

SUTHERLAND SHIRE ORCHID SOCIETY

Why you should grow spuds

1. They are much more interesting than exotic cymbidium hybrids.
2. Many of them have single flowers. In the light of falling education standards this is very handy for those with poor numeracy skills. This same reason explains why hybrid paphiopedilums are so popular in exotic collections.
3. They attract all of the two spotted mites away from the real orchids in your collection.
4. They are at their best when, at a show, you ask the judges which individual flower they judged or whether they judged the whole pot.
5. They are at their very best when after you have done number 4 (above) and a judge points out the flower that was selected for first place you further enquire as to why the all but identical flower in the same pot didn't get second place.
6. Otherwise useless plastic takeaway food containers become a valuable humidity retaining device when your Corybas come into flower.
7. What else can you do with spent cymbidium compost?
8. They are much more interesting than dinner plate paphiopedilums.
9. Their perfume is far more pleasant than Liparis reflexa - a property they share with almost every other living thing on the planet.
10. If you have some particularly unspectacular plants you may care to explore the possibility of selling the tubers to trendy inner city restaurants that specialise in bush tucker.
11. What other environmentally friendly things can you do with chopped-up casuarina needles?
12. A whole new vista of holiday destinations opens up when you realise that terrestrials don't only grow on the eastern seaboard.

Reasons Why I Don't Grow Spuds

1. They are not real orchids despite what everybody would have you believe.
2. They are too shy! Many of them hide underground for half of the year. This is usually in summer when you've got longer daylight hours and better weather - just when you feel like looking at your flowers.
3. You can't risk introducing to your backyard plants that are sneaky enough to mimic grass.
4. You wouldn't even go near a plant that is so sneaky that it lives its whole life underground!
5. They are politically incorrect - repotting them becomes secret men's business so as not to offend 'genteel ladies' by allowing them to glimpse a terrestrial "gonad-like tuberous structures".
6. Once you become obsessed, as most spud farmers eventually do, you end up with a sore back for days after weekend orchid spotting trips spent stooped over searching the ground.
7. Pterostylis are perverse! In any given pot some will flower as natural right handers, others seem to be natural left handers while a third group can't make up their minds to be either. The result is a bunch of hoods all looking in different directions instead of all staring back at the judges.
8. Using bamboo stakes and green twistie to support individual flower stems becomes a tricky business.
9. Because I don't know where to get "3 parts of loam" as required by almost every spud farming recipe.
10. If you grow them really well and they multiply who wants extra terrestrials spooking the rest of their collection? (Boom Boom!)
11. Orchid spotting holidays become very expensive when you have to include trips to Western Australia and South Australia.

12. The names! When you become aware that the Latin names are a nightmare to pronounce and almost impossible to fit on the largest tags you contemplate lowering your standards and using common names. A flick through the pages of Collin and Dorothy Woolcock's book 'Australian Terrestrial Orchids' reveals the following "believe it or not" common names - Wax Lip, Potato Orchid, Donkey, Tall Leek, Pink Bunny, Yellow Leek, Crab Lipped Spider (everyone should have one of these!), Warty Hammer, Common Onion, Little Dumpy, Blue Lady, Shirt, Humped Leek, Prawn, Praying Virgin and Black Tongue among many others. Would you be game enough to offer someone a potful of your ' Yellow Leek'? Should you be so sophisticated as to comment on how nicely the 'Blue Lady' on the bench opens up . and still expect to be treated with some respect? Could you be brazen enough to walk up to the sales table and ask for a 'Praying Virgin' and a 'Black Tongue'?

Neville Roper, 2006