

# NEWSLETTER

Jan. 2009

**NEXT MEETING Sun 8<sup>th</sup> Mar. 2009 at 1.30 pm**

*BBQ Time*

**SPEAKER:** Next meeting we have something completely different! Jenny Perwick (Howick Horticultural Soc. Pres.) will give us an insight into terra-forming the planet Mars, a possible prospect in the not too distant future.

**LAST MEETING:** By all accounts another successful and well attended meeting despite the absence of quite a few key committee members. Thank you Len for running the meeting and to those that helped out. Grahame gave a very interesting talk I am told so hopefully some more of our members will be tempted to take up the challenge. I saw this demo before at another society's meeting and learnt a lot about how to grow on slabs. Consequently I have tried a number and put them in an area where hopefully they will thrive.

**HOS BBQ** This year we are holding this on **Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> March**, (week following meeting), **4 pm** at the home of Anton and Janet, **26 Booralee Ave** Howick. This is near Botany Downs Primary School. HOS will provide meat (steak/sausages) and non-alcoholic drinks. Please bring a small plate as follows: Surnames beginning **A to J** salad and **K to Z** desert. Come and enjoy a relaxing day, spot prizes and raffles. As this is later than usual we expect more of you to attend!

## **EDITOR'S COMMENT**

I was interested to hear Joe Vance's comment at a recent NZOS prize giving evening where Joe and Betty (Villa Orchids) won a number of trophies for their beautiful Cymbidiums.

Joe said: 'that despite some thinking they had so many plants to choose from all his winners this year were old plants, which he had maintained in his collection for many years. The big difference was that this year he had grown them a lot better and had improved the quality of the blooms and increased the number on each inflorescence'.

This is really a lesson to all of us who do have the potential to achieve good results with their old plants if grown to perfection. Some of these older varieties have plenty of vigor, their flowers are as good as many of the modern hybrids and are certainly of competitive quality. Of course if you grow species then they are as good as they always were and very rewarding. The other advantage of growing an old plant well is that you can achieve a specimen-sized plant with many flowers giving a really magnificent display in a relatively short time if you started with a good-sized plant. With these a Cultural certificate may be awarded which I would personally value highly as it is recognition of the grower's ability to achieve a well-grown and excellent flowering plant.

Dendrobiums are especially suited for specimen plants, readily available, quick growing and flowering on old canes they can be very eye catching. For new growers they possibly have the easiest culture for local conditions.

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## **MEMBERSHIP FEES (For next financial year)**

With everything rising in price it is unfortunately necessary to increase our annual fee to cover extra costs. The biggest increase for this year and subsequent years is the hall hire. OCNZ capitation fees have risen, we are now paying more for a lot of the disposable items such as tea, coffee, milk, biscuits, cups, prize giving plants, Xmas catering and Xmas presents. Although our printing costs have been reduced along with mailing now that we utilize internet these are still higher than previous as the postage rates and printer's fee have increased. A 'tea-lady' is now employed to look after our afternoon tea and organize the kitchen on special occasions such as the show and prize giving. We still believe members are getting excellent value for money when these and other benefits such as the BBQ sponsored by the society are taken into account. Many other clubs do not provide gifts, food or have such a great raffle as we do.

The Committee has agreed to the new rates of **\$20 Single** and **\$30 family** (at same address) for the 2009 financial year. This is very minimal increase and basically fees only cover hall hire and capitation. All other expenses have to be covered by other means.

## **MEMBERSHIP FEES** are NOW DUE.

Please pay at the club or post cheque to **38 Andrew Rd Howick 2010**.

Cheques crossed and made payable to Howick Orchid Society Inc.

NOTE: The **new fees** are now applicable, see article above.

**RAFFLE:** Michelle stepped in here and with reception helped by Steven.

## **PLANTS ON DISPLAY** (Jan. meeting)

### **OPEN**

John Muddiman: *Phal.* Sogo Red Ruby, *Phal.* Taisuco Kaaladian.

Wolf Grausch: *Lc.* Callistoglossa.

Michelle Tung: *Den.* Mountain Magic, *Phals.* Sogo John x Dou-dii Spot, Sweet Memory, Brother Little 'Yellow Boy', Golden Buddha x Princess Kiaulani, *venosa* x Tungku Afzan .

William & Man Lo: *Phal.* Golden Taipei x Golden Sun, Sogo John x Katie Morris, Ambenosa x {Gypsey x (Sandswim x Golden Gift)}, Leopard Prince, *Doc. Uniflora*, *Wils.* Jean Dupont.

Burt & Evelyn Ong: *Renanthera* Tom Thumb.

Len Cobb: *Vanda*.

Pam Forde: *Onc. sphacelatum*, *Phal.* Unknown, *Den.* Virginia Jupp x *speciosum*, *Oda.* (Florida? x Direlle) x (Royal Delight x Golden Rialto).

**NOVICE** No entries

**NOVELTY** No entries

**OPEN:** 1<sup>st</sup> Len Cobb (*Vanda*), 2<sup>nd</sup> W & M . Lo (*Phal*), 3<sup>rd</sup> B & E Ong (*Ren*).

## **CULTURE:**

In the winter we wish it would stop raining, now we need it desperately. It's a full time job keeping up with watering at present. An interesting observation when watering can be made if you have any plants in clear plastic pots. If very dry the water just runs through without the bark (or mix) taking up any of the water. The same can happen with very dry roots. Once this happens new roots can seal off at the ends and stop growing. This is undesirable at this time of the year.

Continue with fertilizing this month but a change to a fertilizer with higher P and K should be made towards the end of Feb. The end of Feb is the time to treat your orchids with dried blood. Put a cup full of dried blood in a stocking, and soak in a bucket of water for a few days then dilute and use the liquid to water the orchids.

## **WOC 1 day SHOW**

This year the show was held early and consequently a lot of different orchid flowers on display including Sobralias and many Masdevallias. With a good turn out from many societies it was as usual a very sociable and relaxed affair including the superb BBQ lunch. Attendees judged the show, which is always a bit of fun and gives the members a chance to have their say on what they like. Consequently many large, well-flowered plants won prizes as opposed to maybe more perfect blooms. I think everyone was in agreement with the Grand Champ, Ross & Susan Tucker's magnificent Cattleya. It certainly had everything, excellent blooms of outstanding quality standing out from all the others. For those that get this newsletter by email flowers from this show will feature this issue. WOC web site will have more photos.

**An old** husband and wife die and go to heaven. There, St. Peter gives them the grand tour of their new home. It's a HUGE mansion with a limo driver, gardener, etc.

The old man exclaims, "That's ours?"

St. Peter says "Yes, it is yours, forever and ever."

The old man is a little suspicious and says, "How much is the rent?"

St. Peter says, "It is free. After all, this is heaven."

Across the street is an expansive golf course with beautifully manicured lawn, interesting layout, and fun golf carts.

St. Peter says, "You can play here whenever you want."

The old man says, "What are the green fees?"

St. Peter replies, "None. After all, this is heaven."

The old man is very impressed. They go inside the house and on the dining room table is a gigantic feast with roasted meats, desserts, fine wine and all the trimmings.

The old man says, "How many calories?"

St. Peter says, "None. After all, this is heaven."

The old man gets a look on his face like he suddenly understands what heaven is all about, then he suddenly turns to the old woman, yelling, "You ! If it weren't for your damn bran muffins, tofu and other health food, not to mention making me give up booze and cigarettes and exercise every day, we could have been here YEARS ago!"

## **NEW MEMBERS**

One of the best and very reasonably priced investments I have made is a CF meter, which measures the conductivity of the fertilizer mix prepared to water my plants. As the NPK value on the fertilizer container is only a guide to the relative quantities of each it is difficult to know how strong your mix actually is. Without getting too technical, the percentages and mix ratios refer to different things in some countries and I have found some brands with quite low NPK values to be actually quite 'strong'. This is where your meter will tell you exactly how strong you have made your mix. Depending on where you live the tap water also may already contain minerals and other deposits. Surprisingly our tap water has a reading of up to 130\* and I use a fertiliser mix from 250 (weak) up to about 500. Pure distilled (rain water) is usually near 0.

\*My meter reading, some meters read in different units.

Fertilising has now become a whole lot easier for me this year with the utilization of an old spa pool pump. This was hooked up to a 50 litre laundry tub (mounted outside near a tap) and the outlet connected to the pump. This was necessary as spa pool pumps will not suck water up out of a drum, they will only circulate water if fed from a higher level. From the pump I connect my garden hose and this then gives me 4 minutes of good flow at the nozzle. I mix the fertilizer in to the tub water and check the CF reading. Usually I try and use rain water from a couple of drums placed under a down pipe for watering the orchids.

**SALES:** Each meeting members can bring along surplus **orchids** for sale. There is no sale commission charged on club days. 15% commission is charged for orchids sold at our show.

**RAFFLE:** Please help us by donating an **orchid** for the raffle if you have any in flower to spare. We do get quite a number donated now, but don't leave it to the same people every time.

**OTHER Donations:** Fresh produce and other desirable items may be brought in for the club to sell and the proceeds donated to the HOS.

**AUCTION** (Nov. meeting) Please put aside a plant or 2 for this very popular and great fund raising event. Orchid books are also sold.

**CHRISTMAS:** Social event with afternoon tea and Santa Claus.

The **SUPER 14** has started with.....an IRAQUI RUGBY PLAYER!

The Auckland Blues manager sends scouts out round the world looking for a new player to hopefully win them the Super 14 again.

One scout informs him of a talented young Iraqi winger. The coach flies to Iraq to watch him, is suitably impressed and arranges for him to come over to play for the Blues.

Two weeks later, The Blues are 30-0 down at home to the Crusaders with only 20 minutes left.

The coach gives the young Iraqi winger the nod to go on.

The lad is a sensation, scores 6 tries in 20 minutes and wins the game for the Blues.

The fans are delighted, the players and coaches are ecstatic, and the media love the new star.

When he comes off the field he phones his Mum to tell her about his first day playing rugby for the Blues.

"Hi Mum, guess what?" he says. "I played for 20 minutes today, we were 30-0 down, but I scored 6 tries and we won. Everybody loves me, the fans, the players and the media, they all love me".

"Great," says his Mum, "now let me tell you about my day".

"Your father got shot in the street, your sister and I were attacked and beaten, and your brother has joined a gang of looters, all while you were having a great time.

The young lad is very upset. What can I say Mum, I'm so sorry.

"Sorry?" says his Mum "Its your fault that we moved to South Auckland in the first place!"

## **DENDROBIUMS** (a QUICK GUIDE)

I mentioned these above and many newer and possibly some older members will be mostly familiar with the Australian types as they are so popular and plentiful. Dendrobiums are one of the largest orchid genera (approx. 1500 species and counting) and come from a variety of countries and climates including NZ. We commonly see the Australian types (kingianum, speciosum etc including many hybrids between these) in the spring when their prolific and sweetly fragrant flowers dominate our benches and shows. Others that have been around for some time are the nobile type from Nepal (flower Oct/Nov.) and the tropical ones (variable flowering time) with their showy flowers. There are now an increasing number of others finding their way into our collections especially New Guinea species, many of which are cooler growers and well suited to our climate. Obviously one of the problems we face when buying a new Den is what conditions it prefers. Just because it is Australian doesn't mean that it is a cool grower. The Cooktown orchid (Den. biggibum) and others from the north are definitely warm growers. The New Guinea highlands are quite cool (even snow at the equator) but the lowlands are very humid and hot so it pays to know where a plant originates from before buying. So many new ones are appearing it is becoming quite a task trying to keep up with them. To make matters worse hybridisers are crossing warm and cool growers. This does not necessarily give an intermediate climate grower, some seedlings will tend to the warm and others to the cool.

So what do you do when you see a hybrid such as *Den. cruttwellii* x *stratiotes* for sale? The first thing to do is discuss with the vendor everything he/she knows about it.

Usually if the seller is someone who is knowledgeable about the plant or has bred and grown it, they can give you a good idea about the growing conditions. I have also resorted to checking the plant out on a computer if one is available at the hall where you are and usually these days there is one around with a variety of programmes to research orchids. You can take a risk and buy it anyway but I strongly recommend checking out the parentage when you get home. These days there are many good websites available to do this especially Jay's internet orchid species encyclopedia [www.orchidspecies.com/](http://www.orchidspecies.com/)

So getting back to the above cross. An interesting one and fortunately for sale by our very own Dendrobium expert Grahame Leafberg who told me he was growing it cool. Another plus was it was in flower. Jay's website gave pictures of the two parents (both from New Guinea) and surprisingly the antelope type petals of stratiotes are completely gone but it's nice lip colour retained in the cross. The petal/sepal shape and colour have been inherited from cruttwellii. The other features I liked about the plant were its vigour and potential for growing into a specimen. As mentioned above this is another example of a cool orchid (cruttwellii) being crossed with a warm grower (stratiotes) but obviously preferring to grow cool like the cruttwellii parent.

**One** winter morning at breakfast a couple was listening to the radio. They heard the announcer say, "We are going to have 8-10 inches of snow today. You must park your car on the even-numbered side of the street, so the snow-plow can get through."

The wife went out and moved her car.

A week later while they are eating breakfast, the radio announcer said, "We are expecting 10-12 inches of snow today, you will need to move your car to the odd-numbered side of the street so the snow-plow can get through." So the wife went out and moved her car again.

The next week, while they were eating breakfast, the radio announcer said, "We are expecting 12-14 inches of snow today and you must park....." Then the power went off!

The wife was very upset. With a worried look on her face she said, "Honey, I don't know what to do, which side of the street am I supposed to park on?"

With love and understanding in his voice (that all married men exhibit), her husband said, "Why don't you just leave it in the garage this time."

## COMING EVENTS

DON'T FORGET the **BBQ 4 pm** on Sat. 14<sup>th</sup> March.

Shortly we hope to arrange **home garden visits** to some HOS member's orchid houses. These are always worthwhile as you can see first hand the 'experts' growing conditions.

**HOS Club days for 2009:** 12<sup>th</sup> Apr, 10<sup>th</sup> May, 14<sup>th</sup> June, 12<sup>th</sup> July, 9<sup>th</sup> Aug,  
13<sup>th</sup> Sept, 18<sup>th</sup> Oct (NB not 2<sup>nd</sup> Sun), 8<sup>th</sup> Nov, 13<sup>th</sup> Dec.

Show set up 2<sup>nd</sup> Oct, Show Sat. 3<sup>rd</sup> Oct.

Meetings are held 1.30pm sharp in the Fencible Lounge, Howick every month except January.

Next show on the calendar is the **Bay of Plenty Show** (in Te Puke) and is a different date to that advertised in the Orchid Year book. This year the Lions are organizing it.

New dates are Friday **3<sup>rd</sup> April** (10.30 – 5.00) and Sat **4<sup>th</sup> Apr.** (10.30 – 4.00).

**NZOS** Autumn show is on early May.

**IMPORTANT NOTICE – AN INVITATION** to the WOC meeting 7.30pm Tues 3<sup>rd</sup> March, at the Lion's Whitehouse, Edmunton Rd, Te Atatu. (just past Supermarket near roundabout)  
This is **George Fuller's** farewell talk. George was the curator of Pukekura Park in New Plymouth, has been honoured with many awards is very interesting, amusing and usually entertaining. As the last apprentice taken on at Sanders Nursery in England George's knowledge and experience is unsurpassed. ALL HOS members are welcome to his final public talk.