

*The New Zealand*  
Internet  
*Orchid Review*

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### **This issue's cover**

*Grammangis ellissii*, a native of Madagascar, is a handsome orchid, little seen in these parts. Here is a fine example, grown (and photographed) by Tony Beck from across the Tasman. For more information on this species, see Tony's article in this issue.

### **Editorial**

After an initial drought (of material) for this issue came the flood! Thank you to all our regular and occasional contributors. Included in this issue is a photo-essay from Auckland on low-cost plant shelters. We had initially thought of dividing this over two successive issues, but reasoned that the next few months are when people might feel like building a new home for their plants, so we have sent it out in one piece. Also, there are two articles on the Christchurch earthquake, from a grower's viewpoint, one semi-humorous but with some practical lessons, the other full of sensible tips and useful observations. Remember, some time the big

'quake may happen at **your** place – best to be prepared! This applies even to our readers “across the ditch” –remember Newcastle (1989), with 13 dead, and that was only Magnitude 5.5.

Like much of the North Island we are in drought mode here at Lake Rotoiti – at least we have lake water available for the garden and orchids, but the rainwater tanks are very low. In recent years a pattern of late spring droughts seems to have become established. Usually the Christmas/New Year holiday weather sorts it out! We wish all our readers a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and (hopefully) some rain.

## **Apology**

Note received 17 Sept 2010

Hi Nick,

I thought that I should point out an error in your just released Internet Orchid Review. Lyn Sherlock died some years back, so the champion plant belongs to the display of Kevin Sherlock and Julie Harris (Kevin's partner).

All the best,  
Selwyn Hatrick

*Yes, the Editors should have picked this up while proofreading. We apologise deeply for any upset this may have caused the Sherlock family. Ed.*

## **Obituary: I.D. (Jim) James**

*We seldom run obituaries, but Jim James was a giant figure on the NZ orchid scene, so we have gratefully used these notes from Keith Smart (President of the Waikato Orchid Society) as a basis for a tribute to this grand grower, hybridiser and author.*

Unless you hadn't spoken to Jim in the last 55 years you would know that orchids were a big part of Jim's life. Jim's orchid growing started in 1953 when he purchased two *Cymbidium* orchids from Sander Florist & Nursery in Hamilton. One flowered, the other never produced a flower.

As Jim's collection grew he decided he needed to have a glasshouse, so after much research he designed the perfect glasshouse. It needed to be made so it could be moved, as the James hadn't settled into their own permanent home. After much hard work by Jim and Rae, it was put together with many, many screws. Once their Hall Road home was built Jim announced to Rae that the glasshouse wasn't quite perfect so it would stay at the Frankton property and they would build another one for Hall Road.

Jim decided he needed to import orchids, as orchids in NZ were both rare and expensive and nothing like the quality that was found overseas. So every day Jim would buy a five shilling postal note (about the only form of overseas money exchange you could easily get). Once he had enough he would then order plants from overseas. Jim not only imported plants but brought orchid seeds into NZ, which he then grew by the symbiotic process.

One seedling that Jim grew was a plant called *Cym. HiRate* 'Moonstone' and he sold a backbulb for 100 pounds, \$200 in today's money. Now that would be a very expensive backbulb if that happened today (only those who can remember those days of pounds, shillings and pence can really comprehend just how much spending power that money had.) The bulb was brought by a Dutch flower grower who propagated it as a cut flower.

Jim also bred his own hybrids from 1965. He made over 360 crosses - that's crosses that he made, flaked, then grew on until they flowered. A few, I guess, never made it out of his glasshouse, not being able to pass Jim's critical eye, but a great many were brought to Orchid Society meeting night and shows. The James cast of plants were always very quick to be bought from the trading tables. Many of his plants were awarded for quality, far too many names to list. Thirty-two of them were registered with the RHS and appeared in the Sanders List of orchid names. He registered 12 cymbidiums, 15 cattleya alliance, 4 odontoglossum alliance and 1 dendrobium, the first being registered in 1975, the last in 2009. There are still more flasks growing and seedpods set so the list isn't complete yet.

Not only was Jim growing and breeding orchids, he was encouraging orchid growers to come together. Jim and Rae were members of NZOS, pre-1960, driving to Auckland to attend meetings and shows. When there were enough growers in the Waikato it was decided that a society could be started south of the Bombay Hills, and Jim was a foundation member of Waikato Orchid Society. He served as a President, Secretary, was on the committee for many years, was Show Marshal, and he prepared Show schedules for our local shows and for the international shows that were held in Hamilton.

In those 50 years there were very few meetings or events that the James didn't attend, only travel and sickness kept them away. This attendance is unlikely to be bettered by any other member. Jim was a most sought-after speaker, often talking to our own society and many other societies around New Zealand. He was a life member of Waikato Orchid Society and his last position was as Patron. Jim helped with the formation of the Orchid Council of New Zealand, being at the first meeting held in Taupo. He was a foundation judge of the Orchid Council and was made a senior judge, the highest honour that the judging group can give. The James hosted countless judging meetings at their home where his plants were always greatly appreciated.

Jim was not a man to read fiction or, for that matter watch TV unless it was the weather or news, but he did read a lot, and he had a great interest in facts and figures. He was able to put this to great use by writing four orchid books that were published in New Zealand and one also published in the USA (with most of the photos taken by Jim), together with many articles published in overseas magazines and in New Zealand.

In 2009 Jim was awarded a QSM recognising his service to the NZ orchid community. He was a very hard man to do something for, and he didn't like any one making a fuss over him. Jim was a giver not a taker. Jim, your cymbidiums, mini cattleyas & *Dendrobium cuthbertsonii* will always mark you as a great orchid breeder. But his greatest legacy for his orchid friends was friendship & hospitality. With that friendship came his generosity, as he gave advice and encouragement very freely. Jim gave away many of his plants to people who he thought would be able to grow and appreciate them. Many got community pots of his seedling that later proved to be show or award winners. Just last month one of Jim's latest

crosses, *Cattleya* Port Light, given away as a community pot, was awarded in the same month that the first of his own seedlings was awarded.

Jim we will miss you - you were a good man who did and gave so much to the orchid world that it could never all be catalogued and listed here today.

## **Tips for arranging your earthquake**

Melanie Brigden (lenb@actrix.co.nz)  
Christchurch

### Benefits

Lots more crocking.

### Timing

1. Early spring is the best time to assemble your tremble. Sledgehammer type damage will occur regardless and in spring your new growths and root flush are ready to recover quickly.
2. Plan your quake for night-time. With your orchids 'out of sight out of mind' you will have time for secondary concerns such as family, furniture and neighbours.
3. If you intend to display and sell orchids at your society's show, consider carefully whether one month prior to the show is the optimum time to battle a rattle.
4. It's really dumb to wake your shake the day before heading to an international orchid expo. At the last minute you'll have to choose between wading into the orchids or packing your suitcase. 1-nil to the suitcase. On the other hand, lack of a washing machine and shower will add fragrance to your arrival at the venue.

### Disadvantages

Home-hosting can be great fun. But please think very carefully before hosting a magnitude 7.1 earthquake in your orchid house.

1. All cattleyas rooted to their clay pots were shaken right out of the pots. Most clay pots were smashed and on the floor. The worst thing was the overall damage to pots and plants. Luckily most new leads were too small to break.
2. Do you know the name of each plant? The second-worst thing was half of my labels were isolated from pot and plant. It took me most of two days to identify all but 3 plants. It was hard to think straight. Fortuitously, just the day before, I had finished my monthly measuring and describing of plants onto the card-file and for once had checked the entire collection. I could not have identified all but three orchids without those descriptions.

Not everyone has such card-files. I'd recommend taking an image of every orchid, showing its current direction of growth, and take the following image of its label.

3. Having identified all 250+ plants in the house by at least two descriptors on each card, I repotted most and topped up the rest. By this stage I was back from the Palmerston North expo and had stocked up with Bill Liddy's pots. The least damaged orchids had been hanging, but a fair amount of mix tumbled to the rumble. We had watched them swing against the roof during a mere magnitude 5.2 quake later in the morning.

You can't hobble your wobble but you can always park some fresh bark.

4. Then I had to re-prioritise what could maybe be offered for sale at the show in three weeks. Fresh pots, fresh mix, damaged bits removed, overall the collection wasn't looking too bad.

5. The quake tipped out 75% of the water in the orchid-house trough and 100% of the four goldfish, which were soon in the cat.

## Earthquakes and Orchids

Lesley Newton ([orcats@xtra.co.nz](mailto:orcats@xtra.co.nz)) *Photos from author*

On 4<sup>th</sup> September 2010 at 0435hrs the world changed for the people of Christchurch, her surrounding suburbs and local towns.



*Blackwells Department Store, Kaiapoi*

An earthquake occurred, which brought an otherwise peaceful Saturday morning to a crashing end. Buildings were partially demolished, precious things were thrown from shelves and cupboards. The earth cracked, rose and sunk, liquefaction occurred in prone areas and power and water went off.

A series of three earthquakes, the largest 7.1 in magnitude, tore a 25 kilometre gash eastwards from Darfield, across the Canterbury

plains. An unknown fault (now known as the Greendale Fault) moved after 16,000 years of peace. Canterbury probably has many fault lines buried beneath the many thousands of years of shingle deposits from the Southern Alps. It is virtually impossible to track these faults, unless they move. There was horizontal movement of 3 to 4 metres across Canterbury that has moved roads, hedges, wells and streams.

The irony of earthquakes is they behave differently with different soil types and those differences under Christchurch meant that some parts of the city and its surrounding areas were extensively damaged whereas others suffered virtually nothing, structurally. I am one of the lucky ones with a house built on river stone and clay. The only damage I sustained was a small crack in the mortar on the back wall, some china thrown off shelves and a jar of pickled onions that smashed onto the carpet. I will never curse the clay under my house and garden again.

I was curious to see if any orchid houses had sustained any damage as a result of the quake, especially after Melanie had told me of her experience (that is another article, also in this issue). I have a 2.5 x 5 metre Eden glasshouse set up on a wooden foundation about 45cm high. I was surprised to find no damage, not even a pane of glass broken or cracked. I think Aluminium glasshouses are built for flexibility to be able to stand up to stormy weather and also, it seems, earthquakes.

I have tiered shelves at the back of the glasshouse in which my heat-loving hard-cane dendrobiums are grown. These plants are top-heavy and toppled down on top of the phalaenopsis below. Plants that were too close to the edge of the regular benching vibrated off onto the floor. None of the plants were damaged but flowers were. They did not fall out of their pots although some of the pumice and bark did, but as the plants were well-rooted and



the pots were plastic they bounced on the floor and did not break. The plants were put back up on the benches and tiered shelving and the bark replaced (*photo next page*).

A fine example of plant vibration off a bench was at Brian Syder's glasshouse. A large plant of *Dendrobium jonesii* vibrated off the bench, as seen in the picture (*below left*). It apparently vibrated about 30cm along the bench and on to the floor. No damage was done except to its dignity.

I wonder if weight and height of the plants had a lot to do with whether they moved or not as other plants on Brian's benches did not move.

How tightly the plants are packed on the bench also has a lot to do with whether they fell off the benches or not. It seems to be safety in numbers. The more plants on your benches the less they were able to move.

Most other members of our Orchid Society that I have spoken to experienced similar effects. Their glasshouses or shade houses suffered no physical damage but plants vibrated around and off benches.



The angle of the glasshouse to the earthquake also determined whether plants fell or not. My glasshouse runs north/south, therefore most of my shelves do the same. That is why the plants fell onto the floor. My plants that were on the east/west shelves did not. The same effect also happened in my house. My kitchen and cupboards run east/west so I was spared the horror of having to clean up sauces, pickles, jams and crockery that would have smashed if my cupboards were on a different angle.

Another problem encountered by one of our growers was liquefaction in her glasshouse. Joyce's property in Halswell suffered a reasonable amount of liquefaction around her house and garden. She has a 20cm depth



of stones in the bottom of her glasshouse for drainage and humidity. During the earthquake, little volcanoes of fine river silt burst through her stones and pathways and covered the floor in fine silty mud. She was soon to find this mud dried to an impenetrable barrier (*left*). The next time Joyce watered, the surplus water did not drain away and

flooded the glasshouse. She is now concerned that all the base of stones will have to be dug out and replaced with new ones

### Lessons to learn from the earthquake

- Check which way your local earthquake is going to come from and build your glasshouse and shelves along the direction of shaking.
- Perhaps place river stones in the bottom of top-heavy plants such as dendrobiums to lower the centre of gravity. This would lessen the chance of toppling.
- One of our orchid society members suggested that a lip or some wire netting placed around the edge of the shelves may stop plants from vibrating off the benches and onto the floor. It may work but I think a really good shake could still make them fall.
- Cram your plants onto the benches as “safety in numbers” seems to work quite well



Photo courtesy of TVI.

## Photo-essay: Simple shelters for your plants

Anton Wehman (wehman@xtra.co.nz)

*(This article was supplied as a PowerPoint file, originally presented to the Howick Orchid Society. We have reformatted it slightly to suit publication. There are some good ideas here. Eds.)*



↑ Rough sawn timber (fence rails) is ideal for simple structures. Note the use of trays for easy management of plants



← Polycarbonate roof lifts off for extra air movement



A shade house under the eaves of the house. ↑  
Note the plastic pipe to keep the shade cloth away from the plants.



Shade house, utilising the eaves of the house. ↑



↑ The same structure, showing framing made from standard 75 x 50 framing timber. The front rolls up like a Roman blind, pulled up by 4 ropes over pulleys.



← Another view: Note the angle of the frame to give enough clearance for the plant leaves.



← A stand made from trellis, giving protection and allowing plenty of airflow. Details of shade cloth fixing shown on right.

↓



Simple lean-to structure with polycarbonate roof ↑



←Simple trellis frame is ideal to hang some orchids



Lean-to supported by fence → and recovered timber posts. Roof insulated with bubble wrap, supported by recovered pipe from clotheslines.



←Stands under the canopy

Orchids in the garden ↓



←An old BBQ table makes an ideal orchid stand!



← Note the use of plastic gutters to stand the plants in.



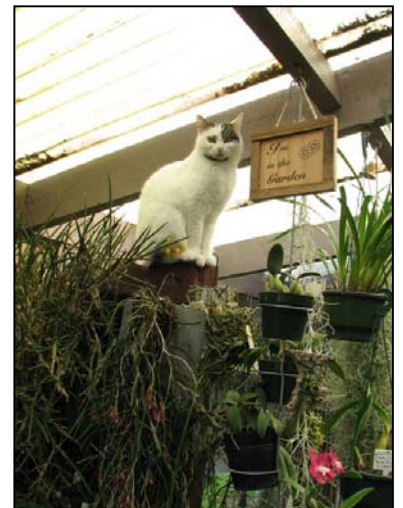
A shade house made from light grade fence railings.→

Note the plant hanger!→



← Innovative plant stand.

Tiered stand allows for high density display of plants ↓





Tiered stands for extra space.  
Note the old ladder to hang plants from (top left, near roof)

←



← A nearby fence and a wash line make a brilliant support for a simple rain shelter. Note the option of having shade cloth under the rain shelter during summer time. ↓



← Rainwater does not go to waste in this garden...

Shade cloth between the eaves of the house and a nearby fence ↓





↑ A good option for a pergola ↑  
↓





← Indoor stand for seed trays.  
Indoor Phalaenopsis stand ↓



← An indoor plant stand.  
A cold frame made from a recovered window frame. ↓



## **A recent decision on importing Cattleya Alliance Hybrids**

The Orchid Council of New Zealand have sponsored an application to ERMA (Environmental Risk Management Authority) for the classification of 'Cattleya Hybrids' for the importation of flasks into New Zealand. This complements the other genera, Cymbidiums, and Paphiopedilum that have hybrids registered for the importation of flasks. ERMA have released their decision, summarised below:

“The application to import for release tropical corsage orchids – all species and species hybrids belonging to the Cattleya Alliance is **approved**, without controls, having being considered in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms (HSNO) Act 1996 (the Act) and the HSNO (Methodology) Order 1998 (the Methodology). “

Ross Bicknell, of Plant and Food, volunteered his time to steer the application through. This will presumably make the importation of members of the Cattleya Alliance easier in the future. Thanks to Clive Perry (cliveperrynz@hotmail.com) for this information.

## **Melbourne Orchid Spectacular and Victorian International Orchid Fair**

Ron Maunder (paradisearchids@paradise.net.nz)

Friday 20<sup>th</sup> Aug - Sun 22<sup>nd</sup> August at Springers Leisure Centre, Keysborough, Melbourne.

Recently I spent a couple of weeks over in Oz visiting my wife's siblings in Victoria and Darwin and working it to coincide with the big annual OSCOV (Orchid Societies Council of Australia) Show in Melbourne. A good reason why I didn't make the show in Palmerston North!

We arrived in Melbourne the day before the OSCOV show and as soon as we were settled at my relations' I started consulting a Melways street map tome as to how I'd get myself across town by tram and bus. It's been close on 50 years since I'd lived in Melbourne and at least 10 since I'd driven there. My brother-in-law kindly offered me the use of one of his cars, a Melways map and a sketch map of short-cuts to the venue and encouraged me to drive over myself. No doubt taking me over and looking at an orchid show would have bored him stiff after half an hour!

The next day dawned overcast and damp and I set off driving about 9am. It's always harder to get away early when you are staying with folk or friends! After a tense but uneventful trip I eventually found the venue which appeared to be in the middle of a huge horse-training park. It seemed that everyone had got there to buy the place out before me! The car parks were full up and I had to walk half a mile to get back to the venue. When I got inside it was obvious that the place was not overflowing with people and I presumed that most of the cars belonged to people playing the pokies and gambling in the rest of the huge complex!

I decided to ignore the commercial area to start with and try and get some photos of the display area plants to keep our editor happy. I did a tour around to see what was what first then started taking a few photos. The Grand Champion was a *Paphiopedilum* Black Spider

'#2' and it was bedecked with a number of OSCOV ribbons. I didn't record all the prizes and owners but tried to get the names down correctly. On the whole the plants were well labelled but there were a few labels that were too far back in the display to decipher.



*Cym. Lunar Blaze 'Ruby'*



*Cym. My Sweetheart 'Amy'*

The cymbidiums were there in full cry for the show and the quality and growing of them had to be seen to be believed. Huge flowers and often plants with up to 6 spikes. Most varieties were ones I had never heard of or seen before. Several I looked up on the RHS Orchid Registration pages on my return to find the breeder and parents but they weren't recorded yet. Wonderful large, round, filled-in reds with bold lips. Hopefully some of my shots are good enough for the editors to show them off here.

There were dozens of lovely displays and I got talking to an enthusiastic couple who were manning a native orchid display and promoting their club. In one corner there were some really keen guys running a well-attended potting, dividing and growing advice stand. Everywhere there were orchid enthusiasts and friends chatting about how their plants had got on in the show, admiring each other's plants or excited about some new plants they'd bought next door in the commercial sales area.

Several hours later I went back along a corridor and into the commercial sales area, which was pretty much the same size as the display area. Lots of stalls from all over Victoria, NSW, SA and Qld. Across almost the width of the hall taking up about five or six stall spaces side by side was Murray Shergold's Easy Orchids sales area. It must have been the largest orchid "sales table" area I've ever seen, with items ranging from all manner of orchid pots, slabs

and requirements to flasks and plants. They were all brought down from northern NSW in his large van which his staff "refuelled" in Sydney from another van on the Monday after the big Sydney show the weekend before. He and Jean were doing a brisk trade. He said he'd had to bring a big load down as his Victorian agent had retired and he'd not appointed another yet. On another stall I spotted Nicky Zurcher all the way from South Australia selling Paphs and we had a brief catch up. Others we see over here from time to time like Clive Halls, Tinonee Orchids, Western Orchids Labs and Woolf Orchid Culture were all there, as well as lots of the ones you read about in their orchid magazines. Around 25 stalls were selling, I believe.



*Vuyyl. Susan Smith x Oda. Moonee Ponds*

There were four overseas guest speakers there and at least two were selling flasks. I was limited to bringing back flasks so sought out stalls selling them of genera I grow. It was a hard decision limiting my flask purchases and keeping my credit card repayments down so I could pay my card off without getting an overdraft! I also had half a dozen flasks to collect for a mate so finally settled on around 30. Too soon I was starting to feel a bit peckish and to my horror I found it was 4pm and the food stall had packed up and were washing up their dishes! Managed to get them to find a couple of club sandwiches from the fridge and buy some of my favourite CherryRipe bars to keep me going till I got home!

Saturday I was out there again but earlier as I had registered to hear the overseas guest speakers. These were Hendrik Vorster of HQ Orchids, South Africa who gave a most interesting slide

presentation on “My Favourite Orchids of Africa and Madagascar”. Next up was Pepe Portilla of Ecuagenera Orchids, Ecuador speaking on “Cattleyas of Ecuador”, followed by Bill Thoms of Hilltop House Orchids, USA talking on “Growing Orchids into Magnificent Specimens” and finally Fred Clarke of Sunset Valley Orchids, USA on “Cycnoches and Catasetums”. Fred was a fairly recent speaker to our shores.

Unfortunately I was expected back at “basecamp” for lunch to a family get-together so had to tear myself away part way through Pepe’s slides which turned out to be of various colour forms of *Cattleya maxima* and three other Cattleyas. THEN he started showing wonderful shots of *Phragmipedium besseae* and *Phrag. kovackii* growing in situ!!! I’d seen the *Cattleya maxima* and *Phrag. besseae* flowering in the wild over there last year but not the *Phrag. kovackii*! I was very tempted to hear his talk out till it ended at the lunch break and explain my lateness to the family luncheon away as having got lost on the way back, but in the end I waved to Pepe and headed off home. I missed the registrant’s lunch and the last two speakers but I reckon I got my \$50 worth from what I saw anyway!

Next day we flew up to Darwin. It took an hour longer than flying to Melbourne from Auckland. The place had changed considerably since I’d seen it in the ‘60s, mostly rebuilt after Hurricane Tracy flattened it in Dec 1974 and now a well-laid out tropical city. It has great botanical gardens with an orchid house and a nice collection of tropical orchids, as well as fine food and expensive hotels!

The return trip to Melbourne was at half-past midnight on Tiger Airways and after a fitful sleep on the long trip we caught the Skybus from Tullamarine Airport (leaves every 20 minutes!) at around 5.30am to the busy Southern Cross Station (once called Spencer St Station) followed by a two hour train journey out to stay with another sister-in-law in Gippsland. While there I was allowed to visit the Gippsland Orchid Society show in a nearby mall where a goodly number of the plants displayed previously at the Melbourne show were shown and brisk sales of exceptionally well-grown flowering cymbidiums were taking place.

A few days later we were ensconced in a Melbourne downtown hotel so I could sort the paperwork out at the airport to get the Phytosanitary Certificate from AQIS (their MAF equivalent!). An Australian Phyto is essential so flasks can be legally brought into NZ. A great money-spinner for the Aussies! I had checked the AQIS web page on my brother-in-law's computer and filled out a list of flasks and applied for an inspection by computer before we left for Darwin. I'd been warned by the locals to make sure everything was done just right or I'd be in trouble as the Melbourne Phytos were the toughest to get in Australia!

My wife saw her beloved Melbourne with another brother the first day and gleefully found Melbourne was celebrating its 175th anniversary since founding and that many attractions were half-price or free that week!

Meanwhile out at Tullamarine I was looking for the AQIS office. A brisk walk away I checked in on time for my appointment at 9.30am only to be told that this was the wrong office! The right one was 2 ½ km away. I tried to get a taxi. That didn't work. They were all driven by what we used to call "new Australians" and when they heard it was only that far I wanted to go they drove off! Plenty of customers wanting to go into the city I suppose! So with my two cartons of flasks I set off walking. Half an hour later I came upon a paddock with a hive of Yellow Cabs coming and going. I took my life in my hands and crossed the busy road and hailed a driver, out in the sun having a smoke. He stepped out and waved a mate down and half a km and \$6 later I was dropped off at AQIS.

At the office I told them my story and apologised for being a couple of hours late! A helpful girl told me the inspector was due back any minute and when he arrived he said he'd inspect the flasks back at the other office where I'd been!!! I meekly asked if he was allowed to give me a ride back as it was getting quite warm by then. He agreed and we were soon back in an inspection cubicle at the previous place! They passed inspection and while he did the paperwork I hastily repacked and sealed up the cartons with a roll of tape. Then he took me upstairs in the lift where I was to pay the inspection fee. Oops! It was lunchtime and I had to wait for the officer to come on duty again! More delays. I'd agreed to meet my wife around lunchtime in the hotel to go and see our haunts of yesteryear! Right, here's the guy and here's my credit card. "Sorry mate! I only accept payments for Imports. You have to go to another place to pay for Exports! I suggest you take that account back to NZ tomorrow and pay it by credit card. You have a month to pay it"!

Back by Skybus and a short walk to the hotel and I found my wife still waiting and worrying. We managed to walk down the street and get half-price tickets to "The Aquarium" and then had a nice restaurant meal.

A 5am start next morning had us packed up, checked out, on the Skybus and at the airport by 6.30am. It was a bit of a battle to be allowed to take a carton each of flasks as sole personal luggage on board and in the overhead lockers. No problems back in Auckland. I had typed out a list of species involved in the pedigree of all the hybrid flasks. This circumvents delays while you look them up back home and send them up to MAF and then they are sent down by courier - often shaken up enroute and even smashed!

After a 20 minute wait for them to be checked by MAF, and nothing to pay, we were off across to Domestic and there to my relief I found the small plane back home had overhead lockers in the cabin.

So would I do it all again? I suppose so. I did it from Guayaquil to Lima to Buenos Aires to Auckland last year and survived! And Pepe says “Come again next year at a different time and I’ll show you Masdevallias and different orchids this time”.

Its tempting but first I’d better get this \$A131.40 Phytosanitary inspection bill paid or my brother-in-law in Melbourne will get the bill and maybe a penalty late payment fee! And I’d better get these flasks planted out now its warming up!

## **Iwitahi Weekend**

Clive Perry (cliveperryz@hotmail.com)

A successful weekend was held at the Sika Lodge for 14 native orchid enthusiasts. A general get-together after one of Bill's value-packed dinners on Friday night allowed everybody to get to know each other, as some had never met before. A visit to the reserve on Saturday morning was spent amongst the 21 different species that were identified as being on view. This gave everybody an opportunity to understand the layout of the reserve and the complexity of the environment that is there.

Good patches of *Chiloglottis valida* (*Simpliglottis valida*) were seen in several places in the reserve. A picnic lunch was enjoyed by all, and then a bit of pull and drop was undertaken in an effort to reduce the impact of the undergrowth which is flourishing as the older trees are thinning in the tops. The young pine trees were sprayed to reduce the effect of the pine needle blight. After an evening three course dinner a robust discussion was undertaken as to where next on the reserve. It was generally agreed that there was a need to re-establish the grid system so that a future survey of what is and where is can be completed and so future work activities can be directed more specifically. It was also resolved to meet again next year on the second weekend in December. See you there?

Thanks Bill (Liddy) for organising the venue and the victuals. Special thanks to all those that participated.

## **Know your Potting Mix components.**

Dr George Tsambourakis ([george@akrogiali.com.au](mailto:george@akrogiali.com.au))

*This was originally published in the TAPS\* Newsletter*

Records show that Chinese were cultivating cymbidiums 6000 years ago and Japanese and Asians 2000 years later. In Europe, Greeks knew terrestrial orchids 2500 years ago, orchid bulbs were part of the Greek diet since. Details about cultivation techniques, potting mediums, etc, from those days are not known.

Three centuries ago, the beautiful and exotic-looking tropical orchids from Asia were introduced to Europe. Originally, Europeans thought that orchids were “parasites” growing on trees and therefore growing orchids in Europe was unthinkable. Planting the right trees under cover in any European botanical garden to cultivate these orchids was not possible. The misunderstanding was realized soon and orchid lovers began experimenting with various media and growing conditions. It was clear that in nature orchids live on the ground, on rocks or trees and take moisture and nourishment from their surrounding environment. Therefore, it was important to recreate the environment they live.

Today, we still believe that it is important to recreate the environment in which they live. However, we do not do things we preach. We use numerous media and potting mixes to satisfy basic orchid needs: Anchorage, retention of water or good drainage, slows decomposition and acceptable pH.

Many growers refuse to accept that the failure to grow orchids successfully is at least 50% directly related to two things: pot size and potting medium/mix. There is NO “best” medium. Each medium requires different management. There is no point copying others, what works for your neighbour may not work for you. Try to find the medium or mix that suits your orchids and works best for you.

A friend insists, “Everything is a matter of management”. Management of plants is related to the control of temperature, humidity, air-circulation, watering, use of fertilizers, pesticides, insecticides, etc. You cannot manage a house before you buy it or build it. With orchids, you must find a plant suitable to your area, use the right size pot and medium that suit the plant, your facilities and the way you are going to manage it. Introducing “potted” plants has its risks, as not only do you not know if the plant has healthy roots but also whether it may require special attention because of its potting mix. Re-potting a plant is sometimes necessary so that all plants in your orchid house can be managed more easily.

Orchids require a fresh, fast-draining, water-retentive medium for good growth. The pH must be 6 – 6.5 (perfect pH 6.3) for the nutrients to remain in solution. Tap water has a pH just under 7; rainwater has a pH around 6.4.

- Bark-based mixes drain well, retain little moisture but break down quickly and need more nitrogen.
- Peat-based mixes, retain moisture, but require more frequent re-potting.
- Inorganic media are good but need a lot of experimenting to get right.

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\* The Australian Paphiopedilum Society

**The potting materials used today can be split into two major groups:**

**ORGANIC MATERIALS**

- 1a. Un-treated (natural) Organic Materials;
- 1b. Pre-treated Organic Materials;
- 1c. Organic Compounds.

**INORGANIC MATERIALS.**

- 2a. Un-treated (natural) Inorganic Materials;
- 2b. Pre-treated Inorganic Materials;
- 2c. Inorganic Compounds.

**1a. Natural Organic Media**

1a.1. Mosses: Mosses are used as soil conditioners to increase the soil's capacity to hold water and nutrients by increasing capillary forces.

1a.1.1 Sphagnum moss: *Sphagnum* is a genus of many species of mosses. Sphagnum moss lives and grows on top of a peat bog. In time, Sphagnum Moss becomes sour and needs to be replaced after 6 to 9 months. Blending sphagnum moss with charcoal can extend the range to a year. Primarily, sphagnum moss is mixed with perlite, charcoal and expanded clay.

1a.1.2. Sphagnum peat or Peat moss: It is the decaying matter underneath the Sphagnum Moss, after it has been dried and pulverized. Peat Moss has excellent water retention properties, is soft, easily compressed and has a low pH that increases acidity, That helps to control and to restrict the growth of fungi. Primarily, small amounts of peat moss are added to perlite or expanded clay.

1a.1.3. Sheet moss: Sheet moss grows on rocks or trees. The benefits are: Good water retention properties, ability to keep the mix more open and like peat moss, it restricts the growth of fungi. It is normally used for mounting orchids on slabs or tree limbs to help the orchid's needs during re-establishment.

1a.1.4. Bog moss: Living moss is gathered in sheets or clumps and it is used as a single ingredient for potting many different species of orchids and because it's salt-free has a long life. Bog moss can be kept alive if it is watered with clean or rain water.

1a.2. Coconut Husks or Chips: Coconut husks come from the outer hulls of coconut shells and are used as a potting mix additive. The husks stay uniformly moist and do not rot. Many orchid growers use successfully coconut husk and believe that there are some advantages, such as: prevention of stress after potting; resistance to fungal growth; neutral PH; holding of water well and excellent drainage. It is a good alternative to bark-based potting mixes. See also coconut fibre. Primarily, the husks are mixed with bark, perlite or charcoal.

1a.3. Coconut Fibre: The coconut fibres are found between the hard, internal shell and the outer coat of a coconut. It is free of bacteria and fungal spores and is used as a substitute for sphagnum moss. Coconut fibre is not inert and is not sterile when purchased. It can contain Sodium chloride and alkalinity. Flush with water before use to remove salt and decrease the pH. Coconut fibre is a deterrent to snails.

Note: Coconut fibre is not re-useable; however, it is biodegradable and can be used in the garden.

1a.4. Cork: Impermeable, buoyant material, harvested primarily from cork oak. Cork is composed of a suberin, hydrophobic substance, and because of its watertightness, buoyancy, elasticity and fire resistance, has a variety of uses, i.e. as wine stoppers. Cork slabs are widely used to grow exotic orchids with aerial roots and small cork pieces are commonly added in

pots for Vandaceous orchids for their roots to anchor onto. Slabs made from small compressed cork pieces are also available.

1a.5. Tree Fern: A popular potting medium for orchids because it is resistant to decay and aerates well. Tree fern is available as shredded fibres, chips or slabs. Some tree ferns are better than others. Round slabs, cut like stepping stones, are very popular with soft cane orchids growers. Tree fern fibre stands up well to warm temperatures and high humidity.

1a.6. Osmunda fibre: The roots of some ferns from the genus *Osmunda*. It is tough and springy and requires good vertical alignment in the pot to ensure proper drainage. It ensures that the plants' roots get the air they need and, as it decomposes, it becomes an excellent source of nutrients, requiring little fertilizing.

1a.7. Peanut husks: Peanut husks were popular 100 years ago but today are rarely used simply because other media are easier to obtain. I used peanut husks some 20 years ago. I did not have any success, mainly because of my lack of experience.

1a.8. Almonds shells: Almond husks from "Paper shell" almonds are also a good medium. I tried it many years ago, but due to lack of experience I had no visible success. Today, if I had the opportunity I would try them again.

1a.9. Rice husks: Rice husks are the hard protective layer of rice grains and are a by-product of rice production. Rice husks break down slowly due to their high lignin content, are water repellent and increase aeration, which makes them a very useful addition to potting mixes. Unfortunately, when used alone, rice husks have a tendency to pack firmly together (like a cake) that prevents the free passage of air and water. The small size of the husks is also a problem.

1a.10. Leaf Mulch: Leafs fallen from most plants or trees, dried naturally and when at a very early stage of decomposition, can be used as 'leaf mulch'. It is obvious that some leaves produce better mulches than others. The breakdown of Leaf Mulch is slow and matches well the decomposition rate of other components of the potting mix. Some species of paphiopedilums grow in leaf mulch in their natural habitat.

1a.11. Pine needles: Pine needles are mainly used in cultivation of terrestrial orchids. Nobody really knows exactly why they are so useful. Some edible fungi (mushrooms), grow in pine forests, so, we can assume that it has something to do with the fungi in the soil. The needles are not used in potting mixes, because when decaying, the needles are too acidic. Pine needles also contain "terpenes" (oils with a "scent") that significantly slow down the germination of seeds and the decay of the needles. The needles shade the soil in summer and help the soil to retain its moisture. The needles are predominantly used finely chopped, a few mm in length, as a layer of 3-5 mm on the top of the mix used for terrestrial orchids. The needles will slowly decay on the top and are harmless if mixed in with soil when re-potting.

1a.12. Seaweed: Seaweeds (marine algae) are simple organisms that fall into the category of "plants". Most belong to three unrelated groups, the green algae, the brown algae or the red algae. The use of seaweed in horticulture has changed from using simple dry product harvested by hand, to manufactured small dried flakes, to seaweed powder and to seaweed extracts. Dry seaweed or dry seaweed flakes in small amounts are mixed in the potting mix. Seaweed supplies all trace elements required by the orchids. Calcified seaweed raises soil pH and adds calcium. Seaweed meal helps to increase humus levels in the soil. The benefits of seaweed are too numerous to mention here. Now that seaweed extract is readily available and easy to use, seaweed and seaweed flakes are difficult to find.

1a.13. Honey: Honey is a known "compost activator". It is known that honey contains antibacterial as well as antifungal properties. Honey may allow the plant to fend off attacks by

bacteria and microbes in the soil while it develops roots. It may also contain a property that acts as a rooting stimulant.

### **1b. Treated Organic Materials**

1b.1. Charcoal: Produced by slow-burning vegetation in a condition where oxygen is limited (pyrolysis). The reason for adding carbon to the mix is to boost soil fertility by attracting microbes, trapping moisture in its pores and retaining nutrients for the plant to use. There are problems. Charcoal being absorbent, it accumulates mineral salts that are detrimental to the roots of the plant by causing burning of the root tips. When using charcoal, the plants must be re-potted on a regular basis to avoid root damage and plant poisoning. Primarily, it is added to sphagnum moss and bark but many add it to every mix.

1b.2. Bark: The woods commonly used in orchid culture are the coniferous trees Douglas fir, pine and redwood. Bark simulates the natural way orchids grow on trees, and does not hold excess water. The bark available for orchids has been steamed to extract the resins that can be toxic to orchids. By removing that resin, the water-holding capacity of the bark increases, but at the same time, the life of bark decreases. If you are tempted to use your “own bark”, make sure you steam it or boil it before use. Primarily, bark is mixed with Coco Husks, Perlite and Charcoal.

1b.2.1. Fir bark: The most popular orchid-potting medium. It is inexpensive, fairly light and easy to handle. It has a rough surface, does not compact and allows air and water to be obtained by the plant's roots. However, as it decays it begins to compact and unless the orchid is re-potted, the roots will start to rot. The microorganisms causing its decay “consume” the nitrogen available from the medium for the plant. Therefore, the use of high nitrogen fertilizers is very important.

1b.2.2. Redwood bark: Similar to fir bark but is more resistant to decay. Redwood bark costs more and is less common than other bark. It is added as a moisture-retention aid and as a means of increasing the acidity of medium blends.

1b.2.3. Wood fibre: Wood fibre produced from steam friction of wood, is a very efficient organic substrate for hydroponics. It has the advantage that it keeps its structure for a very long time.

1b.3. Coco-peat or Coir Peat: This medium is produced as a by-product of the processing of coconut husks by grinding the non-fibrous material that was previously damped. Subsequently, the materials are screened to produce a homogenous size and heat steamed. Coco-peat contains a high percentage of cellulose materials, it is homogenous, has a natural pH of 5.7 – 6.5 and a high CEC (Cation Exchange Capacity). It can replace peat moss in many blends. It is available in 50 L. bags and in various size bricks.

1b.4. Sugar: Terrestrial orchids are characterized for having a relationship with fungi that live in the soil, especially orchids without chlorophyll such as *Aphyllorchis montana*, *A. caudata*, *Cephalathera exiqua*, etc. Fungi require three components to grow: nitrogen, carbon and vitamins. Carbon comes from sugars (glucose, fructose, etc). Fungi have a natural deficiency for vitamins and these are being provided by the organic ingredient from which sugars are extracted. Regular sugar can be added in small amounts in some medium. Sugar is added either after potting terrestrial plants around the roots or in the potting mix to assist the fungi.

1b.5. Molasses: Molasses is used for the same reasons as sugar. There are also ready-made mixtures of honey/molasses that can be added as is or diluted in water.

## **1c. Organic Compounds**

1c.1. Polystyrene: Polystyrene is inexpensive, readily available, and provides excellent drainage and air circulation. The only disadvantages are: a) It is lightweight and therefore can only be used in closed tube systems. b) It is biodegradable and will decompose. c) Some chemicals used as pesticides or fungicides may dissolve it. d) It is a possible health risk.

1c.2. Styrofoam peanuts: As above.

## **2a. Natural inorganic medium**

2a.1. River Sand: Sand is easily available and therefore cheap. It consists mostly of rounded quartz grains and therefore it is very stable. Only “washed” salt-free sand should be used. Sand is heavy, does not hold water, and is used to improve the water permeability and air circulation. A layer of coarse sand is often placed above perlite or other light medium to prevent loss from floating away during watering. It can be re-used but must be sterilized first.

2a.2. Rock chips: Rock chips are inexpensive, easy to keep clean and drain well. Rocks are crushed and screened to sizes to suit. The rocks used are usually highly metamorphic or late igneous rocks such as granite that are not chemically reactive and have very low water retention capacity but enhance air circulation. Small pieces can be used to top up perlite and stop it from floating. Rock chips also increase the weight of the pot.

2a.3. Brick shards: Brick shards have similar properties to gravel but are mostly angular. Disadvantages: Could possibly alter the pH and also require extra cleaning before re-use.

2a.4. Diatomite: Soft siliceous chalky, mostly white, sedimentary rock that contains mainly the remains of diatom microfossils. It is highly porous and can hold a lot of water. It is useful for the culture of plants that prefer a damp root environment. It has a high silica content. Silica is an essential component for the growth of plants and strengthening of cell walls.

2a.5. Bluestone or Blue Metal: Crushed and screened to sizes to suit. Generally used for drainage and decorative foot paths

2a.6. Calcite (Ca Carbonate): Crushed and screened to sizes to suit. Can improve pH and adds calcium.

2a.7. Dolomite (Ca-Mg Carbonate): Crushed and screened to sizes to suit. Can improve pH and adds calcium, magnesium and iron to the mix.

2a.8. Magnesite (Mg carbonate): Crushed and screened to sizes to suit. Can improve pH and adds magnesium to the mix.

2a.9. Scoria or “Lava rock”: Scoria (means waste) is a textural rock type formed from lava, rich volatiles and Gases. It is therefore, a porous volcanic rock that retains moisture, has good aeration and is heavy. Scoria comes in various colours (green, brown, or black are the most common) and is screened to size for further uses. A very useful medium.

2a.10. Pumice: Volcanic glass, which is mostly white due to its high Al-Si content. Very similar to perlite but has a higher density and lower moisture-holding capacity.

2.a.11. Loam. A name used to describe a soil composed of silt, sand and clay at an approximate ratio 2:2:1. Loam soils contain nutrients and humus and are therefore good for gardening. Loam retains water easily and does not prevent water flow. Of interested to orchid growers is “Sandy Loam” as it has better water drainage than a “loam”. Sandy Loam is Loam with a higher sand content. Sandy Loam or Loam + sand, is a very important component of most Terrestrial orchid mixes.

## **2b. Inorganic materials, Pre-Treated**

2b.1. Perlite [1]: Perlite (“Sponge rock”) is a volcanic rock that has been heat-treated into very lightweight expanded glass pebbles. It is used in potting mixes to decrease soil density. Perlite is soft, absorbent, inert, and sterile when new and not biodegradable. It has similar properties and uses to vermiculite but generally provides better air-filled porosity and less water. If not contained, it can float. Primarily mixed with mosses, bark, coconut husks and expanded clay.

2b.2. Vermiculite: “Vermiculite” is the name of the superheated mineral of the same name (Vermiculite). After heat treatment, it expands into light pebbles. Vermiculite holds more water than Perlite. See Perlite.

## **2c. Inorganic Compounds.**

2c.1 Rockwool: Rockwool is a fibrous material made from molten rock spun into cotton candy-like fibres. Rockwool is sterile, inert, has low pH, and it is light when dry. It has excellent water retention and air circulation properties and it is not biodegradable. Available as compressed slabs, cubes and in granulated form. Rockwool is a trade name, however, the use of the term refers to all brands.

Note: Use horticultural grade Rockwool. Home insulation grade can be toxic. It is prone to water-logging.

2c.2. Expanded Clay or Hydro pellets: Expanded clay is a tough granular medium, produced from clay formed into spheres and fired in rotary kilns at high temperatures. The process causes the clay to expand and become porous. The expanded clay pellets are light in weight, do not hold water, do not compact over time, are inert, pH neutral, contain no nutrients and allegedly prevent parasitic growth and root rot. The pellets are not biodegradable and can be cleaned, sterilized and re-used. The pellets come in many sizes, 4-8 mm, 8-16 mm, and larger. The advantages of using expanded clay are very clear but it’s use is still in experimental stage. A mix with 10-20% perlite and little peat moss may prove to be a good alternative to many other mixes.

2c.3. Water jelly crystals or Polymer crystals or Hydrogel: A compound produced in angular or spherical shapes and in varied sizes for numerous uses, from Agriculture to kitty litter. The “crystals” absorb numerous times their weight in water and can last for years. The amount of “crystals” added in the potting mix depends upon the plant’s need for water. Water Crystals are safe to use.

**Garden Mix or Potting Mix:** Good quality, commercially available “garden or potting mix” has been used for very many years to pot terrestrial orchids. It is important to add coarse sand (or small expanded clay pellets) to increase permeability (water drainage and to a lesser extent air circulation). Garden or potting mixes are mainly “mulch” mixed with soil and other additives and unless sterilized the mixes contain numerous good and bad fungi. It is important to buy sterilized, fungi-free mixes. Terrestrial orchids need good fungi and these can be added later.

Other media that can be added in the mix, or “scattered” on the top with a spoon:

Wood Ash: Used in small amounts. Potash rich (adds Potassium (K)).

Gypsum: Delivers calcium (Ca) to the soil without changing the pH.

Ground Limestone: Provides calcium (Ca) and raises pH.

Bone meal: Promotes root growth (high phosphorus (P) content).

It is well known that orchids are also cultivated hydroponically in small or large scale all over the world, including Australia. The most common media used are: Rockwool, Perlite,

Expanded Clay, Styrofoam peanuts and Vermiculite. Crushed rocks can also be used. Honey, Molasses, Sugar etc are always added in the water.

*Further reading:*

Perlite: Handle with Care. Dr. George Tsambourakis, *Orchids Australia*, October 2008, p. 35.

(Article by Dr. George Tsambourakis)

Extracts of the above article were published in the October 2010 edition of *Orchids Australia Magazine*

## Wider Worlds –*Streptocarpus*

Biddy Hair (cbhair@xtra.co.nz)

*This article first appeared in the newsletter of the Wanganui African Violet and Gesneriad Club. Since streptocarpus make excellent companion plants for orchids, we have published it here.* Eds.

*Streptocarpus* generally like conditions that are a little cooler than required for African Violets. Plants tend to wilt quickly in the hot summer weather and care should be taken not to overwater as this can cause rotting. Always check the soil is dry to the touch before watering or try to keep it evenly moist. They need good light to flower well but shelter from the hot sun, bright filtered light and some morning sun is ideal.



The potting mix needs to be light and porous to allow air to surround the roots and be free-draining. The pH should be between 6.5 and 7.0 as the plants access the fertiliser nutrients within this narrow range. Feed regularly during the growing season with a weak, balanced liquid fertiliser formulated to encourage flowering and flush out the pots with plain water once a month to remove accumulated salts.

If your plants are grown outdoors they will go into a semi-dormant state over winter and flowering will cease. Decrease watering and feeding at this time. The plants may develop an abscission line on the leaves and the area beyond this line will yellow and eventually break off. This allows the plants to conserve moisture to ensure they can survive until the spring. It appears this abscission seems to be triggered by a combination of cool temperatures and dry conditions.

Some tips from a friend who has a large collection of *Streptocarpus* plants:

Give your plants as much fresh air as possible (they do very well in a shade house for much of the year).

When repotting put a circle of tulle or shade cloth in the bottom of the pots particularly if they have large holes. This prevents insects coming up into your pots from underneath and also prevents mix being washed out.

When potting on small plants make a hole in the new pot of mix using a pot the same size as the one your plant has been growing in to prevent damage to the new roots.

Dibley's Streptocarpus nursery based in North Wales won the "Best New Plant Award" at this year's Chelsea Flower Show from 20 entries.

*Streptocarpus* "Harlequin Blue" is a lovely blue and lemon bi-colour with dark markings in the throat.

Check out their web-site - [www.dibleys.com](http://www.dibleys.com)

We were given a very small seedling of what we think is *Streptocarpus grandis* in April. It has been potted on twice now and looks like taking over its spot on the glasshouse bench!! Hopefully in time it will flower and we will have seed to share around.

### **Seasonal Hints and Tips # 3**

by Sarco (David Hutchins, [dphutchins@xtra.co.nz](mailto:dphutchins@xtra.co.nz))

Ambient temperatures are rising so make sure that you have plenty of shade cloth up.

Watering frequency may now need to be increased especially with hanging baskets

Do not water if the plant leaves are warm

Watch for sunburn on the leaves

Look out for snails - set traps or bait

Plants may need to be sprayed with a plant stress formula

Is your repotting done?

Soak the new bark 24 hours before repotting

Toss a few sheep pallets on top of the pot after repotting along with a small amount of dried blood

Watch for scale and treat if required

Mist plants in the morning

Use fans to circulate air; this will help to deter fungus

## Cultural Notes on *Grammangis ellisii*

Tony Beck (tonybeck@bigpond.net.au)

This large epiphytic orchid is a species from Madagascar and is one of my all-time favourites. I grow this plant high in the orchid house where it can receive as much sun, wind and rain as possible. Watering is at least twice a week and fertilizing once a week.



You can tell by looking at the plant if your culture is up to speed or not. Under-watering gives you thin pseudobulbs; over-water and you can pump them up to the stage they will split, which will ultimately ruin your chances of getting good healthy inflorescences.

In winter I reduce the watering and keep this plant under cover as it does not mind being

cold OR wet, BUT cold wet at the AND same time and you stand a good chance of losing it totally. The mix is a coarse mix of bark and perlite to allow for good drainage. I live in Thornlands, which is in South-East Queensland, Australia and the plant is grown under 75% shadecloth in a north-facing shadehouse. Temperature range is approx. 35 degrees in summer to 5 degrees in winter.

This plant does not like being divided so it is best to leave as long as possible and then pot on to a larger pot. Any orchid that gives you this many long-lasting flowers deserves the space in any orchid house.

Happy growing.

## The great labelling controversy – another slant!

Ron Maunder (ronmaunder@paradise.net.nz)

Does anyone know where I can find a source of maybe a thousand or so unused, plain, rigid, white, 5” plastic plant labels please? The ones most people write sideways on - or is that confusing and sounding like needing to be a contortionist?

Before you all rush in and say yes I know, I have another requirement. I DON'T want the ones I find at merchants like Horticulture etc. here in NZ which have one side only of the label useable! The back side of those is rough, grained, rippled or whatever you call it and when using an ink label pen the printing “bleeds” or if using a lead pencil it smartly loses its point and looks blurred.

The boys at Horticulture here say that these are all the labels they can find on the market in bulk and they think I'm being grumpy or difficult wanting labels like they used to be!

I guess the old die that made the previous labels wore out and that company had better things to do than compete with the opposition or even the Chinese! Maybe it's why these "abominable" ones are now costing \$55 a thousand – plus 15% GST if you are not GST registered! I can't help thinking there is an ulterior motive behind these one-sided labels!

I do have a temporary answer. Luckily I have been using HB lead pencils for writing on these labels for years. They don't fade like normal "permanent" spirit-based pens do or dry up! They just need clicking out further or reloading from a refill cartridge. My remedy is to gather up used labels, wet them and erase the graphite printing by rubbing it out with the edge of a wetted thick piece of bark from the orchid mix I'm using. Most of these plastic labels will allow you to write on them with a pencil when still wet – another bonus. This method works perfectly for me but it does take valuable time. It is the sort of thing to do at night while watching TV but thank God I don't have one! Maybe my computer serves for that instead!

I'm against the "throw away" mentality today but to me a label is a label and should have two sides you can write on! So if anyone out there has an old box or part box of unused 5" labels they want to cash in on, dump on me, or swap for an orchid plant or two, please let me know. I could possibly even consider not too gaudily coloured labels of a similar type! Don't worry if they don't have a tie hole near the tip because I can drill them out for labelling slab-grown plants or my tomatoes!

If my request draws a blank maybe I'll have to email Murray in Oz and see what he can find in Asia! Amazing what that guy can find a source of! Thanks but please don't send me all your old labels! I have enough for quite a while yet!

## Questions and answers

I have an orchid problem that perhaps someone can help with. An *Oncidium* (the standard Dancing Ladies type), bought potted in standard orchid mix, lost nearly all of its roots over winter (outside in a shade house), so I've removed it from the pot, wrapped what remains of the root system and the pseudobulbs in sphagnum and tied it to a slab of ponga fibre. Is this the most sensible thing to do?

Barbara Parris (bsparris@igrin.co.nz)

I have some questions about moth orchids (*Phalaenopsis*) - when do you know when to re-pot and if you have a specimen with a lot of air roots but is not re-flowering what's the problem? When I re-pot do I cover some of the air roots or just what's covered now? Also with the moth orchid, the plant is pot-bound but is producing prolifically - it currently has three spikes in varying levels of growth; the ones in flower are producing flowers on the existing spikes with branches off the main stem, with three other stems starting to grow. Is this OK or am I over-fertilizing the plant??

And where do I get new pots for the moth orchid please???

Eileen Bridgens (ebridgens@slingshot.co.nz)

## Publication Details and Charges

The *New Zealand Internet Orchid Review* is published on a quarterly basis, with publication in March, June, September and December.

The email subscription rate is **zero**. We would like to eventually publish a printed version (which would attract a charge), but there would need to be sufficient demand to make it practical. To date that demand has not been sufficient for us to follow it up.

### **Deadlines for copy**

All written copy for articles must be emailed to the Editors no later than one week before publication date. A reminder will be emailed to all regular contributors two weeks before each deadline. Society notices and classified advertising must be emailed to the Editors no later than one week before publication date. If you are running late, please email the editors (ncmiller@orcon.net.nz). We expect the next issue to go out on Friday 18 March 2011.

A reminder notice will go to all subscribers and Society contacts shortly before each publication deadline.

### **Advertising**

If you are interested in advertising in this publication, please email the editors for an information sheet. Our advertising rates are extremely reasonable. Graphics and photos incur no extra charge, provided that you supply them.

### **Classified advertisements, Society notices**

These are published free of charge, maximum of 30 words for a classified ad please.

### **Letters**

Feel free to write letters to the editor. As long as they are not anonymous, obscene, time-wasting or libellous we will publish them!

### **Question and answer section**

If you have any questions relating to any aspect of the growing of orchids or companion plants, we will solicit replies from our panel of experts. Any responses received will be emailed to the questioner, and the question and answers will be published in the next issue. This way you can receive a prompt response to your question but other readers can subsequently benefit as well.

### **Spread the word**

If you have any friends who grow orchids or 'companion plants', let them know of this publication. All they have to do to subscribe is to send an email. If they haven't joined the computer age and/or would be interested in subscribing to a print version, ask them to contact the editors by mail or telephone or else send an email on their behalf. So far only a handful of requests for a printed version have been received.

### **Please write for us**

All submissions are welcome – long or short. If you're not too fluent with the written word, we are happy to edit your copy. Without writers there will be no magazine.

### **File formats**

We prefer to receive copy as a Word document. If you have a very recent version of Word, please ensure that you save your document and send it to us as a .doc file (preferred), or a docx file. We also prefer not to receive Acrobat (.pdf) files – we actually assemble the magazine in Word and don't convert it to Acrobat until we're ready to send it out. So .pdf

files have to be converted to Word – a tiresome business. We are also happy to receive shorter documents as a simple email message.

If you are sending us a Word document with photos in it, please shrink the photo file size (to, say, 100 to 300 KB) **before** you insert the photo in the document. We can't shrink the photos from inside your document, without going through a complex procedure. If we fill the magazine with 2 or 3 MB photos then, even after we have converted it all to an Acrobat file, those readers still with dial-up access will get very grumpy!

**That address again**

ncmiller@orcon.net.nz

**Please note:** If you change your email address and you don't advise us, you won't receive your magazine! Typically, every time we send out an issue, 8 to 12 bounce due to invalid email addresses.

## Society Notices

A small suggestion for your readers "across the Tasman". Would it be possible to indicate in future issues if orchid shows are on the North or South Island, and possibly the nearest main city. (Andrew Foster). *We'll do our best, Andrew.*

### **Waitakere Orchid Club Ribbon Show (Fun show)**

27 February 2011

Hobsonville Hall, Hobsonville Road, Auckland

\$6 for BBQ lunch (including entry), please bring a salad OR desert.

Contact Glenys MacRae (09-8351216) for bookings.

Show is judged by members, all are welcomed to participate.

Open to public 1-3pm

### **Talk by David Banks – clivias, orchids, collectables**

David Banks (Australia) is going to be in New Zealand in January for the Taranaki Orchid Society Summer Orchid Show and Workshop. David has kindly agreed to speak to the Clivia Club here in Auckland on Friday 21st January before he returns to Sydney on the Sunday. He will give a PowerPoint presentation on his clivia hybridising, but also a short additional one on orchids (and other rare and collectable plants). We would be happy for any orchid enthusiasts here in Auckland or elsewhere to attend. Who knows but that some may be attracted to clivia.

The **venue** is AHC Building, 990 Great North Road, Western Springs, Auckland.

**Time:** 7.00pm No entry fee.

Alick McLeman (clivia@xtra.co.nz)

Treasurer/Membership Secretary

NZ Clivia Club

[www.nzclivia.org](http://www.nzclivia.org)

**The Orchid Council of NZ** has a web-site that lists all the shows around the country. The URL is:

[http://www.orchidcouncil.co.nz/show\\_dates.html](http://www.orchidcouncil.co.nz/show_dates.html)

*Bay of Islands Orchid Society meet 2nd Wednesday of the month at 7.30pm except for May, June, July and August when we meet 3rd Sunday of the month at 1.30pm. February starts the year with a "moveable feast."*

*Meetings are held at St James Church Hall, Stone Store Hill, Kerikeri. Visitors welcome.  
Enquiries to - Lorna (09 4073424).*

(3 hours north of Auckland, N.I.)

### **North Shore Orchid Society**

The Society meets on the LAST Sunday of each month (except January, October & December) in the Milford Senior Citizens Hall, 141A Kitchener Road, Milford (behind New World, adjacent to Milford Shopping Centre carpark) at 12.30 pm. (Auckland) We would love to see you at our meetings which are relaxed and informative. Any queries regarding meetings to Rodney Draper at [draperfam@xtra.co.nz](mailto:draperfam@xtra.co.nz)

### **Howick Orchid Society Inc.** (Howick is an eastern suburb of Auckland, N.I.)

Meets 2nd Sunday each month except Jan. (no meeting) and Oct. which is 2 weeks after show date.

Venue: Fencible Lounge, Uxbridge Rd, Howick, adjacent to library.

Our one day Show this year is Sat. 9th Oct at the above venue. Set up Friday 8th Oct.

We have approx 100 members (usually 50+ at each meeting) and a large variety of orchids displayed each month.

Check out our Website where you can see some photos of plants displayed and read our newsletters: <http://hos.inetgardens.com>

For further information phone Glenn 09 534 8689 or Len 09 576 6303.

## Classified advertisements

ORCHIDS FOR SALE, FROM EWEN PERROTT. MOST GENERA,  
INSPECTION INVITED, AT  
253 Tui Crescent, Te Awamutu.  
PH 07 871 4599.

**Wanted:** surplus laminar flow unit in working condition.

Email: [dphutchins@xtra.co.nz](mailto:dphutchins@xtra.co.nz)

*Dear Orchid friends*

*The publication "The Stanhopea Book" is now printed and available. On 2.7 kg of paper and 496 pages you will find more than 850 illustrations. If you are interested please contact*

*[RJOrchids@gmx.ch](mailto:RJOrchids@gmx.ch)*

*Rudolf Jenny*

*I would like to know if there are any growers who may have any Diuris tubers for sale.*

*David Hutchins - [dphutchins@xtra.co.nz](mailto:dphutchins@xtra.co.nz)*

## Advertising Section



### ***POTTERING ABOUT GARDEN CENTRE***

*254 Military Road, R D 2,*

*Whakatane 3192*

*Ph: (07) 3228101*

*Email: [potteringabout@xtra.co.nz](mailto:potteringabout@xtra.co.nz)*

*Webpage: [www.potteringabout.com](http://www.potteringabout.com)*

**Open Wednesday to Sunday 9am to 4pm unless by  
appointment**

**Here at Pottering About we have a great range of orchids, bromeliads and subtropical plants.**

**Some of the more unusual plants that we have available are:**

***Hoya* bella, fusca, australis, carnososa, red buttons, carnososa variegata, nicholsoniana, pauciflora, polyneura.** These are all in 2 inch tubes and are \$5 each.

***Dendroseris litoralis.*** This is an endangered species and part of the cabbage tree family. It comes from the Juan Fernandez Islands in the Pacific. It is an evergreen perennial species. The leaves look like cabbage and are edible. It is a cool grower but should be protected from freezing conditions. Can be grown in part shade with protection from afternoon sun. See google images for some great photos of the plant and flower. These are \$8 each in 70mm tubes.

***Ceropegias.*** These are unusual plants and are treated as succulents. We grow our main plants in hanging baskets as they have a twining habit. We have the following ones available : woodii, ampliata, stapeliaformis, barkleryii, haygarthii and stapeliaformis serpentine. We have a limited number of these that we are offering out at \$8 each in 2 inch tubes. (the main photo, above, is of stapeliaformis).

**We do mail order on all our plants so we are more than happy to package them up and send them to you. All orders are p&p extra.**



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**Gisborne**  
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Email [Hdphutchins@xtra.co.nz](mailto:Hdphutchins@xtra.co.nz)H

Sarcochilus seedlings, divisions and flowering plants for sale in pots and on rafts

Send for a list of flowering size and seedling plants

A limited number of den rafts available

**ORDER NOW TO GET YOUR PLANTS**

**IMPORTANT NOTICE**

To comply with the Law regarding spam mail, we are upgrading our address book so if you wish to receive

our plant list via email please send us a return email requesting to be kept on our mail list

A Merry Christmas to all

The Orchid Tray Company is an internet based company primarily set up to offer orchid accessories to orchid enthusiasts. We have several exclusive products designed especially for orchid lovers and will be expanding our range regularly.

250mm Port Pot-\$4.00 incl. GST



50mm tray-\$5.50 incl. GST



**Products**

- Trays
- General Pots
- Squat Pots
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- Port Pots
- Basket Pots
- Specialty Pots
- Fertilizers/Sprays
- Accessories
- Wire Hanging Baskets
- Wooden Hanging Baskets
- Meters
- Media



pH meter-\$35.00 incl. GST



Products



**Wooden hanging baskets** for hanging vandaceous orchids, beautifying or for anything that likes lots of drainage.



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Please visit [www.orchidtrays.com.au](http://www.orchidtrays.com.au)

Contact Robert Bisetto 0431037372 or George Birss 0413581777 for further product information.