

## Your Big Meeting

Today is the last Monday of the month and tonight's orchid meeting is the one that you have been anxiously waiting and planning for over the last fortnight. The meeting tonight in the local church hall will not be just an ordinary monthly meeting. There's prize money up for grabs, you see it's the annual oncidium alliance competition night and the committee are offering substantial financial rewards to successful exhibitors. This has been organised to encourage members to bring along their plants to put on a good show for visiting international oncidium expert, Mr. V. Aricosum. You would just love to claim a share of the prize money but you especially want to be recognised by the world authority..even get on first name terms.perhaps!

Standing under the carport you admire the crackerjack *Odontocidium* Golden Trident that you have just carefully cradled across the backyard from the glasshouse. Surely this magnificent specimen is not only a certainty to pick up the prizemoney but to also capture the attention of Mr. V. Aricosum. To avoid even the slightest chance of damaging the blooms that you have carefully groomed to form a near perfect 1.5 metre tall pyramid of gold and brown you decide that that some prior thought and planning are needed. Perhaps if you wind down the passenger side window, tilt the pot until the compost just begins to spill out and if you can cajole your seven year old to lean through the back driver's side window and guide the raceme. you get the idea.

Having accomplished the nerve wracking task of loading your showpiece into the car you are finally on your way to the church hall for the eagerly awaited meeting. Conscious of the need to drive carefully so that an unnoticed pothole or an urgent braking episode will not undo your hard work and deprive you of your anxiously anticipated rewards you choose to travel at a speed considerably below the speed limit. You insist on proceeding at this conservative speed despite the frustration that you are obviously generating for the horn blowing drivers who are forming an ever lengthening procession behind you.

When you drive up to the hall you are surprised by the number of cars parked nearby - or more precisely you are annoyed by the shortage of parking spaces within easy walking distance. While you find it galling to have to carry your champion in the making over such a long distance you console yourself with the notion that there will a very large crowd in attendance to witness the success that you have been anticipating with such relish. These thoughts have been racing through your head as you have been carefully extracting the precision packed Golden Trident. Now that you have, thankfully, achieved this task with all flowers intact you begin the long walk to the hall. The absence of familiar cars parked along the way leads you to conclude that a lot of people from other clubs have shown up tonight either to try and get their hands on the prizemoney or because Mr. Aricosum has real drawing power. Anyway you'll show them how it is done!

The hum coming from the hall is exciting as you ascend the steps to the front door, you wonder how many heads will turn, how many conversations will be suspended, how many will concede defeat as you enter the room with your ripper. Sure enough as you step inside the door the room goes quiet, you feel mesmerised as you survey the crowded room, you are vaguely aware of admiring oohs and aahs but as you look around there is not another orchid in sight - not even one familiar face just a hundred or more ladies sitting around knitting beanies for the third world children!

Walking back to your car you feel like a complete halfwit - all that effort and anticipation thwarted by your inability to read a calendar. Meetings are set for the fourth Monday of each month which usually means the last Monday of the month but this month had five Mondays - in short the annual oncidium alliance competition night was held last week. Not only have you missed out on the prizemoney and the chance to be noticed by Varicosum but you have missed the meeting. At least you were noticed by a hundred or so very bemused charity knitters!

Neville Ropert, 2003



*Plectochilus Zelda*