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## **MONTHLY BULLETIN**

**VOLUME 43 NO 12**

**Meetings held at the Uniting Church Hall, cnr. Flora and Merton St., Sutherland on the Second Monday of the Month. All Visitors Welcomed. [Visit our Website on www.ssos.org.au](http://www.ssos.org.au)**

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### **December 2007**

#### **Minutes from the November 07 Meeting.**

In opening the meeting, the President extended a warm welcome to all the members, visitors, and our guest speakers for the evening, Cary Polis and Ian Nelson. A motion was then presented, that the minutes as printed in the Bulletin were a true and accurate record, by Spiros Vavayis and passed.

#### **Correspondence.**

Various Bulletins from other Societies.

Letter from the new President of the OSNSW. Mr. Geoff Fulcher.

#### **New Members.**

Murray then announced and welcomed two new members, M/s. Renee Trevitt and Mr. Robert Coulton (Daniels Father). We wish you both a happy and friendly time with us.

Thank you to Bob Moar, who spoke on species orchids for the Beginners class. We are grateful, and lucky indeed to have such knowledgeable people, who are willing to pass on information over such a wide range in the last twelve months. Our thanks to you all.

To-night is the last of this years (2007) points score. From the December meeting the point score will commence for Year 2008, and the winners for 2007 will be announced.

The committee have decided to elevate the following members :-  
Daniel Coulton from Junior to Novice.  
Trevor Costa from Novice to Intermediate.  
Louise Gannon From Intermediate to Open.  
and as from the December meeting you will show your orchids in the new classes.

Murray then presented the prize cards and ribbons won by our members at the recent "Sharkies" Show. He congratulated all the members who contributed to our success in any small way, making special mention of Neville Roper – Grand Champion plus 4 other Champions, Eric and Audrey Marks – 2 Champions, See Ting Ho – 1 Champion, Sandra Crosby and Tony Costa 1 – Champion and the many other prize winners.

He then called for members to care for the ferns, which the club had purchased for the display and to grow them on for our display next year. ( Our thanks to the volunteers).

We are still looking for a host or hostess, or both, for our meetings? See Murray or Louise if you can help.

As most members would be aware, with this our Xmas Party, you are invited to contribute to the Xmas Raffle. Your Xmas donated wrapped gift, (of anything ) not only helps the Society, but contributes to the evening. The Society supplies all the hot food and cool drinks, tea and coffee,

but a plate of goodies for the supper table would be appreciated.

**Lucky Plants.** G.Birss, L. Gannon, S.Crosby & T. Costa.

**Plant Raffle.** C.Polis 2. (Visitor) K. Hancock. J.Hart.

### **Dates to Remember.**

10 th. December --- SSOS. Monthly and Xmas Meeting. Prize Giving and Giant Raffle. Xmas Party.

13 th. January --- SSOS. Monthly Meeting, normal meeting.

### **Judges Choice.**

Open. -- Paph. Mem.Robert Ward - G. Hart.  
Intermediate – Dend. densiflorum - L. Gannon.  
Novice. -- Max.haematoglossum – M Hitchcock

### **Judges for December 2007.**

	TEAM 1	TEAM 2	TEAM 3
LEAD JUDGE	E BEEHAG	I CHALMER	N ROPER
JUDGE	G HART	D BROOKS	W CHAPMAN
JUDGE	J HART	K WILSON	I WARE
ASSOC.	J MOSS		
WRITER	J ROBINSON	M HITCHCOCK	D COULTON

Murray gave a short talk on plants benched. He made mention of D. Mousmee, a cross between D. thrysoflorum and D. bronckartii ( furcatum) a lovely delicate mauve/pink petals with a yellow centre.

Supper was taken .and then Cary and Ian gave us their talk on a recent trip to New Guinea. In showing us so many species and their habitats. The cross section of orchids they introduced us to, so many as yet unnamed was vast and interesting, but along with the orchids, the visitation to the villages and the people was a change from just an orchid talk. Thank you to you both.

### **Editors Corner.**

One of the happier sightings was seeing Ken Hancock back on deck again after a “hiccup’ again. Also, Judy Calnan, who has been out of action after her knee operation. Good to see both of you up and around.

Once again your committee is seeking a home ( storage area or space in a garage) for some of our gear. If you are agreeable to have us place a shed even on your block ( at our cost ) please contact Louise.

The Society, as a way of thanks , presented Swane’s nursery with a gift basket for their sponsorship through the year.

I hate to bring it up, but **FEES are now DUE.** Please see Treasurer George.

At the December meeting, a Perpetual Trophy in the name of Rona Goudie, will be presented. The majority of people have no idea who Rona was, or the conditions of the award. Rona and husband, Noel, (in those good old days) were many things. They were made life members not only for their work and involvement but the yearly donation of plants for the auction. The yearly break-up of their top quality plants, saw the donation of all the surplus pieces which were very eagerly sought after. On a trip to South East Asia, Rona , purchased a gold plated orchid pendant, which was donated to the Society, to be held by the person who won the most prizes at a major show., without winning a championship, for the following twelve months. She was trying to get people to bring plants to the shows, to help the Society. Her untimely passing was a great loss to all of us who had the privledge of calling her friend. As has been told to me “ an oldie, but a Goudie”.

In the letter received from OSNSW, Geoff Fulcher there is a lot of detail, which we will put to members in the January Bulletin.

In conclusion for the year, I would be remiss if I didn’t give my thanks, to all the people who in some way help me produce this for you. The expertise that See Ting Ho tries to instil in me with the computer, the printing and layout. Ian Ware for his photography. Bob Maxwell collating the Bulletin. Jan Robinson for typing and articles, and the many people who in any small way help me produce this for you, Don’t forget we are looking for new articles, even experiences.

### **Website Report**

Only a few updates since the last Bulletin, with the October and November Photos now on the site, provided by Ian Ware. Sadly we seem to have a drought of articles, as I have not recieved one for quite a few months no. Come on now, get on the computer or jot a few lines down on paper, it doesn't have to be a literary masterpiece or pages on pages. We could benefit from ideas on the website. As I have said before, this is your website, everyone needs to contribute.

Daniel Coulton. [dan-the-man351@hotmail.com](mailto:dan-the-man351@hotmail.com)

## Osmosis

by Jeff Allen (Courtesy of Cumberland Orchid Circle)

Water H<sub>2</sub>O, two atoms of Hydrogen and one atom of Oxygen, when combined, this makes one molecule of water. The molecules of liquid have a strong power of attraction to each other (similar to magnetism) which gives rise to numerous actions often not realized, e.g. it is this force that pulls the kerosene up the wick of a lamp.

Osmosis is the diffusion of a liquid through a permeable membrane. This action continues until the liquid on each side of the membrane is of equal density.

All elements taken in by osmosis must be totally dissolved, such as salt and sugar, and thus make the water denser and in doing so increases the molecular pull of the molecule. It then follows that if and when the density of the water outside the surrounding the roots is denser than the liquid in the root cells there is a reverse action of osmosis, thus pulling the liquid out of the root. However this action only removes the water and not the dissolved elements.

In plants there is a continuous line of plant cells from the roots to the leaves, in the woody perennials the wood forming the heart wood are the conveyors, while in the herbaceous plants, contained in the stems are a group of cells called vascular bundles which perform the task moving the liquid from the roots to the leaves.

As is well known leaves exude water vapour and this exudation is only the water and does not include the dissolved elements thus increasing the density of the cell moisture, this increase in density thus causes an osmosis action of pulling the liquid from the roots to the leaves.

As mentioned above if the soil moisture is denser than the moisture in the root cells reverse osmosis occurs and again only removing the water thus increasing the density of the cell moisture and causing the osmosis action to pull the moisture down from the stem. This action can be first noticed in the death of the young growths, then the dead tips of some leaves and finally if severe enough the death of the plant.

In orchids we have the vastly different locations of plants, some are terrestrial and others are epiphyte. It is logical to expect the terrestrial cymbidiums to grow in locations with far denser soil moisture than the dear old Den. speciosum growing on sandstone rock I feel that it can be readily assumed that one can take or require heavier feeding than the other, and is also

considered to be the reason for the difficulty of growing a varied collection in the one location. It is also most obvious that to increase the rate of any fertilizer [etc. is](#) not necessarily going to give the benefit required but could result in reverse osmosis and the disastrous results thereto.

## The Orchid Society of New South Wales

By Doug Symons -Gardening Australia – August 1994.

SMALL group of enthusiastic orchid growers formed The Orchid Society of New South Wales in 1935 when orchids were rather rare and expensive and (following the European experience) considered difficult to grow.

With the realisation that the New South Wales coastal climate is ideal for growing a very large variety of orchids, the number of growers has increased dramatically. Scattered throughout the state, there are now about 60 orchid societies, totalling thousands of members and affiliated with The Orchid Society of New South Wales.

With the possible exception of the grasses, orchids constitute the largest and most diverse group of flowering plants in nature. There are over 25,000 known species, with new species frequently being found. Orchids occur over most of the land masses of the earth - from steamy tropical jungles to semi arid deserts. Most of the horticulturally desirable orchid species are found in the tropical and subtropical areas of Asia and America, many occurring at quite high altitudes - hence their adaptability to temperate climates.

Australia has a number of showy orchid species. Possibly the best known in New South Wales are the yellow 'Rock Lily' (*Dendrobium speciosum*) and the mostly pink Governor King's Orchid (*Dendrobium kingianum*).

Hybridisation of Australian native orchids has produced many vigorous and beautiful orchids. Many growers specialise in Australian native orchids and have formed their own societies. Orchids have been known from very early times. The Orchid species, after which the family is named, occur throughout Europe. The tubers of these orchids resemble animal testes and were thought to have grown from semen spilt on the ground. These tubers have been used as an aphrodisiac from ancient times.

The 19th century was the great age of discovery for the orchid. The beauty and great variety of the flowers captured the imagination of the wealthy and noble of Europe, particularly of England, and

Orchid Hunters' were despatched to all corners of the globe in search of new varieties. Many of these intrepid men fell prey to tropical diseases or were murdered by natives. In spite of this, orchids were shipped back to Europe in large numbers and the great houses vied with one another for new varieties, which fetched extraordinarily high prices. Many great collections were built up and much of the mystique surrounding orchids dates from this era. Orchids produce large quantities of seed but, unlike that of most plants, orchid seed carries no food supply. In nature it is symbiotic - it relies upon a fungus to penetrate the germinating seed and feed it until it has grown sufficiently to fend for itself. For this reason, hybrids were very difficult to raise in the glass-houses of Europe. Seed was scattered around mature plants in the hope that these plants retained some of the specific fungus necessary for germination. Occasionally they did, and a few hybrids were raised from the late 19th century onward.

The discovery of asymbiotic germination in the mid-20th century changed all this. Sterile seed, placed in a sterile flask containing a nutrient gel, germinated and grew to the stage when the young plant could fend for itself. This made it possible for orchids to be raised cheaply and in large numbers. The more recent development of cloning has resulted in desirable varieties being produced in quantity and at low cost. Orchids are now within the reach of everybody.

The great thing about orchids is their diversity. The variety of vegetative growth and flowering habit is enormous and (even better) many quite distinct varieties of orchids will grow quite happily together in a shadehouse in the backyard and will produce long-lasting flowers throughout the year.

The best way to appreciate the beauty and diversity of orchids is to visit some of the many orchid shows held during autumn, winter and spring. The big one, organised by the Orchid Society of NSW and its affiliated societies, is the Spring Orchid Festival, held in the Royal Botanic Gardens in Sydney from 18th to 25th September 1994.

This article was found by Frank Bowyer from one of the old books he had bought at our recent auction.

### **Tree Branch, Fern Slab or Whatever** **Orchid Culture**

by Sydney A. Monkhouse (Orchid grower for the last 45 years)

Article from Australian Orchid Foundation  
Awareness Campaign

I have read in other "Awareness Papers" that orchids that are growing well in an ideal environment do not suffer from diseases such as fungus, bacteria and even insect pest. I fully agree with this.

Orchids are amazingly adaptive plants and whilst we have a large variation in climatic conditions in our continent, the orchids will do their best to acclimatize no matter where you happen to live.

Epiphytic orchids are adapted to grow on the bark of certain trees and one way to ensure their healthy existence is for us to grow them on trees or pieces of trees or even on tree fern blocks. In my experience the plants must be attached in the most natural manner to such objects.

First I select a suitable epiphyte for my growing conditions. Living in Adelaide - a dry climate with hot summer and cold winter, I have had much success with most Laelias, some cattleyas, Miltonia spectabilis types, many of the oncidiums, most Australia Native epiphytes plus similar types. All of these I can grow successfully without any special housing - just a little light shade in the hottest weather.

The most materials that I have used successfully are blocks of "paper bark", tree fern blocks and Casuarina trunks.

My procedure is to remove all roots from the plant to be attached - this means ALL of the roots - just leaving a bare rhizome with, of course, its leaves and shoots attached. Place the rhizome firmly against the host block, but NEVER put a pad of sphagnum moss or coconut fibre between the rhizome and the block. I have found this to be the main cause of the failure with block culture.

I firmly attach the orchid to the block with nylon cord criss-crossing over the rhizome several times until the whole plant is firmly held in place. I never run the cord over any new shoots. These procedures I carry out in spring so that the new shoots will quickly appear and from these a whole new root system will quickly attach itself to the block or log.

Plants so grown will have healthy disease free root systems and make very attractive talking points.

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## Watering Orchids

Courtesy of Cumberland Orchid Circle from the Handbook on Orchid Pests and Diseases

Need it be said that water is vital to plant life? Plants are predominately composed of water. Water is important to nearly every physiological process on going in living plant tissue. Carbon dioxide and water are combined in photosynthesis to make the food necessary for plant survival. Water performs another essential function in plants by acting as a vehicle for the uptake of minerals through the root, as well as for the distribution of minerals, food and other substances within the plant itself. An orchid grower needs only to provide too little water, or too much to realize how critical it is to orchids.care.

Most orchids, particularly the epiphytes, have evolved to withstand dry conditions to some extent. Unlike other more tender plants, orchids don't usually cry out that they need water by wilting in a dramatic fashion. Instead, a prolonged period of almost deliberate water neglect is usually necessary to produce drought responses in well-rooted orchids. Most orchids, particularly the epiphytes, have evolved to withstand dry conditions to some extent. Unlike other more tender plants, orchids don't usually cry out that they need water by wilting in a dramatic fashion. Instead, a prolonged period of almost deliberate water neglect is usually necessary to produce drought responses in well-rooted orchids.

These responses are subtle at first. A slight shriveling of the succulent leaves of Cattleya-type orchids can be noticed with close observation by sight and touch. Turgid succulent leaves are smooth; those under water stress develop wrinkles and bumpy patches, feeling rougher. Thinner but still leathery orchid leaves may curl under water deprivation. Some orchid leaves may react by dying back at the tips. With persistent drought, leaves may lighten in colour, turn brown. Pseudobulbs, which normally develop furrows with age, will become deeply grooved under chronically dry conditions. All these symptoms should suggest to the grower that the orchid so responding is not taking up enough water to compensate for water loss.

*ctd after results.....*

## MONTHLY JUDGING RESULTS

For : Nov-07

### OPEN JUDGES CHOICE

Winner Paph. Mem. Robert Ward G. Hart

### INTERMEDIATE JUDGES CHOICE

Winner Den. densiflorum L. Gannon

### NOVICE & JUNIOR JUDGES CHOICE

Winner Max. haematoglossa M. Hitchcock

### CLASS # 1 AUSTRALIAN NATIVES

1st Cym. canaliculatum var sparkesii E&A Marks  
 2nd Cym. suave T.Costa/S.Crosby  
 3rd Dockrillia toressae R. Moar  
 4th Dockrillia prenticei R. Moar

### CLASS # 2 SPECIES PAPHIOPEDILUM

1st Paph. hirsutissimum K. Wilson  
 2nd Paph. victoria reginae G. Hart  
 3rd Paph. hayaldianum K. Wilson

### CLASS # 3 CATTLEYA OVER 110mm

1st Cat. Irene Holguin 'Feathergill' J. Hart  
 2nd Blc. Lyn Spencer 'Cha' J. Hart  
 3rd Cat. Irene Finney Spring Bounty x Blc. Dundas T.Costa/S.Crosby

### CLASS # 4 NOVELTY PAPHIOPEDILUM

1st Paph. Mem. Robert Ward G. Hart  
 2nd Paph. Cristina Richards G. Hart  
 3rd Paph. Linda Booth K. Wilson  
 4th Paph. Gold Dollar G. Hart

### CLASS # 5 CATTLEYA OVER 80 TO 110mm

1st B. nodosa x Blc. Elenor x Blc. Golden Myth J.W. Moss

### CLASS # 6 PAPHIOPEDILUM

1st Paph. Freckles 'Corkey' N. Roper

### CLASS # 7 CATTLEYA INTERGENERIC (Up to 70mm)

1st Ctna Brandii T.Costa/S.Crosby  
 2nd C. Chicanery Diane x Sophra millerii K. Wilson

### CLASS # 8 CATTLEYA UP TO 80mm

1st Pot. Free Spirit 'H4' T. Beehag  
 2nd Slc. Charming Jewel 'H&R' T. Beehag  
 3rd Slc. Dal's Rage T. Beehag  
 4th Lc. Maris Song x Slc. Tangerine Jewel T.Costa/S.Crosby

### CLASS # 9 AUSTRALIAN NATIVE HYBRID

1st Cym. Little Black Sambo 'Barbara' N. Roper  
 2nd Cym. Kuranda D.Wood

### CLASS # 10 SPECIES ASIAN

1st Den. aggregatum A&E Moulang  
 2nd Bulbo. hymnopolitanum D.Wood  
 3rd Den. chrysotoxum K. Wilson  
 4th Coel. lactea E&A Marks

### CLASS # 11 PHALAEOPSIS

1st Purple Haze Pearl T.Costa/S.Crosby  
 2nd Golden Joy 'Lemon Stripe' T.Costa/S.Crosby  
 3rd Wedding Art X Hsinying Mafii T&J Hyde  
 4th Hsinying Noble Moor T&J Hyde

### CLASS # 12 SEEDLING

1st Sarco. Bessie N. Roper  
 2nd Sarco. Velvet KWR N. Roper  
 3rd Sarco. Elise 'Plum' x Velvet 'Ruby' N. Roper  
 4th Sarco. Elise x Velvet N. Roper

### CLASS # 13 ONCIDIUM

1st gardnerii x marshallianum K. Wilson  
 2nd Sydney R. Moar

### CLASS # 14 NOVELTY PHALAEOPSIS UNDER 75mm

1st Brother Cats Paw T&J Hyde  
 2nd Little Emperor T.Costa/S.Crosby  
 3rd Dov-dii Rose x Ching John T.Costa/S.Crosby  
 4th Akebono x Karla's Blush x Hilo Lip T. Beehag

### CLASS # 15 ONCIDIUM INTERGENERIC ALLIANCE

1st Tolu Susan Perreira x Tolu Jubilee T. Beehag  
 2nd Odcdm Golden Trideni T. Beehag  
 3rd Colm. Space Race Golden Topaz T.Costa/S.Crosby  
 4th MclIna. Pagan Love Song T. Beehag  
 5th Onc. Robert Perreira x John Evans J. Hart

**CLASS # 16 MISCELLANEOUS**

- 1st Prom. Cachaca N. Roper  
 2nd Prom. Norman Gaunt 'Pure Green' N. Roper  
 3rd Angl. Nowra D.Wood  
 4th Prom. Cachaca Raspberries N. Roper

**CLASS # 17 DENDROBIUM HYBRIDS**

- 1st Den. Mousmee T.Costa/S.Crosby  
 2nd Den. gonzalenni 'Royale' x Victoria regina T.Costa/S.Crosby

**CLASS # 18 VANDACEOUS NOT VANDA**

- 1st V.bensomii x Rhy. coelestis x Fuch's Sunset M. Errington  
 2nd Ascda Su-Fun Beauty 'Viboon' M. Errington  
 3rd Sarco. hartmannii x Phal Lobiata N. Roper  
 4th Asc. Fuchs Port Royal x Asc. sarasai M. Errington

**CLASS # 19 MASDEVALLIA & DRACULA SPECIES**

- 1st Masd. vellifera G. Hart

**CLASS # 21 ODONTOGLOSSUM INCLUDING ODONTIODA**

- 1st Odo Mornington T. Beehag

**CLASS # 21A PLEUROTHALLIDINAE HYBRIDS**

- 1st Masd. Cuzco Gold R. Ettrick  
 2nd Masd. Peach Fuzz x Masd ignea G. Hart  
 3rd Bro. Sanguinea M. Errington

**CLASS # 21B LAELINAE SPECIES**

- 1st Enc. cochleata G. Hart  
 2nd C. intermedia var coerulea J. Costa

**CLASS # 22 MINITURE CYMBIDIUM UNDER 60mm**

- 1st Cym. Sweet Devon E&A Marks  
 2nd Cym. Little Beauty E&A Marks  
 3rd Cym. Sweet Devon 'Little Beauty' K. Wilson  
 4th Cym. Australian Midnight K. Wilson  
 5th Cym. Cricket E&A Marks

**CLASS # 23 SPECIES OTHER THAN ASIAN OR PAPHIOPEDILUM**

- 1st Prom. guttata N. Roper  
 2nd Cuitlanzania pendula T.Costa/S.Crosby  
 3rd Max. variabilis N. Roper  
 4th Pescatorea cerina N. Roper  
 5th Onc. sphacuiatum T.Costa/S.Crosby

**CLASS # 23A OTHER PLEUROTHALLIDINAE SPECIES**

- 1st Phloeophila pubescans G. Hart  
 2nd Pleuro platystacha G. Hart  
 3rd Platystelle misera G. Hart  
 4th Pleuro minutalis G. Hart

**CLASS # 24A NATIVE SARCANTHINAE HYBRID**

- 1st Sarco. Cheries Joy D.Wood  
 2nd Sarco. Dove 'Good' x Fitzhart '780' J. Costa  
 3rd Sarco. Burgundy on Ice N. Roper  
 4th Sarco. Cheries Joy D.Wood  
 5th Sarco. Mem Albie x Heidi D.Wood

**CLASS # 29 NOVICE - MISCELLANEOUS**

- 1st Phal Brother 'Sarah Gold' Trevor Costa  
 2nd Phrag Perseas Trevor Costa  
 3rd Onc. Sharry Baby 'Sweet Fragrance' R. Trevitt

**CLASS # 30 NOVICE -SPECIES**

- 1st Max. haematoglossa M. Hitchcock  
 2nd Masd. maculata R. Trevitt  
 3rd Robiquetia mooreana R. Trevitt  
 4th Phal equestris x self R. Trevitt

**CLASS # 31 INTERMEDIATE - PAPHIOPEDILUM**

- 1st Paph. Magic Gem x Tuxedo Junction G. Birss

**CLASS # 32 INTERMEDIATE - CYMBIDIUM**

- 1st Cym. Mad Magic 'Amber' S. Vavayis

**CLASS # 33 INTERMEDIATE - NATIVE SPECIES & NATIVE HYBRID**

- 1st Sarco. (Hot Ice x fitzgeraldi) x Elegance 'Super' G. Birss  
 2nd Cym. suave G. Birss

**CLASS # 34 INTERMEDIATE - CATTLEYA**

- 1st Cat. unknown S. Vavayis  
 2nd Lc. Chicanery x Blc Orange Nugget 'Lea' x Lc S. Vavayis  
 3rd Slc. Jewel Box 'Scheherazade' S. Vavayis  
 4th C. intermedia amethystina x Blc Morning Glory S. Vavayis

**CLASS # 35 INTERMEDIATE - MISCELLANEOUS**

- 1st Den. Gifu L. Gannon  
 2nd Masd. Echo x Masd. Pinnocchio G. Birss  
 3rd Den. Fortune II S. Vavayis  
 4th Phal Brother Lawrence 'Carmella' G. Birss

**CLASS # 36 INTERMEDIATE - SPECIES**

- 1st Den. densiflorum L. Gannon  
 2nd Max. tenuifolia L. Gannon  
 3rd Dryadella zebrina G. Birss  
 4th Gongora dresslesi G. Birss

**CLASS # 41 JUNIORS**

- 1st Coel. massangeana D. Coulton  
 2nd Calanthe triplicata D. Coulton

**Cont....**

Being more needy, actively growing leaves and pseudobulbs are the most vulnerable to stress. Expanding leaves, especially those of the more thin-leaved genera, are likely to develop a case of "accordion pleating" without adequate moisture. Leaves and pseudobulbs will often be stunted at maturity if deprived during this critical stage. Over-watering is a far more common error committed in orchid culture. All zealous orchid growers know how hard it is to resist watering, even when it might be very well unnecessary, or harmful, ironically enough, watering too much can bring about the same response in orchids as watering too little. The reason for this lies in the ability of the roots to take up the water needed. Watering a potted orchid more frequently than necessary results in a perpetually soggy, eventually decomposed potting mix. A mix high in water content or decomposed is poorly aerated. Without oxygen, roots cannot grow or properly take up the water needed. Under such conditions they will prematurely die. An orchid with imperiled roots cannot absorb the water it requires. Losing this ability, over-watered orchids desiccate. An overly watered orchid is also more subject to disease. Orchid rot, phythium, etc. can kill an orchid from the ground up before the unwary grower can take any corrective action. Giving an orchid more water than it needs in those critical times of active growth can also, as with under-watering, lead to poor development and stunting of new leaves and pseudobulbs.

Since under-watering and over-watering can cause similar responses in orchids, how is the grower to know on which side he or she is erring? If an orchid is distressed to the point where symptoms such as those just discussed above begin to appear it is time to consider the all important roots. An idea of what condition the root system is in can be ascertained by jiggling the plant. A well-established orchid with a healthy root system usually won't budge in the pot. If such an orchid is showing signs of desiccation most likely it is being under-watered, and only needs more frequent watering to regain its growth. On the other hand, a plant with a distressed root system, having few healthy roots to hold it in place, will shift easily in its pot with a nudge. If the orchid in question does

so, it may be necessary to take the plant out of the pot to examine the root system. Any disruption, which may be caused in the process, is well worth the possible resolution of a potentially serious problem. If an orchid has been over-watered for some time, probably both the potting mix and the roots will be dark, wet and decomposed. Very few orchid roots can survive such wet and airless conditions, and they will very likely separate from the plant when "depotted". Dead orchid roots are darker than those which are alive, and will easily pull apart with the slightest tug. By contrast, live roots generally are lighter in colour, and will hold on tightly to both the plant and bits of potting mix. What dead roots remain attached to the plant should be removed and the orchid repotted in fresh media. With few, if any viable roots, it should then be moved into low light, high humidity conditions to prevent further desiccation until new roots form. The urge to continue watering excessively must be conquered now or never, because new roots are unlikely to develop in a wet mix. Keeping the mix slightly moist with infrequent watering will encourage root development. Once sufficient roots have initiated and penetrated the mix, more frequent watering can be carefully resumed.

Growers have been known to put their rootless, newly repotted orchids into polyethylene bags to achieve the high humidity levels conducive to new root formation. If this method is followed, care must be taken to keep the bagged plant out of all direct light. After all, what good is a stewed orchid?

Every sunny day plants lose great quantities of water because of transpiration through (evaporation from) their leaves. This water, of course, needs to be replaced through the absorption of water by the roots for the impaired functioning of the plant. Any environmental condition which increases the transpiration rate of an orchid will correspondingly increase its water needs. These include high light, high temperatures, low humidity and rapid air movement. An orchid's vegetative characteristics also have a lot to say in its water requirements. Leafy, terrestrial species have more surface area from which water can transpire and therefore will need more water than, for instance, a terete species adapted to a dry, epiphytic habitat. Many orchids especially species and primary hybrids have "rest periods" during which watering should be curtailed, in contrast to periods of rapid growth when watering needs can be at their highest. What an orchid is growing in has a significant effect on watering practices. Some media dry out faster than others. Potting mix composed of fine-

grade materials, particularly mixed containing peat moss, retain more water and are less subject to air, thus they dry out more slowly. Coarse media dry out more quickly, having less surface area to absorb water and larger air pockets to bring about more rapid evaporation. Fresh potting mix, particularly those containing bark, tends to resist water at first and dry faster than later when they have had a chance to decompose and settle. Orchids on mounts and the like dry out the quickest of all being constantly exposed to air on a surface of limited waterholding capacity. Media in clay pots generally dry out more rapidly because the clay is porous and "sweats" drawing water out of the media to evaporate on the outer surface of the pot. Plastic pots do not have this tendency. Media in such containers dry out more slowly as a result. Also the size of the container is a factor in watering. Larger pots, containing more media will retain more water and take longer to dry than smaller pots, which can dry far more quickly. Big pots often have a central core of media which being so protected from the air and other drying forces, takes a considerable time to dry. This can be a problem in specimen culture.

Watering orchids is very much a process of trial and error. The difference between a successful grower and one less so lies not in the fact that one makes errors in judgment while the other does not. All orchid growers, novice or experienced, make occasional mistakes in watering, especially with new plants whose needs are probably unfamiliar. But the expert orchid grower is more likely to be a keen observer of the condition of his/her plants, above and below the media surface. Suspicious by nature or by design, they will be the first to sense any adverse reaction to present watering practices, and the first to make the proper correct actions. Water is the means by which orchids obtain the nutritional elements essential for their survival. Naturally occurring water is an alphabet soup containing a number of these necessary elements dissolved in solution. To this water solution, in orchid growing practice, we add water - soluble fertilizers.

### **An absurd 'Key' o the philosophy of Orchid Growers. By an anonymous orchid grower**

Please do not get offended - this is a joke. Read only if you have a sense of humour. We orchid growers sometimes take ourselves far too seriously.

#### **The Purist**

There are two types of Purists;

1. In the first category, we have the individual who only grows species or hybrids. They tend to collect as many different type forms of a particular species. They may also specialise in a specific genus. For example they may specialise in epiphytics from Asia, and in particular bubophylums. They will acquire varieties of the same species from as many locations as possible. This particular group have in the past contributed to the serious decline of orchids in many places in the world.

2. The other group of Purist Orchid growers are not really growers, as often they only have a small collection. Instead, they are mostly found from late winter and onwards tramping around the bush with tripod and camera. They are usually very hardy souls, and solitary types, who prefer the company of themselves, rather than others. They prefer to observe orchids in situ and photograph them. They can identify literally hundreds of species'. And have an acute eye for small variations. They are rarely known to remove orchids from their location. If they do it is probably because they may have found a new species that requires further research. In the view of the writer, this group is the most highly regarded group. But for some who follow later, they are merely a source of obtaining more plants. Some members of this group have been known to have had an orchid named after them.

### **The Comedian**

The Comedian is probably the most important orchid grower. This individual is an antidote to the rest of us. Unlike others they refuse to take themselves seriously. Even though they may possess attributes common to other groups, they can see absurdity in the whole enterprise of trying to grow orchids. Even when they are sick, they can still see the funny side of things. Generally they are optimists. They listen attentively to fools trying to embarrass them, about their apparent lack of knowledge or expertise, and end up telling an absurd joke, just to put the expert off.

The comedian plays a useful role at orchid meetings. When a very serious discussion is taking place they tend to drop a clanger, which totally disrupts the others, throws the meeting into chaos.

There is a variation of this type. This person does not think they are very funny, but they tend to make the most stupid remarks, without thinking first. This person can be very dangerous, if they get into positions of responsibility, as they often tend to focus on their own agenda, diverging from the objectives of their particular organisation.

The amateur orchid grower may be classified under the following categories.

### **The Robber**

This is a fairly wide group of orchid growers. However they should not be considered real Orchid Growers, as they are known to obtain plants legally or illegally from the wild, plonk them into pots and flog them off, even though the plants are not established. Often this group has very little idea about growing orchids, they are only interested in making a quick profit. They have been known to strip out 100's of plants, of rare species. Before the plants are established a substantial percentage are dead. Members of this group have been known to befriend purists (2), by pretending to have similar interests. Once they have found where a location where orchids exist, they will return sometime later and strip the site of all available plants. Do not trust any one from this group.

### **The Bushwalker**

The bushwalker, again can be called an orchid grower, as often crashing around the bush, trying to get from point A to point B before the rest of their walking group, they find the odd orchid plant in the bush. They may collect the odd backbulb and try to grow it at home. This group usually has absolutely no idea how to grow orchids. When they get home, they have been known to nail orchids to fences and live Gum trees. They may plant an epiphytic plant in the soil. These people have a genuine love of the bush but do not really understand it. The bush for them is something to be mastered, hence the frenetic walking. They pay little attention to the moment they are experiencing i.e. the beauty of the bush. These are the type of person who is attracted to buying orchids from the Robber, as they have much in common. The difference here is that the robber is prepared to spend more time looking and collecting.

There are probably a number of other classifications of orchid growers, and if you were relativist, every single grower would have their own class. On the other hand if you were a person who thinks in absolutes, this key may or may not be going over the top! Where do you stand in this nonsense?

By Anon.

**WISHING ALL MEMBERS**

**AND THEIR FAMILY A MERRY**

**CHRISTMAS AND**

**A VERY HAPPY 2008**