



Vireyas



At Last – The All Year Round Flowering Plant

A shrub which flowers many times throughout the year is a plant enthusiast's dream. The vireya rhododendron is a species which can do just that. In addition, the flowers come in arrangements of brilliantly coloured Victorian posies on the plant and many are delightfully perfumed.

The first plants were discovered in 1823 by Dr William Jack in Sumatra, but weren't commercially developed until 1845 when Thomas Lobb sent samples from Malacca to James Veitch and Sons nursery in Exeter. Over 40 years later, the year-round flowering hybrids were exhibited in a tray of freshly cut blooms at every fortnightly meeting of the Royal Horticultural Society.

The popularity of this plant reached near total eclipse due to a new species of rhododendrons being discovered on mainland Asia. But since the renewal of interest in this species in the 1950s, the vireya has been considered the most exciting rediscovery in the plant world in this half century.

Vireyas are vastly varied in leaf, stature, manner of growth and flower. Most have the ability to flower from three to seven times a year; some seem to bloom almost continuously under proper management. The flower shapes vary greatly from tubular, jasmine-like flowers to delicate hanging balls to theatrical-sized trumpets. The flowers are known for their durability and it is common for them to remain in good condition on the plant for several weeks at a time. However, once they have finished flowering, it is important to take off the seed capsules otherwise they exhaust themselves in producing masses of seed.

Some varieties are available at retail centres for the home grower. They include white vireya flowers (*R. loranthiflorum*, perfumed), which are immaculate. Cream coloured *R. konori* has a carnation-like perfume. Oranges (*JavaLight*), yellows (*R. laetum*), golds (*Gilded Sunrise*), are plangent in their purity. Pinks deepen from a blush (*Princess Alexandra*) to medium pink (*Star Posy*), rose (*Pink Delight*), red (*R. lochae*), salmon red (*Rob's Favourite*) and deep crimson.



MORE Magazine in the 1980s.

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This is the first part, only, of the article written by Ann Russell for MORE magazine under her former married name, Ann Whitehead.