

SUTHERLAND SHIRE ORCHID SOCIETY

The Show from Hell

Ever come home from a show feeling less than satisfied with your show bench results? Consider the following events that can only lead one to decide that this was indeed the show from hell.

To give your ripper intermediate cymbidium every chance of taking out Grand Champion at your local show you spend three hours each day for four weeks training and arranging each of its eight racemes of thirty plus blooms.

Not only does this entail a lot of time but it creates a level of frustration bordering on psychological warfare as you try to manipulate those springy little yoyo's, apply at least five metres of green twist tie without damaging any buds, insert eight reshaped dry cleaners coat hangers and then 'pack' the flowers with a melange of cardboard, tissue paper, sponge rubber, pipe cleaners and Styrofoam - you know, all that stuff you see adorning the back of empty station wagons parked in the car parks outside show venues .

Having driven the twenty kilometres to the show at a conservative 40kph to minimise potential damage to your Grand Champion in the making you eventually place it on the show bench in pristine condition with, thankfully, no need to use the words 'damaged in transit'. At this point in time you are at peace with the world knowing that the announcement of your plant as Grand Champion is little more than a formality. That is until you discover that your painstakingly engineered 200mm. pot full of stud intermediate cymbidium has been beaten for Grand Champ. by a Masdevallia in a 50mm pot. with a single paltry flower!

Your rapidly rising blood pressure reaches stratospheric levels when you realise that the Masdevallia flower doesn't even need a stake!

After a few deep breaths your blood pressure begins to subside. As calmness finally prevails the show marshal instantaneously elevates your anger to a new personal best when he informs you that it was close "real close. if your cymbidium didn't have that pollen cap starting to go off."

By the end of the show you have accepted, albeit grudgingly, that the judges decision is final and it was only an orchid show. After all Reserve Champion and a cheque for \$25 is a pretty respectable outcome anyway. Your ego saving mental fall back position has been achieved largely due to the general opinion of sympathetic club members that you have been the victim on an injustice - "Who were the judges?" "typical mix up" "Half of them hate cymbidiums and the other half grow Masdevallias" and "the short black one with the studded collar could have done a better job than the bloke with the white cane!" being typical commentary.

Eventually the show from hell is nearing the end and pull down time is approaching. You are now consumed by the desire to get your reserve champion, its decorations and your prize money into the car and on the road ASAP. No need to street crawl at 40kph on the home journey.

The prize winners are being presented with their trophies and prize money. You clap politely when 'Mr. Masdevallia' is called to the dais. He is all smiles as the president shakes his hand while back in the crowd the best you can muster is a sort of pained gesture, a cross between a fear grin and a death stare. Anyway you assure yourself that the club members clapped loudest when you were called to the dais and surely now even 'Mr. Masdevallia' realises how lucky he has been.

Your escape plan is to make two trips to the car. The first trip is to deliver your hard earned winnings, the packets of fertiliser and some seedlings purchased from the sales stall during the day. The second journey will be needed to convey your sizeable Reserve Champion intermediate cymbidium to the back of your station wagon. This operation proceeds uneventfully until, on approaching your car, you realise that your left hand is the one most easily freed from supporting the Reserve Champion but your car keys are in your right trouser pocket!

The solution, you decide, as you stand in the car park, is to carefully transfer more of the load from the right arm to the left and..

EXPLETIVES!!! Broken pot on the asphalt! Potting mix everywhere! Battered pieces of prize winning foliage spread for metres and microscopic pieces of petals decorating the car park! And the loudly exclaimed "I hate *#* orchids" ringing in the ears of stunned onlookers.

You dip your now liberated right hand into your trouser pocket and extract your car key. As you do so "Mr. Masdevallia", smarty pants, all smiles bloody Grand Champion is standing at his car, the one parked next to yours, still cursing his 'butter fingers' as he bends down to salvage the pieces of what was once the Grand Champion and you decide that there is justice after all even at the show from hell!

Neville Roper, 2007