



BULLETIN
THE CALIFORNIA HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY
 San Francisco County Fair Building
 Ninth Avenue at Lincoln Way
 San Francisco, California 94122
APRIL 19, 2004

- 4:00 PM Botanical gardens walk with speaker at Strybing Arboretum. Parking is available behind the San Francisco Co. Fair Building and on 9th Ave.
- 5:30 PM NO HOST Dinner will be at Park Chow Restaurant, 1249 Ninth Ave., San Francisco.
- 7:15 PM **Announcements, Plant Forum. Meeting will be held at Strybing Arboretum in the San Francisco County Fair Building at 9th Avenue and Lincoln Way**
- 8:00 PM **Speaker and Plant Drawing.**

***Guest fee \$5.

SAVE THESE DATES: April 17-18, 2004

California Horticultural Society's 10th Annual Plant Sale.
 Strybing Arboretum in the San Francisco County Fair Building.

Rare and Wonderful Plants

Saturday, April 17, 2004 6:00-9:00PM – Members ONLY
Silent Auction of Selected Plant Treasures!
Hundreds of Plants for Sale! Refreshments!
(Memberships available at the door). Admission \$5.00

General Sale, Sunday, April 18, 2004 – 10:00 AM to 2:00PM

Our Sale has become one of the Bay Area's premier sales owing to the talents of its many members. Volunteers are needed to assist in this special event.

For information – call Elsie Mueller (800) 884-0009



Coming Programs
 Co-sponsored with Strybing Arboretum Society

Monday, April 19, 2004

“The Art of Espalier, Topiary, Bonsai and Pruning Basics”
 Presented by
Ted Kipping – Consulting Arborist & Certified Arborist

This two screen presentation will look at unique solutions worldwide for controlling woody plant growth in artistic imaginative ways. Included are: French parterres; sheared yews in England; pleached hornbeams in France; free- standing espalier and cascading espaliers; “Arcuate” style of espaliers in England; pollarded trees; Cloud Pruning; Bonsai-Pots with Panache. Bring all your best pruning questions. Ted will stay after the program until they are all answered.

The Plant Drawing each month provides an important source of funds for the Grants and Scholarships Program. In April, the drawing will include donations from **Magic Gardens**, courtesy of Aerin Moore; **Lone Pine Gardens**, Sebastopol, courtesy of Ian Price and **Strybing Arboretum & Botanical Gardens**, courtesy of Dr. Don Mahoney. Our appreciation to **Moraga Garden Center**, courtesy of Ken Murakami and to **Strybing Arboretum**, courtesy of Dr. Don Mahoney for the outstanding plants donated for the March meeting.

Monday, May 17, 2004
ANNUAL MEETING, POTLUCK DINNER, ANNUAL AWARDS, PROGRAM
“New Plant Introductions”

Presented by
Annie Hayes, owner of Annie's Annuals & recipient of the 2004 Annual Award

Annie will present an exciting program showing the best new plant introductions from Annie's Annuals. Her presentation will include live plants, highlighting many of the choice and unusual plants that her nursery has introduced to the gardening public in Northern California over the last seven years. Silent Auction of rare plants.

Call Elsie Mueller at [800-884-0009] for reservations. Your dinner ticket & name tags will be held for you at the door. Bring your favorite dish [enough to serve 8]; a serving utensil; your own silverware; plants for sale.



President's Letter

by Bruce Peters

I would like to commend all the people who put in some good hours in organizing our display at the San Francisco Flower & Garden Show at the Cow Palace. As usual, it was one of the most popular exhibits of the show and was very well received. So well, in fact, that we had to print more of our handouts at the last minute...2000 wasn't even near enough!

Manning the booth is a fun activity because you get to spend a few hours talking about plants and our Society with people from all over the state, and even the country. I know I learned a bunch of stuff from visitors to the booth, and taught quite a few people some things, too. When volunteer time rolls around next year, give it a go. If you couldn't make it this year, check out the photos on our website.

Speaking of volunteers, our popular and fun Annual Plant Sale is coming up in just a few days. This is one of our biggest events of the year, requiring quite a lot of manpower to organize, collect plants, set up, run and break down. Unfortunately, I've been hearing that our membership has been stingy with their time this year. This is disheartening news since it means fewer people have to work much harder to get

the sale going. Fewer people working longer hours is a great recipe for burnout and if these people get burnt out this year we might very well not have a plant sale at all next year. Since the sale is our primary fund-raiser for the Society and our Grants and Scholarships program, I think we should really all put in some effort to keep it going.

There might still be time to help out with this year's sale—call Ann DeRosa at (510) 528-8404 and see how you could help. As I keep saying, volunteering a few hours on Cal Hort committees is such a great way to get to know other members, all gardeners in one way or another, and what better type of person can there be to hang out with? Of course, I'm a little biased but plant people often are...

Next month we're going to launch a fun New Member Reward System so start thinking of friends, co-workers, neighbors etc who like plants and start extolling the benefits of a Cal Hort membership to them. I'll be giving details at the next meeting and in next month's *Bulletin*.

I'll see you all at the Plant Sale Gala on April 17. I've already cleared a few spots in my garden in anticipation of new purchases!

Cal Hort Annual Plant Sale Gala is April 17

Food, wine, great plant selection!



Botanical Tours

January 20–February 2, 2004

Drakensbergs—a floral treasure—South Africa in Summer. In support of The Botanical Society of South Africa for flora conservation.

May 11–23, 2004

Botanical Excursion in Eastern Macedonia & Thrace (Northeastern Greece) with noted greek botanist George Sfikas & Richard Turner. A *Pacific Horticulture* tour.

May 16–June 3, 2004

Botanical & Cultural Treasures of China's Sichuan & Yunnan Provinces. Escorted by Kristin Yanker-Hansen in support of California Horticultural Society. www.calhortsociety.org for full itinerary. **A few spaces just opened up! Call to reserve your place!**

October 11–27, 2004

Wildflowers, Gardens, Natural History and Fjordland of Chile at the Peak of Springtime Bloom with noted horticulturist and Landscape Architect Professor Wes Conner. In support of Strybing Arboretum Society.

For information please call (800) 624-6633 or visit www.geostartravel.com.

Volunteer Corner

Being a volunteer-run organization, Cal Hort is always in need of people with various skills and talents to help out. Look below to see how you can help our Society to grow!

Hospitality Committee: Tasks include showing new members the different areas and aspects of the monthly meetings. The only pre-requisite is having attended one previous meeting. *We really need people here!* Contact Renee (vicepresident@calhortsociety.org) or Diana (lambeaux@pacbell.net) for info.

Open Garden Coordinator: We have some gardens set up in SF in June but would love to add more! Contact Renee (vicepresident@calhortsociety.org) if interested in opening your garden or even to suggest someone else's.

Newsletter: The *Bulletin* is always happy to accept stories, articles or fun garden-related tidbits. If you would like to start a column, write something or have just run across an interesting item, share it with the rest of us! Contact Bruce at editor@calhortsociety.org or (415) 824-1833.

March Plant Forum by Don Mahoney

"A picture is a worth a thousand words." Fully believing the old adage, color photos are available on our website at www.calhortsociety.org in the 'Plant Forum' section.

1. **Calochortus 'Cupido'**

LILIACEAE

Alan Brubaker, Kenwood

This is a horticultural variety produced for the bulb trade that is best grown like our native California species. It is a small plant, only 4" or 5" high with inch-wide soft violet flowers that resemble a small wide-open tulip. Like all *Calochortus*, it requires very well-drained soil and is summer deciduous when it requires a dry resting period. A good planting mix is half peat and half sharp sand. It is best grown in pots as it must be protected from snails and slugs.

2. **Erythronium tuolumense**

LILIACEAE

Alan Brubaker, Kenwood

Dog-tooth violets or trout lilies are a genus of 20 species, all American except one. This species is native to the foothills of the Sierra Nevada in Central California. It has unspotted green leaves and deep yellow flowers on 6-inch stems. They grow best in dappled shade in well-drained peaty soil. The only way to reasonably be assured of success is growing them in containers. They bloom in spring and are summer dormant when they require a dry resting period.

3. **Gladiolus tristis**

LILIACEAE

Alan Brubaker, Kenwood

Fragrant gladioli are marvelous plants to grow in pots so they can be brought into the house in the evening, when their fragrance is strongest. This species from South Africa has pale beige-yellow flowers that are 2-inches long and over an inch wide. They also make lovely cut flowers as they can be grown readily in the ground in well-drained soil in sunny locations. Even though dormant in summer, they tolerate some summer water and will slowly naturalize.

4. **Clivia miniata 'Flame'**

AMARYLLIDACEAE

Ilie Gaceu, grown at Strybing

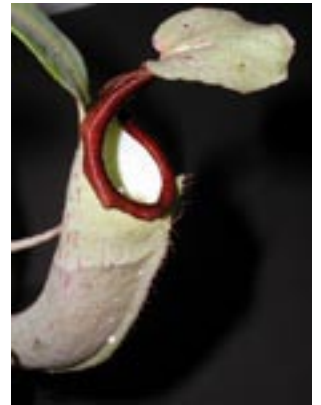
We in the Bay Area are very fortunate to be able to grow clivias outdoors. Large drifts of these evergreen plants with strap-like leaves exist in Golden Gate Park. The flower stalk shown is the closest to true red of any cultivars currently available. It opens a dark orange-red and quickly fades to a rich ruby red. The plant was first introduced by a volunteer at the South Coast Botanical Garden, named Hodge Amemya, and was picked up by Monrovia from whom it is currently available. Clivias are best grown in full shade in well-drained soil enriched with leaf-mold. They are drought tolerant and need checking occasionally for snails.

5. **Nepenthes maxima x albonmarginata**

NEPENTHACEAE

Katherine Henwood,
Pacifica

These insectivorous plants are grown for their striking leaf tips which turn into long tendrils ending in inflated pitchers. Unlucky insects get trapped and digested and this adds minerals to the plant. These two parent species are native to Borneo and Southeast Asia. They like humid, warm days and cool nights and are one of the few varieties that can be grown successfully outdoors in the Bay Area. They need a protected frost-free area and probably would do better in a cool greenhouse. They should be watered with distilled or pure water.



6. **Leucothoe fontanesiana 'Rainbow variant'**

ERICACEAE

Bob Hornback, Occidental

This eastern United States native is sort of the American equivalent of *Pieris*. It has leathery leaves and clusters of urn-shaped flowers. The evergreen leaves turn bronzy in autumn. The variety called 'Rainbow' has multi-variegated leaves. While the species wants to slowly grow to 6 feet tall, it can be kept dwarfed to 18 inches by cutting off the tallest stems. This form might be one that will remain dwarf. *Leucothoes* want acid-rich woodsy soils and partial shade. They become drought tolerant after a few years.

The Plant Forum is a traditional feature of our monthly meetings. Members are strongly encouraged to bring new plants or old favorites from their gardens to tell about and share. Something old-bat to you might be a brand new wonder to another member. What's putting on a display in your garden? Bring it in a share it with us! In the event of a very large number of submissions, we will select 8-10 plants for the discussion

Please welcome to the following new members to the California Horticultural Society.

Edward Brambila
Mary Fisher
Lorena Gorsche
Mary Jepson
Michelle Leahy
Linda Middleton
Morgan Industries
Carol Mosier

Judy Ousterhout
The Ruth Bancroft Garden
Kathy Till
Mark Tilley
Karen Toran
Alida Truant
Brian W. Whyte

Horticultural Calendar

Every Sunday

Sunday Garden Market—Neat plants for sale and free garden talks 10 AM – 2 PM at the Ferry Building SF.

www.cuesa.org

April 15

BMP's of Water Management—Tom Bressen, Urban Farmer Store. SF Prof Gardener's Assn. 7–9 PM, Env. Hort & Floriculture Dept, CC of SF. (Non-members \$20 for CEU hours)

April 17

Spring Plant Sale—Sponsored by the UC Santa Cruz Arboretum and CNPS. Members only 10 AM – noon, General public noon – 4 PM. Held at the UCSC Eucalyptus Grove. (831) 427-2998 or www2.ucsc.edu/arboretum.

April 17

Non-Toxic Solutions for Pests and Diseases—Free class with Jessie West. 10 AM at Magic Gardens, 729 Heinz Ave. Berkeley, (510) 644-2351 or www.magicgardens.com

April 17 & 18

Cal Hort Annual Plant Sale—SF County Fair Bldg. 17th is member's only Gala, 18th is general sale. Check cover page for details.

April 17 – 18

Rhododendron Show and Sale—Sponsored by the American Rhodie Society. Noon – 5 PM and 11 AM – 4 PM at the Lakeside Garden Center, 666 Bellevue Ave. Oakland. Free (510) 841-5402.

April 18

Gardens of Spring—proceeds to The Gardens at Heather Farm Self Drive Garden Tour and at GHF Waterwise Demonstration Garden. Mt. Diablo Iris Society Iris Show. www.gardenshf.org. (925) 947-1678. \$10

April 21

Monthly Slideshow and Potluck—Phyllis Faber speaks on 'Plants Communities in California.' Please bring a dish to serve eight people. 7 PM at the County Fair Building, 9th Ave. at Lincoln Way, S.F. Free. (415) 753-7090

April 24

Bamboo Festival, Show and Auction—Sponsored by the American Bamboo Society. 10 AM – 4 PM at the County Fair Building, 9th Ave and Lincoln Way, SF. www.americanbamboo.org

April 24

Earth Day clean up of Lakeside Park Gardens—by volunteers (Oakland). awoodell@bayrep.com

April 24 & 25

AIDS Benefit Plant and Craft Fair—benefitting Sunburst Projects & other Bay Area charities. 9 AM–6 PM. Parking lot 8, under freeway on 21st st, between X & W St, Sacramento. Admission, parking free. (916) 429-8315

April 25

Secret Gardens of the East Bay Garden Tour—9AM–5 PM, (510) 653-0317 x 103

April 27

Clematis in the Garden Landscape—A lecture and slide show with Dr. Mary Toomey, author of *An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Clematis*. 10 AM – 3 PM at Chalk Hill Clematis, Healdsburg. \$75. Call or email for directions/info (707) 433-8416 or www.chalkhillclematis.com

May 2

Hillside Gardeners of Monclair Garden Tour—11AM–4PM. \$20. (510) 339-8720

May 8

Native Plant Sale—and books, seeds and displays. Hidden Valley Ranch, 26870 Moody Rd, 2 mi. west of Foothill College. Free parking, bring box for plants.

May 8 – 9

Plant Sale—The 26th annual sale at Cabrillo College. 9 AM – 5 pm and 9 AM – 1 PM at the Horticulture Dept. 6500 Soquel Drive, Aptos. (805) 477-5671 or www.cabrillo.cc.ca.us/divisions/becho/hort.

May 8

Native Plant Sale—Organized by the Santa Clara CNPS chapter. 10 AM – 4 PM Hidden Valley Ranch, 26870 Moody Road, Los Altos Hills. Cash or checks only. (650) 941-1068 or www.cnps-scv.org.

May 8

The San Francisco Bay Area Backyards Secret Garden tour of Seacliff—Benefit Victorian Alliance, a non-profit SF Preservation Organization. 12 NOON–3 PM. \$15 per person in advance; after May 1 \$20/person. Send check & SASE to Victorian Alliance, 1212 Fell St., San Francisco, CA 94117. (415) 673-5057

June 5

Cactus Caper—Celebrate Lotusland's new Desert Garden with a fun filled afternoon of food and stories. 2 – 6 PM. Reservations are \$45 for members and \$50 for non-members. (805) 969-9990 or www.lotusland.org

Jepson Herbarium

(510) 643-7008 • www.ucjeps.berkeley.edu

April 23– 25

Flora of Mount Diablo—Broaden your knowledge of Mount Diablo's floristic treasures with Dr. Barbara Ertter. Includes camping, short hikes and meals. Members \$325, non-members \$350.

May 1 – 2

Plant Evolution—Have you ever wondered how new plant species arise? Well here's a great two-day workshop just for you. Members \$100, non-members \$125.

May 12 – 16

Advanced Botanical Illustration—Spend the weekend along the Klamath River refining your illustrating skills with Linda Ann Vorobik. Includes field and classroom sketching, and lodging. Members \$425, non-members \$450

Continued →

Plant of the Month by Josh Schechtal

Tricyrtis - Toad lilies

Spring is here, and with it come the proverbial spring flowers. Well, not quite. Some of our most cherished plants won't be blooming for another few months yet. *Tricyrtis*, more commonly known by the rather unflashy name of Toad Lily, is one of these late-comers to the flowering season. Native to Asia, from the Philippines and Japan through much of the mainland, from warm lowlands to chilly highlands, these plants are beautiful, frost-hardy perennials. They range in size from less than 3 inches to upwards of 4 feet, and with all the recent hybridization, both leaf and flower colors are rather varied. In fact, a recent glance at the Terra Nova nursery website showed thirteen species and over forty cultivars. Names like 'Harlequin', 'Lemon lime', 'Amthysti', 'Golden Ghost', 'Albomarginata' and 'Lilac Towers' give you some idea of the variety of colors and forms available.

Tricyrtis are woodland plants, so they enjoy a rich, organic soil, fairly even moisture, and partial shade. They make great neighbors for hostas, astilbes, trilliums, ferns and other woodland plants, and they extend the flowering season of the shade garden into summer and fall. Most *tricyrtis* have an upright habit, and some form beautiful arching stems. Depending on the species or cultivar, the flowers are either



near the end of the stem (terminal) or along the stem near each pair of leaves (axillary). Some have more upright flowers, while the flowers of others hang down from the stem.

Lots of variety here, but in general the flowers are small, intricately shaped and patterned, and wonderful. These plants are best placed along a path or at the top of a wall, where the small flowers can be admired up close. They will even grow happily in a pot, provided that they don't dry out completely between waterings, and don't get too much sun. Even when not in bloom, the interesting leaves and graceful form of these plants still attract the eye of the garden admirer. Unfortunately, they also attract the eyes and mouths of snails and slugs, so get the snail bait or copper barriers ready if you are going to grow these plants.

As for their odd name, the folks at Digging Dog Nursery claim that Toad Lilies may have been named due to the fact that some natives of the Philippines would wipe their hands with the juice of the flowers before going hunting for frogs. As a frog hunter during my youth, we never washed our hands with flowers (or soap for that matter), so this story may be a non-urban legend. In any case, toad lilies are truly a frog that turns into a prince as they become established and form graceful clumps in the garden.

Regional Parks Botanic Garden **(510) 841-8732 • www.nativeplants.org**

April 17

Plant Sale—Tilden's annual sale specializing in CA natives. 10 AM - 3 PM.

May 8

CA Butterflies' Host and Nectar Plants—Lecture and slideshow with Bobby Gendron. 9 AM - 2 PM. Members \$35, non-members \$40.

May 9 & 16

Designing Your Garden with Natives—A two-session workshop with Glenn Keator. 10 AM - 3 PM both days. Members \$75, non-members \$85.

U.C. Botanical Garden

(510) 643-2755 • www.botanicalgarden.berkeley.edu

First Saturday of the Month

Sick Plant Clinic—Let plant pathologist Dr. Raabe and entomologist Dr. Mills diagnose what ails your plants. 9 AM - noon. Free. No reservations required.

April 23 & 24

Plant Sale—Friday is the members' sale 5 - 7:30 pm and Saturday is open to all 10 AM - 2 PM.

May 2

African Salvias—Book signing, lecture and plant sale with Betsy Clebsch. 1 - 4 pm, members \$40, non-members \$45.

May 8

Rose Garden Walk—Tour the beautiful 'old rose' collection with Peter Klement. 10 AM - Noon, members \$12, non-members \$17.

Strybing Arboretum Society **(415) 661-1316 • www.strybing.org**

May 1

Plant Sale—The 37th annual sale featuring rare and unusual plants. 10 AM - 2 PM at the County Fair Building. Free admission

April 12 - May 17

Spring Perennials—Learn to design an effective and beautiful springtime display with J. Charmain Guiliani. Six classes 6:30 - 9 PM, one field trip 10 AM - 3 PM. Members \$155, non-members \$185.

April 13 - May 19

CA Natives in Style—A basic design course using local native plants to create a stunning garden. Six classes, 6:30 - 9 PM, and 3 field trips, 10 AM - 3 PM, with Alrie Middlebrook and Glenn Keator. Members \$255, non-members \$295.

Plant Life in the Hawaiian Islands: Vanishing natives & unusual exotic ornamentals grown in Hawaii

Presented by Robert Gustafson, Emeritus Collections Manager
in the Department of Botany, Los Angeles County Natural History
Museum

The slide program Robert Gustafson presented consisted of two parts: a survey of some of the most endangered native Hawaiian plants, and a sampling of exceptional ornamental exotics grown in the Islands. Gustafson's extensive research background and key role in locating, identifying and even preserving many of the plants he showed made for a very specific and personal discussion of the images.

The Hawaiian flora, occurring as it does on the most remote large land mass on earth, in extremely diverse terrain and climates, has a high proportion of endemic plants – upward of 88 percent of flowering plant species and 76 percent of ferns and fern allies. Yet this array derives from an estimated 256 to 280 individual species arriving and diversifying over the 70-million years of the archipelago's existence. About 80 percent of native species can be traced to Indo-Malayan origins, 18 percent to American origins, and 2 percent to Austral origins. Currently, a huge number of the native species are rare, threatened, or endangered. Slide after slide showed individuals from the last known populations of their species in the wild, some numbering in the double and single digits.

The means by which those pioneer ancestor species' seeds and spores arrived include attaching to birds' feet and feathers, embedding in mud on birds' feet, and importation in their digestive tract. In addition, winds likely carried very light propagules, such as seeds of the ancestor of 'Ōhi'a lehua, *Metrosideros polymorpha* (offered by Don Mahoney in the plant drawing this night), and spores of various ferns to Hawaii; salt-tolerant, buoyant seeds, like those of Wiliwili, *Erythrina sandwicensis*, probably floated by sea.

Gustafson showed slides from the five major plant zones: coastal, lowland forest, montane forest, subalpine and alpine. Mo'omomi, on the northwest coast of Moloka'i, is an extensive intact dune area where *Sesbania tomentosa*, a showy low pea shrub with reddish flowers, grows. Populations with different color forms grow – or grew – on most of the major islands. *Chamaesyce roxburgii*, a euphorbiaceous shrub, is one species in a diverse genus under pressure. Many of the coastal-zone plants are adaptable for cultivation and are being used in new landscaping on Waikiki, for example. The greatest number of indigenous species – those known to be also native to Hawaii and beyond – are found in the coastal zone. *Vitex rotundifolia*, a plant that has been available at Cal Hort drawings, is one.



Silversword - *Argyroxiphium* sp

Lowland forest species Gustafson found in the Pu'u Wa'awa area of the Big Island in the 1980s include *Caesalpinia kavaensis*, an ornamental tree with bipinnate foliage, *Kokia dryanarioides*, a *Hibiscus*-like tree with ruby-red flowers adapted for pollination by endemic honeycreeper finches, and a tree violet, *Isodendron*, known from only one cinder cone and vulnerable to fire. In other lowland forests grew *Gardenia brighamii*, a treelike gardenia now limited to one wild specimen on Moloka'i.

The lobelioids, genera allied to *Lobelia*, have proliferated in the copiously wet, ferny, montane forests of the Islands. Gustafson showed many of the unusual shrubs and trees and their tubular, bisymmetrical flowers, each adapted to specific bird pollinators now endangered or extinct due to predation by introduced mammals and birds. Perhaps the most spectacular was *Lobelia wabiawaensis*, with profuse four-foot spikes of creamy greenish flowers on a low shrub. He noted a few species, like *Cyanea grimesiana*, that had gone extinct in the wild since he had photographed them.

Subalpines occur only on Maui and Hawai'i, the Big Island, where volcanoes rise to 10,000 and over 13,000 feet, respectively. One potential ornamental for cool-summer parts of the Bay Area may be Mamane, *Sophora chrysophylla*, a tree found on the slopes of Mauna Kea along with the local variant of cosmopolitan *Dodonea viscosa*. Higher up on the sometimes snowcovered Mauna Kea, as well as on Haleakala, the volcano on Maui, is the famed silversword (known to the Hawaiians as Ahinahina), *Argyroxiphium sandwicense*, descended from the tarweeds (*Madia*, etc.) of California. Each of the two alpine peaks has its own subspecies, and other peaks, like Pu'u Kukui in West Maui, have their own species and other genera in the alliance, such as *Dubautia*.

From beachside to high peaks, Robert Gustafson provided a tour of the plants that he had studied and photographed, often at great personal peril and discomfort, and gave the audience a sense of the delicate, subtle beauty of the original, besieged flora of Hawaii. He completed his talk with a gorgeous assortment of slides of rare exotic tropical ornamentals being cultivated in botanic and private gardens on the populated islands.

Vireyas, And Where To See Them

by Richard Starkeson

One of the least known public gardens in the Bay Area is in Oakland. Hidden away at the back of the gardens at the Lakeside Garden Center on the northwest corner of Lake Merritt, just to the east of a small walled Japanese garden, is a lathhouse, about 100' by 50', which contains one of the world's best public displays of vireyas. Infrequently visited, it is quiet place to eat lunch or get away from business life in uptown Oakland. With its industrial facade, it does not appear inviting. However, once inside one finds a collection of attractive raised beds, containing a large variety of vireyas, and there are always blooming plants. It is sadly not always open when it is supposed to be. Gardens do not rank high among Oakland's Park and Rec budget priorities. As you might expect, the garden inside the lathhouse was not created by the City of Oakland, but is entirely the labor of one volunteer, William Moyles, who used donated funds for materials. A hybridizer of vireyas, Moyles has over a ten year period, gradually taken over the entire lathhouse for his collection.

Vireyas are tropical rhododendrons, and while not rare in the world, they are definitely a rarity in gardens. Of the 900 or so species of the genus *Rhododendron*, around 600 belong to two groups of vireyas. The family *Ericaceae* contains rhododendrons, blueberries, manzanita, madrone, and agapetes.

Vireyas are not much grown, because of their climate demands. There are few areas in the US where they can be grown easily outdoors. The inner Bay Area is one of them. Hawaii is another. Being tropical, vireyas are subject to being killed in a hard frost. With most vireya species originating at higher elevations, most prefer cool nights, humidity, and filtered sun. They are easily grown in a cool greenhouse - the University of Edinburgh has one of the world's largest glasshouse collections. Strybing Arboetum has a collection begun by retired gardener and hybridizer Pete Sullivan. Expanded and moved in recent years under the direction of Bian **, it has yet to experience one of the decennial 5-day freezes.

Vireyas come virtually in all shapes and sizes. They come in all colors except for blues and purples. Being tropical, they may bloom at any time of the year. Some bloom several times a year, and many for some reason bloom



in the winter in the Bay Area. Many vireya species easily interbreed, which is why a multitude of hybrids is available. The flowers are waxy, and tend to last a long time. Some of the white and yellow species have delicious fragrances, and there are many fragrant hybrids based on them. *R. leucageigas*, a very large fragrant flower and an ancestor to many sought after hybrids, including many of Pete Sullivan's best, is itself rather difficult to grow. Some hybrids and species have large flowers - up to 5 inches in length. There are also species with very tiny flowers. A number of hybrids have pendulous flowers, and make great hanging baskets. Treat all vireyas like orchids - they prefer bark to soil, and perfect drainage. But don't let them dry out, either.

Another great place to see Vireyas is the garden at St. John The Redeemer Church, on St. Mary's avenue, off of Mission Street in San Francisco. This is where Pete Sullivan placed his collection when he retired. Located in a narrow space between two buildings, it is enough protected from the weather, that it has survived all of San Francisco's frosts with no damage.

Vireyas can be purchased locally at Strybing sales and sometimes at Berkeley Hort or from two internet sites: http://www.pacificislandnursery.com/vireya_rhododendrons.html and <http://www.bovees.com/>. The Oakland vireya garden is guaranteed to be open during the Rhododendron flower show, April 17-18.

Need some Horticultural Help?

The back page of your Cal Hort Roster contains a special listing of our Business members. What better way to insure your future landscaper knows a tulip from a petunia? It's also a great place to give recommendations to friends from!



Host a Speaker

Please let us know if you would be willing to host a monthly speaker. Many of our speakers live out of town or the state and would greatly appreciate an opportunity to stay for one night with one of our members and perhaps enjoy their garden or another if time is available. Please contact Barbara Hopper (707) 833-2078 or Bruce Peters (415) 824-1833, bruce@calhortsociety.org.

Cal Hort T-Shirts



\$16.24 (tax incl.) Size: large
Color: soft green w darker green logo
Available at Cal Hort Monthly meetings,
or call Ann DeRosa (510) 528-8404

Earn CEU Credits

We are now able to register Continuing Education Unit credits for the California Certified Nursery Professionals—a program of the California Association of Nurseries & Garden Centers. Attendance at our monthly lectures and plant Forum will qualify you for 1 hour CEU credit. Sign in at the registration desk following the program.

Officers

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