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# ORCHIDS IN NEW ZEALAND



January-February, 1977



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# MAXALARIA SANDERIANA

by J. Campbell, Prebbleton.

This is an orchid which does not appear very often in the collection around the Christchurch area and as orchid growing has a quite strong following in these parts, I assume that it's rarity here is an indication of its rarity throughout the country. This is quite surprising as it is always listed as one of the most beautiful and largest flowering species in the genus.

Perhaps its unpopularity is directly connected with its shyness to flower. The two plants I have known of for the past five years have to my knowledge only flowered once each. One of these plants is now in my collection and flowered one bloom only about two years ago. It has been in the one pot all the time and may have been there for quite some years before I met the previous owner. I had considered its reluctance to flower may have been because it was potbound and the medium needed renewing. The pot was completely crammed with pseudobulbs, most bearing broad leaves 25 cm long, which are quite distinctive in that they are carried on 10 cm long stalks unlike any orchid growth I have come across. I have promised to repot it for as long as it has been in my collection but have not got round to it yet.

Recently I lifted it from a lower shelf and wrenched its tangled mass of roots out of the pot and to my surprise I found five flower shoots forcing their way down through the extremely tight root mass. On closer inspection I found six more old and decaying flower shoots which had died because they could find no escape from the pot. I immediately recalled the old story of the Stanhopeas which would not flower for growers in England about 80 odd years ago.

One day a clumsy gardener knocked a pot of Stanhopea off a bench and among the broken debris, discovered a flower shoot curled up in the bottom of the roots. It was obvious that this plant required different culture and when grown in a basket, sent flowers down through the bottom.

It was my observation that Maxalaria sanderiana would fall into a like category and on reading several accounts listed in some of my old books, I did indeed discover that it is recommended to grow it on a fern slab or in a basket.

I have cut the root-ball in half and because of the well developed flower shoots I decided to mount both pieces on fern slabs rather than risk damaging the shoots by placing the plants in a basket. Some of the shoots have since wilted while others are still developing.

M. sanderiana was first displayed at the South Kensington Orchid Conference in 1885 where it caused quite a stir.

The flowers have white or pinkish petals and sepals with deep red spotting midway merging to solid red near the junction of the petals and the labellum, which is also red. Flowers are born singly on a fairly short stem and are reported to be as large as 15cm although mine were only about 10cm across.

It is classed as a temperate house orchid (16 to 18 degrees C.) and mine has grown very well on a lower bench where it receives fairly heavy shading. It has been grown in a fern fibre mixture up to date and is now mounted on fern slabs where I hope it will continue to do well. Once seen in flower, Maxalaria sanderiana is not soon forgotten and if the opportunity of obtaining one arises, I strongly suggest you accept it.

### Cultural Note.

In my article on the white slipper orchids (Phaphiopedilum concolor, niveum etc.) I mentioned the use of limestone chips in my potting mix.

Broken seashells are a perfect substitute for limestone and in fact fowl shellgrit has been used for many years in local orchid mixes. Any shells or grit should be thoroughly washed to remove traces of salt which could be detrimental to plants. A complete half of a pipi or suchlike shell makes a very good 'bridge' over the drain hole of a flower pot.

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## PALMERSTON NORTH SEMINAR

On Sunday October 30, 1976, the Manawatu Orchid Society held its second biannual orchid seminar. I am sure that those who attended would have learnt something from the various short talks given. Seminars are not really designed for instructional purposes but rather as an excuse for people to renew acquaintances and make new friends. Probably one gains more knowledge from the latter as people will talk to others with the same interests rather than listen to someone giving a lecture on a subject that is of no interest to them. Two or more day seminars do however give the listeners a chance to miss certain lectures if they are not of interest, therefore a one day seminar must have subjects for discussion that interest everyone. The 15 minute talks at the Palmerston function were well chosen and I am sure were of value to all those who attended. The limited time allowed for speakers made for listener interest. The subjects chosen were the "Plant Protection Act" as it affects orchids and the establishment of an orchid museum by Tom French, orchid pests and diseases by Norm Wood, bud deformity in Cymbidiums by Mrs. K. Black, suggestions for the magazine "Orchids in New Zealand" by the Editor, miniature Cymbidiums by Lofty Dawson, and feeding and compost for Cymbidiums by Norm Porter.

A great pity that this function was not advertised more fully, particularly as to speakers and subjects. Many magazine readers within the Wellington and Manawatu area who are not members of Societies would no doubt have attended had they been aware of the seminar. The subject matter would have been of benefit to these people in particular.

The day passed quickly and all those attending learnt something to their advantage and a special thanks to the Manawatu members who gave of their time and the ladies who provided morning and afternoon teas.

## Letters to the Editor

Mr. Campbell,  
Prebbleton.  
Dear Sir,

I would refer to your letter in the October-November 1976 issue of Orchids in New Zealand in respect of the cover photo.

The magazine committee do not wish to let the front cover go to commercial interests unless absolutely necessary, and the offer for front cover advertising which was made some months ago has not as yet been taken up. I must admit that the present method of choosing cover photos is very flexible whereas commercial advertising could give us a run of the same genera for too long. Your idea that societies may wish to contribute towards the cost of the cover is most interesting. There are now 12 societies affiliated to the Orchid Council of New Zealand and if your suggestion is acted upon it would mean that each society would contribute once every two years. Since the inception of our magazine two societies have given substantial sums and this money has been utilized for cover photos.

A colour block is made from a good 35 mm slide and the current cost varies from \$110 to \$125 depending on the work involved. If a society wishes to have their own colour photo on the cover two or more "slides" must be submitted as only the best with regard to focus, depth and colour etc. can be selected.

There is an amount allocated each year for the cost of the front covers and the committee will continue to print colour until this account is exhausted.

Editor.

### COVER PHOTO:

Ascocenda Memoria Jim Wilkins (Vanda Jennie Hashimoto x Ascocentrum curvifolium grex was raised by Wilkins Orchids of Florida, U.S.A., and the cross was registered by them in 1969. Some clones of this grex have gained American Orchid Society Awards. The particular clone illustrated Ascocenda Mem. Jim Wilkins 'Happidaze', has proved tolerant of the cultural vagaries of the owner, and is a valued 'space saver' orchid in the warm glass house.

Cover photo by courtesy of MR. TOM FRENCH

## CULTURAL NOTES FOR CYMBIDIUM ORCHIDS

NORM PORTER, 443 Te Moana Road, Waikanae.

Cymbidium orchids are easily grown under a wide range of conditions anywhere in N.Z. but if they are to produce vigorous growth, large healthy bulbs with the resultant wealth of beautiful blooms, a little attention is necessary.

**Composts:** Cymbidiums can be grown in almost anything but any free draining material that will allow free passage of water, yet retain moisture and not rot down quickly is suitable. Never use soil or ingredients that will stay a wet soggy mass. At the present time an excellent Cymbidium mix on the market, which is freely available is Beck's Orchid Mix, being a blend of pinus bark, peat, pumice and fertilizer all adjusted to the correct pH. As N.Z. pine bark and peat are very acid and not suitable for Cymbidiums so the pH (acidity) is adjusted to the suitable level by the addition of calcium and magnesium carbonate. It is far better and easier to use a balanced blend of ingredients like Beck's Orchid mix than make up one's own, as one's ideas change from year to year as to what constitutes a good mix. Usually one will start off with a mix that either remains too wet or dry, the following mix will be modified with an additional ingredient to counteract the fault, then perhaps one of the ingredients won't be available for the next mix, so something else is added. Within a short time, say two years, the collection could be growing in a variety of mixes, all with different pH's and all requiring different watering, which makes successful results very difficult. Far better to use Beck's mix and learn how to grow plants in it as by far the greater majority of New Zealanders are doing so with excellent results.

**Fertilizer:** Cymbidiums are gross feeders and during the growing months, Oct.-May, can be fed every alternate watering with a liquid feed, such as Atlas, Alaska, Zest, Lush, Nitrophoska dissolved in water at the rate of 1 teaspoon in 9 lit. water. Don't use the same fertilizer every time, but alternate between three different types so the plants will get a

more balanced diet. Also twice a year, say spring and summer, the plants can be fed with a dry fertilizer of 4 parts each by volume of super phosphate, dried blood and 1 part sulphate of potash, at the rate of one dessertspoon to a 9 lit. bucket, making sure to sprinkle the fertilizer on the compost and not against or among the bulbs. ALWAYS water the plants thoroughly, until water is running out of the drainage holes, then apply the fertilizer and water well in. In the winter months apply liquid fertilizer only at half the strength used in summer.

**Watering:** This is the most important aspect of growing Cymbidiums as more plants are lost by overwatering than by any other factor. A plant cannot be overwatered by giving it too much water at watering time, it is overwatered by watering too often. It is difficult to give a firm rule about watering as everyone's conditions differ. As a guide plants growing in Beck's Cymbidium Mix in 9 lit. plastic buckets would be watered once a week in summer and once in 2-3 weeks in winter. Cymbidium roots to be healthy and vigorous must have air and this can only be achieved if there is a lull between waterings which will allow the compost to dry out to a moist state. Smaller plants in say 7-12 cm pots would be watered up to twice a week in summer and once in 10-14 days in winter. Never water the plants when the compost on top of the pot is still damp, wait till it looks quite dry but damp say 2 cm below the surface. Always water thoroughly till the water is pouring out of the drainage holes. This may require dunking the pot in a tub or filling it up 6 or 8 times with water so it is thoroughly soaked. If using sprinklers leave on for up to 2 hours and then go over the plants by hand to ensure every plant is watered, as often the leaves of a neighbouring plant will obstruct a thorough coverage.

To be continued.



to respond to dilute foliar feeding in the growing season but I feel it inhibits flowering.

Lastly but most importantly in damp humid periods the plants damp off easily. The cure is more air but better to not wet the leaves, if you must water do so from below. With a little care you will have a pot of lovely green leaves and a mass of flowers.

#### The Species

- C. aconitiflorus—a small plant 2-3 centimetres tall, the "feelers" are very tiny. Found mainly in the Auckland province. It is fairly difficult to grow and more difficult to flower. Seems very sensitive to soil moisture fluctuations.
- C. unguiculatus—similar to C. aconitiflorus but a bit larger. Found mainly north of Auckland. Rather difficult to grow but maintaining soil moisture is the key.
- C. oblongus—similar in many ways to the above but the "feelers" are very evident. The lip is beautifully fringed and the flower often seems to lie back. I find it quite easy but few flowers. The top of the pots are covered in moss and I think this helps. Found throughout the North Island often in very damp soils.
- C. cryptanthus—I have never seen this plant. It has no chlorophyll so could not be grown in captivity.
- C. rivularis—This is the largest species in my experience. Rather like C. oblongus the leaf is usually much larger and shaped like an arrow head. Found throughout the country in damp places, often on logs on the forest floor.
- C. macranthas—This species easy to distinguish. The large heart shaped leaf is on a tall stalk carried well above the flower which is also quite large. North, South and Stewart Islands.
- C. trilobus—Very similar to C. macranthus but the leaf is usually deeply indented at both ends. Flower is on a stalk not sessile as in most species. Widespread in damp places.
- C. orbiculatus—Another very common species. Heart shaped leaf often with red spots. Leaf can be quite large and thick. The easiest to flower. I have had pots with over 100 flowers.

## FERTILISING FLOWERS

by R. Tucker

Today breeding of orchid plants can be carried out by anyone who has one or more plants of the same species. It is possible to pollinate an orchid with its own pollen by hand and you could then expect to perpetuate the characteristics of the parent. Like all inbreeding this tends to magnify any weaknesses in the parent and a large proportion of the seedlings will fail to survive. In nature, self pollination is almost impossible so a different pollen parent should be chosen.

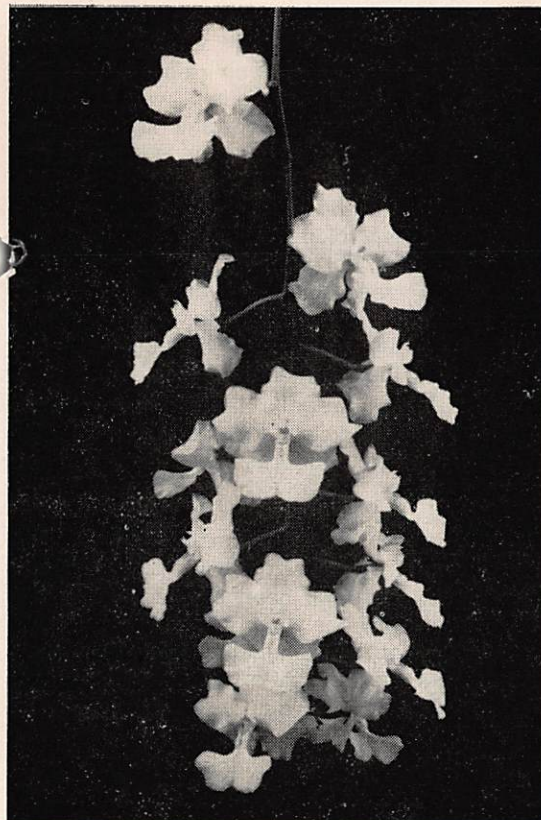
The Cymbidiums and other large flowered orchids cannot be pollinated by any insect smaller than a bumble bee but it is not necessary to induce a bee to perform this task, it can easily be done by hand. The pollinia are found immediately below the translucent cap at the tip of the column, the distinctive feature of all members of the orchid family. This cap is very easily displaced, the lightest touch is sufficient, and this exposes to view the pollen concentrated in two pellets of pollen known as pollinia. Using some of the sticky substance from the depression in the column known as the stigma it is a simple matter to transfer one or two pollinia using a sterile needle or the tip of a pocket knife to the stigma of the intended pod bearing plant where they will adhere. The flower of the latter should then wilt (exceptions are non-staining types) within a few days and the flower parts should be then cut off leaving the column intact.

In a week or so the ovary immediately below the column should begin to swell and during the succeeding months a seed pod will develop. The swelling and development of the pod is not in itself an indication that viable seed has been produced with hybrids of such complex parentage as the plants at present being grown, incompatibility is common. It has been suggested that one can occasionally get seed from a triploid. But to the beginner fertility is easily checked, if the pod stays on the plant for more than six months it is generally accepted that it is viable, but of course there are exceptions.

Don't forget the label (Pod parent first x pollen parent).

## PUKEKURA CORNER

by G. Fuller, N.D.H. (N.Z.) Curator. Pukekura Park, New Plymouth.



*Odontoglossum pendulum* Batem.

To many, this delicate pink truly pendulous orchid will be known as *O. citrosmum*. Ldl. Although most authorities suggest a fragrance of lemon, I must confess that I have never found this to be a strong characteristic and I am happy to accept reversion to the name indicating habit.

The spike, of the form in the Park collection, reaches a length of about 75 cm (30"), is perpendicular, sometimes branched and bears up to 30 shell pink blooms about 5 cm (2") across but other forms may not match all these characteristics.

The first plants were introduced into cultivation in 1838 from Mexico where one auth-

ority suggests that they grow up to an altitude of approx. 3,000m (10,000 ft.). This hints to coolhouse conditions but I must point out that most successful efforts at cultivation that I have observed have been in intermediate conditions—even warm.

Our plant is in a basket lined with tree-fern fibre and filled with chunks of fibre mixed with coarse Cymbidium-type mix. It exhibits a definite rest period during winter when watering is reduced but not completely suspended. The rounded, glossy pseudobulbs then tend to shrivel slightly. About October or early November a new, pointed growth appears and before it is barely 5 cm (2") long, a thread like spike emerges from between what can only be described as bracts at this stage and begins to elongate at an incredible rate, looking somewhat like a piece of dangling green string. At this stage it would be a difficult task to convince anyone that over twenty blooms were in the process of formation.

The flowering season is summer, ours being at its best in December. The delicate pink blooms are a picture and last quite well, though in moist conditions they will spot prematurely. Because of the flowering habit the plant must be suspended. The margins of the sepals and petals are softly waving and the kidney-shaped lip (I tend to think of the old banjo shovel!) has a yellow crest.

After flowering, the plant should not want for water and feeding can be applied while there is growth response. Watch for cessation of growth in the bulb and the two broad strap-shaped leaves and restrict watering accordingly. Feeding could be damaging after this point.

The pre-Christmas suspense of wondering whether ones treatment has been such as to again induce the emergence of the snake-like flower spike from the new growth is quite comparable to the Cymbidium enthusiasts annual autumn dilemma—growth or flower spike.



## A MODERN DAY ORCHID HUNTER

by Ron Maunder, Te Puna.

During the August holidays in 1973 I joined a party of 53 volunteers who flew to the New Hebrides to undertake various tasks among the islands for three weeks.

My task took me to the island of Epi in the Central Islands and along with five others we stayed at a leprosy hospital there. Although we were kept busy practically all the time there was the occasional free period when one could collect shells on the exposed reef, explore the jungle or visit the village nearby.

Before leaving New Zealand I had decided to spend any free time I had there looking for orchids. With this in mind I decided to see if I could contact any local growers in Vila. My American Orchid Society Yearbook had only one member there and I wrote to her and was surprised to receive a reply from Taupo. It turned out she was in New Zealand on leave with her husband before taking up a new post in the Seychelles Islands. Mrs. Colin Allen was most helpful and gave me information about who to contact and where to collect. She had left her collection at the Domain Gardens in Auckland while in New Zealand. So I called there the day I flew out and was kindly shown the plants by Mr. Bill Langhelin, the orchid grower there.

After a hectic time at Nandi where airport staff were striking, and a few hours sleep in a luxury hotel, we flew into Vila at 8 a.m. on a special flight. After the midday siesta when everything stops, I met Herr Bregulla, a German ornithologist who was also making a collection of orchids for European Herbariums. Herr Bregulla lived 5 kilometers out of town but it seemed further because of the atrocious roads. My heart was in my mouth all the way as we hurtled along the wrong side of the road in his battered Volkswagen, while he shouted comments in his broken English and gestured freely with one arm.

We bumped off the road over a few tree roots, sending fowls, cats and dogs running all over the place, and skidded to a halt outside a large ex-planter's house which had seen better days. He explained that the French owner

was a native orchid lover and was letting him stay there at a cheap rental while he did his collecting. Inside I met his charming Indonesian wife, Jeanette, who obviously was his field assistant as well as cook. She knew where he kept all his slides and they soon had me looking at pickled orchids, pressed orchids and magnificent slides of orchids taken by his expensive Hasselblad camera which I greatly envied. Outside he showed me many species growing on trees and on branches of other shrubs. Nearby under a shelter were rows of caged birds which he had collected on his trips around the islands.

When Herr Bregulla heard I was off to Epi he asked me to collect specimens for him of every orchid I found as he had never been there collecting. On my return he would give me a collection of local orchids from Efate (where Vila is situated). He then suggested we go out to a nearby Catholic Mission farm where the jungle had been cleared so I could see what to look for when collecting. I agreed with him when he commented that it wasn't easy to see the orchids let alone reach them. I was rather deflated when he left me with the words "You won't find much up on Epi!"

I could go into details about Vila with its cosmopolitan population, its Chinese trade stores, open markets, and mushrooming multi story office blocks, or the beautiful flowering trees, banana palms, coconuts, breadfruit and mango trees, but these things are what attracts the increasing numbers of tourists by air and cruise ships and are probably not of interest to orchid people. The part French, part British condominium of the New Hebrides is an amusing, exasperating and unique place. Where else can one see the French and British flag raising ceremonies taking place at the same time a few hundred yards apart? Where else can it take so long to get official documents stamped and where else can one buy old centimes stamps to put on your mail when such a currency doesn't even exist.

Our party left at 9 p.m. aboard a 10 metre launch with a European skipper and New Heb-

## SOME MORE NEW ZEALAND ORCHIDS: HELMETS

by Jim Forrest — 19 Fairview Place, Te Puke

Corybas were first found in Australia by Robert Brown who called them *Corysanthes* meaning helmets. Unfortunately the law of priorities forced a change to the present *Corybas* which was the name of one of the dancing priests of Phrygia.

It is a genus of some fifty species ranging from the foot hills of India to Malaysia, Philippines, New Guinea, Australia and New Zealand. In New Zealand we have eight species, two are common in Australia and the rest are endemic (found only in New Zealand).

### The Plants

All the species except one have a solitary leaf (occasionally two) which lies close to the ground. The leaves vary considerably in shape and size among adults of the same species but in general they are rounded, heart shaped or like an arrow head. They may be various shades of green depending on where they grow, some are wafer thin while others are thick and much like a succulent. Underneath the leaf they are either silvery or red, an aid in identification. Frequently they have no stalk (sessile) or in some species are held up above the flower on a longer petiole. All species however elongate rapidly following fertilisation. I have seen them as high as 20 centimetres. This is a feature which *Corybas* have in common with *Chiloglottis* and undoubtedly is an aid to seed dispersal.

The underground system consists of a small rounded tuber (2-5 millimetres across) and long white roots which form new tubers at their tips. Quite often the plants are joined together like strawberry runners. This is a point to remember if lifting plants or you will break the new roots. The tubers are seldom deep and often only a few millimetres under the surface.

Flowers are small four millimetres, quite large 25 millimetres. The "feelers" are much larger, sometimes straight up or curving forward or backward. The flower in some species faces down or in others lies back. Colour is

variable but reddish purple would be the most common. Some species have a delicately fringed lip. Regrettably flowers are small in proportion to the number of plants in the colony but many more than the Australian species. A very small proportion of plants seem to set seed.

### Where to find them

In my limited experience I would say that *Corybas* are widespread or at least in the North Island. They probably would outnumber any other genera as they are always found in colonies, in many cases very large colonies. It would be unwise to generalise about where they grow but a damp partly shady spot seems to suit them. Some of the places that I always look are roadside cuttings (how often are these widened for progress and the colonies destroyed); along the edge of streams particularly under overhanging ferns in the moss on boulders in small streams where they receive some shade and of course on the floor of the forest or rotten stumps and fallen trees. In suitable places some plants at least never lose their leaves but June to January is the best time to look.

### How to grow them

The basic requirements seem to be a continually moist locality a well drained open compost and freedom from draughts or strong sunlight.

Before potting make sure the drainage hole flows freely. Use an open compost that drains easily and contains partially broken down leaf mould. This helps to keep the moisture from fluctuating in the mix. These orchids do seem to be very sensitive to soil moisture fluctuations and some species quickly die if they dry out too much over the growing season. If you are having trouble you could try plunging the pots to the rim in a coarse sand peat moss mixture.

Some species build up quickly in numbers and these I re-pot each year, others more slowly and these I leave for two seasons. All seem



# TEN FAVOURITE CYMBIDIUMS

by Tom French

To reduce one's favourite Cymbidiums to the number of ten is difficult enough, but when the Editor (bless his purple little soul) imposes the condition that the clones chosen must be reasonably available for purchase in New Zealand, then the choice becomes ten times more difficult. So it is with anguish, tribulation and the drawing of lots, that I have selected from my thousand and one favourite Cymbidiums a meagre ten.

The Cymbidiums in our collection are grown for display in the home when in bloom, and my wife does assist in the choice of suitable clones for this purpose. The plants must be generally attractive, and colour and colour harmony of the blooms are of prime consideration, as they must be pleasant to live with.

The ten clones listed are all from our own collection, but during the past flowering season quite a few new "favoured" Cymbidiums were noted in other collections, and many of these now reside in our shade house. The order of those listed does not indicate any special preference.

## LUCENSE 'GOLIATH'

An early season green. Large flowers well displayed on a strong stem.

## MIMI 'SANDALWOOD'

This miniature is easy to grow, and very floriferous. Flowers are a warm mahogany red, the wide lip attractively marked. Needs to be flowered in good light for best colour.

## WYANGA 'ELANORA'

A popular 'non staining' green with yellow lip.

## SPICE ISLANDS 'FANTASY'

A light green with shapely raspberry lip. Has charm and distinction.

## VOLCANO 'MENEHUNE'

Brown sepals, contrasting cream lip edged with red. Flowers well presented on an arching stem. Another that needs to be flowered in good light.

## HAMSEY 'THE GLOBE'

A light brick red of very good form. A colour hard to describe, but I liked this one.

## LADY MOXHAM 'MARY'

This well known polychrome in shades of bronze and chocolate red always seems to attract the ladies. Perhaps that is why I have included it in this list.

## FLIRTATION 'PRINCESS ROYAL'

An older miniature, but one that really flowers profusely. Lots of blush pink blooms carried well above the foliage. Early season too.

## NEGRITO 'CHERRY RIPE'

Nice spikes of cherry red, medium size flowers, well displayed. A compact grower, makes a nice pot plant.

## BALKIS 'CAPTAIN ANDERSON' or 'WEDDING VEIL'

A few clean whites are a must for any display to give contrast for the stronger colours.

Unfortunately I have had to omit so many of my favourite Cymbidiums from this list, such nice clones as Tapestry 'Long Beach' and 'Red Glory', Cleo Sherman 'Mrs. Casamajor', Tristran Kobb 'Liquid Amber', Sea Gem 'Tania', Bud March 'Rosetta', Carigara 'Meadowmist', Mary Pinchess 'Del Rey', the many lovely Sensations, and all the rest of my nine hundred and ninety one favourite Cymbidiums.

This is the first of a series which I propose to run following a suggestion from the Palmerston North Seminar. A number of commercial growers and hobbyists have been asked to submit a list of their 10 favourite Cymbidiums. I hope these will be of help in making a selection, particularly for new growers.

—Editor.

ridean bosun and two crew. The harbour was a pretty sight with its reflections and silhouettes as we chugged over the glass-like waters. I decided to sit up front on the cabin with my feet amongst the anchor rope and leaning against the dinghy which had been lashed across the cabin roof. All was well as we sailed up the coast but when we sailed away from Efate, across the open straits, we encountered rough seas. The waves were like warm water as they broke over my feet and the phosphorescent plankton left a long line behind us in our wake. For about 12 hours the leader of our party and I clung to the mast, waking each other as we dozed off, too scared to scramble the 10 metres back to the cockpit where the others were being thrown off their beds and hanging over the side. At daybreak we could see the chain of volcanic cones which formed the islands away on our right and eventually in the lee of Epi Is. the water became calm again.

The island of Epi roughly resembles a fish and is about 48 kilometres long and 16½° south of the equator. The population is practically all at the "head" end and the villages nowadays are on the coast. The only income comes from copra from the coconut plantations all around the coast. The interior is mountainous jungle country rising to an extinct volcanic cone 880 metres above sea level. Having been a mountaineer back home I decided Mt. Pomare the highest peak would be my goal to collect orchids from. I was soon to be discouraged for I learned that there were only about 4 vehicles on the island and about 56 kilometres of road.

The hospital staff said I was mad as I made plans to conquer Mt. Pomare. A maintenance engineer who called in one day said he had heard that there was grass on top of many peaks over 660 metres in the islands. This only made me more determined. I found a New Hebridean woman in hospital from a remote village beyond the mountain and although I couldn't understand the Bislina pidgin used throughout the islands, I managed to confirm that grass grew on top. To get to Mt. Pomare did indeed seem hopeless. It was about 24 kilometres away as the crow flies but 32 kilometres by jeep track around the coast and then through 5 kilometres of jungle.

Although I searched the jungle around the hospital several times I only found a couple of epiphytic orchids. They were both vanaceous orchids. One was a vanda or vandopsis which grew over the track about 10 metres up in a tree. The tree was covered in vines and the huge plant with its 2 metre branches remained a tantalizing prize for several weeks before I managed to persuade one of my workers to scale the tree and break off a large piece. The boys had knocked off small tips with their stick throwing which is highly accurate and devastating, but none had roots on. A village elder told me the flowers were red and sometimes yellow, but so far the plant has not flowered for me here in New Zealand.

The other orchid which later proved to be quite common around the coastal area was found in great masses. It had a spike like *Rhyncostylis retusa*, with dozens of red fleshy flowers with a green tip on the saccate lip. Unfortunately each flower only lasts a day or two but the whole spike lasts about a month. The flower colour of the clones ranges through pinks to pure white. It has turned out to be *Robiquetia merrelli*.

—To be continued.

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## Notes on the rules for naming orchids

These rules are given in detail in the Handbook on Orchid Nomenclature and Registration published in 1969 by the International Orchid Commission on Classification, Nomenclature and Registration. They adhere to the general principles as defined in the Botanical Code and Cultivated Code. But the interpretation of these principles has by agreement been broadened to accommodate the special problems in naming orchids.

Orchid names fall into three main categories (a) names of species (b) names of hybrids (c) names of cultivars.

## Some rules of the Botanical Code regarding naming of species

The botanical name of a plant species consists fundamentally of two parts, a genus name and a specific epithet. In the human situation these names correspond with surnames, e.g. Smith and christian name, e.g. John. As is the custom in South-East Asia, the surname comes first. The practice of giving plants two names, the binomial system of nomenclature, was firmly established by Linnaeus in Species Plantarum (1753) although Brunfels had used it as early as 1530. It replaced the previous system whereby each plant had a more lengthy series of descriptive names.

The genus name is a noun with a Latin ending and begins with a capital letter. The specific epithet is an adjective with a Latin ending which agrees in gender with the genus name. It begins with a small letter, although, if honouring a particular person, it may by the rules begin with a capital. To avoid confusion with the genus name a small letter is preferable.

To distinguish the scientific name further, it is printed in different type from that used in the text of the article, usually in italics but in this magazine in heavier type. The customary indication to the printer that words in a typescript are to be italicised is to underline them. So one often finds that scientific names are underlined in typescripts and manuscripts.

Sometimes the name of the author who first published the name follows in plain type,

and, unless short, is abbreviated, e.g. *Phalaenopsis violacea* Witte. This practice allows a scientist to track down the original description by consulting the writings of the author.

The Botanical Code also makes provision for the recognition of subdivisions of a species, such as botanical varieties. These occur in comparatively few species and particularly in those whose range extends, for example, over different types of soils or through different temperature or rainfall regimes. The variety name has a Latin ending and is preceded by var., e.g. *Arachnis hookerana* var. *luteola*.

to be continued

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# THE NAMING OF ORCHIDS

Ella O. Campbell, Massey University

## Introduction

If you take up any hobby or sport, such as motoring, football or golf, you immediately find that you are involved in learning new words and new rules. The hobby of growing orchids is no exception. In this article I am going to attempt to explain the rules for naming orchids.

The orchids present two special problems. Firstly, as natural or wild species they form the second largest family of flowering plants and include about 1/10 of all recognised species. Moreover, most of these species have become known comparatively recently, more particularly as the Tropics have been opened up to exploration. This occurred long after Botany had become established as a discipline in Europe and North America and long after a system had been drawn up for naming the limited flora of these regions. Secondly, man-made hybrids between orchid species and indeed orchid genera occur comparatively readily, as compared with the situation in other families. In fact, there are now many more hybrids recognised than there are natural species. Moreover, many of these are in cultivation and are widely distributed.

## Types of plant names

There are three types of names for plants

- (1) Common or vernacular names, e.g. chickweed, daisy, primrose. These have either originated in folk-lore or been derived from botanical names. Very few orchids have folk-lore names, e.g. slipper orchids, spider orchids, scorpion orchids, but many generic names are used as common names, e.g. cymbidium, cattleya. They may be compared with such horticultural names as iris, lobelia and chrysanthemum.
- (2) Scientific or botanical names, e.g. *Papilionopedilum barbatum*. These are given to naturally growing, wild plants. They apply even though the plant is in cultivation. Species orchids are good examples.

les. Botanical names are recognisable as being in Latin form and by being printed in a different type, usually in italics. The Latin form came about partly for historical reason, for, with the revival of learning in the Middle Ages, scholars sought out the early descriptions of plants which were in ancient Latin and Greek manuscripts. Latin had the advantage of using the Roman alphabet and of being known by scholars throughout the world. It is a truly international language. Rules for the botanical naming of plants were first approved at an International Botanical Congress in 1867 and have been revised at later International Botanical Congresses. They are known as the International Rules of Botanical Nomenclature or; for short, the Botanical Code.

- (3) Cultivar names e.g. *Cymbidium lowianum* 'McBeans'  
Cultivar is a shortened form of cultivated variety and refers to plants which have been produced by man and are not found in the wild. Many are maintained in cultivation only by careful selection and breeding and would not retain their identity under natural conditions. The cultivar epithet 'McBeans' is distinguished from the botanical name by being printed in plain type and when following it, is enclosed in single quotation marks. It is always attached to either a botanical or common name. The naming of cultivars is governed by the International Code of Nomenclature of Cultivated Plants, in short, the Cultivated Code. This code was originally drawn up by horticulturists and published in 1953 but has since been broadened to provide for agriculturists and foresters. The 1969 edition was drawn up by the International Commission for the Nomenclature of Cultivated Plants.

# THOUGHTS ON ORCHID GROWING

Bruce Douglas, 46 Grey Street, Kawerau

I expect all types of orchids will be into their new seasons growth by now. This gives them the whole season to grow and develop their new pseudobulbs to the greatest possible size. How does one get this "greatest possible size"? At this stage we can assume your mixture is right for your condition. If you have any doubts check with your local society or ask someone who knows. This would show by his or her well grown plants. At this point may I suggest something that may not be very popular in all quarters. It is "seldom do exactly as you are advised." My reason—your orchid mixture may have slightly different needs for you could have used different materials, you may carry heavier shade which keeps your plants wetter than those of your informant etc. etc. Work out the reason for your being given such and such a fact then evaluate it for your own conditions.

When you receive this issue holidays for some will be well under way. I expect you all coped with your time in various ways—neighbours, spaghetti watering, automatic equipment and No, surely not—nothing done at all. After all for most orchids this will be their main growing months with a spill over into the next month or so. Therefore if you have not provided the best now, how can you expect good flowers next season.

These notes of course will be written several months ahead of your reading them. Well I am going to stick my neck out and suggest that there will be a reasonable amount of rain during the first half of January. This should help your culture over this part of the holiday period. Then from that point on the weather will pick up and in will come the hot dry period. How will you cope with this?

Generally the orchids you are growing will be themselves associated with bush or have ancestors that would have been. Herewith then is your first clue. You will need cool buoyant air in your glasshouse or shadehouse.

Naturally a shadehouse will, or should provide this easier than the average glasshouse. A small glasshouse especially if inadequately shaded will run to very high temperatures on hot days. For good growth these high temperatures must be controlled. If you do not have a Max.-Min. thermometer get one immediately, put it in your glasshouse and set it daily. Ventilate during the day as necessary. Close down early enough in the afternoon to build up some reserve of heat and so conserve this until night temperatures equal the minimum you require.

Possibly I am open to correction here but I expect almost all bush areas in the world will have humidity. Here again is something you must control and mostly keep up rather than down.

Think of our Canterbury friends during a Nor'wester. This dries everything to the extent of a fine dust being blown about that infiltrates everything. You northern growers are lucky. Oh yes I do know that some orchids in the wild grow on open rock faces in full sun and seem literally to get cooked. But which orchid is which, is for you to find out, by asking during question time at your local Orchid Society meeting.

Congratulations to all you growers who have adequately sprayed for fungus, aphids, scale, etc. and also baited for slugs. Now that you have done so well don't get lazy and forget or slacken off. There is still plenty of time for infection to spread. Perhaps the main one from now on would be red spider. Spraying and damping down should control same.

If it is ever wise to take a risk with over watering it will be during the next month or so. The weather will mostly be such that there will be plenty of quick drying. Watch the washing on the line—the days it dries quickly so will your orchids.

You can regard orchids as gross feeders. To get the best you therefore must feed. How



and what you use will be your decision. I know one grower uses this while another grower uses that type of feed. Don't get confused—it just means you have to feed adequately with a mixture of your choice.

Later when you understand feeding and feel fully qualified to comment because of your own well grown orchids you will possibly be using a particular formulation of your making.

How do you shade your orchids? Some use whitewash. I prefer a mixture of seven parts kerosene and one part of a lead paint, white in colour brushed on to the glass (never use plastic paint as I did once). To prevent glare insert several drops of green or red paint into the base mixture. You may need to experiment to see if it is best to use 5 parts or 8 parts of kerosene in your district. More kerosene would of course kill the paint further and less would make it harder to wear off. By autumn this should be wearing thin and so let more light through. If not, a yard broom pushed up should easily scratch enough away to let more light through. Further to this I like some sort of blind say 25-30 cm above the glass. This can be dropped (or what is required of it) to beat those extra hot days and give extra shade perhaps over a section only of the glasshouse. Use it also for frost control. The frost settles on the blind and does not cool the glass beneath as much as if it settled directly on to it.

Selenipediums seem to be making a come back these days. Checking some old notes I found they were making a good display during the first week of November. However for the first week in December one year, three plants finished flowering and were returned to the nursery after each had been on display for seven months. Can you beat that?

Have you ever heard of (or seen) *Grammatophyllum scriptum*. It is something like a Cymbidium and comes from further up in the Pacific Islands. I flowered it in October 1953 and it was almost certainly its first flowering in New Zealand.

Potting should largely be completed now. However a few plants may still need attention. Some growers especially Cymbidium lovers make no bones about potting in the Autumn. I doubt if I could recommend this unless the plants have gone back to the extent that this becomes the best policy to take. Up to this point I have only introduced the subject and information:—

To close I will briefly give the following general cultural notes.

**CYMBIDIUMS:** Give plenty of air movement, adequate watering and damping down. As much light as the plants will stand and keep a good colour (some folk like them to go yellowish)  
**VANDAS:** These plants don't make many roots in their compost. Damp down exposed roots give as much light as possible without burning the plants. If your humidity is low few or no aerial roots will be made.

**CATTLEYAS** etc: Should be mainly making up pseudobulbs with plenty of new roots. A healthy root would be white or whitish. These are 'intermediate' temperature plants and will not like high temperatures.

**FEEDING:** continue to feed as orchids could be called gross feeders. Check the size of some grower's large pseudobulbs with what you think they would be in nature. Check them with yours also—anything lacking? Members seem to feed with many and varied solutions. Mostly if other factors are equal results will be similar so don't become confused.

**PROPAGATIONS, BACK BULBS** etc.: those that you took during your repotting period should be getting away now. Keep them growing. Any check these plants get will affect them later. Often they will become your top plants in a year or two with good care.

Until next issue, good growing, happy times and plenty of relaxing moments.

Overheard at a recent orchid show: "Those are Cymbidiums and these are Orchids".

## ASCOCENDAS

by J. Brljevich.

The first cross of Ascocenda was made by a Dr. Siberis of Hawaii in 1949. The cross was between *Ascocentrum curvifolium* x *Vanda lamellata* which was named *Portia Doolittle*. Though this cross did not produce many good plants Dr Siberis flowered another cross next year which was *Meda Arnold*. The parents were *Ascocentrum curvifolium* x *Vanda Rothschildiana*. This turned out to be an exceptionally fine cross and up to the end of 1973 56 awards had been given to different clones, including 20 Am/Aos.

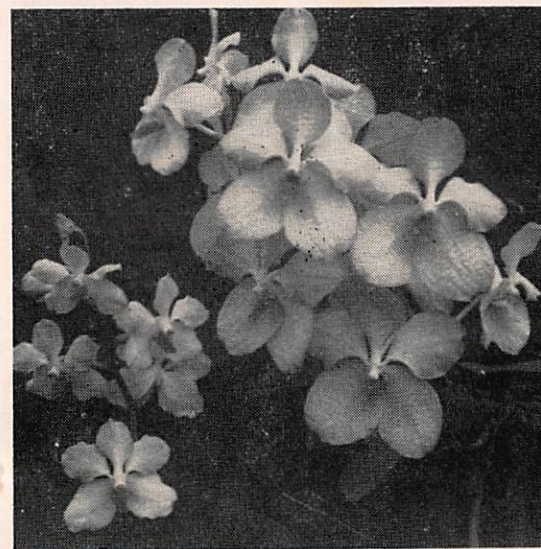


Photo: G. Fuller.

*Vanda coerulea*

To give an idea of the beauty and popularity of this remarkable genus over 300 crosses were registered in the period of 1961-70 and in the period 1971-74 there were 206 crosses registered.

Another great cross was *Yip Sum Wah* (*Vanda Pukele* x *Ascocentrum curvifolium*) registered in 1965. In the short period between October 1966 when the first award was grant-

ed and the latter part of 1973, 54 different clones were awarded by the American Orchid Society including 24 Award of Merits. In addition these two crosses produced a large majority of high quality plants.

The purpose of crossing the large *Vanda* with the dwarf *Ascocentrum* is to produce plants which remain on the dwarf side and will bear flowers somewhat larger than the *Ascocentrum* but much smaller than the *Vanda*.

One of the fine qualities of Ascocendas is that the *Ascocentrum* parent imparts a brilliance to the flowers that is not usually found in the *Vanda*.

Another fine characteristic of most Ascocendas is that they are free flowering, bearing many flowers on a spike and as one spike dies down another is already showing on the plant.

The mix I use for growing Ascocendas in, is two parts pine bark and one part charcoal and I have found they do not grow as fast as other genera. They like plenty of warmth with high humidity but the winter months tend to slow them down even with the temperature between 17 degrees-20 degrees C. In places like Thailand and Singapore they flower in two years from flasks, but I find the small plants slow growers. The bigger plants grow a lot better for me and if anyone is thinking of buying I would recommend flowering or near flowering size. Remember, plants in pine bark need a higher nitrogen fertiliser.

## CYMBIDIUM NOTES

by Gordon Maney

### January, February & March

January, February and March are similar to November and December for feeding and watering and it is important to spray each of these months with a fungicide.

By March flower spikes will be showing up again and once more slug bait must be used each week.