



Vireya of the Year
'Taylori'

VIVA VIREYA

HAWAI'I CHAPTER AMERICAN RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

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Hawai'i Chapter Website: <http://www.hawaiivireyaars.org/>

April President's Message

I want to thank Rick Worley for his great program on plant butchering. I couldn't imagine having pruned a plant that drastically. Even the roots weren't exempt! For those of you that missed the program, you missed a great one.

This month is our annual elections. We are still looking for a new president. I'm hoping someone steps forward.

Jane will be giving the program this month. She will be showing us how she roots her cuttings. Than it will be our turn, so everyone please bring your favorite rooting mix, pots, and plant labels. If you have a plant that you can cut a branch to share with everyone else, please bring them. These plants will be given away at our October outreach program at the Zoo.

Ray Schimpf, Hawai'i Chapter President

Mitch's Corner

I have a problem. One of my favorite subjects is propagating Vireyas by seed and I have tried my darndest to persuade our chapter members to try it. Why seed, you ask. Why is that so important? Well.....I am assuming that all of us are interested in adding to our Vireya collections, and our location in the middle of the Pacific Ocean makes it difficult to import cuttings or plants. Acquiring seed is not nearly so much of a problem. Furthermore, our chapter is the sponsor of the world-wide Vireya Seed Exchange.

So why aren't we doing very much in seed propagation? Perhaps, I said to myself, people are skittish about trying something new to them. If that is the case perhaps a show and tell presentation might be helpful.

So back in January of 2001 I invited the club to meet at our place and gave a presentation showing step by step how to do it. I concluded by preparing a half dozen or so containers. Then I sowed the seed Sylvia Saperstein had sent to me from Australia. It was *R. leucogigas* 'Hunstein's Secret' seed, and this plant is not readily available to us here. After I sowed the seed in the prepared containers I handed them to the auctioneer to include in his presentation. I have no idea who bid on them, but I do know that I never heard what happened to them.

I did save one container, however, to serve as sort of a control specimen, and germinated the seed using the procedure I had described. Then I planted the seedlings and eventually one of them bloomed.

Editor's note: You can find the current seed list and Bill Moyles' growing instructions on our website -- the website URL is just under the banner at the top of this page. Try it!!!!

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“Jean Curtis Day” at the Pana’ewa Zoo and Gardens

"Jean Curtis Day" at the zoo was a hit even though many did not know what and how this came to be. Jean was active in volunteerism for years through many different organizations in Hawaii, including the role of President for the Friends of the Zoo (FOZ). In this role she supported our Hawai'i Chapter of the ARS by inviting us to many of the Zoo's functions to set up our vireya educational booth. She also supported us at our past national conventions & vireya seminars by making sure the "Vireya Shirts" were available to us and the public. When she passed on, Mayor Kenoi presented us (FOZ) with an official Proclamation announcing "Jean Curtis Day" and the celebrating of Volunteerism.

This will be an annual event by the Friends of the Zoo. This year (the first) was planned by me as Co-Chair Person with Nina Bremmer, another of Board members & Karla Cook, FOZ President. We met with local artist Cheryl Ans to plan the Dedication Plaque & vase of torches that were placed on the corner of the Vireya hillside garden. Ron Phillips did all the installation of the Memorial & planting of the "Jean Curtis" Vireyas donated by Ron & me.

Vireya 'Jean Curtis' is a cross of (Anacapa X Clare Elsie) grown and registered with RHS by Sherla & Richard Marques. They had a small number of Vireya 'Jean Curtis' which they offered to FOZ Board Member's, Jean family & close friends with a donation from each going back to FOZ. They brought them to the zoo to be picked up near the Dedication site. Along with the HI Chapter's set-up

there was much opportunity to share information on Vireyas.

In the future more Vireyas will be planted at the dedicated site when Ron has the time to do so. You are invited to drop by the Zoo to see the Dedication Garden. We hope you will be part of next year's event, too. Our sincere mahalo goes out to all who participated.

Donna Thomas and Ron Phillips



Vireya ‘Jean Curtis’ (Anacapa X Clare Elsie)

Treasurer’s Report by Joyce Gay

Club funds: \$6,075.78, Zoo account \$4,763.05 and Kimalia \$1,364.00 as of April 1, 2010.

A big MAHALO to our professional growers, Pacific Island Nursery (Sherla and Richard) and White Cloud Nursery (Jane and Peter) for the donations of Vireyas for auction. Their generous gifts are the biggest single money maker for the club and pay for most of our expenses. They receive nothing from these gifts but our appreciation, please let them know how much we all appreciate it. Other club members also give plants for auction, and those are also appreciated but our mainstays are our two vireya nurseries.

The Kimalia raffle netted \$34 for Kimalia this last meeting and we have also received a donation from Fred Renich and Alex Garcia from California. Mr. Renich has been a speaker here twice at vireya seminars, so perhaps you have met him.

Vireya of the Year Contestants

Which Vireya will own the title "Vireya of the Year 2011" ?

Below are the Vireya in the running. Here's how this will work. Look over the following list put together from our members suggestions. Our chapter will vote on the VOY at our May meeting after which I will forward the top 5 to other ARS chapters for their input, as well. From all our combined votes will come the winner. If I've missed any suggestions or you would like to vote directly, contact me at (808)-966-9225 or sbertelmann@hawaii.rr.com.

Note: One of the requirements for VOY is the vireya selected must be registered . A few suggestions did not qualify. They included Aleksandr, Cara Mia, John West, Honey Star & Mt. Pire and have been left off the list.

'Arthur's Choice'

christianae x viriosum F2

Large reddish-orange flowers inside and out fading to a yellowish pink in the throat. Compact, full grower.



'Haloed Gold'

christianae X Tropic Glow

Large strong yellow flowers with a red halo on the edges. Upright, good branching shrub.



'Candy'

jasminiflorum X christianae

Long, thin, tubular, pale pink, fragrant flowers on an upright, bushy, full shrub.



'Java Light'

laetum X javanicum

Medium sized, bright orange flowers on an upright, open grower



'Coral Sea'

Pink Delight X Simbu Sunset

Medium sized coral flowers with yellow centers, dark green leaves & red stems on an open growing, upright,



'Rocky's Mom'

(Felinda x (aurigeranum. X Dr. Sleumer)) X javanicum.

Full round trusses of wavy lobed, red-orange flowers with darker red-orange edging.



'Cyril'

leucogigas x (konori x laetum)

Large, 5' to 7' across, fragrant, cream flowers. Blooms more pink in the winter. Upright, sturdy grower with big leaves.



'Star Posy'

'Pink Delight' x jasminiflorum

Light purplish pink flowers with contrasting red stamens on a compact growing shrub. Lightly fragrant.



'Dawn Chorus'

Tropic Glow X (macgregoriae x viriosum)

Medium sized, coral flowers with yellow centers. Shorter tubular shaped with wide faces. Upright, bushy grower.



'Veryl Ann' (M6)

laetum X H018

Large dark red orange flowers with deep yellow, star centers. Upright, bushy grower.



Tidbits from Members

Renee Siracusa dropped by the other day and asked that we include an announcement that will be of interest to all our local folks.

Lei Day celebration and annual Ho'olaule'a will be held Saturday, May 1st from 9:00am - 3:00pm on the Kamehameha School Kea'au campus.

There will be a huge plant sale, along with the Puna Sustainability Expo which will have lots of garden-related information. Oh, and don't forget that there will be music, hula, crafts and much more.

This suggestion comes from **John Barbour**:

It's the gardening season - when is it not? - which means our membership will be out diligently pulling weeds and tending their vireyas. It also means that we shall all be exposing ourselves to the sun's deadly rays - even on cloudy days. Yes, we may wear sunscreen and protective clothing. but just how much protection are we getting?

Sunscreen lotions are now available with as much as a 100 SPF (Sun Protection Factor) or UPF (Ultraviolet Protection Factor) and come with UVA and UVB protection. Be sure to check your sunglasses too. Many do not give UVB protection! Now, to that protective clothing. Hats, shirts, blouses as well as pants are also available - mostly on line - which are treated to provide extra protection against harmful ultraviolet rays. It's not exactly inexpensive apparel, but well worth it if it wards off chances of developing skin cancers. Good news, however! RIT, you know, the fabric dye manufacturers, now has a product on the market called SUN GUARD which, for the meager price of around \$3.00 allows you to convert any and all of your natural fibre (cotton, wool, etc) clothes to sun-protective garb with a 30 UPF rating. Though it's not 50, it sure beats the 5-7 UPF your untreated clothing is currently providing you. It's easy to use - simply toss a packet into your washing machine when you're doing your next laundry (does require HOT water). The resultant protection will last through multiple washings before needing to be repeated. This product is certified by the Skin Cancer Foundation and claims to block more than 96% of the sun's harmful rays from reaching your skin.

Just a thought - you might be tempted to use that spent laundry water on your Vireyas but **ONLY** on your Hilo Tan!!!

Sherla sent on this message: "A woman named Bobbie called me about small flower pots. She just put her home up for sale and has a ton of small flower pots she would like to give a home to. She lives in HPP. Her phone # is 982-8820."

Club History -- a conversation with Mitch Mitchell

As a follow-up to last month's article re-printed about the initial meeting of Vireya enthusiasts in Volcano in early 1997, Pete and I made arrangements to speak with Mitch about the early days of the club following that event. We spent a lovely afternoon with Mitch, Sandy and their two new energetic kitties.

We started the interview by asking Mitch to describe his first experience with Vireyas. He told us the story of having been on a canal boat in England, seeing many rhododendrons in bloom. and fell in love with them. He spoke to people about his interest, and was told he should have no trouble with them. When they returned home determined to try to grow them in Volcano, he placed an order with Greer Gardens in Oregon. He planted them, but they didn't bloom or grow.

This was in 1983, and they were planning to return to England. In preparation for that trip, Mitch made arrangements to attend the International Rhododendron conference in Federal Way, WA, where he met E. White Smith and many others in the rhododendron community for the first time. Equipped with his list, he asked what he was doing wrong, and they told him he was just growing the wrong kind of rhodies -- he should be growing Vireyas!

By 1985 or 1986 Mitch had been buying Vireyas from Bill Moynier in Las Angeles, and had met Charles Trommer and Glenn Sahara. Mitch was in contact with E. White Smith and Barbara Campbell. Barbara (then director of district 5), had her heart set on getting a chapter established in Hawai'i and E. White was equally set on having a Vireya meeting in Volcano. E. White took the lead and began writing to people like George Argent and others to plan the event. That first Vireya seminar in February 1997 was reported about in the newsletter last month.

Greg Adams had energetically joined the group by that time and had been bringing liners in from New Zealand, and was wanting to grow them out and sell to the mainland. The first batch went to Florida, and he gave them the growing directions, which they promptly ignored and killed all of them. His collection was sold to Rick Worley and then he got out of the vireya business.

Our next questions focused on the format of the organization -- was it to be a special interest club or a formal chapter of the ARS. Mitch and several others strongly believed that there would be great advantage to be tied to a larger organization, especially since we were so isolated out here in the Pacific. Some others felt otherwise, but ultimately the group worked at establishing the ARS chapter. Spring of 1997 brought the first meetings in March and April after the Vireya seminar, which were held in the upper conference room in the True Value Hardware in Volcano.

Having the requisite 12 members, the chapter was really organized and set up at the October meeting with the election of the first officers: Mitch Mitchell (President), Scott Lucas (Vice President), Charles Trommer (Treasurer), and Allen Almeida (Secretary). By February of 1998 there were 17 members.

We next asked him about early sources of plants, and how they were working to enhance availability. He had discovered that there were few sources for Vireyas -- Moynier (out of business shortly after his first orders), Strybing Arboretum (a few, but they weren't really in the nursery business), Bovees was just getting started, and the Rhododendron Species Foundation (early on, their species Vireyas were grown by Bovees Nursery),

Next we asked him about his personal interests -- were there any species or hybrids that are special and really stand out in his mind? He has been thoroughly captivated by species -- such a variety. Initially, like most, he was struck by hybrids. Narnia came to mind. We talked about Sweet Marni, its cross and disappointing blooming cycle.

Knowing Mitch's efforts at hybridizing, we asked why he got into it. He indicated that it was a way to propagate and extend the depth of plants available. The was coupled with a discussion of another disappointment -- being unable to motivate people to grow from seed. He related how he had obtained *R. leucogigas* 'Hunstein Secret' seed from Sylvia Saperstein in Australia, and showed members how to sow and grow it at a meeting at his place. He used Bill Moyles' paper on growing from seed as the basis. His disappointment came from not hearing from people about the outcome of growing the seed.

Another topic that was discussed at length was the importance of supporting the RSF. He feels that we're by ourselves way out here, call ourselves the Vireya Club and ought to be doing all we can to support RSF financially and participating in the plant sales. The club has a membership, as do Mitch, ourselves and Fran Jackson.

We spoke also at some length about the future direction and remarkable changes that have been taking place at the RSF. It feels like a very different organization than it has been in the past, and is making excellent strides towards making a more world-class facility. Certainly, the renewed focus and display of Vireyas in the Tropical House will enhance that new construction. Mitch spoke at some length about the service and support that the late Fran Rutherford had brought to those endeavors.

As a final question, we asked him what had been the high points of the Vireya Club. His response was that, truly, the high points were the people, both those locally who had made it all happen, and the opportunity to meet so many people from abroad who brought their expertise and interest to seminars and conferences.

Jane Adams

Next Chapter Meeting:

When: April 18, 12:00pm for potluck, 1:00pm for the meeting.

Where: Kea'au Community Center

Business and Program: This is our annual meeting, so there will be election of officers. Jane will demonstrate sticking of cuttings. Following that, members will stick cuttings to be grown out for the annual outreach day at the Zoo in October.

Calendar of Coming Events:

Sunday, April 18: Regular chapter meeting at the Kea'au Community Center. Potluck at 12:00pm, meeting at 1:00pm.

Sunday, March 25: Regular 4th Sunday Zoo work party. 12:00pm - 3:00pm.

Sunday, May 16: Regular chapter meeting at the Kea'au Community Center. Potluck at 12:00pm, meeting at 1:00pm.

Viva Vireya!

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