Indumentum

Newsletter of the Vancouver Rhododendron Society

Volume 36, Number 3, November 2004



The Vancouver Rhododendron Society is a chapter of the American Rhododendron Society

2004 Executive

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This Month's Meeting: Thursday, November 18th 7:30 pm Floral Hall, VanDusen Botanical Garden

Program: Steve Hootman, Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden, Federal Way, WA: 'Exploring for Plants in Northeast India'

Sales: Rosemary Burnham & Ron Feicht

Plants for Late Summer and Autumn Interest, Part III - Unexpected Delights

Having trashed horticultural novelty in the previous issue, some readers may assume I've painted myself into a conventionality corner. I suppose that's the way it



could look to some, but for me, different, but *sub-tle*, nearly always trumps the blatant. Most garden plants descend into subtlety in November. The most spectacular foliage displays from Japanese maples and the like, are starting to fade by this time. Some plants, especially those whose native conditions are generally warmer in the fall, such as *Liquidambar formosana*, will continue to display bright colours until hard frost. More common in our rainy climate, are plants whose autumn finery is somewhere between pale green and biscuit-coloured. Subtle, yes, but boring, too. I look for plants that, while not flashy or overtly unusual, have something else to offer.

There are few truly autumn flowering plants in our gardens; mostly, we rely on colourful berries and foliage for interest at this time. However, perhaps because I make a habit of snooping around gardens at all times of the year, I have a sizable catalogue of reliable autumn bloomers. Most are not what would be termed spectacular, but they do have appeal. The buttercup family (Ranunculaceae) is a good place to start. Three clematis species that fit this description include the fragrant, semi-evergreen, sweet autumn clematis, *C. terniflora*, the diminutive evergreen, but unfortunately, rather tender *C. cirrhosa*, and the very rare, very fuzzy, herbaceous scrambler, *C. ranunculoides* (photo by Daniel Mosquin, above). The related monkshoods

(Aconitum spp.) are also known for late flowering and A. carmichaelii is a very popular species, with beautiful purple-blue flowers on strongly upright stems; but one of my favourites is the climbing A. vilmorinii, which I've previously written about (see Indumentum, October 2003). Cimicifugas, now attributed to the genus Actaea, are generally known as summer flowering plants, but the shade-tolerant Kamchatka bugbane, A. simplex is usually in full flower with sprawling white candelabra-like spikes well into November (photo, right). The cultivar 'White Pearl' ('Armleuchter') has impressive, 2' long inflorescences.



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Vancouver Rhododendron Society - Bronze Medal Award

Dr. Joe Ronsley has been a member of the Vancouver Rhododendron Society since 1978. He is a tireless worker on behalf of the Chapter and the ARS. He has served the Society as President, Past President, and Nomination Chair.

In addition, Joe has been the Program Chair for eight years and has regularly brought distinguished guest speakers to The Vancouver Rhododendron Society from around the world. Joe and his charming wife, Joanne, travel the globe, never missing the opportunity to renew acquaintances or make new contacts, and always with an eye to finding international-calibre guest speakers.

Joe's many activities illustrate the enthusiasm he has shown for the genus Rhododendron. In recognition of his many contributions to the well-being of the Society, the awarding of the Bronze Medal, the highest award an American Rhododendron Society chapter can bestow, is a small token of the Vancouver Rhododendron Society's appreciation, and is richly deserved.



VRS President Ron Knight presents the Bronze Medal to Joe Ronsley

Ron Knight

... Unexpected Delights continued from page 1



Another group of plants not normally associated with late flowering is the rhododendron family (Ericaceae). Two notable plants, Oxydendrum arboreum (sour gum) (photo by Judy Newton, above) and Arbutus unedo (strawberry tree) are late summer or fall flowering. The latter is a bulky, small tree or large shrub with evergreen leaves and orange, strawberry-sized fruits. These take a year to develop fully, so they obligingly accompany this year's open flowers to increase the appeal of the show. We grow the cultivar A. unedo 'Rubra' which

has pink flowers and a more compact habit than the species. Oxydendrum is a proper tree, although notoriously slow. Its deciduous leaves tend to turn fire-engine red as the long panicles of white, pieris-like flowers are finishing.

Grasses ought not to be overlooked at this



time of year; some are in flower now, and even when they're not in flower, many are exceptionally beatiful. Maiden grass, *Miscanthus sinensis*, tends to flower late. So late, in fact, that in cool summer climates, some forms (e.g., the popular, compact cultivar 'Gracillimus') never actually produce flowers—hence the common name. Locally, all cultivars produce flowers eventually, and some of the most attractive include the later, reddish-flowered cultivars, such as 'Rotsilber' and 'Gracillimus'. Another group of plants that tends to flower late (or not at all) are the Mexican salvias. We often use these mostly tender plants for bedding or containers, but a few are hardy enough to leave in the ground. The best by far is *Salvia guaranitica* (anise sage) a bushy, upright grower (to about 6' tall in this area) that produces deep, sky blue, tubular flowers from persistent, indigo, tubular calyses, October until hard

frost. A common cultivar of this species is 'Black and Blue' (photo below, left, courtesy Magnolia Gardens Nursery).

We have great plant-growing weather here and can safely grow many plants that are invasives elsewhere, such as *Elaeagnus* (oleaster). A few oleasters are grown locally, primarily for their evergreen foliage, but most also produce sweetly fragrant flowers.



Although they produce berries attractive to birds, our cool, winter-wet soils tend to prevent germination of the seeds. The shrubby *E. pungens* 'Maculata' was featured in last month's *Indumentum* in Ron Knight's article on variegated plants, and *E. ×ebbingei* is a common hedging plant blooming now. However, my favourite is *E. glabra*, the deliciously fragrant, smooth oleaster (scan by the author, above), which is also in full flower here in the botanical garden. I recall having

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October Education - Elements, Compounds and Plants

(A fragment of the October presentation by Louis Peterson) In a competition for the Greatest World Molecule, water (H₂O) might be considered to rank among the top ten. The exercise, however, would be a foolish one, given the mosaic of interdependencies of all things in nature. Nevertheless, from a chemist's point of view, water has quite special properties as far as plant (and all) life is concerned. This hydride of oxygen is a liquid under "normal" conditions, whereas the hydrogen compounds of its neighbours, carbon, nitrogen, sulphur and fluorine, are gases. Water owes its condensed state to the polarity of the H₂O molecule, a feature determined by the nature of the component atoms. From this condition flows other important properties—some good, some bad, such as relatively high density (things float), high boiling point, high heat capacities and latent heats of freezing or evaporation (heat-mediating climate control, danger of scalding), solubilities of polar and ionic substances (transfer of nutrients, dissolution of oxygen, transfer of pollutants, electrophysiology, formation of acids and bases and the concept of "pH," erosion), insolubility of weakly- or non-polar substances such as oils, fats, proteins (allowing solid structures, including those of living forms, to develop), high surface tension (supporting suspended matter, good for micro-organisms). Water reacts chemically with a great many substances to form new compounds, but one magnificent feat that nature has engineered is the photosynthetic collaboration of water, carbon dioxide, light and chlorophyll—a collaboration that is fundamental to all plant life and those dependent upon it, as well as the maintenance of the atmosphere we breathe.

Louis Peterson

President's Message

You missed a real treat if you were unable to attend October's VRS meeting. **Des Kennedy** showed us some fabulous slides of the gardens and landscapes of Ireland. Des is just one of many international-calibre speakers that **Joe Ronsley** has brought to the VRS over the past 8 years. In recognition of Joe's outstanding contributions as Program Chair, he has been awarded the ARS Bronze Medal. A photo and a copy of the citation can be found on page 2. Congratulations, Joe, and thank you for all your hard work on behalf of the VRS membership.

Many thanks to all of the VRS members who brought plants for our Dollar Table. We sold 41 plants, an excellent start on this new venture. Please remember to bring divisions, rooted cuttings, seedlings or surplus plants for the Dollar Table at November's meeting. And bring lots of loonies too; the Dollar Table offers the best plant bargains in the Lower Mainland!

Thanks also to **Martie Irwin** for her donation of gardening books and to **Lilli-Ann Hemminger** for providing a beautiful landscape painting for auction.

As a non-profit society, the VRS has budgeted each year to provide money from our Sale and Show profits to support gardening students and gardening projects in Greater Vancouver. This year we donated \$1000 towards the repair of the lath house at the UBC Botanical Garden Nursery.

Looking ahead to our 2005 Show, the executive would like your help in providing bottles to hold rhododendron trusses. If you have any large Perrier bottles, please bring them to the next VRS meeting.

Lastly, a reminder that we have no meeting (or *Indumentum*) in December. Therefore, I'll take the opportunity now to wish you a restful and enjoyable Christmas season and hope that you'll join us at the January VRS meeting.

Ron Knight

Membership



Fall Membership Renewal is going full steam—almost 100 of you have renewed at October 31st. Thank you!

ARS members who wish to avoid "journal jeopardy" (missing the mid-January journal) must renew on or before Thursday, November 18 or pay US\$4.00 more in membership fees for the mid-January journal. Membership fees remain unchanged.

New members receive the remainder of 2004 and all of 2005 at the current prices. Guests are always welcome at our meetings.

Visit our website at http://www.rhodod.citimax.com for an electronic copy of the membership application/renewal and the benefits of membership in the VRS and discounts at selected nurseries.

See you at the November meeting where those who have renewed can pick up their new "blue" membership cards and receipts. Those not attending the meeting will have theirs mailed. Thank you to all who have renewed so far!

If you change your mailing address, etc., please let me know. Last month, mail was returned from 3 members as "moved or unknown, return to sender." So, if you aren't receiving the *Idumentum* or Membership Renewal information, or your initials are JM, CZM and AI, I don't have your new address.

Carole Conlin, Membership Chair

OOPS: VRS TROPHY WINNERS (2004 Show)

The editors regret that an incomplete list of VRS trophy winners was printed in the October Indumentum. A complete list appears below.

Jacquie and Tony Clayton

Best Triflorum Spray: R. yunnanense

Triflora Trophy for Best Species Rhododendron Truss or Spray in subsection 2112.25

Frank Dorsey

Best Species Plant: R. macrosepalum

Gerry Emerson Trophy for Best Plant in Division 100

Best Blotched Rhododendron Truss: Mrs G. W. Leak

Claydian Cup for Best Blotched Rhododendron Truss in Division 2200 & Classes 2310.08 & 2320.08

Barbara Forsyth

Best Novice Entry

Ron Round Memorial Trophy for Best Novice Entry in Class 3110

lan Forsyth

Best Hybrid Spray: Irene Koster

Langton Memorial Trophy for Best Deciduous Azalea Truss in Class 2232 or 2332

Highest Novice Aggregate Points

Dr. Walter Otto Memorial Trophy for Highest Aggregate Points in Classes 3110 and 3120

E. & L. Hemminger

Highest Hybrid Aggregate Points

Wally Zeglat Memorial Trophy for Highest Aggregate Points in Divisions 2200, 2300, 2400 and 2500

Best Hybrid Truss: Lem's Stormcloud

B.C. Nursery Trades Trophy for Best Hybrid Rhododendron Truss in Divisions 2200, 2300, 2400 and 2500

Best Red Hybrid Truss: Lem's Stormcloud

Teamster's Joint Council #36 Best Red Rhododendroon Truss in Division 2200 and Classes 2310.08 and 2320.08

Best in Show, of any type, species or hybrid: Lem's Stormcloud

Park & Tilford Trophy for Best Exhibit

Best Yellow or Orange Plant or Truss: Paprika Spiced

R.C. Rhodes Trophy for Best Yellow or Orange Plant (excluding azaleas) in Division 1000

Gerard Picher

Best Walloper: Pink Walloper

Harold Johnson Memorial Trophy for Best Rhododendron Mega-truss in Division 2500

John Priestman

Best Potted Plant: R. asterochnoum

E.J. Trayling Award for Best Rhododendron Plant in Division 1000

Best Container Grown Plant: asterochnoum

Patio Plant Trophy for Best Container Grown Plant in Division 1600

Karen Shuster

Highest Species Aggregate Points

William M. Stephens Cup for Highest Aggregate Points in Division 2100

Bill and Suzanne Spohn

Best Species Truss: R. yakushimanum Ken Janek

Milton Wildfong Trophy for Best Species Rhododendron Truss in Division 2100

News and Notes

The Nominating Committee presents the following Executive slate for 2005, to be ratified at the January AGM:

President Louis Peterson
Vice President Lothar Mischke
Past President Ron Knight*
Treasurer Barbara Sherman
Secretary Bill Spohn
Membership Carole Conlin
Newsletter Editor Todd Major

Program

Member at Large

Bill Herbst (one year)*

- * Does not need ratification.
- ** Completing the term of Lothar Mischke.

Any VRS members who wish to make further nominations for any of these positions should send in the name of the nominee, along with his or her acceptance of the nomination in writing, and the endorsement of five VRS members, before January 1st to Joe Ronsley, P.O Box 422, Lions Bay, BC, V0N 2E0.

\$\$Dollar Table\$\$: On the questionnaires that the VRS executive handed out last spring, several members suggested that we have a dollar table at each VRS meeting. **Ron Knight** explains how it works:

Members bring divisions, rooted cuttings, or seedlings from their gardens to each VRS meeting. Any perennials will do, as long as they are labelled with the correct common or horticultural name. (e.g., Shasta daisies, irises, cotoneaster, self-seeding heather, rooted euonymus cuttings, hosta divisions, etc.) At the end of the meeting, the plants go on sale for one loonie each. Proceeds are used to pay for the rental of the Floral Hall.

The Dollar table was implemented (successfully) at our October meeting. It's a great way for members to build up their supply of perennials at an extremely low price.

We will still have our regular raffle table, which usually includes rhododendrons, rarer perennials, pottery, books, preserves, etc. Please bring one item for this table, as well.



BC Rhododendron Inventory

Harry Wright, outgoing President of the ARS's District 1 (BC) is revising his book on rhododendrons in British Columbia. The book catalogues both hybrids and species from private and public gardens throughout the province. The second edition will be ready for sale at the ARS conference in Victoria next spring.

Harry would like all members of rhododendron clubs in BC to submit a list of the names of all the rhodos in their gardens. The deadline for submissions is December 1, 2004. Please send your list to this e-mail address: hai-daau@mars.ark.com.

As an alternative, you can give your list to **Ron Knight** at the November VRS meeting; he will forward it to Harry.

Vice President and Librarian Louis Peterson (604 921 7260 or peterso@sfu.ca) is asking members to Check your Bookshelves for possible VRS library books languishing there—they may wish to join their fellows in the VRS Library! To summarize our holdings, we not only have many books on Rhododendrons and Azaleas (of course), but also on categories such as Alpines, Bonsai, Climbers, Companion Plants (Bulbs, Ferns, Hellebores, Hostas, Irises, Paeonias, Primulas, Roses etc), Garden Design, Greenhouses, Native Plants, Perennials, Pests & Diseases, Plant Explorations, Propagation, Pruning, References & Dictionaries, Trees & Shrubs, Succulents, and more! A good news item: books taken out in November are not due back until our January meeting. Enjoy a few weeks of leisurely reading!

And speaking of books...

Christmas is Coming! Louis reminds us that books make excellent Christmas presents! Order your selections via the VRS from Whitecap Books and/or Timber Press, and receive a 35% discount (the society qualifies for a special discount and free delivery for orders above \$200). A \$50.00 order would cost you \$34.78 (with GST) and benefit the VRS \$8.03, while a \$100.00 order costs \$69.55 with \$16.05 to the VRS. In addition to gardening books, Whitecap carries titles on cooking, health, crafts, children, nature, environment, arts, history and more! Timber Press deals solely with plants and gardening. I will bring catalogues to the fall meetings and be happy to take orders from you then, or by e-mail (advance payment by cheque to the VRS is preferred). Order soon to ensure timely delivery. You may view the Whitecap and Timber Press listings at www.whitecap.ca

To advertise in Indumentum, contact Tony Clayton 604 921 7947 tclayton@telus.net

Subscription Rates

VRS + ARS Membership (US & Overseas)	\$50.00 \$US 28.00
VRS Membership (no ARS Quarterly Journal)	\$25.00
Associate Membership	\$10.00

(member of another ARS Chapter in Canada)

Associate Membership

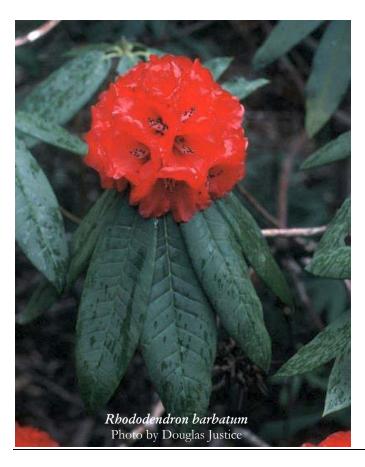
Associate Membership \$US 10.00 (member of another ARS Chapter outside of Canada)

Advertising Rates

	1 month	3 months	8 months
Business card	\$10.00	\$25.00	\$50.00
½ page	\$25.00	\$67.50	\$160.00
½ page	\$40.00	\$108.00	\$256.00
full page	\$70.00	\$189.00	\$448.00

November Program

Steve Hootman is one of the major plant explorers in the world today, in the words of Keith White 'an intrepid explorer along the lines of the great plant explorers of the early 20th century'. I have spoken to no one among several people who have been on expeditions with Steve who didn't praise him for his special style of participation on these expeditions—his intrepidity, his great knowledge of plants, his value as a comrade and colleague. He also has the capacity to convey vividly enthusiasm and excitement in undergoing difficult physical conditions and being rewarded with great plant discoveries. He has certainly been



involved as much as anyone in discovering species of rhododendrons that hadn't been known before, and also adding to the gene pool of those already in cultivation. Most of Steve's travels have been in China and Tibet, but the evening of November 18th Steve will speak on his latest trip: **Exploring for Plants in Northeast India**.

As I wrote last year, when Steve spoke here about the Rhododendron Species Foundation itself, there are very few visiting speakers at VRS meetings who are invited back very frequently, year after year. Those who are, are reinvited for good reason: because they are excellent speakers and because they have very interesting, new things to speak about. And, generally, because we like them. Steve Hootman, Co-Director of the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden, is one of this very small and elite group. From past experience I have complete confidence that Steve will be heartily welcomed by VRS members. The only problem that arises in repeat visits by people like Steve comes in writing something new about them in these biographical sketches, so much of the following is a repeat of earlier commentaries.

As most of you know, the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden is located in Federal Way, Washington, an undistinguished and drab suburb between Seattle and Tacoma. For the benefit of newer members, I should mention that the many recent plant expeditions that have been carried out in Asia, by Steve Hootman and others, not only provide our gardens with beautiful new plants, but also contribute to the conservation of the species in their dissemination among gardeners, when they might otherwise be brought to extinction by destruction of their natural habitats. This is where the RSF comes in. Steve has gone on as many expeditions as anyone, bringing back propagating material collected in the wild. Unlike most other botanical institutions, where the new discoveries are primarily

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to be seen in their own gardens, all the plants introduced through the Rhododendron Species Foundation are propagated and eventually offered for sale, with first choices going to members of the RSF. At the same time, especially beautiful clones of more familiar species are vegetatively propagated and distributed in a like manner, with similar benefits to the horticultural world. The RSF, and Steve particularly, also have much to contribute in the way of education about the natural species of rhododendrons. And finally, the RSF Garden is in itself not only educational, but also beautiful, and becoming moreso under Steve's, and his Co-Director Rick Peterson's directorship. The RSF is vitally important as an organization to all of us who appreciate rhododendrons and natural plant habitats. It's always a pleasure for our members to welcome back this bright, young, articulate explorer, administrator and gardener.

Joe Ronsley

... Unexpected Delights continued from page 2

written about *E. glabra* this time last year, and I suppose it is the fragrance (gardenia with a hint of orange blossom) more than anything that prompts me to bring it up again. As you can see from the image (see page 2), the flowers couldn't be considered showy.



No autumn flowering plant list would be complete without a few members of the witch hazel family (Hamamelidaceae). A number of gardeners know *Hamamelis virginiana* (this is the witch hazel from which the tincture is extracted), because it is commonly used as understock for the winter-flowering species and hybrids. A poor or damaged graft union will cause the understock to shoot up, and as it produces its spidery yellow flowers now, it is easy to recognize. Another hamelinad, one that is grown primarily for its spectacular fall colour, is *Disanthus cercidifolius* (photo above, by Daniel Mosquin). Its tiny purple flowers are myiophilous (visited by flies), so it doesn't pay to get too close.

Last, but certainly not least, are a couple of viburnums, thankfully, at UBC, still unravaged by the dread viburnum beetle



making its way around the Lower Mainland. The versatile laurustinus (Viburnum tinus) is often overlooked in favour of other evergreen shrubs (dare I say rhododendrons?), but laurustinus, particularly the compact cultivar 'Eve Price', has so much to recommend it, including flat-topped clusters of fragrant, white flowers that emerge from pink buds from September to April, and pert, porcelain blue berries. At the top of everybody's list should be the deciduous hybrid V. ×bodnantense (photo courtesy Olda.nu, above), whose narrow, upright stature makes it easy to accommodate in almost any garden; however, it is the flowers that really deserve the superlatives. They are individually long-tubed, pale pink and intensely sweetly scented. Flowers are produced in rounded corymbs along the older branches throughout the winter, inevitably succumbing to the frost when it occurs, but they are replaced with a succession of new flowers as the temperature moderates. November never felt less dreary.

Douglas Justice

Indumentum

The editorship of the VRS newsletter is being handed over to the capable and multi-talented **Todd Major** beginning with the January issue. The present editorial staff have thoroughly enjoyed the experience of editing *Indumentum* since they took it over in September of 2000, but feel that it's now time for a change (we think regime change should begin at home). Douglas will continue to contribute articles (and so should you!) and Karen will continue to apply her editing magic to Douglas's material. Thank you members for supporting us and thank you, Todd, for taking this on. We all look forward to new energy and new ideas (and a new look?).

Rhododendron Stamps, by Bill Spohn

s most will know, Vireyas are rhododendrons that are tender, indoor plants in most temperate areas, originating in the Southern Hemisphere. They were hothouse curiosities for many decades until Norman Cruttwell (1916-1994), an Anglican priest, took what was to be a 42-year stay in Papua-New Guinea right after World War II.

Cruttwell noted a sudden increase in botanical interest in 'his' area in the 1960s, when Dr. Sleumer toured the area to compose his works on Malesian flora. He named two of the plants after our Anglican friend—R. cruttwellii, and after his mother, Christian, who had joined her son at his mission, R. christianae.

He spent his years trekking all over the islands, noting new botanical discoveries as he went, and playing host to various visiting plant groups, including the Australian Rhododendron Society tour party, who he managed to pretty much walk off their feet in 1981 at the age of 65, on an 8-hour trek up and down Mt. Gahavisuka. In recognition of this man's long service, a set of four stamps was issued in 1989, including R. cruttwellii, R. christianae, R. superbum and R. zoelleri.



Common throughout Papua New Guinea, a large shrub with brilliant flame flowers, often bi-coloured. It favours moist grassy slopes but sometimes grows on trees. It is easy to grow in the highlands. A fine garden plant. It is pollinated by butterflies. It can be found between 1300 to 1800m above sea level.

Rhododendron christianae

From Aguan, Milne Bay Province, named after Mrs Christian Cruttwell, Fr N. Cruttwell's mother. First found by Fr Cruttwell in Mt Simpson in 1947. Confined to a limited area of Milne Bay Province from Mt Simpson to Mt Dayman. Introduced into cultivation by seed and now grown in many countries and used in hybridisation. It flowers profusely and plants can be seen from the air as orange splashes. It grows on the ground, preferring steep slopes and precipices. It can be found between 500 to 1500 metres above sea level. It is pollinated by butterflies.

Rhododendron superbum

From Mt Gahavisuka Provincial Park, Goroka, Eastern Highlands Province. Aptly named, this and the next species have the second largest flowers in the genus, up to 18cm across. The flowers are white to pale pink with deep pink centres. They have seven lobes, and are nicely scented. It is pollinated by bats. It usually grows on trees, though sometimes on the ground and is found from 2000 to 3000 metres above sea level. It is widespread throughout the highlands.

Rhododendron cruttwellii

This species was first found on Mt Simpson, Milne Bay Province, at approximately 2700m by Father N. Cruttwell in 1947. It is typical of the moth-pollinated rhododendrons with long tubular scented flowers, which are endemic to Papua New Guinea. There are many similar species found at medium to high elevation (i.e., 2000 to 3000m above sea level.)







