

Odontoglossum Intergenerics



One wet June Sunday afternoon several years ago I came across a wonderful display of *Odontoglossum* species and hybrids while browsing around one of the many orchid fairs. I was immediately smitten by their beauty and ended up, at considerable expense, taking several home. Over the next few years I met with my share of success and failure as I attempted to grow these beautiful orchids. As many orchid growers have, I quickly learnt many of them strongly dislike Sydney's thirty-five degree summers.

So some were lost, but others did not seem to mind. They adapted and in many cases thrived. They were largely *Wilsonaras*, *Odontocidiums*, *Colmanaras*, and some *Vuylstekeara*. They obviously had some heat tolerance and ability to adapt. These are the plants I now grow and find do very well if given the right conditions.

I grow my plants in a bush house covered with 70% shade cloth. The house has a removable clear plastic cover for the roof to ward off heavy period of continual rain. The plants grow in this bush house with the roof uncovered for most of the year. They receive a good supply of rainwater and shade. Air movement is good but is only supplied by the prevailing winds. The plants are grown in small pots (80mm to 150mm) depending on root ball size. Notice I did not say plant size, pot these orchids in pots that just accommodate their roots or allow for one years growth. Over potting is very dangerous! I grow my plants in medium bark mix nothing else is added, just fresh medium bark, repotting every two years. So many growers have very complicated mediums to grow their plants in. I am not a great believer in this. My theory is keep it simple, keep it fresh by regularly repotting, and give serious thought to what you feed your plants. Water quality, air movement and fertilising management are much more important than the medium you pot in. It is really there to hold

the plant in position, as long as its fresh.that's about it!

I fertilise very weakly every time I water using a balanced commercial fertiliser. If the rain has watered them for me I miss several watering throughout the year. (Rainwater can be as good as fertilising!)

When the inflorescences appear on the newly matured growths I carefully stake them so they come up straight and strong. If I need to bend or straighten them I wait until the plant an day have warmed up. Proceeding very carefully and slowly.

Many of these wonderful plants will send out inflorescences from both sides of the growth, especially if one is damaged. They also branch with plant size and maturity making an even more spectacular display.

Given these quite simple growing conditions and good observant management practices that proactively ward of insect pests and other problems, this family of orchids will reward you year after year with long lasting flowers of great beauty.