream!

Our move was accomplished with only one serious drama – the packer for the moving company diligently spent one complete day packing absolutely everything he could see – including the car keys. Fortunately, I had a spare set in my handbag. It took two days before Ken's keys were found. Next problem presented itself when reading the instruction on how to use the induction cooktop – it was advisable before use to consult your doctor first if you had a pacemaker. Now, we both are bionic people and this caused a major concern. We did not have the phone connected, so could not ring our regular doctor – so we managed with frozen foods from the supermarket and the use of the microwave oven. Two days later Telstra finally grew tired of our hassling them and connected the phone. A quick call to the doctor's rooms and he replied within five minutes with the assurance that our pacemakers were the latest models and it was quite safe to use the induction cooktop. That nightmare was out of the way.

After the garage/workshop was built and our machinery and tools were returned from storage, Ken finally was able to turn his attention to the garden. Rotted wooden sleepers were removed from a long retaining wall and steps and replaced with new ones. He started to build a rock edging to a garden bed but rain hampered the project which had to be abandoned until the next fine day. Meanwhile the soil in the garden bed turned to a muddy hole due to the clay content in the soil. This then required a drain to be put in to remove the excess water.

At last the rock edge was finished and planting has started. Pots of bulbs, with some in flower, have been placed where we can see them from the living room. *Galanthus*, with their green tipped white flowers, *Anemone blanda* with intense deep blue daisies, golden *Narcissus cyclamineus*, pink, red and white *Cyclamen coum* and light blue *Iris* 'Harmony' are a fine mix of colour. Next will come some of the smaller-growing rhododendrons. The perimeter of the garden has a number of native plants which have provided privacy but as Ken says: not his kind of plants and they will be removed over a period of time.

Ken purchased a chipper from a firm in Sydney so that all the discarded shrubbery could be shredded into a good mulch. By mistake he ordered the smaller size (7 HP, not the 15 HP size). We have a new, unpacked, chipper sitting in the workshop until a decision is made on what to do. Do we keep it or order the correct size and try to find a buyer for the one here? Problem is the cost of freight at \$270 each way has to be considered. Do we class this as a nightmare?

Meanwhile dreams of the garden are taking shape. There are over 100 rhododendron in pots waiting for a home, which we hope will be ready before spring. The majority are dwarf varieties but some of the large leaf specimens will go by the creek in the shade. Fortunately Ken decided to lift and bring his

R. forrestii with us. We had imported this lovely prostrate red form from Cox's Glendoick Nursery in Scotland 12 or so years ago, when we had the quarantine house in operation at the nursery. He found ten layers on it and they have all survived so far, as well as the main plant.

The plan is to have one garden bed devoted to these choice, small-growing treasures like *R. campylogynum*, *R. 'Canada'*, *R. radicans*, *R. 'Yaku Fairy'*, *R. 'Golden Bee'*, *R. 'June Bee'*, *R. 'Euan Cox'*, *R. 'Moth'*, and several more of similar habit. Larger hybrids were too big to lift, but a visit to some of the nurseries will probably tempt us to build up our collection again. There are only two rhododendron here. *R. boddaertianum* is in full flower, just above the creek in the shade of a deciduous weeping willow. It is white with a blotch similar to *R. 'Sappho'* On the slope above the house there is what Ken says will be a red-flowered hybrid which should open later in the spring.

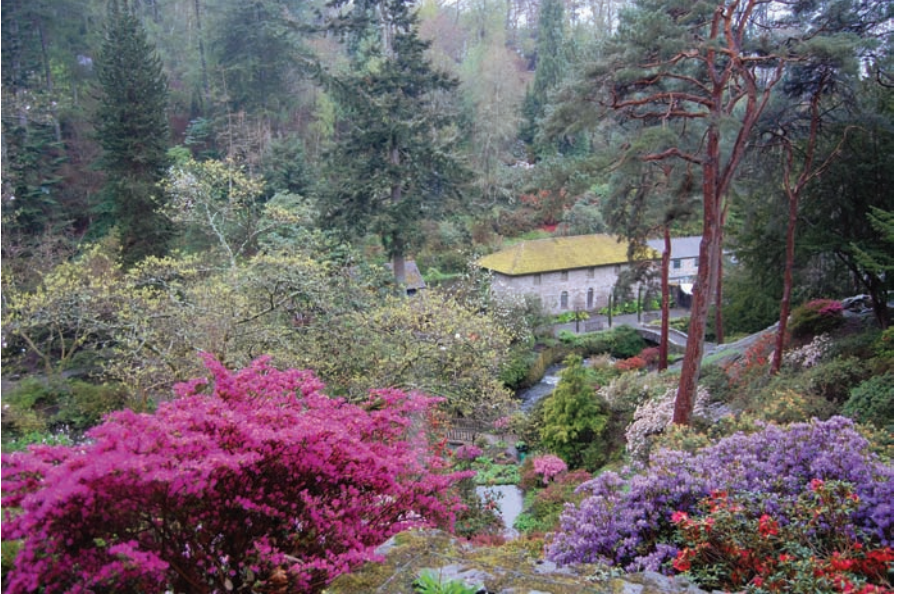
As I write these notes on a cold, wet and snowy day, I look forward to spring and a colourful garden again, knowing it will be different from our previous one. I will miss the old garden but the dream of our new creation will be worth waiting for when Ken can bring me a flower and say "Here, paint this one". ❁



Above The author preparing the new garden.



Left Plants in containers awaiting their new homes.



Above Bodnant Garden, Wales.

Below Exbury House, built by Lionel de Rothschild in 1920, and the planting of Arboreums to the front of the House, dwarfing Jenny Chalk.



Visits to UK Gardens

Spring 2012

JENNY & IAN CHALK

Glendoick Garden, Scotland

Amongst the highlights was the opportunity to meet in Scotland with EVRG Patron Ken Cox. Ken is a third generation of the well-known and respected Cox family of rhododendron plant hunters and hybridisers. Ken and his father Peter are the acknowledged senior authors on books pertaining to rhododendrons and gardening internationally and also run a major nursery business. Ken is a third generation plant hunter and has been on at least 12 expeditions to southwest China, Tibet and Arunachal Pradesh, during which he discovered many new species of rhododendrons.

Following his visit to EVRG in 2010, Ken remains a great supporter and he highlighted again to us the very unique position that EVRG enjoys. In his words: “EV RG is a unique garden in that the Tasmanian temperate climate combined with a reliable rainfall climate makes Emu Valley suitable for growing virtually all rhododendron species and hybrids outdoors. The garden’s excellent design and its amphitheatre setting makes this garden one of the most important of its type created in the last 30 years anywhere in the world. As long as development continues, it should become a widely recognised, world class, woodland garden.”

A major feature is our ability at EVRG to present year round flowering and colour amongst the vireyas, assisting our image as a “Garden for *all* seasons”. Other major features enjoyed at EVRG include our amphitheatre setting viewed from a raised balcony overlooking water and the fountain, an aspect envied by others. The site, being privately owned by the membership, ensures its future and encourages and retains volunteers. And EVRG is still such a young woodland garden that it is not shaded by overplanting of mature conifers from past generations. On our travels we did not see anywhere big leaf rhodos to compare with what we have at EVRG.

Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, Scotland

The world’s largest collection of vireya rhododendrons (171 species!) is at the Royal Botanic Gardens of Edinburgh. Why, you might ask? It’s because the cloud cover during the summer enables the glass houses at Edinburgh to be maintained at an acceptable temperature, and because of Dr George Argent.

Whilst still working part time, Dr Argent has recently retired as Senior Tropical Botanist with the RBGE. He is acknowledged as the world's foremost authority on vireya rhododendrons. He first became interested in this group of plants in 1977 and since that time has undertaken numerous field trips to South East Asia. From that region he has introduced many vireya species currently in cultivation as part of the superb Living Collection at the RBGE. Guess what George is looking forward to growing in his garden in retirement? Vegetables!

How fortunate we were to meet with George over a meal and then to inspect the collection. George visited EVRG some years ago, and with fond memories remains another of our great supporters. George's tips for the more cold-hardy vireyas: *R. emarginatum*, *R. kawakamii*, *R. ericoides*, *R. gardenia*, *R. konori* and *R. macgregoriae*.

Whilst at RBGE we were also able to meet with Curator of the Living Collection, David Knott. David has expressed a desire to assist EVRG in any way he can and he is now receiving the EVRG Newsletter.

Exbury Gardens, Hampshire, England

A visit to Exbury Gardens near Southampton in Southern England is a privilege – to wander amongst so much rhododendron history.

Lionel de Rothschild, the creator of Exbury Garden, was born in 1882 into the famous banking family. In 1919 he bought the Exbury Estate in the New Forest from Lord Forster. He developed this private woodland garden covering 250 acres that was to become one of the most ambitious enterprises of its kind to take place in the last century.

Lionel made his garden during the era when plant hunters Frank Kingdom-Ward, George Forrest and Joseph Rock were bringing back seeds of hitherto unseen plants from the more remote areas of the Himalayas & South East Asia (Lionel co-sponsoring many of the early plant hunting expeditions). Some 250 were employed to clear the woodland so that the gardens could be laid out. Lionel Rothschild was described as a “banker by hobby” and a gardener by profession. He had a passion for creating new hybrids, (1,204 in total) and most of the rhododendrons and azaleas you see today at Exbury were raised there.

The work Lionel started was continued by subsequent generations, first by his eldest son Edmond and now by his younger son Leopold. They have raised new Exbury hybrids, added new features and maintained the high standards set by Lionel with the help of a privately endowed charitable trust.

In 2001 The American Rhododendron Society recognised Lionel Nathan Rothschild's significant contribution by posthumously bestowing on him a Pioneer Achievement Award.

Lionel was a perfectionist and nothing was left to chance. Like the founders of Emu Valley Rhododendron Garden, what a legacy Lionel has left for us all to enjoy.

Bodnant Garden, Wales

Steeped in rhododendron history like Exbury, Bodnant Garden is blessed with natural and developed features, Bodnant rates amongst our world's leading gardens. It is situated South of Llandudno and Conwyn Bay, looking across the River Conwy valley towards the mountains of Snowdonia.

Henry Davis Pochin, a chemist heavily involved in the china clay industry, bought Bodnant together with its surrounding estate of some 25 farms in 1874. Pochin then retired to Bodnant. His daughter Laura inherited the property when Pochin died in 1895. She had married Charles McLaren a barrister, who later was a Member of Parliament. Charles became a peer in 1911 and took as his title Lord Aberconway, which means the "mouth of the Conway". Laura was a keen gardener and when her eldest son Henry left Oxford in 1901, she entrusted to him the detailed care and development of the garden. The mother and son partnership laid the foundations of the garden as it exists today.

Henry, in due course the second Lord Aberconway, was an enthusiastic gardener and until his death in 1953 contributed 50 years of significant development at Bodnant. Henry was elected to the Council of the Royal Horticultural Society in 1923 and served as President from 1931 until his death. Today Michael McLaren, the third generation of the family and a practising QC, manages the garden on behalf of the National Trust with Troy Smith as Head Gardener.

The McLaren family, like the Rothschilds of Exbury, contributed significantly to plant hunting expeditions in the early 1900s. Bodnant benefited from seed collected by Dr Ernest Wilson and sent to England between 1900 and 1906. Later other collectors, notably George Forrest, Frank Kingdom-Ward and Dr Joseph Rock sent home hundreds of new species of rhododendrons of which many are growing today at Bodnant.

Today some 80 acres of garden are open to visitors and a spring visit is an unforgettable experience. Unfortunately our visit coincided with some of the 43 inches of rain that is experienced annually, but this failed to dampen the day's enjoyment. Winter frosts of minus 11°C can also be experienced, however. Bodnant is a "must not miss" garden for any UK tour. ❀

Jenny and Ian Chalk, members of Emu Valley Rhododendron Garden (EVRG), visited the United Kingdom during April and May of 2012, taking the opportunity to visit many of the leading rhododendron gardens.

Results of hybridising with (*R. macgregoriae* × *R. rubineiflorum*)

ANDREW ROUSE

From 2000 to 2011 I have used the hybrid (*R. macgregoriae* × *R. rubineiflorum*) as one of the parent species in some of my crosses where I'm seeking to create compact, hardy and floriferous hybrids. The results of this hybridising program are presented in this article.

Compact vireya hybrids

There has been extensive hybridising of vireyas in Australia with approximately 240 vireya hybrids registered and many other unregistered hybrids widely grown. Understandably, much of the hybridising has used species (or hybrids) with large, showy flowers, with the smaller species attracting less attention. This is despite some of the best vireya hybrids being small, compact plants created using some of the small vireya species such as *R. rubineiflorum*, *R. anagalliflorum* and *R. gracilentum* in the cross. Some of my favourite Australian-bred vireya hybrids are those with small vireya species in their parentage:

R. 'Carillon Bells' (*R. gracilentum* × *R. laetum*), hybridized by Bob Withers and registered by Graeme Snell, 1984

R. 'Craig Faragher' (*R. gracilentum* × *R. jasminiflorum*), hybridized by Craig Faragher and registered by Graham Snell, 1982

R. 'Happy Times' {(*R. laetum* × *R. aurigeranum*) × *R. rubineiflorum*}, hybridized and registered by Brian Clancy, 1994

R. 'Saint Valentine' (*R. lochiae* × *R. gracilentum*), hybridized by Tom Lelliott and registered by the ARS–Vic, 1984

R. 'Little Duchess' (*R. anagalliflorum* × *R. pauciflorum*), hybridized by John Rouse, registered by Andrew Rouse, 2009

(*R. rubineiflorum* × *R. anagalliflorum*), hybridized by John Rouse, unregistered.

(*R. macgregoriae* × *R. rubineiflorum*), hybridized by John Rouse, unregistered.
The reverse cross has been registered as *R.* 'Sweet Beatrice'.

Hybridising Program

In my hybridising program I've used a wide range of the smaller vireya species and their hybrids, in pursuit of compact, hardy and floriferous plants. Some of the compact species and hybrids I've used include *R. rubineiflorum*, *R. gracilentum*,

R. womersleyi, *R. pauciflorum*, *R. leptanthum*, *R. calignis*, *R. christi*, *R. culminicola*, *R. truncicola*, *R. commonae*, (*R. rubineiflorum* × *R. anagalliflorum*), (*R. pauciflorum* × *R. anagalliflorum*), (*R. rubineiflorum* × *R. pauciflorum*) and (*R. macgregoriae* × *R. rubineiflorum*). I would very much have liked to use *R. anagalliflorum* – however, I think it has been lost to cultivation in Australia since it was used in hybridising in the 1980s and 1990s.

(*R. macgregoriae* × *R. rubineiflorum*)

I've used (*R. macgregoriae* × *R. rubineiflorum*) as a parent plant in hybridising as it has a number of desirable attributes. It is multi-branched and will do so with minimal tip pruning, it is compact and floriferous with a good display of orange 'mac-like' flowers. Its major drawback is that it can be susceptible to powdery mildew, something it shares with *R. macgregoriae*. However its hardiness means that it normally returns to vigour after an outbreak.

The (*R. macgregoriae* × *R. rubineiflorum*) I used in hybridising came from my father's collection. As far as I'm aware it hasn't been registered, and given it is very similar to the reverse cross which has been registered as *R.* 'Sweet Beatrice', it is probably not warranted.

I grow (*R. macgregoriae* × *R. rubineiflorum*) in pots or hanging baskets. For me at least it is too small in the ground and tends to get swamped by other plants – or trampled on!

Hybridising using (R. macgregoriae* × *R. rubineiflorum)

Between 2000 and 2011 I used (*R. macgregoriae* × *R. rubineiflorum*) and its hybrids in 36 crosses, 15 as seed parent and 21 as pollen parent. Of these, 19 did not produce seed (or I failed to collect it), with the remaining 17 crosses producing viable seed that was germinated and the seedlings grown on for evaluation (see Table 1). The unsuccessful crosses are not necessarily due to incompatibility; in some cases it was due to me not being available to collect the seed when the pistils split open, which can easily happen with small vireyas as the pod can open and disperse all the seed in a day or two. For example, I would expect a cross between (*R. macgregoriae* × *R. rubineiflorum*) with *R. rubineiflorum* to be compatible – however, I was unsuccessful in collecting seed.

I have not been particularly methodical in the selection of the other parent in the cross, with the choice partially driven by my curiosity as to what a cross will produce and by the availability of pollen. I have been less than diligent in collecting pollen for storage and on occasions when I would like to make a cross find I have no pollen available. My primary aim however has been to produce small, compact hybrids, and to that end most of the crosses have used other small to mid-size plants. In hindsight, I probably should have used more of the

larger species as there are top quality hybrids from a cross between a compact and large species (for example, the first four in the list of hybrids above).

Space constraints prevent me from keeping a large, representative sample of plants from each cross. At their first potting on, I keep nine seedlings, selecting a range of seedling sizes which are potted together in a 3-inch square pot. When these are potted on I only keep three to six plants, depending on their appearance and vigour. Many are subsequently discarded, and often before first flowering if I find that the plants are lacking in vigour, have a poor habit and/or are susceptible to fungal disease.

Results

Of the 17 crosses with (*R. macgregoriae* × *R. rubineiflorum*) as a parent that produced seed, eight were discarded before they flowered. Of the remaining nine crosses, I view three as partially or predominantly achieving the intent of producing hardy, compact vireyas:

(*macgregoriae* × *rubineiflorum*) × (*rubineiflorum* × *anagalliflorum*): the pink flowering form from this cross has been registered as *R.* ‘Pixie Star’ (Figure 1, opposite). The white flowering form is equally attractive however is not quite as hardy (Figure 3, page 28).

R. polyanthemum × (*macgregoriae* × *rubineiflorum*): this is one of the few crosses I’ve done using *R. polyanthemum*, and it has produced a delightful shrub, albeit not as compact as I had anticipated. The flowers are yellow-green at the corolla base, the rest bright orange (Figure 2, opposite). I grow one of the sister seedlings in a hanging basket where it has formed a spreading-trailing shape.

R. luraluense × (*macgregoriae* × *rubineiflorum*): *R. luraluense* has proven to be a worthy parent in crosses, having (for me at least) produced some nice hybrids from crosses with *R. macgregoriae*, *R. womersleyi* and *R.* ‘Simbu Sunset’. The cross with (*macgregoriae* × *rubineiflorum*) has white flowers and has retained the compact form of the male parent and is equally hardy (Figure 4, page 28).

I will keep *R. himantodes* × (*macgregoriae* × *rubineiflorum*), despite its lack of vigour because in flower it is a most attractive plant with its ‘himantodes-like’ pink flowers (see our front cover). It is also the only hybrid I have with *R. himantodes* as a parent.

Continued on page 33, after colour plates.



Figure 1 *R. 'Pixie Star'*.

Figure 2 *R. polyanthum* × (*macgregoriae* × *rubineiflorum*).





Jury vireya rhododendrons – 'Sweet Vanilla', above, and 'Golden Charm', below.





Jury vireya rhododendrons – 'Jaffa', above, and 'Pink Jazz', below.





Two views of the rhododendron Garden at the Tamborine Mountain Botanic Gardens. see page 10.





Rhododendron campylogynum, white form (above) and the ground-hugging *R. forrestii* (below), two of the plants transplanted by Ken and Lesley Gillanders.





New registrations ... 'Mrs Frances Underwood' (above), 'Pink Organdy' (left) and 'Burnie Gold' (below).





New registrations ...'Eric Szabo' (above), 'Joey Rabbit' (right) and 'Howie' (below).





Figure 3 White flowering form of (*macgregoriae* x *rubineiflorum*) x (*rubineiflorum* x *anagalliflorum*).

Figure 4 *R. luraluense* x (*macgregoriae* x *rubineiflorum*).



Discussion

One of the reasons for submitting this article is that there is little published material on the results of hybridising programs apart from the information provided when hybrids are registered. The list of registered plants of course includes only those plants that the hybridiser has deemed worthy of naming, and what is not known, and something I believe is of interest, is information about the other crosses made and reasons why the plants were considered unsuitable for registration.

For me, the crosses that didn't work are as important to know as those that did. Having this information publicly available will help hybridisers to review where hybridising effort has been directed, to be able to assess the relative merits of species and hybrids for their hybridising potential, and to identify species and hybrids that to date have not been evaluated for their hybridising potential. Given it can take up to eight years from making a cross to first flowering, anything that improves the hybridising 'return for effort' will benefit the vireya community overall. ❀

The table on the following pages details the results of hybridising using (*R. macgregoriae* × *R. rubineiflorum*).

For Australian based subscribers, please email me at awrouse@bigpond.com if you'd like rooted cuttings of hybrids mentioned in this article.

These plants will be propagated by the volunteer group at the National Rhododendron Gardens Olinda and a small charge will apply to cover the Society's costs for providing this service.

| <i>Female parent</i> | <i>Male parent</i> | <i>Sown</i> | <i>Comment</i> |
|----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>rubineiflorum</i> × <i>anagalliflorum</i> | × <i>macgregoriae</i> × <i>rubineiflorum</i> | 2000 | No seed collected |
| <i>rubineiflorum</i> × <i>anagalliflorum</i> | × <i>macgregoriae</i> × <i>rubineiflorum</i> | 2000 | No seed collected |
| <i>rubineiflorum</i> × <i>anagalliflorum</i> | × <i>macgregoriae</i> × <i>rubineiflorum</i> | 2000 | No seed collected |
| <i>rubineiflorum</i> × <i>pauciflorum</i> | × <i>macgregoriae</i> × <i>rubineiflorum</i> | 2000 | No seed collected |
| <i>rubineiflorum</i> × <i>pauciflorum</i> | × <i>macgregoriae</i> × <i>rubineiflorum</i> | 2000 | No seed collected |
| <i>rubineiflorum</i> × <i>pauciflorum</i> | × <i>macgregoriae</i> × <i>rubineiflorum</i> | 2000 | No seed collected |
| <i>rubineiflorum</i> × <i>pauciflorum</i> | × <i>macgregoriae</i> × <i>rubineiflorum</i> | 2000 | No seed collected |
| <i>planicostastum</i> | × <i>macgregoriae</i> × <i>rubineiflorum</i> | 2000 | No seed collected |
| <i>macgregoriae</i> × <i>rubineiflorum</i> | × <i>pauciflorum</i> | 2001 | No horticultural potential – discarded |
| <i>macgregoriae</i> × <i>rubineiflorum</i> | × <i>quadrasiannum</i> v. <i>rosmarinifolium</i> | 2001 | No horticultural potential – discarded |
| <i>macgregoriae</i> × <i>rubineiflorum</i> | × <i>rubineiflorum</i> × <i>anagalliflorum</i> | 2001 | Compact, hardy and floriferous plant. Variation in flower colour among sister seedlings. Pink flowering; registered as <i>R.</i> 'Pixie Star'. Plant is 60 cm high × 80 cm wide after 11 years. White flowering; identical in habit to <i>R.</i> 'Pixie Star' though with white flowers and not quite as hardy. |
| <i>macgregoriae</i> | × <i>macgregoriae</i> × <i>rubineiflorum</i> | 2001 | Moderately vigorous plant very similar in shape and habit to <i>R.</i> <i>macgregoriae</i> however lacking the compactness of <i>R.</i> <i>rubineiflorum</i> |
| <i>pauciflorum</i> | × <i>macgregoriae</i> × <i>rubineiflorum</i> | 2001 | No horticultural merit – discarded |
| <i>polyanthemum</i> | × <i>macgregoriae</i> × <i>rubineiflorum</i> | 2001 | Mid-sized, branching plant, reasonably hardy, floriferous with bright orange flowers. I have retained 3–4 sister seedlings, the largest plant is ~ 70 cm in height after 11 years. |

| <i>Female parent</i> | <i>Male parent</i> | <i>Sown</i> | <i>Comment</i> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>macgregoriae</i> × <i>rubineiflorum</i> | × <i>calignis</i> | 2001 | No horticultural merit – discarded |
| <i>macgregoriae</i> × <i>rubineiflorum</i> | × <i>kawakamii</i> | 2002 | No seed collected |
| <i>macgregoriae</i> × <i>rubineiflorum</i> | × <i>commonae</i> × <i>truncicola</i> | 2002 | No seed collected |
| <i>macgregoriae</i> × <i>rubineiflorum</i> | × <i>wrightianum</i> | 2002 | No seed collected |
| (<i>rubineiflorum</i> × <i>pauciflorum</i>) × <i>womersleyi</i> | × <i>macgregoriae</i> × <i>rubineiflorum</i> | 2002 | No horticultural potential – discarded |
| <i>himantodes</i> | × <i>macgregoriae</i> × <i>rubineiflorum</i> | 2002 | Attractive, compact plant with pink ‘himantodes-like’ flowers, however lacking in vigour |
| ‘Saint Valentine’ | × <i>macgregoriae</i> × <i>rubineiflorum</i> | 2002 | No seed collected |
| <i>sessilifolium</i> | × <i>macgregoriae</i> × <i>rubineiflorum</i> | 2002 | No seed collected |
| <i>macgregoriae</i> × <i>rubineiflorum</i> | × <i>leptanthum</i> | 2003 | No seed collected |
| <i>rubineiflorum</i> | × <i>macgregoriae</i> × <i>rubineiflorum</i> | 2003 | No seed collected |
| <i>suaveolens</i> | × <i>macgregoriae</i> × <i>rubineiflorum</i> | 2003 | No horticultural merit – discarded |
| <i>macgregoriae</i> × <i>rubineiflorum</i> | × (<i>rubineiflorum</i> × <i>pauciflorum</i>) × <i>womersleyi</i> | 2004 | No horticultural merit – discarded |
| <i>macgregoriae</i> × <i>rubineiflorum</i> | × <i>macgregoriae</i> | 2004 | Very similar to the reverse cross however has larger, orange flowers |
| <i>macgregoriae</i> × <i>rubineiflorum</i> | × ‘Simbu Sunset’ | 2004 | No seed collected |
| <i>calignis</i> | × <i>macgregoriae</i> × <i>rubineiflorum</i> | 2004 | No seed collected |
| <i>luraluense</i> | × <i>macgregoriae</i> × <i>rubineiflorum</i> | 2004 | Hardy, much-branched compact plant, very similar in shape to male parent, floriferous with 1–3 white flowers in truss. Plant is 40 cm high × 40 cm wide after 8 years. |

| <i>Female parent</i> | <i>Male Parent</i> | <i>Sown</i> | <i>Comment</i> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|-------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>anagalliflorum</i> × <i>pauciflorum</i> | × <i>macgregoriae</i> × <i>rubineiflorum</i> | 2005 | No seed collected |
| <i>macgregoriae</i> × <i>rubineiflorum</i> | × <i>retusum</i> | 2005 | Much-branched plant, floriferous orange-red tubular flowers, plant susceptible to foliar fungal diseases and tends to die back and re-shoot from base. Very attractive in full flower. |
| <i>christi</i> | × <i>macgregoriae</i> × <i>rubineiflorum</i> | 2005 | No seed collected |
| (<i>macgregoriae</i> × <i>rubineiflorum</i>) × (<i>rubineiflorum</i> × <i>anagalliflorum</i>) | × <i>christianae</i> | 2008 | Under evaluation, initial flowering disappointing with none of the desirable attributes of <i>R. christiana</i> e. Plants are susceptible to foliar fungal disease |
| (<i>macgregoriae</i> × <i>rubineiflorum</i>) × (<i>rubineiflorum</i> × <i>anagalliflorum</i>) | × <i>jasminiflorum</i> ssp. <i>heusseri</i> | 2009 | No horticultural potential – discarded |
| (<i>macgregoriae</i> × <i>rubineiflorum</i>) × (<i>rubineiflorum</i> × <i>anagalliflorum</i>) | × <i>rousei</i> | 2011 | Small seedlings |

Rhododendron catawbiense a historical note

JEFF JENKINSON

This rhododendron species – indigenous in the mountains of North Carolina and Virginia – is tough. The plants are frequently wider than taller and may reach more than 3 metres in height. The colour of the flowers may vary but they are usually lilac-purple; but may be in shades of pink, and occasionally white and faintly spotted.

It was named after the Catawba Indians who lived in the area. When first described, the mountains were covered with kalmias and rhododendrons so dense they were known as “slicks” or “hells” and only passable by following bear tracks.

William Bartram (1739–1823), during his American explorations starting in Spring 1773, described this rhododendron as “foremost in the assembly of mountain beauties”.

John Fraser (1750–1811) was a London-based nurseryman who decided to travel to America and travel some of Bertram’s tracks in the Blue Ridge Mountains in 1808–9. He brought back rhododendron plant material to his nursery which was subsequently distributed.

The Seidel brothers of Dresden started hybridising existing European rhododendron species *R. hirsutum* and *R. ferrugineum* (the alpenrose) with *R. catawbiense*. Hybrids with *R. ponticum* were also produced.

When the magnificent red-flowering *R. arboretum* from the Himalayan mountains was introduced to the UK and Europe in the early nineteenth century, further opportunities for hybridization occurred. In 1831 the celebrated hybrid ‘Altaclerense’ was produced at Highclere castle. This hybrid was a cross between (*R. arboretum* × *R. catawbiense*) × *R. ponticum*.

‘Altaclerense’ really captured the imagination and commenced the fashion for rhododendron amongst wealthy gardeners and gentry.

Well established nurserymen such as John Veitch of Exeter featured rhododendrons in their catalogues. The multi-generation Waterer family of nurserymen used *R. maximum* × *R. catawbiense* to produce pink and rose shades of flowers. The Waterer nurseries were located on the Bagshot Sands near Woking, UK. This soil type was early warming, free draining, acidic with peat and loam in patches, resting on water-retentive clay which proved perfect for growing American evergreens. Waterer family members developed strong

American links, with Anthony Waterer (1822–1896) breeding hardy “ironclad” *R. catawbiense* hybrids for the New England market.

The Waterer “hardy hybrids” found in old Australian rhododendron collections owe much of their robustness to their American ancestors. ❀

References

1. *The Larger Species of Rhododendron* by Peter Cox, 1979.
2. *Tales of the Rose Tree* by Jane Brown, 2004.

Rhododendron catawbiense, the Catawba rhododendron, just outside the ranger station of Mount Mitchell, North Carolina. The photo was taken by Jason Edgecombe and is licensed under the GNU FDL and Creative Commons CC-BY-SA licenses. It can be seen in colour on the Wikipedia page devoted to *R. catawbiense*.





Above 'Satan's Gift', planted by *Schefflera septulosa*.

Below A promising lemon seedling – the breeding continues.





Above The original plant of *R. macgregoriae*.

Below *R.* 'Cherry Pie'.



The Jury vireya legacy

ABBIE JURY

Back in the 1950s, when Felix Jury first became interested in vireyas, they were pretty much unknown in New Zealand, with few enthusiasts internationally.

Felix started raising from seed and trying controlled crosses but at that time he was just after anything that was new and therefore interesting; there was so little raw material to choose from in those early stages. He named maybe a dozen and, with the passage of decades, about four of that dozen have stood the test of time very well and may still be around in another 30 years' time. Unfortunately, the finer details of his crosses were never recorded so it's not possible to state with certainty which were Felix's own crosses and which came from seed sent to him from overseas and were therefore just raised and selected by him. We do know that the Australian, Tom Lelliot was particularly generous with seed and there were others from that country.

In 1957, Felix went collecting in the highlands of New Guinea and brought back several plants of enduring interest. *Ficus antiarus* remains the most asked about tree in our garden and *Schefflera septulosa* is one of the most beautiful members of that plant family you will ever see. His form of *Rhododendron macgregoriae* is still rated as one of the best in circulation and, astonishingly, the original plant is still surviving. This is an achievement because vireyas are not noted for being long-lived in our climate. It was that plant of *R. macgregoriae* which gave rise to one of Felix's best cultivars – *R.* 'Golden Charm' (*macgregoriae* × 'Princess Alexandra'). We still rate it highly after several decades. The foliage is dark and glossy, the new stems are red, the habit is compact and healthy and the many flowers, while relatively small, are in good sized heads and attractive apricot to orange tones. It is also relatively hardy.

With the benefit of hindsight, we now wonder whether Felix's other two notable *R. macgregoriae* hybrids, *R.* 'Buttermaid' (*aurigeranum* × *macgregoriae*) and *R.* 'Orange-maid' (*laetum* × *macgregoriae*) might not in fact be from Lelliot seed, raised and selected by Felix. There is also the possibility that he may have been sent pollen. Mark is unsure whether Felix had *R. aurigeranum* at that stage but is certain that he did have *R. laetum*. The *R. macgregoriae* parentage shows dominance in both the flower form and colouring of these selections but hybrid vigour makes them more reliable and tidier garden plants.

R. 'Queen of Diamonds' (*viriosum* × *macgregoriae*) was indubitably Felix's own cross, a pink version this time but rather too tall and leggy to be of great merit. Apparently *R. viriosum* was misidentified for 70 years as *R. lochia*. Most

records use the *R. lochiaie* name when it appears that they are all, in fact, *R. viriosum*. I will defer to those with a great deal more expertise in this matter and have accordingly changed to using *R. viriosum*.

R. ‘Satan’s Gift’ (*konori* × *zoelleri*) and *R.* ‘Silken Shimmer’ (*konori* × *Dr Herman Sleumer*) were selections from Australian seed, raised by Felix. These were spectacular for their day, being big and lush, colourful and fragrant. *R.* ‘Satan’s Gift’ is the stand-out plant which has passed the test of time and is still a wonderful performer. The name amuses us – Felix was a completely non-religious man and to him, Satan merely evoked hot colours. Over the years, more devout nurseries have clearly had a problem with the name and this cultivar has been marketed variously as ‘Jury’s Gift’, ‘Satin Gift’ and, best of all, ‘Santa’s Gift’. One wishes nurseries would understand that it is fine to reject a plant because of ethical issues with the name, but it is not acceptable to rename it willy-nilly.

Felix was very taken with the big, scented blooms of *R. konori*, and his own hybrids were the pink *R.* ‘Cherry Pie’, red *R.* ‘Hot Gossip’ – both sister seedlings of a *R. viriosum* hybrid crossed with *R. konori* – and *R.* ‘Lipstick’. *R.* ‘Cherry Pie’ is particularly lush and has good bushy, spreading growth along with a good flower (though much of the scent has gone) and we still rate it as a good garden plant.

R. ‘Red Rover’ (*viriosum* × *javanicum*) is another of Felix’s early hybrids that we continue to rate for its bushy growth habit, healthy characteristics and plenty of good red flowers in a mid-size. However his *R. jasminiflorum* hybrid called *R.* ‘Lullaby’ has dropped off the radar now and, while a good performer, *R.* ‘Lulu’ (unknown) has probably been superseded by modern selections with more flowers to the truss.

By the time Mark started hybridising vireyas, there was a veritable explosion of recently discovered and newly imported species becoming available. He collected every single one he could lay his hands on at the time and propagated a few to distribute to collectors. Our nursery records show that we produced over 60 different species at that time, and very difficult most of them were too. The death rate in the species was far higher than in the hybrids, both in the nursery and when planted in the garden. It was with some relief that we decided after a few years that the few collectors in the country (there were probably only five or ten of them) had everything we held so we stopped feeling obliged to produce them. Similarly, we decided that it was not critical to keep every species represented in the garden. We have never coveted a national collection of any plant genus because we would prefer to garden with plants which justify their position as being garden worthy. Only some of the vireya species perform well for us – we would be sorry to lose varieties such as *R. himantodes*, *R. goodenoughii*, *R. taxifolium*, *R.*

hellwigii, *R. macgregoriae* and *R. konori* but many of the other species are either too difficult for us to keep going, or not worth the effort (*R. inconspicuum*, we have always felt, was particularly well named).

So Mark had a much bigger plant palette to work with and this included an ever increasing number of new hybrids as well as the species. Vireyas were suddenly a fashion plant in New Zealand; they were seen as a wonderful alternative for warmer areas of the country where the hardy rhododendrons do not thrive. Added to that, in a country where we would like to be tropical but aren't, vireyas fitted that exotic look and often obliged by flowering throughout the year. From being an unknown plant family with no market at all, they were a gardening sensation for a few years in the nineties.

Fashions change and vireyas are no longer as popular as they were – they are somewhat harder to keep alive, let alone looking good, than many people realised – but in those heady days, there was an insatiable demand for new varieties which had large luscious blooms with heady fragrance and large, heavily felted foliage. Unfortunately, this sometimes meant using breeder parents, which, with the passage of time, have not proved to be particularly resilient in our climate.

Mark was also keen to extend the flower form of vireyas into full trusses which more closely resemble the hardy rhododendrons. Many of the species and early hybrids are quite sparse in their flowering and have few flowers to the truss. He also wanted to explore what could be done with colour.

With the benefit of 20 years' experience, he has gone full circle and come back to the point his father reached earlier – a conclusion that it is more important to produce healthy plants which stay alive, with compact growth and masses of flowers as top priorities. More hardiness and less 'flash and dash', one could say. This tends to mean sacrificing individual bloom size, foliage size and often fragrance. It may end up that his *R. macgregoriae* hybrid, *R.* 'Mango Sunset', proves to be one of his best. While he achieved the much fuller truss he was looking for, it is just a good all round performer without being spectacular.

Market demands meant Mark made the same mistakes as many other vireya breeders – selecting new cultivars on the beauty of their blooms and on initial performance as a nursery plant. The test of longevity rests, for us, on long term health and performance as a garden plant. More than we would wish have fallen by the wayside. *R.* 'Candy Sunrise' (*konori* × Halo series) had beautiful, big fragrant flowers with good colour but was very susceptible to *Phytophthora*. Ditto the red *R.* 'Sweet Cherry' (*konori* × *hellwigii*) – wonderful as a garden plant but not easy in the nursery, *R.* 'Strawberry Fields' ('Satan's Gift' × *brookeanum*) – gorgeous big red flower but leggy growth over time and inclined to die, *R.* 'Orange Sparkles' (*retusum* × *macgregoriae*) and cute little *R.* 'Jellybean' ('Red Rover' × *stenophyllum*).

R. 'Frosted Candy', another of the *konori* × 'Halo' series hybrids, is performing very well as a large garden plant (now two metres plus which is large for a vireya) and it has huge blooms, but again is difficult in the nursery with an unacceptably high death rate from *Phytophthora*.

R. 'Jaffa' ('Halo' series × *javanicum*) is in the right direction for a full truss; there are now up to 15 large blooms per flower head (which is a big increase from the two to five range of many of the species and early hybrids) and a good strong orange combined with large lettuce green foliage. It is more frost tender and sensitive than the tougher cultivars (which tend to be those with *R. magregoriae*, *R. viriosum* or *R. saxifragoides* in their parentage). It certainly has the right tropical look and is a better nursery plant than many.

R. 'Pink Jazz' (*konori* × 'Halo' series) is another splendid large grower with enormous blooms – bright pink with a central star of cream and scented too. It also has the stand-out feature of deep maroon new growth and even the old foliage keeps the burgundy tint. It is not easy as a nursery plant and it is too big for many gardens, but the plants we have in our garden are standing the test of time. We have a special fondness for this one. Mark rarely names plants after people, but this one is for our older daughter who, in her teens, was called Jazz by many friends and who nursed a penchant for wearing hot pink.

Mark has always been lukewarm about R. 'Peach Puff' (*[phaeopeplum* × *leucogigas*] × *viriosum* selfed) because he regards the pastel peach colouring as insipid. It was an interior fashion colour a decade ago and I still find it very pretty. Again the truss is satisfyingly full with big blooms, good scent and felted foliage.

Of that type of larger flowered, scented hybrid, R. 'Sweet Vanilla' (*[leucogigas* × *viriosum*] × 'Silken Shimmer') is probably the best garden plant for fragrance. Its flowers, while not huge, are a good size, opening soft pink and fading out to cream. This is one plant which garden visitors regularly ask about when in flower – always a good indicator of showy performance. R. 'Sherbet Rose' ('Hot Gossip' sister × *herzogii*) matches R. 'Sweet Vanilla' for scent and it is very floriferous but the small tubular mid-pink blooms simply aren't showy enough for most people. We still like it because we don't want only big showy or blowsy vireyas in the garden, but we stopped producing it commercially because scent alone was not enough to sell the plant.

Practical Matters

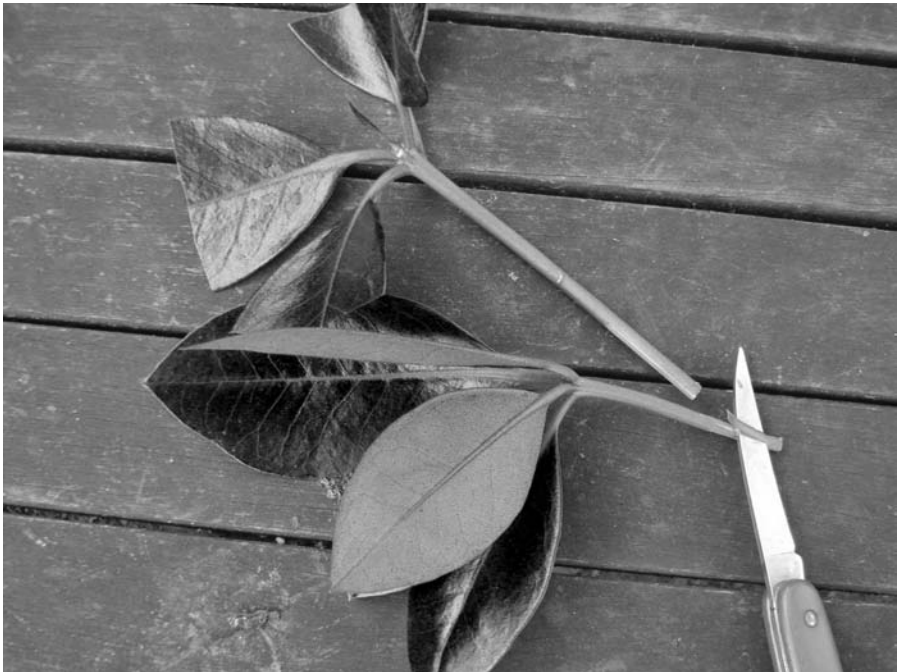
Vireya rhododendrons must rank amongst the easiest of the woody plants to propagate but one of the hardest to produce commercially. Neither are they bulletproof as garden plants. As long as you have firm, green material, it is easy to get cuttings to root. You don't even need rooting hormone. In fact it is so easy that we routinely showed customers how to take autumn cuttings so they

could have back up plants lest their specimen get taken out by a hard frost or wet roots. The one critical issue is to remember to have a generous sized cutting and to take the sliver off two sides of the stem (wounding). Vireyas put their roots out from the exposed cambium layer and having two wounds gives a more balanced root system and therefore more stability.

It is keeping them alive after rooting which is the tricky part, especially in nursery production. Vireyas are not only frost tender and deeply intolerant of wet feet (sodden root systems), but they are vulnerable to pretty much every strain of *Phytophthora* and a fair range of other diseases common in nursery production.

In the wild, many of the vireya species are epiphytic or semi epiphytic which is an indicator that their roots need open conditions. This is what fits them to a role as permanent pot plants though they appear to last better in pots, which are more permeable (terracotta or wood), than in containers which are impermeable (glazed pottery or plastic) and dependent for drainage on one or two holes in the bottom.

Vireya cuttings are very easy to strike but wounds should be made on two sides of the stem.



When producing commercial runs of vireyas, we maintained a rigorous spray programme to keep disease at bay. Even so, we tolerated a far higher mortality rate in nursery plants than we would in any other crop. We have always produced them outdoors, under protective shade cloth and overhead irrigation – identical conditions to most of our nursery crops.

Vireyas tend to put on a lot of top growth, supported by small, inadequate root systems (an indicator of their epiphytic origins), and new growth is often very soft and brittle. As nursery crops in our climate, they grow very rapidly at all times of the year and it is possible to get a saleable plant through in half the time of a hardy rhododendron, but they are correspondingly more vulnerable to damage by mishandling and disease.

We are blessed with a climate which enables us to use vireya rhododendrons as garden plants. We are not entirely frost free so we use them on the woodland margins where temperatures may get cool but never cold enough to cause significant damage. Any frost at all can burn the most tender varieties which includes anything with *R. leucogigas*, *R. konori*, *R. hellwigii* and sometimes even *R. laetum* in the breeding. The hardier types will take two or three degrees of frost without damage but more than that can be a problem. Get it up to five degrees of frost and plants can be killed stone dead. The beauty of vireyas as garden plants is that they do not have a set flowering season so if you have sufficient numbers, there are always plants in bloom – even in the depths of winter. Added to that, they are tolerant of hard pruning so easy to renovate. Even when cut back to bare wood, most will force out dormant leaf buds from old wood and can be bushy and fresh again within a matter of months, even if it takes longer for them to set flower buds. It is a misconception that vireyas are all tropical plants. While natural habitats are often in the tropical latitudes, they are in elevated sites which cool the temperatures.

With their climatic limitations, vireya rhododendrons will never have the geographic distribution of hardier plants and, no matter how good the hybrids, they are unlikely to achieve international standing. There is a long way to go yet in breeding reliable cultivars which are likely to stand the test of time but it is certainly interesting to have been in from the early days on the development of new selections and Mark will continue to work with them here, albeit on a rather casual basis. ❀

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Propagating from seed germinated in peat moss

MARC COLOMBEL

For propagating small seeds, pure peat is the easiest medium to work with, as well as offering the potential for very good results. It is sold very compacted in large plastic bags. I have had very good results using it to propagate rhododendrons.

From my experience, I recommend using it by following a sequential process:

(1) First, on a bench, crumble the peat with your hands to separate clumpy parts.

(2) Then add water and mix with a small towel. It should be moist enough when water seeps (rather than drips) between your fingers when you squeeze it in your hand.

(3) Have a small pot (say 10 cm sq.) ready to receive the peat. Fill it to the brim. Then lift it and let it drop gently to the bench. The peat should settle a little, say by at least 2 cm.

(4) Now filter the peat through a fine sieve or screen (say, 6 mm mesh). Its colour is paler by now because it has dried somewhat (colour indicates the difference in water content: brown = saturated; very pale = too dry). It has to be dry enough to pass through the mesh. Then put the filtered peat into the pot, filling it.

(5) Next, gently press the surface with a trowel. The level of the peat has to be under the rim. I use an English tool to sow seeds – it has a notched wheel which vibrates a strip to create small vibrations. In varying the angle I can control the amount of seeds which fall at the surface. Whatever you use, it's necessary to avoid seeds mounding on the medium – they need to be well dispersed across the surface.

(6) Don't forget to label the pots and keep an accurate list or register of what you sow, and the date. Don't rely on memory.

(7) Watering is best done by misting. The small drops of water should fall vertically on the seeds (to avoid displacing them). Place the seeded pots in a tub (a plastic crate, or similar). They should be slightly raised off the bottom, so a small amount of water can be maintained in the bottom to maintain humidity, but without this touching the base of the pots containing the seeds. Leave some space between each container for sanitary security, to reduce the chance of spread by any fungal infection.

(8) Place wire mesh or netting on top of each tub, to support a plastic sheet which will prevent stray drops of water falling on the pots and disturbing the seeds.

(9) Keep the medium moist with regular misting, being careful to do it very gently so as not to disturb the seeds. Keep observing the colour of the peat (brown means it should be damp enough).

I sow in mid-winter, between December 25th and January 1st, when it is time for an appropriately “restful” activity. My plastic greenhouse is not heated and there is no artificial lighting. Depending on the harshness of the winter, seeds begin to germinate at the beginning of March or April. I try to get about a hundred plants in each pot: about one seed for each square cm. The germination of diploid seeds typically runs at 98–99%.

Then, between the beginning and end of May (depending on the weather) it will be time to transplant the seedlings: each small plant into its own pot (say, 6 cm²). It is a waste of time to leave the seedlings any longer in their sowing container. I choose cloudy and “cold” days to transplant. Usually, I’m pleased to say, nearly all the small plants survive. I transplant only 20 seedlings from each sowing container.

When the seedlings are in their own pots they stay in my plastic greenhouse until May of the next year. That is to say they stay protected for 18 months. In September, at the beginning of autumn, I have to repot them again because by then the roots fill the 6 cm² container. At this time they go into a 10cm² pot and spend the winter season in this. Then in May when spring arrives, I put them outside after repotting them again into a 4.5 litre pot – they stay in this until the following autumn. Then I repot them again, into an 18 litre pot. By transplanting regularly the roots never become affected by crowding and growth setbacks are avoided.

I get flower buds in three years on 75% of the plants propagated. The remaining 25% bloom one or two years later.

To reiterate:

1) Sowing pot => 10 cm × 10 cm from 1st January Year 1 to May Year 1 – in the greenhouse.

2) First pot for individual plants => 6 cm × 6 cm. From May Year 1 to October Year 1 – hold in the greenhouse.

3) Around October 1 Year 1, transplant to 10 cm × 10 cm pot – hold until May Year 2 in the greenhouse.

4) Around May Year 2, transplant to 4.5 litre pot – until October Year 2 keep outdoors.

5) October Year 2, transplant to 18 litre pot – keep outdoors.

6) First flowers expected in May of Year 3. ❀

Marc Colombel runs a website devoted to rhododendrons from his home in France (text in French and English – for the latter click on the Union Jack on the home page) – <http://www.rhododendron.fr>. Also another on azaleas – <http://www.rhododendron-azalee.fr/>

Note that peat is not generally obtainable in Australia these days (although it used to be imported from sources in the northern hemisphere). However, a substitute is available in the form of “peat” made from processed coconut fibre, and this has proved useful not only as a component of potting mixes, and as mulch for garden beds, but also as a propagating medium. Marc’s techniques should be appropriate for use with this material, which has similar physical properties. It’s suggested that the pure “cocopeat” be used rather than an alternative product which contains premixed fertilizer.



Blocks of peat as taken out of the bag. Note its dark colour – which indicates the peat is very damp.



Start by crumbling the peat between your hands.



It’s wet enough when water seeps out as it’s squeezed.



Peat in a sowing pot after sieving. Press it in with a trowel and make sure it settles a little below the rim before sowing seeds.

Vireya for the Cloud Forest Conservatory, Singapore

NEIL PUDDY

In 2007 I reported on a project in Singapore called *Gardens By The Bay*. In that report I described a project that was, at that stage, still essentially on the drawing boards and in the hearts and minds of the project team. The floraculture manager was importing some vireyas to cultivate in a prototype glasshouse to experiment with and increase his knowledge of vireya culture with a view to importing larger numbers at a later date for display.

In 2008 the project displays and models were completed and open for viewing. Kathy and I were overwhelmed with the grandeur and complexity of design; not only were these gardens going to be spectacular in terms of horticulture and architecture but they were to incorporate ecologically sustainable features as well. To quote again from their brochure, “A horticultural fantasia, the gardens will showcase horticultural craftsmanship and floral artistry at its finest.”

In 2011 I visited the site and was again overwhelmed as what seemed an almost impossible project when viewed as a display was well under construction. Marina Bay had been closed from the sea and was now a freshwater lake, the enormous “supertrees” of concrete with colourful exterior frames were built – creating the ambiance of forest giants, and the conservatories – no longer models – were now stunning glass and steel landmarks.

The 1.2 hectare Flower Dome Conservatory will replicate Mediterranean conditions and include a semi-arid subtropical climate. This conservatory was up to the stage of planting, that’s if you can call the placement of five huge mature baobab trees planting.

The 0.8 hectare Cloud Forest Conservatory maintains a cool tropical mountain climate and features an artificial mountain with a suspended walkway spiralling around it. To look outwards through the glass you view the sights of Singapore to look inwards you see waterfalls and mist forest plants festooning the exterior of the mountain. It is within this conservatory that the vireyas will be displayed. It should be noted that a large biomass boiler utilising green waste from the gardens will be used to supply energy for the project including cooling of this conservatory.

As Jagera Wholesale Vireya we have now exported vireya to 12 different countries, but mostly small plants in 90 mm pots still in their perlite propagation mix. Singapore was a very different exercise involving a large number of 3- to 6- year-old semi-mature plants .

A selection of 855 vireyas was chosen, 800 plants in 200 mm pots, 50 in 300 mm pots, and 5 plants up to 1.6 m in height in 400 mm pots. To ship plants to Singapore there are no Import Permit requirement as with many countries, but a Phytosanitary Certificate issued by Australian authorities with a mandatory additional declaration must accompany the plants. The additional declaration is certification by DAFF (Department of Forestry and Fisheries – formerly called AQIS) that I as the exporter have complied with a set of endorsements developed by DAFF from the Singapore Governments Plant Protection Agency AVA (Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority) in preparing the plants for export.

Singapore has general and one specific treatment endorsement that DAFF had to sign off on and include:

The consignment is to be free from pests, soil, weed seeds and extraneous material.

If plants are to be exported with growing media they must be fumigated with methyl bromide, steam sterilised or treated with an approved nematicide and evidence of this treatment is to be submitted to the inspector at the time of inspection.

Depending on your locality, fellow growers of vireya rhododendron will know that the above general statement – “Free from pests” and the specific treatment with nematicide comes down to chemical warfare. In the subtropics it required sprays of fungicides for the root fungal disease *Phytophthora* and leaf rust, insecticide sprays to exclude mealy bug, lacebug, mites, thrip and scale, plus nematicide dips to prevent nematode infection of roots and earthworm invasion of potting medium. So many potential stowaways and untold hiding places are provided by large bushy plants.

Physical inspection looking for small rainforest snails, the magnificent large pink slugs that love to hide in the lush foliage, and the microscopic bugs that live in mosses that grow on the pot medium, is also a must. The potential for these freeloaders requires that the surface of each pot be cleaned of all traces of moss. A find of one living organism is all it takes for those dreaded words from a DAFF /AQIS Inspector to be heard – “It’s moving, would you like to book a second inspection?” The prospect of taking the plants home and applying yet another treatment then re-presenting does cause a little anxiety.

For weeks in the lead up to export of these vireya, I could be found plucking, scraping, spraying and dipping – moving through the plants suited up like a moon walker.

855 large plants presented a packing and transport challenge as well as a freedom from pest and disease one. Each plant has a final elevated inspection and the pot wiped clean and placed in an individual plastic bag (pot only) prior to packing into its carton. The challenge is related to time as the first

plant inspected and packed was going to be in its carton for three days before the last one. Plants do not look so good after too many days in the dark, so to reduce the plants' time in their cartons to a minimum, 500 went in one shipment and 355 – including the 55 largest plants – one week later. Shipping in two lots also improved the handling and transport logistics. 190 Cartons with the dimensions of H 900 mm L 560 mm W 375 mm and five at 1.6 m height was a lot to deal with.

The vireyas for Singapore included 92 different hybrids and 16 species. The variation in growth habit, of leaf colour, (scales and pigment) shape and size and of flower hue, shape and size of this selection should provide an insight into the morphological variations within sub-genus *Vireya*. An ongoing project is to provide additional species for the collection to further enhance the story of vireya diversity and the beauty of the sub-genus.

Favourable inspections both prior to shipping and on arrival in Singapore resulted, one week after packing, in the plants being in a glasshouse on site at *Gardens By The Bay*. At the time of writing I can report that the Floriculture manager was very happy with the vireyas and they were looking forward to displaying them. The gardens and conservatories were opened to the public on the 29th of June. I can only visualise having not seen the result but be assured these gardens are world class and truly a horticultural fantasia, I am confident that a wonderful vireya experience will be had by all those who visit. ❀



The conservatories in Singapore (left), the first shipment (bottom left), and Kathy on final inspection (below).



New Registrations 2011–2012

KEN GILLANDERS

The following is a listing of registrations submitted by the Australian Rhododendron Society Plant registrar, and approved by the Royal Horticultural Society during the year 2011/2012.

Colour numbers refer to the R.H.S. Colour Chart. Accompanying colour names are taken from “*A Contribution Towards Standardization of Color Names in Horticulture*”, R.D. Huse and K.L. Kelly, edited D.H. Voss (ARS 1984).

Parents of plants are reported in the conventional order – seed parent × pollen parent.

Abbreviations used: H hybridized by
G grown to first flower
S selected by
N named by
I introduced by
R registered by

I have included broad colour definitions after RHS Colour Chart numbers for the flowers. This will enable members without access to the chart to have some idea of the colour of the flower.

‘Burnie Gold’ Lepidote hybrid of chrysodoron × ‘Chrysomanicum’ H: Noel Sullivan (1991). G: Emu Valley Rhododendron Garden (2000). N: Noel Sullivan (2000). I & R: Emu Valley Rhododendron Garden (2011) Truss: loose, consisting of 7 broadly campanulate flowers. Corolla: 35mm × 68mm. Lobes: 5 wavy. Buds: 154A. Corolla: inside and outside 1C (Yellow) Spots: 1A. Leaves: elliptic 65mm × 30mm margins flat. Upper surface: matt. Height: 80cm × 80cm in 10 years. Flowering: early August.

‘Eric Szabo’ Elepidote hybrid. Seed and pollen parent unknown. G: Emu Valley Rhododendron Garden (2007) N: Lauren Coombes (2011) I: Emu Valley Rhododendron Garden (2011) R: Emu Valley Rhododendron Garden (2012) Truss: ball consisting of 13 funnel-shaped flowers. Corolla: 30mm × 45mm. Lobes: 5 wavy. Buds: 37C. Corolla: inside and outside 8D (light yellow). Leaves: elliptic 95mm × 38mm margins flat. Upper surface: matt. Height: 1m × 1m in 10 years. Flowering time: late August.

‘Howie’ Elepidote hybrid. Seed and pollen parent unknown. H: Noel Sullivan (1991) G: Emu Valley Rhododendron Garden (2000) N: J. Woods (2011) I & R:

Emu Valley *Rhododendron* Garden (2011) Truss: ball consisting of 17 tubular campanulate flowers. Corolla: 40mm × 40mm. Lobes: 5 margins wavy. Buds: 46A. Corolla inside and outside: 46A (deep red) Spots on 3 top lobes. Leaves: elliptic 110mm × 38mm margins flat. Upper surface: matt. Height: 80cm × 1m in 10 years. Flowering period: late August.

‘Jenny Cox’ Lepidote hybrid of (*moupinense* red form × *johnstoneanum*) × *moupinense* red form. H: Maurice Kupsch (1999) G: Emu Valley *Rhododendron* Garden. N: Maurice Kupsch (2010) I & R: Emu Valley *Rhododendron* Garden (2012) Truss: loose consisting of 3 open funnel-shaped flowers 50mm × 72mm. Lobes: 5 wavy. Buds: 53D. Corolla inside: 62C. Corolla outside: 62A.(pink) Spots on upper lobe: 61B. Leaves: elliptic 60mm × 22mm margins flat. Upper surface: matt. Height: 80cm × 70cm in 10 years. Flowering period: late August.

‘Joey Rabbit’ Elepidote hybrid. Seed and pollen parent unknown. G: Emu Valley *Rhododendron* Garden (2007) N: Juanita Wood (2011) I & R: Emu Valley *Rhododendron* Garden (2012) Truss: ball consisting of 20 tubular campanulate flowers. Corolla: 38mm × 48mm. Lobes: 5 wavy. Buds: 51A. Corolla: inside and outside 53C.(light red) Leaves: elliptic 85mm × 22mm margins flat. Upper surface: matt. Indumentum: 158B. Height: 1.8m × 1m in 10 years. Flowering period: late August.

‘Lil Clark’ Elepidote. Seed and pollen parent unknown. H: D.J. Dosser (2005) G: D.J. Dosser (2010) N & R: D.J. Dosser (2011) Truss: ball consisting of 10 broadly funnel shaped flowers. Corolla: 25mm × 110mm. Lobes: 5 wavy. Buds: 185C. Corolla inside & outside: 179B.(tangerine) Spots on 3 top lobes: 158A. Leaves: lanceolate 120mm × 40mm margins decurved. Upper surface: matt. Height: 1m × 0.75m in 6 years. Flowering period: November. Slightly scented.

‘Mary Watte’ Elepidote hybrid of ‘Miss B.L. Jones’ × ‘Petras Debut’ H: D J Dosser (2000) G: D.J. Dosser (2007) N & R: D.J. Dosser (2011) Truss: ball consisting of 11 broadly funnel-shaped flowers. Corolla: 75mm × 50mm. Lobes: 5 wavy and frilly. Buds: 58D. Corolla inside & outside: 63C. (pink) Spots 59B. Leaves: lanceolate 125mm × 42mm margins decurved. Upper surface: matt. Height: 1.5m × 1m in 11 years. Flowering period: November. Slight scent.

‘Mrs Frances Underwood’ Vireya hybrid of *konori* × unknown. H: R. Malone (1989) G: Emu Valley *Rhododendron* Garden (2007) N, I & R: Emu Valley *Rhododendron* Garden. (2012) Truss: flat top consisting of 9 tubular funnel shaped flowers. 90mm × 100mm. Lobes: 7. Corolla inside: 155C. Corolla outside: 155A.(cream) Leaves: oblanceolate 140mm × 75mm margins wavy. Upper surface: matt. Indumentum: (scales) brown. Height: 1m × 1m in 10 years. Flowering period: spring. Strong scent.

‘Mrs June Sanderson’ Elepidote hybrid of ‘Miss B.L. Jones’ × ‘Petras Debut’. H: D.J. Dosser (2000) G: D.J. Dosser (2009) N & R: D.J. Dosser (2011) Truss: conical consisting of 16 funnel-shaped flowers. Corolla: 100mm × 55mm. Lobes: 5 wavy. Buds: 67A. Corolla inside & outside: 67D. (pink flushed white) Spots on top lobe 67C. Leaves: oblanceolate 150mm × 50mm margins decurved. Upper surface: matt. Height: 1.5m × 0.75m in 10 years. Flowering period: November. Slight scent.

‘Pink Organdy’ Vireya hybrid. Seed & pollen parent unknown. H: Andrew Rouse (2006) G: Andrew Rouse (2010) N & R: Andrew Rouse (2011) Truss: open consisting of 2–3 open campanulate flowers. Corolla: 18mm × 50mm. Lobes: 5 margins wavy & ruffled. Corolla inside & outside: 49C flushed 50D. (light pink) Leaves: narrowly elliptic 25mm × 10mm margins flat; Upper surface: glossy. Height: 35cm × 25cm in 5 years. Flowering period: August.

‘Rosebery Goldmine’ Lepidote hybrid. Seed and pollen parent unknown. H: Unknown. G: Emu Valley Rhododendron Garden (2003) N: Management of Mineral Metals Group (2011) I & R: Emu Valley Rhododendron Garden (2012) Truss: loose consisting of 8 tubular campanulate flowers. Corolla: 35mm × 45mm. Lobes: 5 margins wavy. Buds: 180B. Corolla inside: 4B. Corolla outside: 4B fused with 51A. (yellow) Leaves: elliptic 70mm × 28mm. margins flat. Upper surface: matt. Height: 1.2m × 1m in 10 years. Flowering period: early August.



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Deciduous azaleas from the Appalachians – a yellow form of *R. calendulaceum* (above) and the pink form of *R. prionophyllum* (below). See page 13.



PHOTOS BY JEFF JENKINSON

Back cover: *Vireya rhododendron* 'Buttermaid'. See pages 39–46. Photo by Abbie Jury.

