THE RHODODENDRON NEWSLETTER

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FACEBOOK: Do you have some interesting garden photos, information about your garden, visits or tours, etc., you have done, which may be of interest to other members? You are invited to send them to Prue Crome via email and she will put them on Facebook and/or the ARSV website. Email prue.crome@fcpl.net.au

2014 PROGRAMME

JULY and OCTOBER; NEWSLETTERS
VIREYA HOUSE OFFICIAL OPENING; SOON

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PRESIDENTS REPORT APRIL 2014

Dear members,

My last report was written at the peak of our very hot summer. We did not know then how well, or if, our plants would survive the heat. I lost a lot of plants for which I have been caring for a long time, both at home and on a rural block where I plant the tougher varieties. It is good, however, to report that the gardens at Olinda, and more particularly the plants in our refurbished facilities have come through very well.

The Vireya House is proving an excellent growing environment for almost all the vireya species (145 at the last count) we have planted in it. The plants have settled in well, making very good growth, most are shooting from their bases and thickening up nicely. Each week species very rarely seen are flowering and highlighting how much variation there is in the sub-genus. This week we have flowers from the two extremes, *R. konori* is at one end of the glasshouse just near the door so you are greeted by its delightful heady scent, while at the other end and extreme, *R. perakense* is in flower with a tiny truss of tiny flowers. Andrew Rouse has been extraordinarily generous with the material he has supplied for this project and the work he has put into getting things in place. He has spent the last month planting the more delicate or drooping vireyas into hanging baskets and the tiny leaved ones into small holes in the tree fern towers. I can't help but feel that this glasshouse, as impressive as it is now, will be an amazing sight and resource in a few years time.

In late March the ARSV was involved in the rare plants expo at Tesselaar's. We were able to supply plants of a much higher quality this year and, as the Society nursery stock grows, we will be able to offer still better material in the future. These rare plant days do offer the ARSV an opportunity to make a bit of money, which is nice, but more importantly they allow us to talk to keen gardeners. We can show them what's available and hopefully coax them into getting involved with the ARS. We will look at perhaps doing a couple of these rare plant fairs a year from next year.

The Tuesday Group was very successful at getting seed from the RHS seed exchange this year. We have now germinated seed from something in the order of 40 species. All were wild collected. Some are new to us and will add to the Gardens at Olinda. Others were sought so as to increase our supply of rare species. Mostly we sought to increase our stock of plants from known wild locations. As the seedlings progress I will update *Newsletter* with information about our success with germination techniques and growing on.

John O'Hara

THE SPECIES COLUMN.

araiophyllum -Subsection Irrorata. [photo page 12]

Rhododendron *araiophyllum* is a little-known species which should be more predominately displayed in our garden. The white flowers with a crimson blotch are quite spectacular and stand out from a distance. If you wonder why so many rhododendrons have blotched or spotted flowers, the answer is obvious. They have evolved to attract the pollinators, such as

bees, butterflys, and birds, to the centre of the flower for a tasty meal of nectar, and, incidentally, pollinate the flower. The stamens are arranged so that it would be difficult to feed without getting the sticky pollen on their bodies and so perpetuate the species..

Name:
The name means narrow-leaved. A long-winded name for a simple characteristic.

Distribution:
From West Yunnan and upper Burma at 2300 to 3400 metres. This species is fairly common over a limited area and grows in forests, thickets, and on the edges of bamboo brakes.

Characteristics:
This species forms a rather upright shrub up to 6 metres high. The narrow leaves are thin in texture and have wavy edges. The flowers are white to pink with a crimson blotch or spots and are slightly fragrant. (Our plants are pure white with a crimson blotch). It is not difficult to distinguish from the other Irrorata species:

aberconwayi has saucer-shaped flowers and stiff leaves.

annae has small spots in the flowers but no blotch.

anthosphaerum has pink 7-lobed flowers.

irroratum is a very variable species and the flowers can be white, pink, or sometimes yellow. The flowers are usually spotted. In one clone, "Polka Dot", not my favourite, the inside of the corolla is completely covered in spots.

kendrickii and ramsdenianum have red flowers.

wrayi is a tropical species from Malaysia, where it grows alongside Vireya rhododendrons.

All of these species are fairly rare in England due to their sensitivity to frosts but thrive at Olinda.

Where to See this Plant.
There are only two of this species in the Garden, both growing on the North bank below the glasshouse path. This is a rather dry shady area, but they put on a good show last September.
Alan Kepert.

VIREYA SPECIES COLUMN APRIL 2014

R wentianum [photo page 13]
Classification
Section *Schistanthe* subsection *Euvireya.* This accords with the classification proposed by Craven *et al* **Vireya Rhododendrons: their monophyly and classification (*Ericaceae, Rhododendron* section *Schistanthe*)** Blumea 56, 2011: 153. The classification proposed by Argent *Rhododendrons in subgenus Vireya* RHS 2006 had Vireya as a subgenus and this species in section VII Euvireya Subsection v Euvireya. It is in good company as Argent's Subsection has 90 members including *R Christi* with which it has been confused. I can relate to this confusion as, when *R wentianum* flowered for me for the first time as I write, I thought I must have mislabelled it. When I checked more carefully I discovered the true position.

Name

The species was first noted by Koord, Nova Guinea 1909.8:188 and is named after F.A.F.C. Went who worked for several years in Indonesia, later becoming professor of botany at Untrecht, Netherlands but not introduced into cultivation until 1974 when Lou Searle sent material to Bob Withers in Melbourne labelled as a low altitude form of *R christi.* The species was correctly identified by Lyn Craven [2002]. It has been growing in Edinburgh since 1995.

Origin

The species comes from New Guinea, both PNG and Indonesian West Irian at 600-1500m. In the former it is found in the upper Sepik river region and in the latter in the Main Range from Mt Carstensz to the Star Mountains. It flowers from January to August. By contrast *R christi* is found from 1200- 3000m in different locations in PNG and West Irian and flowers from May to January.

Cultivation

R wentianum, in its natural habitat, is a shrub to 2m. In cultivation my plant is, as yet, only 45 cm. It is not widely held in Australia. What it will do when it grows to maturity in the best conditions we can provide at Olinda is yet to be seen. By contrast *R christi*, in its natural habitat is a small shrub to 1.2m and I have had it successfully in cultivation in Olinda both in pots and in ground to half that size. Curiously *R christi* is one of the few vireya species that does not thrive at Mitch Mitchell's property at Volcano on the Island of Hawaii at 4000 ft.

Description

Epiphytic in its natural habitat *R wentianum* shows every sign of prospering in cultivation, that is developing a reasonably robust root system. Its first flowering has two florets one with 5 petals the other 6. Each floret has a yellow triangle at the base of the upper petals, which Argent says is distinctive, with the remainder of the upper and all the lower being salmon. Argent describes orange red. In my 6 petal floret the triangle is distinct on 3 upper petals but is also present on a fourth. One can expect 3-6 florets. The floret sizes are in line with Argent's description with the bottom petals separated and the top ones overlapping. By contrast I have had *R christi* flower with 7 florets. Leaves are glossy green above in a tight whorl with 2-3 larger and similar number of smaller leaves in each group. The larger leaves on my plant are at the bottom of Argent's size range 60-160 x 30-63mm.

Conclusion

I have great expectations that ARS members, at least, will grow this species successfully and enjoy its addition to their gardens or patios.

Simon Begg

TESSELAARS' GARDENING AND PLANT EXPO

Over the weekend April 5th and 6th the Society had a stall at Tesselaars. We sourced about 110 pots of mainly rhododendrons and some Vireyas from the nursery. Andrew Rouse selected the species he thought would be wanted by collectors. Myself and other members

selected Rhododendrons thought suitable for growing in both Melbourne and the hills. Sales were very good and our stock was supplemented by Andrew Raper's Vireyas and some rhododendrons. The stalls were manned by Andrew, Mike, John, Dan, Liz, Laurie, Tom, Simon, Marcia and myself over the two days.

Saturday morning was very busy and the buyers who wanted specific Vireyas were able to get them with Andrew's informative help. Consequently many of our plants were sold. Andrew Raper provided two large pots of display Vireyas, one of them was Dixie and it proved to be a big draw card. Many people wanted to buy this in 20cms. pots and before the end of the day all were sold out. Our rhododendrons were organised in colours and thus was useful as people either wanted the usual reds, pinks and whites. Most of this stock was sold but the yellows and apricot colours didn't do as well. At the end of the day we had sold $1400 of stock.

Sunday was also busy and Laurie sold quite a few plants to customers who seemed a little hesitant in growing a rhododendron but he was able to recommend a type which should do well in their area. By lunch most of Andrew Raper's stock had sold and our stock was down to about half. At the end of the day we had sold about $980 worth of stock.

Overall the society had made a profit of about $1500 and Andrew was pleased with his results also. For next year it may be useful for three people to be on the Saturday morning roster. Demand was higher then and with the usual two people rostered after that, then demand could be met. Thank you to a good effort from everyone.

Alex Pottage

UPDATE ON THE VIREYA GLASSHOUSE, MARCH 2014

It has been six months since the initial planting out of the glasshouse, and more importantly the first summer.

Overall the glasshouse has performed extremely well with the misting system keeping the glasshouse at or below 35 Degree C on the hot days we've had, including the heat wave in the 3rd week of January where we had four days over 40 Deg C. The humidity threshold has been set at 60 Percent relative humidity which kicks in when the humidity drops to this point. The vireyas are positively enjoying the high humidity. The Western end of the glasshouse, which gets the full force of the afternoon sun, is the hottest spot in the glasshouse, however even here we see virtually no sign of heat stress. Parks Victoria has just constructed an entrance foyer that should help to shade this part of the glasshouse in summer afternoons.

The bed mix seems to be performing well. It is holding some moisture but also draining well, with the ground up tree fern log used to bulk up the mix helping with aeration and coarse fibre content. We've had two in-ground casualties – *R. blackii* and *R. gardenia* – however I think these succumbed because they were planted too deep. Pleasingly, nearly all the other plants are doing well. Indeed *R salicifolium* planted on the top of one of the fern towers

when near death miraculously has revived. We're starting to see surface root development, a positive sign that the specimens are healthy and re-shaping their root balls from 'pot shape' to 'disc shape'.

Planting specimens wedged between rocks seems to be working well. We did this to help anchor species that we knew to be 'weak rooted' and to provide a solid substrate onto which the roots can attach.

We've had little sign of pests or foliar fungal disease, though as a precautionary measure, the glasshouse has been sprayed three times since planting. We have a couple of species that are known to be susceptible to powdery mildew, including the large potted specimen of *R. aurigeranum* near the entrance, that are checked regularly for any signs of disease.

Over the last few months we've had a number of specimens flower; the hanging basket specimen of *R. gracilentum* has been in flower for nearly three months. In the beds we've had *R. meliphagidum, R. retusum, R. wentianum, R, alborugosum, R. phaeochitum, R. rarilepidotum, R. retivenium, R. pauciflorum, R. rousei, R truncicola, R konori, R leatum* and *R. javanicum* in flower, to name a few.

ARS-Vic volunteers have been maintaining the glasshouse on Tuesday mornings which has largely entailed inspecting for pests and diseases, checking the automatic watering and weeding, and Parks Victoria staff are checking at other times and particularly on hot days to ensure the misting system is working.

The three tree fern towers in the centre bed have been planted in March/April with small vireya species and hybrids. This entailed drilling holes into the logs and simply planting the specimens into the hole and backfilling with ground tree fern. We have also installed more hanging baskets after the roof trusses were reinforced – the plastic baskets have an outer wire framed basket to act as a screen, with the gap between the baskets used to grow other epiphytes. We have a growing collection of plants including orchids and pitcher plants for this display.

There's also a 2nd round of planting of in-ground species that I hope can also occur in March/April once back-up cuttings of these plants has been completed. In total we have about a further 50 plants earmarked for planting and once this is completed, the glasshouse will house ~95% of the species held in cultivation in Australia. The remaining 5% are predominantly small seedlings that are too small to plant out, or species requiring back up cuttings to be taken.

Over the next few months we'll reduce the frequency and length of watering and as the weather cools, lower the shadecloth. There is no heating so we'll also monitor the minimum temperature and whether the plants are coping with the cool conditions.

A storage box in the ARS-Vic tea room labeled 'glasshouse' has an up to date list of specimens in the glasshouse. The plant location is by bed number, with Bed 1 being closest

to the left hand door with the beds numbered clockwise from this point; bed 5 is the centre bed. Please feel free to use this list to assist with finding specimens.

All plants are labeled with an on-plant aluminum tag and a more visible, laser cut, in-ground Perspex label. Please let me know if you find a plant with a missing label or a specimen you think might be mis-labelled.

The glasshouse plants will also be a source of cutting material for plant sales, for the garden beds at Olinda (for those species we want to trial in-ground outside) and for ARS members seeking specimens for their private collections. Please let me know if there are species you want to grow so we can schedule in the collection of cuttings as and when suitable material becomes available.

Andrew Rouse
awrouse@bigpond.com

AMERICAN RHODODENDRON SOCIETY CONFERENCE, HILO HAWAII, 21-23 FEBRUARY 2014

Four Australians - Simon and Marcia Begg, Neil Puddey and I - attended the American Rhododendron Society Conference in Hawaii in February. I've been a member of the Hawaii Chapter of the ARS for many years however had never participated in an ARS Conference before, so it was wonderful to meet for the first time the many Rhododendron enthusiasts I've corresponded with over the years.

The week prior to leaving for Hawaii, Melbourne had a week-long heat wave with temperatures above 40 Deg C, so it was something of an extraordinary contrast to visit gardens on Day 1 in and around Hilo so see how well vireyas grow in the warm and humid climate. We visited the vireya display at the Hilo zoo, and the private gardens of Mitch Mitchell, Richard Marques & Sherla Bertelmann, Jim Ware and Gordon Morse. It made me realise how much vireyas benefit from the high humidity and the 'goldilocks' climate i.e. not too hot and not too cold. At Mitch Mitchell's garden were superb specimens of a wide range of vireya species growing in the ground and attaining a size I've never seen with specimens in Australia, including >1m plants of R. wrightianum and R. himantodes. Hawaii is arguably the closest thing to optimal conditions for growing vireyas outdoors - enough to make a vireya enthusiast most envious!

Day 2 was set aside for presentations. Steve Hootman and Dennis Bottemiller from the Rhododendron Species Foundation talked about collecting rhododendrons in the wild and their cultivation at the RSF in their new Rutherford Conservatory. The Conservatory is a large and beautifully landscaped space for growing rhododendrons under glass. I then talked about the refurbishment of the glasshouse at the National Rhododendron Gardens Olinda to display our vireya species collection and the 2012 Australian Rhododendron Society expedition to North Queensland. I was followed by Neil Puddey who talked about exporting vireyas including consignments that have gone to Singapore's Gardens By The Bay. Neil showed photos of this extraordinary development at Marina Bay with his vireyas growing on an almost vertical cliff within the structure! Christy Hartsell, an avid vireya collector from

California, talked about his collection and cultivation requirements for their growing conditions, including an annual relocation of his vast number of pots to more sheltered spots to protect them from winter weather. George Argent talked about the recent review of the conservation status of Rhododendron and gave examples of threatened vireya species and the importance of ex-situ collections of species that are threatened in the wild.

The conference created a convivial environment for informal conversations amongst the delegates; we compared notes on quarantine requirements, hybridising, species conservation, growing media, pest & diseases and a raft of other topics. I'm most grateful for the hospitality extended by the Hawaiian Chapter and I hope we can entice our Hawaiian friends to Australia for when we next hold a conference.

Andrew Rouse

RHODODENDRONS NOT IN THE BOOK

New species of Rhododendrons are constantly being discovered and described and our garden oriented books are hard pressed to keep up with them. Here is a selection of species described in the last ten years – it is certainly not comprehensive and it is unlikely any are available in Australia at the moment. I could find no pictures of any of these on the net so, for photos, the reader is referred to the papers in which they are described - most of which are available on the web.

The first three species are from western China.

***Rhododendron huangpingense* Xiang Chen & Jia Y. Huang**

This is a large species growing to over 5 m high discovered in 2008 on the slopes of the Baili Rhododendron Nature Reserve, Huangping County, Guizhou, China at 1,679 to 1,719 m elevation (Chen *et al.* 2010). In the original description it wad described as growing "...in thickets dominated by *R. delavayi* Franch. and *R. agastum* Balf. f. & W. W. Sm." It may be extremely rare. Chen *et al.* (2010) state, "Since only two populations and a total of five mature individuals of this species were found in the area where the type collections were made, we make a preliminary conservation assessment for the species as Critically Endangered (CR)". It has rose coloured, funnel form to campanulate flowers with deeper rose flecks, in heads of eight to eleven flowers. Chen *et al.* (2010) present a comparison table with *R. oreodoxa* var *adensotyla* and *R. decorum*, which are similar species.

***R. lilacinum* Xiang Chen & X. Chen**

In the same publication Chen *et al.* (2010) describe *R. lilacinum*, again from the Baili Rhododendron Nature Reserve but in a narrow altitudinal band around 1,673 m elevation. This is a small deciduous species up to 2m tall in the section Tsutsui and is similar to *R. simsii*. It differs from that familiar species in having a longer pedicel and calyx, and smaller flowers (2 cm vs. 3.5 to 4 cm), which are pale purple with purple flecks rather than red. The small flower heads consist of two to three flowers. It was found growing in thickets dominated by *R. delavayi, R. irroratum*, Franch., and *R. agastum*, and Chen *et al.* (2010) describe its conservation status as "… Endangered, (EN) ... since approximately 10 populations, and fewer than 200 mature individuals were found in the area where field observations were conducted."

***Rhododendron baihuaense* Y. P. Ma**

This is an interesting, small leaved and small flowered evergreen shrub discovered in the forests on the west slopes of the Gaoligongshan range in Yunnan near the Burmese border in 2011. It is only know from the vicinity of Baihualing at an altitude of 2,600 to 2,700 m. It is

most similar to *R. hanceanum* and *R. genestierianum* but lacks leaf scales, is smaller leaved and the 2 cm long flowers are only in heads of two to five flowers compared with seven to nine in *R. hanceanum* and eight to 15 in *R. genestierianum.* Interestingly this species appeared on the 2012 seed list of the Danish chapter of the ARS under "Rhododendron species: New very distinctive species, lvs glaucous underside, flowers in 3's well developed calyx. W Yunnan 2600m" (http://www.rhododendron.dk/baihuaense.html).

Next, two species from northern India.

***Rhododendron rawatii* I. D. Rai & B. S. Adhikari**

This lovely species was discovered in 2010 in the western Himalayas in the Kedarnath Wildlife Sanctuary in Rudraprayag district of Uttarakhand state. A second population was discovered in Pithoragarh district in the same state. It is a shrub to small tree up to 4.5 m high with thin papery bark, big heads (13 to 16) of medium sized (49 x 59 mm) pink flowers with red to brown blotches and a globose calyx with hairy margins. It is in the subsection Fulgensia and most closely related to *R. fulgens*. Plants were found at an altitude of 3,100 to 3,375 m on the edge of open canopy forest with a northwest aspect. The Kedarnath Wildlife Sanctuary population consists of about 11 individuals and that in Pithoragarh about 150. This is a tiny distribution, and on this basis the species is considered Endangered (EN). According to Rai and Adikhari (2012) "On the basis of total number of individuals (ca. 161) found in 2 populations, the status of species may be considered for immediate conservation measures and the habitat as critical, as the area is under high anthropogenic pressure. The geographical range is extremely narrow and the population is fragmented, therefore, the species requires immediate in-situ conservation and habitat management interventions."

Rudraprayag was the scene of Jim Corbett's hunt for a man-eating leopard made famous in his book *"The Man-eating Leopard of Rudraprayag*". Corbett's eponymous national park, the oldest in India, lies 150 km to the south-south-east of Kedarnath.

***Rhododendron mechukae* A. A. Mao & A. Paul**

In a very short paper Mao *et al.* (2013) described this new species collected in 2011 from the West Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh. It is a 5 to 12 m tall tree most similar to *R. hodgsonii* from which it differs in having rough, brown peeling bark, a rufous brown indumentum under the leaves, and an indistinct calyx. The flowers are tubular campanulate up to 4.5 cm long, pink to purple with a basal blotch in heads of 12 to 18. According to Mao *et al.* (2013) "The plants grow in semi-dense temperate forest mixed with *Rhododendron arboreum* Sm., *R. arizelum* Balf.f. & Forrest, *Taxus wallichiana* Zucc., *Pinus roxburghii* Sarg. and other shrubby species. It is only known from the type locality at 2,436 m elevation but is "common but localised on hillsides in this area". It is "Critically Endangered CR ... The total area of occupancy of this species is only around 5–10 km^2 and the area is subject to timber extraction, greatly threatening the population."

While it may be expected that western China and the Himalayas are the main sources of new species there are novelties still hidden away in the rest of Asia and even the USA. (We have managed to source pictures of these two, see page 11)

***Rhododendron chamahensis* Rafidah**

This is the first new Rhododendron described from peninsular Malaysia since 1935. It is an epiphytic vireya found in 2010 on Gunung Chamah in Kelantan state at an elevation of 1,200 to 1,700 m. It is a slender branched epiphyte with dark green elliptic to oblong leaves in

pseudowhorls. The attractive inflorescences have two to three pure white rotate campanulate flowers 18 mm long x 22 m wide with a short cylindrical tube. It is most similar to *R. seimundii* and differs in the longer petiole, bigger, wider leaves, rounded bracts, smaller flowers without red scales, and white rather than maroon anthers. It is obviously a rare and narrowly distributed species. The paper has good photographs of the plant and flowers (Figure 1, page 11).

***Rhododendron colemanii* R. Miller**

This new American deciduous azalea from the upper coastal plain of Alabama and western Georgia, was named in 2008 in an exhaustive study by Zhou *et al.* (2008). The species was known as the "Red Hills Azalea" and is very close to *R. alabamense* and co-occurs with it. Like *R. alabamense* it is fragrant, the scent being described as "sweet, musky, and lemony". Its species status was confirmed by genetic analysis and Zhou *et al.* (2008) provide detailed differences between this and the very similar *R. alabamense. R. colemanii* has longer flower buds, and the flowers are thick and opaque rather than thin and more-or-less translucent . It is a many-stemmed shrub to small tree up to 7 m high. The inflorescences appear after, not before, the leaves have expanded and occur in heads of eight to ten. The flowers are white with a yellow blotch on the upper corolla lobe, or uniformly white, pink with yellow blotch, or uniformly pink 1.6 to 2.5 cm long and 0.25 to 0.4 cm wide at the base. It grows on sandy ridges or creek banks or on north-facing bluffs in moist woods whereas *R. alabamense* occurs on dry ridges and open, dry oak woods with scattered pines. The species is available from nurseries in the USA (Figure 2, page 11).

Francis Crome

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Figure 1 R. chamahensis (from Novataxa on Facebook)

Figure 2 R. colemanii

(from http://www.auburn.edu/academic/science_math/cosam/collections/arboretum/plants-and-horticulture/image_gallery/Azalea_gallery/full_size/Red%20Hills%20Azalea%20Rhododendron%20colemanii.JPG)

Brian Clancy
with R "Dr Sleumer x *superbum*" at ARSV Vireya Show May 2005

R araiophyllum **Alan Kepert Photo September 2014**

***R wentianum* Simon Begg photo April 2014**

Andrew Rouse's prize winning entry at the FCHS Autumn Show
R *kochii x* "Simbu Sunset" Simon Begg photo April 2014

Small Vireya entries at Ferny Creek Horticultural Society Autumn Show 2014 Many really great entries including some from ARSV Vireya House, Andrew Rouse and Simon Begg. First and second prizes went to Cherrie Miriklis the new owner of "Beechmont". The winning entry was a *macgregoriae* hybrid, Photo Simon Begg

***R vanvuurenii* second placed for Andrew Rouse in the large flowered vireya class at the FCHS Autumn Show**

HOW TO PRODUCE YOUR OWN RHODODENDRON SPECIES SEEDS

Ole Jonny Larsen

Editor's Note: The following article is reproduced from *Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Group Bulletin 114 March 2014* with the kind permission of the Group, the author, Ole Jonny Larsen, and Peter Cox who provided the illustrations. It is particularly pertinent to ARSV because the Volunteer Group has, in recent times, been substantial importers of seed from RHS and the Rhododendron Species Foundation Botanic Garden. ARSV needs to contribute seed as well as receive it. The volunteers need to produce, label, store and send seed correctly. The importance of this is underlined by the Group Editor's Note which is also reproduced.

Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Group Editor's Note: With the ongoing debate about collection of material from the wild, it's becoming increasingly clear that the Group has to be proactive and needs to turn its attention to producing its own rhododendron seed to supplement the annual Seed Exchange. We all know that random collection of open-pollinated seed is not an option and must be discouraged, but considered hand-pollination of correctly identified species, especially those in limited cultivation, or experimental crosses when properly done are both worthwhile and should produce a viable alternative for the dedicated collector and grower.

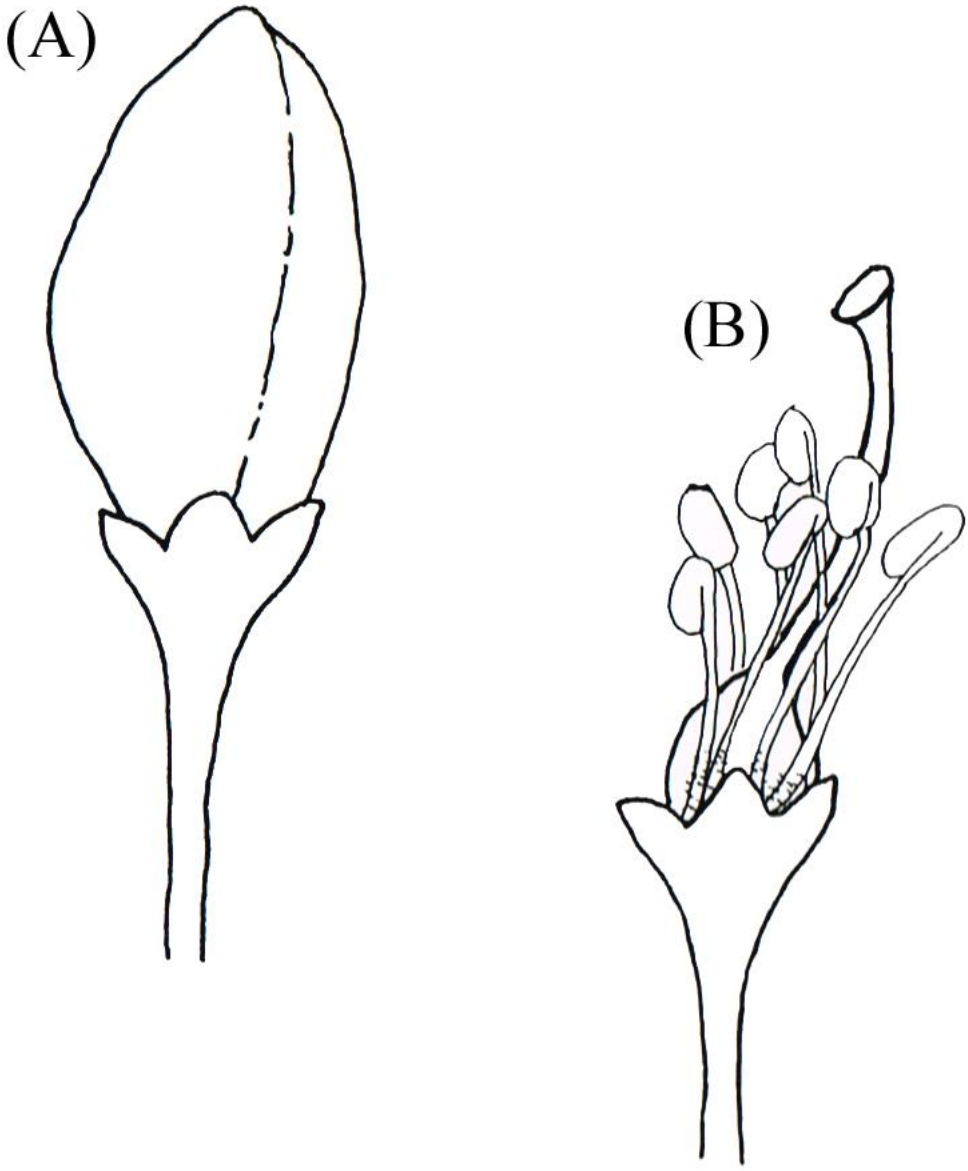
Ole Jonny Larsen is one of our Norwegian members and he has been pursuing this route for some years now with great success and has kindly shared his approach to hand pollination below. I hope this will produce some valuable correspondence and engender debate so that we can all become proficient and productive for the wider benefit of the rhododendron growing community.

If we can develop a vibrant pollination programme we might even be able to start a pollen bank as other societies do.

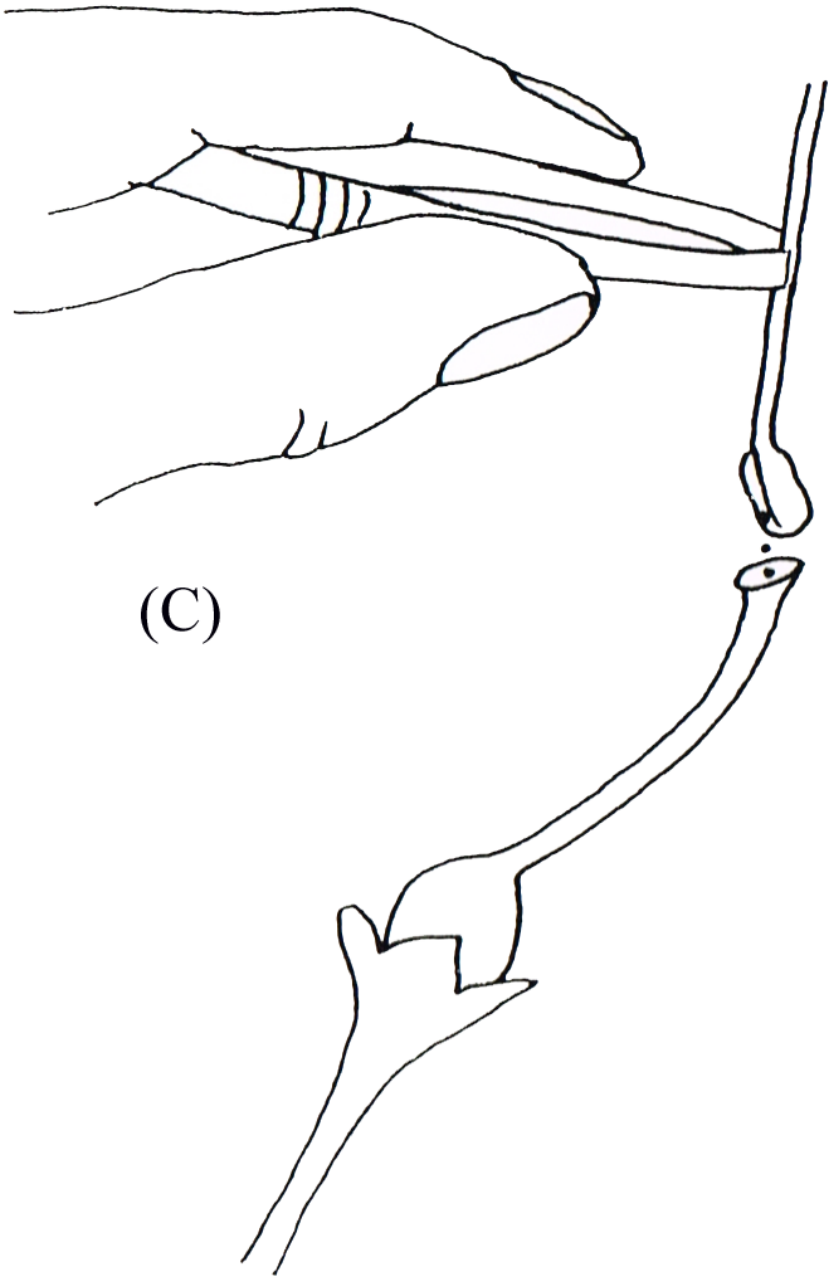
This is an introductory guide to an easy way to producing seed from your rhododendrons.

1) Choose your parents. You need to have a) two different clones of a given species *or* b) two sibling plants from a given species *or* c) one single plant of the species. Given a choice, the (a) alternative is the best and (c) is the least. The pollen parent flower should be mature enough that the anthers are beginning to exude pollen – look carefully and you will see the grains of pollen held in a sticky thread. The seed bearing (mother) plants must be *near* to flowering but *not in flower*.

2) Choose one or more trusses *just before they open* – the flowers should be in the 'balloon' state. *(see diagram A)*. Remove the corollas and the anthers on as many single flowers you as want to pollinate, ***leaving just the style and stigma*** *(see diagram B)*. (The corolla must still be completely closed. If the flowers are even a little open, bees can have been there before you. Importantly, bees will not seek a naked style/stigma.) Remove those flowers on the truss that you do not use.



3) Pick one or a few anthers from your chosen pollen parent plant's open flower. The anther must have visible pollen coming out from the top (at least when you are a beginner). If the stigma on your 'mother' plant is sticky, attach pollen to it, covering the surface of the stigma completely with pollen, using the anther as a 'paint brush' *(see diagram C)*. If the stigma is dry, it is not quite mature, so protect it from insects with a paper bag and wait a few days to try again. Repeating the procedure after two days may give a better chance of success.



4) Label the twig with the pollinated stigmas and remember to keep a detailed written record of the cross. Never rely on your memory!

5) If you are lucky, you can harvest your seeds in the autumn when the capsules are brown and almost dry, but try to catch them before they split or seed will be wasted or become contaminated.

6) Put the dry capsules into paper bags or envelopes and allow them to split naturally. Sieve out as much of the chaff as possible and replace seed in small paper or plastic self-seal bags, always remembering to label, label, label!

7) Send you spare seed off to our Seed Convenor:
Mrs Julie Atkinson

184 Crow Lane East
Newton-le-Willows
ST HELENS
Merseyside
WA12 9UA

in time for it to be included in the annual Seed Exchange (November/early December).

Additional notes:
Some growers do not accept this method since the stigma is not covered after the pollen is added. However, this is how Kenneth Cox taught me to do it in 2000, and it has worked for me ever since.

Some rhododendrons will not readily self-pollinate (1c), presumably a natural defence since this is a kind of inbreeding. But if you have only one plant, this is the only option and it is always worth trying. I guess this happens in nature too.

Further Reading
Cox, Peter (1993). *The Cultivation of Rhododendrons*, Batsford.

VALE BRIAN CLANCY -- 20 May 1923 - 23 November 2013

The vireya world lost one of its pioneer growers, hybridists and lateral thinkers with the death of Brian Clancy in November in Melbourne, Australia.

Although not realised at the time, Brian played a very significant role in the introduction of vireya species to Australia when he wrote to Hermann Sleumer at Leiden, after discovering that Sleumer was going to New Guinea to collect herbarium specimens for his research into *Rhododendron* for the *Flora Malesiana* project. Sleumer sent seed of several species that he had collected on the Vogelkop, Dutch West New Guinea, to Brian. Included were three key species, *R. konori*, *R. laetum* and *R. zoelleri*, all of which subsequently played a major part in the hybridisation programs of various breeders. [Brian gave Sleumer's seed to Tom Lelliott who germinated it and grew seedlings on for distribution to members of the Australian Rhododendron Society.]

Brian made quite a few vireya crosses and many of his cultivars, such as 'Arthur's Choice', 'Kiandra' and 'Little One', are extremely good plants. I think most of the better clones were introduced to commerce by his daughter who ran a small vireya nursery in the southern Dandenong Ranges. As I do not grow hybrids because of a lack of space, I am not sure just how many named cultivars resulted from his crosses. To me, however, his enquiring mind and disregard of the then current "rules" for growing vireyas were his greatest strengths and led to some interesting findings. One of these was his method of taking "seedling cuttings". As anybody who has grown vireyas from seed will know, one very frustrating behaviour is for a batch of seedlings to start growth but stop when about 1 cm or so tall, and just sit for several years before going into growth again. This means it is years before one sees flowers.

Brian took cuttings of seedlings that were at about the two or three leaf stage and inserted them into living sphagnum moss. The cuttings were struck and grown on under an extended daylight regime achieved by using what was then called "Grolux" fluorescent tubes. Brian flowered plants in 18 months from seed!!! He wrote this work up in *The Rhododendron*. Brian was also an advocate for growing vireyas in the adventitious root mass that develops on the trunks of the tree fern, *Dicksonia*. Certainly plants grow well on *Dicksonia* stems but the difficulty in obtaining supplies of the stems, and their cost, meant that potting mixes of the type devised by John Rouse were more practical and grew plants just as well, if not better.

Brian lived in Bentleigh, a SE suburb of Melbourne, on a standard-sized block of land. He had a glasshouse in which he did his propagation and grew out the small plants until they were shadehouse or garden ready. In the late 1960s he was an administrative officer in the Australian Government's Post-Master General's department in which he was located in the engineering side of the department, coincidentally in the same section as Jack O'Shanassy, also a member of the rhodo society (from memory, Jack was more interested in subg. *Hymenanthes* rhodos than in vireyas). His garden, as usually happens with plant specialists, gradually became converted to vireyas, all I think of his own hybridising. I lived in a suburb quite a bit to the south of Brian's and I used to collect Brian, and Rose and Arthur Headlam who also lived in Bentleigh, and together we would drive to the rhododendron society's monthly meetings.

From what I could see, Brian was generous with his knowledge but never forced it onto anyone. There was a certain diffidence with respect to his interactions with some of the other vireya experts in Melbourne that I could never understand. Certainly there were some cliques in the vireya (and general *Rhododendron*) world in Melbourne in the 1970s and 80s, but Brian's knowledge and abilities in my book meant he was right up in the top league with the best of them (actually he was better than many of them especially those (fortunately few) who were patronising sods) and why he did not ignore the "clique walls" and enter more into the sharing of ideas, plant material, etc. that occurred I do not know. [My own thinking is that Brian somehow, and very unfortunately, had inherited a "ghost" of the British class system and was not able to see that he was not intrinsically inferior to another in any aspect.]

Living in Canberra (600 km from Melbourne) from 1971, I did not often get to Melbourne and did not see as many *Rhododendron* people as I had when I had been living there. Consequently I no longer saw Brian very often. In later years, I think his health deteriorated and he was unable to attend meetings. It was possibly only in 2013 that Brian moved into an aged-care facility. Writing these notes, Brian's friendly face, illuminated with his characteristically infectious passion for his topic, is very much in my mind's eye. He was a remarkable person and the vireya world is the poorer for his passing.

Lyn Craven, Canberra, Australia

[Acknowledgment Andrew Rouse provided information on the names of some of Brian's hybrids.]

VALE LINDSAY McCALLUM

Lindsay McCallum died in New Zealand on 19 November. Lindsay was a
Life Member of ARSV and contributed a great deal of time, effort and enthusiasm to the Society.
Michael Hare.

LIST OF VIREYA HYBRIDS TO HOLD AS STOCK PLANTS AT NRG OLINDA

The stock of vireya hybrids held at NRG Olinda is much depleted with a number of the remaining plants incorrectly labelled or unlabelled. This has prompted a discussion amongst the Tuesday volunteer group on selecting good quality vireya hybrids the society should have in stock so that these cultivars are periodically available to the public.
The informal criteria used in drawing up the list are cultivars that are suitable for Melbourne conditions, vigorous and disease/pest resistance, though needless to say, these criteria were not slavishly adhered to.

Members are invited to comment on the above list and suggestions as to additions (or deletions!) are most welcome – please email Andrew Rouse on awrouse@bigpond.com

The cultivars nominated by the Tuesday volunteers as worthy of having in stock are:

Bob's Crowning Glory
Buttermilk
Cara Mia
Coral Flare
Crimson Lightening
Eastern Zanzibar
Etty
Gardenia Odyssey
Glenn Sunrise
Great Scentsation
Highland White Jade
Highland Bonsai (sister seedling)
Haloed Gold
Irian Jaya
Joan McLelland
Liberty Bar
Littlest Angel
Lord of the Rings
Meadow Yellow
Mrs Elizabeth Miller
Penny Whistle
Pixie Star
Popcorn
Sarah Ormiston
Saxon Glow
Shantung Pink
Shepherds Warning
Silver Thimbles
Simbu Sunset
Sweet Mac
St Valentine
Tropic Fanfare
Uluru

Over the next few months cuttings will be sourced of those cultivars not held at Olinda with the aim of having stock plants from which cutting material can be taken as required.

Andrew Rouse

ARE THESE VIREYA SPECIES LOST TO CULTIVATION IN AUSTRALIA??

The sourcing of specimens of vireya species for the vireya house at NRG Olinda is largely completed with the 2nd tranche of specimens planted out in mid-April.

There are a couple of species that have been introduced into cultivation in Australia that we have been unable to secure, and quite possibly these species may have subsequently lost to cultivation. These include:

R. anagalliflorum	*R. arfakianum*	*R. atropurpureum*
R. bagobonum	*R. comptum*	*R. gaultheriifolium*
R. giulianettii	*R. invarsorium*	*R. longiflorum*
R. luteosquamatum	*R. micromalayanum*	*R. nummatum*
R. pachycarpon	*R. purpureiflorum*	*R. vandeursenii*

Any information regarding the status of these species in cultivation is most welcome. Please contact Andrew Rouse on awrouse@bigpond.com

Andrew Rouse

UPDATE ON THE IMPORT OF RHODODENDRON SEED INTO AUSTRALIA

Permit?

In 2008 I sought a permit to import seed of a significant number of Rhododendron species into Australia. Permit IP 09003752 was granted in March 2009. Later another permit IP 11020929 was granted to me in respect of seed of an additional group of Rhododendron species. **BOTH** these permits have now expired. **NEITHER** permit is now needed because seed of all the species listed in both permits may now be imported **WITHOUT A PERMIT.**

DAFF [Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forests] has asked me to pass on to readers that the permits have expired and not to quote them when trying to import seed. Before seed

of the species the subject of the permits was added to the list of permitted seed I did suggest that rhodo enthusiasts wishing to import seed of these species quote my permit number. Now, in respect of these species, quoting my permit is not useful and is unnecessary. Doing so will just annoy DAFF.

However there is still a long list of Rhododendron species whose seed requires a permit to import into Australia.

Seeking a further permit

I have prepared a paper dated 2nd May 2014 listing the species known to me whose seed still requires a permit to import. The paper also sets out the 'permitted' species. The paper prints neatly into a 16 page A5 booklet. A copy accompanies the email notifying publication of this *Newsletter* on the ARS website and hard copy *Newsletters* to members I know might be interested. The purpose of my paper is twofold.

First to inform members what rhododendron seed can be imported without a permit and what seed requires a permit to import.

Second to inform DAFF and Biosecurity Australia of the species which ARS requests be added to the ICON "Permitted List" and, pending such adding, be the subject of a further permit.

A permit will be granted to import the seed of any Rhodendron species which is already in Australia. To gain a permit in respect of any Rhododendron species not already permitted and not already in Australia Biosecurity Australia advises DAFF on the weediness potential of the species. An applicant for a permit can self assess and supply the data to DAFF for checking. Past experience shows that to obtain a satisfactory weediness assessment the applicant must pay a licence fee for an approved software programme [$2500 for a single PC 5 years ago] and then have the skill to run it. I lacked the skill and was unwilling to pay the fee.

Back in 2008 a Biosecurity officer had recently presented a paper in Melbourne explaining how easy it was to apply for a permit to import seed. This was at a time when Australia's system had recently changed from one where any seed could be imported without a permit unless the species was on a "prohibited" list. I rang the Biosecurity officer and explained my difficulty in applying for a permit to import rhododendron seed. I asked for his help. As a consequence I produced my first version of my paper and sent it to one of his staff. I selected a list of Rhododendron species for priority assessment. I tried to make Biosecurity's task easier by referring to "Authority" in respect of each species from which Biosecurity could easily determine place of origin and other pertinent details. Biosecurity did the weediness assessments on these species. I got my first permit. I then selected a new priority list. I got a further permit. Since then I have asked for yet further species to be added to the "permitted list" 5 years on much progress has been made. Much still needs to be done.

Here I reproduce the salient points from the introduction to my paper.

Australian Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry (**DAFF)**, administers whether and under what conditions, plant material, including seed, may be imported into Australia.

Relevant DAFF data is publicly available information searchable and downloadable. The DAFF database is called ICON.

I last searched ICON, via Google, on 27 April under the heading 'Rhododendron'. Some details of the DAFF [then AQIS] requirements are set out in March 2008 *Newsletter*. Seed of the Rhododendron Species listed in the ICON permitted list **("Permitted List")** may be imported without an import permit from any country. DAFF has conditions that must be satisfied but, for present purposes, these are manageable. My paper copies the current Permitted List from ICON. In previous versions up to November 2013 I edited this list to refer to authorities, to highlight errors such as misspellings and duplication and to distinguish Vireyas from other Rhododendrons. The task is a large one and I have yet to address it for this Permitted List.

My paper then sets out the Rhododendron species, that I was able to identify, as at 27 April 2014 (updated from my last lists prepared in March 2009, 2 January 2012 and November 2013] which are NOT on the Permitted List, in four categories

- Non Vireyas already in Australia **("Category 1").** At this time there is one of these.
- Vireyas already in Australia **("Category 2").** At this time there is one of these, a long held species misnamed.
- Non Vireyas not known to be in Australia **("Category 3").**
- Vireyas not known to be in Australia **("Category 4").**

There are subtractions from the previous versions of all 4 Categories due to species being added to the 'permitted list' notably [almost] all vireya species held at Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh at 30 September 2011 and, also, additions from new discoveries in categories 3 and 4. In due course I expect that all species for which I may later obtain a permit will be added to the 'permitted list'.

I have used codes to refer to "authority" in these further lists.

Page references marked

"c" are to Cox *Encyclopedia of Rhododendron Species* 1997 [presently only obtainable from the Rhododendron Species Foundation, Seattle]

"c,l" are to Cox, Peter *The Larger Rhododendron Species* 1990

"c,s" are to Cox, Peter *The smaller Rhododendron Species* 1985

"a" are to Argent *Rhododendrons in subgenus Vireya* 2006

"a l & p" are to George Argent, Anthony Lamb & Anthea Phillips *The Rhododendrons of Sabah Malaysian Borneo* Natural History Publications Borneo 2007

"RHS, 1998" and "RHS" are to *The Rhododendron Handbook 1998*, RHS [Royal Horticultural Society], 1997

"N" are to The Rhododendron *Newsletter* published by ARSV

"I" are to *The International Rhododendron Checklist*, RHS, 2004

"S" are to a recent paper, one of a group of papers referred to in "N" October 2011,5, Craven et al *Vireya Rhododendrons: their monophyly and classification (Ericaceae, Rhododendron section Schistanthe)* Blumea 56, 2011, 153-158 that, *inter alia,* proposes a new section name,

Schistanthe for the group of plants known as Vireya Rhododendrons previously given subgenus rank by Argent in "a" above.

There are three references to Adansonia of discoveries of Vireyas by Frederic Danet.

"Authority", when I wrote the first draft of my paper, was limited to the publications listed above, save "S". They remain 'authoritative' as is "S". Indeed the effect of "S" is that the group of plants, previously subgenus vireya, is now section *Schisanthe.* The common name of this group is continued. Also I agree with a kind suggestion made to me that I should add, in respect of rhododendrons other than vireyas, the revisions ['revisions'] published by the Journal of Botany of the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh [RBGE] which are the, current, recognized authoritative classifications of these rhododendrons. Argent, above, contains the recognized authoritative classification of vireya rhododendrons prior to Craven *et al*. As ICON has yet to catch up with this very recent work the Argent classification has not been revised.

I list references to the revisions as follows:

RBGE Vol 39 no. 1 [J Cullen's revision of Sections Rhododendron and Pogonanthum]

RBGE Vol 39 no. 2 [D Chamberlain' revision of Subgenus Hymenanthes]

RBGE Vol 44 no. 1 [W Philipson and M Philipson's revision of Subgenera Azaleastrum, Mumeazalea, Canidastrum and Therohodion]

RBGE Vol 47 no. 2 [D Chamberlain and S Rae's revision of Subgenus Tsutsusi]

RBGE Vol 50 no.3 [K Kron's revision of Section Pentathera]

Since March 2009 I have 'discovered' *Pocket Guide to Rhododendron Species* JFJ McGuire and MLA Robinson Kew 2009. This work does not extend to Vireyas.

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