

NEWSLETTER

May. 2010 **NEXT MEETING Sun 13th June 2010 at 1.30 pm** *See updated footer below*

NEXT MEETING: Anjo McKernan (Orchids 4 U) from Hibiscus Coast Orchid Soc. (also an HOS member) will speak about Cattleyas (one of my favourites).

LAST MEETING

A big thanks to **Raewyn McCormack** (scones with jam and cream), **Heather Brockett** (pikelets with jam and cream) and **Lea Westlake** (about a thousand mini muffins) for a sumptuous afternoon tea.

We had 8 visitors and 2 of these signed up as new members. With approx. 50 in attendance we are still continuing to attract a good audience and plenty of excellent flowers.

Another 18 of **Stan's** Cyms were sold at very cheap prices to our members in the Blind Auction netting us another **\$89**. Sales of the left over accessories from Xmas were also popular (**\$37**), there are limited supplies left. Our raffle is still popular with **\$82**, but don't forget your 50c door entry.

Dennis Chuah gave possibly the best talk we have ever heard on orchids with his in depth study of the genus Dendrobium. With a superb power point presentation and photos to suit we were given a comprehensive insight into this large genus.

RAFFLE: I was lost for words last month. There were 10 draws, some people had gone home, others returned their tickets for a redraw and with just a little confusion as to the combination of numbers, colours and designs on the tickets confusion reigned. Thanks for all the donations, there were even a couple of 'real' plants in the raffle.

SUBSCRIPTIONS are now **OVER-DUE**. This will be the last Newsletter for those that have not paid by the June meeting. You will also be classed as visitors to meetings.

If you do not wish to rejoin the society please let us know by contacting one of the people on the newsletter footer. Also you can now PAY by internet: **ASB Botany Branch 12 3040 0537527 00**

NEW MEMBERS: Welcome to **Lesley Collier** (Howick) and **Greg Scheurich** (Howick).

EDITOR'S COMMENT

The next step on our display at Palmerston North has been taken with a mock layout being set up at Kathy's home to determine the size and what props are required. We have now purchased new cloth for this, as we prefer something a little different to black.

Its time to sort out a few plants for our annual **BIG AUCTION** coming up as usual in November. We've had a good selection donated previously so both you and the club benefit.

PLANTS ON DISPLAY (May meeting)

Compiled and printed by **Michelle**

OPEN

Dennis Chuah: *Den. oligophyllum*

Peggy Bell-Booth: *Den. subclausum*, *Oncidium alliance* - unknown, *Phal* unknown.

Glenn & Manee: Aliceara Maury Island 'Fantasy', *Laelia gouldiana*.

Grahame Leafberg: *Dracula bella*, *Sc. Dal's Cutie* x *Sc. Jungle Gem* (unregistered grex), *Sc.*

Grahame's Jewel 'James', *Sc. Lana Coryell* x *S. coccinea* (unregistered grex), *Den./ Dockrilobium* (*Den. Golden Fleck* x *Doc. teretifolium*) unregistered grex, *Den/Dockrilobium* (*Doc. Virginia Jupp* x *Den. speciosum* 'Coromandel Gold') unregistered grex.

Pam Forde: (*C. Caudebec* 'Carmela' x *Sc. Batemanniana* 'Bette') x *Sc. Lana Coryell* 'Alex' unregistered grex, *S. cernua*, *Phal* unknown.

Den. Virginia Jupp x *speciosum* *(unregistered grex)

Kathy Rimmer: *Masd. macrura*, *Pot. Little Toshie**, *Ddc. cobbianum*, *Den. goldschmidtianum**

Lea & Bryce Westlake: *Onc. Sugar Babies*, *Den. bigibbum**, *Epi. Veitchi**, *Epi. neoporpax*.

William & Man Lo: *Ctt. Chocolate Drop* x *L. pumila* = *Ctt. Maple Land** (registered grex 1990), *C. Rivermont Imperial* x *Rsc. Amy Crispin** (unregistered grex), *Sc. Red Jewel* 'Kiwi Babe', *Paph. Milmoore* x *Johnbourn* = *Paph. Via Gala** (registered grex 1978), *Drac. vlad-tepes*, *Paph. sukhakulii*, *Den. Aussie Green* x *cruttwellii**, *Den. alaticaulinum*.

Ron Reeves: *Cym. erythrostylum*, *Milt. x bluntii**, *Milt. clowesii*, *Masd.* ? name.

Ken & Chui Tse: *Laelia pumila* 'Black Diamond', *Oncidium alliance* - unknown, *Masd. Maryann**

Michelle Tung: *Den. subclausum*, *Masd. Rubicon*, *Slc. Jeannie Wolfe*, *Coel. fimbriata*.

Wolf Grausch: *Slc. Dal's Joy* x *Sc. Lana Coryell* (unregistered grex), *Sc* (Bright Angel x Jillian Lee) x *Sc. Tangerine Jewel* (unregistered grex).

John Sheppard: *Cym. Peters Delight* 'Petite'.

Lennard Cobb: *Ctt. Memoria Neil Ryan**

Novice

Lee Stone: *Den.* unknown, *Onc. Sugar Babies*, *Masd. Misfit*,

Alan Robinson: *Onc. flexuosum*

Norman Streater: *Onc. Sugar Babies*, *Laelia* unknown.

(NOTE * change of label recommended)

Either incorrect spelling or a new name of a registered hybrid.

POPULAR VOTE

OPEN: 1st Peggy (*Den. subclausum*), 2nd William & Man (*Den. Aussie Green* x *cruttwellii*), 3rd equal Pam (*Phal*) and Peggy (*Phal*).

NOVICE: 1st Lee (*Den.*), 2nd equal Lee (*Onc.*) and Alan (*Onc.*), 3rd Lee (*Masd*).

NOVELTY: 1st Pam (*S. cernua*), 2nd William & Man (*Den. alaticaulinum*), 3rd Dennis (*Den. oligophyllum*).

Commentary was by **Dennis Chuah**.

Plant of the Month (picked by Dennis) was **Pam's** large eye catching white *Phalaenopsis*. Dennis picked his own *Den.* as the most unusual. (And for what it's worth I was very impressed with Pam's slab mounted *S. cernua*).

PRISON

All expenses are paid by the taxpayers with no work required.

WORK

You get to pay all your expenses to go to work, and they deduct taxes from your salary to pay for prisoners.

RESEARCH

Many of the Dendrobiums on display this meeting were New Guinea types with the long straggly canes. These grow quite well in Auckland without heat. As Dennis explained, in many cases they come from high altitude so prefer moist air most of the time. Being such a large genus it is worth reminding our newer members they can vary quite dramatically in cultural requirements. Even the Aussie ones can be from quite cool southern areas all the way up to the tropics.

Two miniatures on display I've not seen before were *Den. oligophyllum* and *Den. alaticaulum*.

Alaticaulum is a recently listed (1979) cool grower from New Guinea.

Oligophyllum is from Thailand and grows very warm. It was listed in 1950.

A **cowboy** appeared before St. Peter at the Pearly Gates. 'Have you ever done anything of particular merit?' St. Peter asked.

'Well, I can think of one thing,' the cowboy offered. 'On a trip to the Black Hills out in South Dakota I came upon a gang of bikers who were threatening a young woman. I directed them to leave her alone, but they wouldn't listen. So I approached the largest and most tattooed biker and smacked him in the face, kicked his bike over, ripped out his nose ring, and threw it on the ground. I yelled, 'Now, back off or I'll kick the c... out of all of you!'

St. Peter was impressed,

'When did this happen?' 'Couple of minutes ago...' was the reply.

CULTURE

Cut back on watering now. Fertilise lightly with a high Potassium fertilizer only. Maximum light is needed on short winter days. Protect emerging inflorescences from rain and snails.

Stake up your spikes before they go in unwanted directions.

Ensure your warm growers are kept indoors in a warm room. Protect from direct rays of the sun, which will be shining in your windows now since it is lower in the sky.

At the end of this newsletter are more extensive notes on culture for our **newer members**.

HOW TO MAKE SURE THAT YOUR WINE STAYS GOOD:

1. Open the bottle to allow it to breathe.
2. If it does not look like it's breathing, give it mouth-to-mouth.

July Lecture Series

As the OCNZ Orchid Extravaganza is in September, the NZOS will be hosting their 2010 speaker in July. This year's speaker is **Wayne Harris** from Queensland. Wayne's topics will be on the Orchids of Queensland, Western Australia, Papua New Guinea and Borneo. Registration for the 2 days (24/25 July) will be \$30.00. This includes lunch both days. Register at leaitym@xtra.co.nz or at the next meeting.

Many of you have attended in previous years and this is a great opportunity to hear an expert in the field. As Dennis mentioned Wayne is co-author of the Dendrobium 'bible' *Dendrobium and its Relatives* so he should be a wealth of information.

COMING EVENTS

HOS CLUB DAYS for 2010

11 July, 15 Aug, (NB 3rd Sun) 12 Sep, 8 Oct (Show setup) and 9 Oct (Show),
24 Oct (Prize giving), 14 Nov (Auction), 12 Dec (Social).

Meetings are held **1.30 pm** at the **Fencible Lounge**, Uxbridge Rd. Howick.

Don't forget to bring along your friends and acquaintances if they show some interest in gardening or horticulture. Hopefully our beautiful array of flowers will get them interested in **ORCHIDS**.

CULTURE FOR BEGINNERS

It is always a problem getting the message across to new growers that there is no simple answer to your many questions. The most common being 'how often do I water?'

Everyone does 'IT' DIFFERENT so there is no correct or easy answer to the above question.

By 'it' I mean:

Growing conditions, is it in a glass or plastic house that heats up quickly, under trees or inside the home? Is the position windy, airy or very sheltered?

Potting media (or compost), is it coarse, fine, a mixture of these or a water-retaining one such as sphagnum moss?

What is the locality of your home is it high up, inland, near the sea or in a microclimate?

How do you space your orchids in the growing area. Closely grouped ones may not dry out as quickly as those spread out.

Are they raised off the ground (they should be) and if so are they on mesh or solid benches?

Have you researched the types of plants you are growing? Some need a lot less water than others. Some don't like over-head watering.

What are the day and night temperatures at that time of year?

Is the plant in an active growth phase or dormant?

Watering frequency is directly related to all the above.

As you can see there are so many variables the person living next door may grow completely different to you and may be successful with those you have difficulty with.

Being able to pull a plant out of a pot easily without losing all the mix over the floor is always a good test to see how well your plant is.

This is a very simple test to carry out.

If it comes out easily and the white (healthy) roots are in a nice cluster then it is usually OK.

If it won't come out of the pot without smashing it then in all likelihood it is pot bound and may need to be repotted.

If the mix falls everywhere, it probably has either very few roots or lots of rotten roots in a broken down mix.

If the mix is a sodden mess then you have problems.

Obviously this doesn't apply to seedlings or recently repotted plants still getting established.

If I am buying a plant the first thing I do is very gently lift it by the foliage. If it looks like it is going to pull out of the pot easily then it may have a problem as above or it could have been recently divided and potted up. This means it could take a long time to re-establish.

I have read and listened to speakers tell us that the **potting media** could be anything from bark to broken glass. It is how you treat the plant in the mix that matters. With an inert mix you will need to apply more fertilizer.

Personally I stick with the old favourites, bark, charcoal, pumice, hydroton and polystyrene, generally a mixture of all or some of each and usually nothing smaller than about 5mm. I always sieve my mixes before potting up to ensure no fines are included. Others will do it differently but the more open the mix the less chance of root rot especially if you have a tendency to over water or get caught out in the winter with a prolonged cold period.

The advantages of the above are: bark gradually breaks down providing nutrients, charcoal is easy to wet, stays wet and will remove excess salts, hydroton dries quickly, pumice (volcanic ash) is light, slowly breaks down, has air pockets and styrene also provides air spaces. I sometimes add washed shell or limestone pebbles. Whatever you use it must be periodically flushed out, the fines and broken down material removed or the mix completely replaced.

It is common for orchid growers to drill extra holes in **pots** for more air movement and quicker drying out. Or else you can buy the purpose made ones that are very airy and have the advantage of being squatter which is especially good for many orchids. Deep pots need to be well crocked. Some use non-glazed ceramic pots which dry very quickly but I find many plants are too cool in these especially in winter, due to evaporative cooling through the pot walls.

Fertilisers are many and varied and this subject is a science itself, so I will not go into too much detail.

The most important point to note is that orchids do not require strong fertilisers, in fact they will suffer root burn if over fed or will be depleted by reverse osmosis where the nutrients are actually sucked back out of the plant by the strong solution in the mix.

Always check the NPK on the label to ensure you are getting what you want and what the plant wants. Fertilisers high in urea based Nitrogen are not suitable for orchids in bark or inert mixes as it is washed out before it has time to break down and be available to the plant.

In general for your orchids, dilute by half the recommended rates shown on the package.

The common adage is to fertilise Weekly Weakly.

Diseases and insect attacks are common with orchids as with any plants. The most prevalent and devastating seem to be scale insect which comes in various forms and hides under the bulb sheaths and the leaf underside; mealy bugs (a sticky residue on the leaf is a sure sign); aphids (love new growths and flower buds) and snails and slugs which love flower spikes. Any of the generally available insecticides are suitable.

Orchids in general do not suffer too badly from fungal diseases. These can be kept at bay with the usual sprays although blackening or soft bulbs could be signs of bulb rot and these must be removed immediately. This is lethal and can rapidly progress through the whole plant. It is best to repot checking that wherever you cut is green and treating all cuts with a fungicide.

The other important factors such as **light, temperature** and specialized growing conditions are learnt through experience or reading.

There are many people in the society who can help you choose suitable plants to grow that will suit your conditions. It can become an expensive and depressing experience learning the hard way. Unfortunately many sellers may be over optimistic in their conception of what is a cool/intermediate/warm grower and it pays to confirm this for yourself immediately after purchase.

Although many orchids will withstand the rigours of our winters they may be reluctant to flower or flourish if the conditions don't suit.

If you are serious about growing orchids then **observe** your plants regularly. If they look sick or are not responding to water, light and fertilizer during the growing season then firstly **repot, checking roots**. Next move to a different growing area and if still no good ask for some help. Good healthy roots should be generally white, stiff and have green growing tips during the growing season. If wet, brown and mushy they are usually dead. If very dry, brittle and the outer layer flaking off they may still be of use for a while until new ones establish.

It's a lot to take in all at once so keep these notes as a general reference to remind you from time to time what is needed. I am still learning, still making mistakes and have the usual reluctance to get onto problems before it is too late. Experiment with different mixes, locations etc to see what suits a particular plant best.