

SUTHERLAND SHIRE ORCHID SOCIETY

Growing Seedlings - Cymbidiums - The Final Ecstasy!!

Most experienced growers will always recommend orchid enthusiast to have a go at growing seedlings of any orchid genera . Why is this? To answer this, you have to answer the question, what is a seedling?

The word 'seedling' will suggest that the orchids are grown from seed. That is exactly what it is. For me, growing seedlings is the search for improved quality from the parent plants, hoping for that "Wow" plant that you have nurtured to come along.

The seedling is a new generation of plant that may have inherited the quality or even improve the various features from both its parents.or grandparents etc, and invariably advances or improvements of that genera appear. There is no guarantee of a desirable result, in fact it can be somewhat of a lottery!

On pollination of an orchid flower, a seedpod will form. Upon maturity of the seedpod (1-18 months, depending on what genera of orchid), the seedpod is then sterilized in laboratory environment and the seed harvested and sowed in sterile growing medium which is contained in a Bottle or flask. Upon germination of the seeds grow into protocorms, which are then replated or resown, again done in laboratory sterile environment. Protocorms are separated and planted into another flask where it will then grow on developing leaves and roots (again a 6-12 month wait). The flask will usually contain 20 to 40 plants. The flasks usually grown under lights in the laboratory.

When the seedlings are large enough, the plants are deflasked, taken out and grown on either in community pots, ie all the seedlings planted together in a small pot with appropriated potting medium or planted out into individual little tubes. As they grow and mature in the external environment, they are potted on into larger pots when required. It will take 3 - 5 years before they will start to flower.

Now the wait is over, the little babies have grown up and have thrown up a spike. The buds extend. Hmmmm, this bud looks good, has potential - it is round like a grape! Hmmmm, this one looks long and sharpish, a 'For Sale' sign perhaps!! The expectation and excitement begins!! As the buds mature, you start forming an opinion about its potential. You earmark those very rounded buds, you check each day to see if they are going to open up soon. From the buds, you can see if the flower sepals are going to be very broad or just narrow. You still cannot see the petals and the labellum. If it is a pink or red, the bud will show that form of colour but certainly not the final outcome.





The bud then starts to open, very slowly, teasing you each day about the final outcome. It is now open enough for you to know the colour, the look of the labellum and the size of the petals.



The waiting is killing you, so the fingers go to work, you try to pry open the sepals and petals a bit more to get a better look. In doing so, slightly too vigorously, you manage to tear some part of the petal!! Never mind, its only a seedling and I am not going to show it - you say to yourself, trying to console yourself!



A few days later, the flower has opened-up halfway, enough for you to cry out "WoW" in excitement!! You say to yourself, "this is a bloody beauty!" The petal looks wide, the flower looks round, the colour is good, hmmm the labellum is a slight disappointment. Nevertheless, still a "WoW" in your mind. Now you start to worry, is it too cuppy and not going to open up because of the size of the sepals or petals or is it going to blow out by furling back etc in a few days time. Here is hoping!! Fingers crossed!

The wait is over, the flower kept its form, it is the roundest of round, what a red of good size. Perhaps the judges will not like the partly folded back lip, but at least it is symmetrical, you consol yourself.

It is worth the excitement and wait. Alas, how often does this ecstasy come along, well it's a low percentage but well worth the wait!!

What is the Cross you ask? - it is one of Greg Bryant's crosses - Khan Flame "Lucifer" x Yowie Flame "Vulcan" which has been registered as **Flaming Vulcan** . This cross has produced quite a good proportion of quality seedlings.



This is another of the Flaming Vulcan seedling, this one using Khan Flame 'Raquel' with Yowie Flame "Vulcan"

Both these seedlings flowered in 2007! What a Year!

Here are some pictures of the parents



Yowie Rose "Vulcan"



Khan Flame 'Raquel'



Khan Flame "Lucifer"

Grow some!

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