



COFFS ORCHID NEWS JULY 2023 PUBLICATION OF THE COFFS HARBOUR ORCHID SOCIETY

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1. EDITORIAL:

Many members would have fond memories of our past President, Edward Pearce. Ed passed away after a short illness in November 2019 but he left a legacy of a variety of *Coelogyne* seedlings which were the result of around twenty different crosses that Ed made in the years just before his unfortunate death. Some of these were already germinating in a number of plant laboratories, but most were still seed pods waiting to reach maturity before they would be sent away for germination. Edward had meticulously recorded details of each cross on his computer and accurately labelled each pod ensuring there was no likelihood of incorrect identification. Ed asked the CHOS Committee to continue his work through to completion, and then to distribute any surviving plants among Society members.

Over 15 different *Coelogyne* crosses were deflasked, and while there were plant losses along the way, the surviving seedlings have been distributed to Ed's family and members of CHOS.

The really great news is that Paige Sinclair has been able to flower one of



Coel. Memoria Edward Henry Pearce

Ed's early crosses. The plant was crossed in the middle of 2018, deflasked late in 2019 and produced its first flower on 23rd May 2023. This plant is the result of crossing *Coelogyne* Kirribilli Joyce with *Coel.* Kirribilli Norm (both bred and registered by Kevin Dawes in 2013). After consultation with the Pearce Family and the CHOS Committee, Paige has registered this plant with the RHS in London and they have accepted the name *Coelogyne* Memoria Edward Henry Pearce. Congratulations to Paige on her success in growing the plant through to the flowering stage. If you happen to have any of this cross then you can now change your label to its new name. Well done and thank you, Edward Pearce!



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SPONSORS**SHEARWATER RESTAURANT**

Brekkie and Modern Australian dishes in a bright, upscale location with outdoor tables and lovely views over Coffs Creek. 321 Harbour Drive, Coffs Harbour.
www.shearwaterrestaurant.com.au or Phone 6651 6053.

COFFS HARBOUR PRODUCE

Coffs Harbour Produce is at 26 June Street in Coffs. They carry a good range of fertilisers, insecticides and fungicides for orchids, as well as general garden needs. Phone 02 6652 2599.

COFFS COAST MAZDA

For new Mazda vehicles, also second-hand vehicles and ALL your servicing needs. Ring for an appointment 02 6652 3122 or visit 211 Pacific Highway, Coffs Harbour
You won't be disappointed .

DARK STAR ORCHIDS

Dark Star Orchids. 0416 195832 or (02) 65644088.

Hans and Sue run a small nursery west of Bowraville. They specialise in rare, unusual and hard to find species of many orchids particularly Bulbophyllums, Dendrochilums, Stanhopeas, Coelogynes and lots of other genera.

www.darkstarorchids.com.au

email darkstarorchids@skymesh.com.au

BRUCE HALL

Bruce provides raffle prizes for Autumn and Spring Shows.

OFFICEWORKS

Officeworks carries an excellent range covering all stationery needs, computers/monitors/printers, and associated technology. They sell a wide range of smart phones and watches, plus furniture and workspace solutions. If you are looking for low prices on everyday essentials, it's all there at Home Base, Coffs Harbour. Phone 66 919100 or check out the full range at officeworks.com.au.

LUDO'S OLD WARES, ULMARRA

Deals with old wares and collectables — 0402 044 601

2. CALENDAR, 2023

24—25 June—Mingara Fair/Show

20 July 2023—Hans Schaible—
New Bulbophyllums

3 Aug 2023— Peter Gough-Paphs
and Bill Bright—Phrags

19 Aug 2023— Dorrigo NP Visit

7 Sept 2023— TBA

9-10 Sept 2023—Spring Show

5 Oct—Plant Auction

Oct Visit to Rosella Orchids

2 Nov – AGM/ Age Care Talk

? Dec—Annual Presentation
Meeting—Venue/Date to be
determined

1st Feb, 2024—TBA

Note: The Committee meets on
Tuesday following the Monthly
Meeting.

CHOS BANK DETAILS

BSB No: 533-000

ACCOUNT No: 32817199

ROSELLA ORCHIDS**Spring and Autumn Show Sponsor**

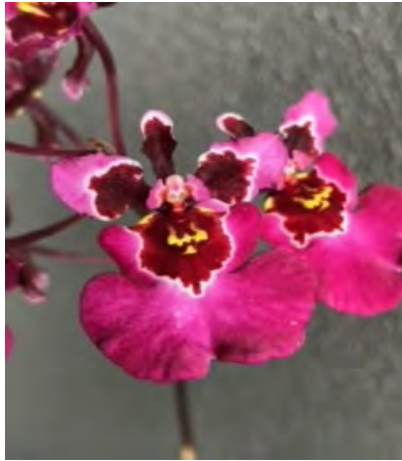
Located in South Grafton and can supply a wide range of orchids but specialises in Cattleya and Vanda genera. They also stock a large range of hardware and accessories for orchid growers. Nursery is closed to the general public except by appointment.

www.rosellaorchids.com.au

3. FLOWERING IN MEMBERS GREENHOUSES DURING JUNE:



**Dendrobium Impact
grown by Rhonda Smith**



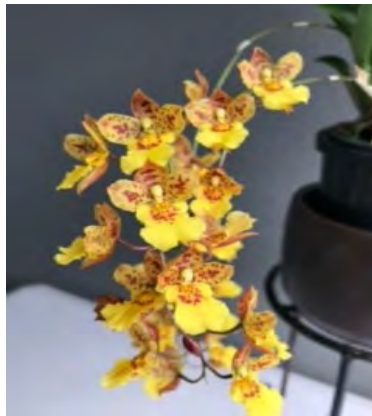
**Tolumnia Red Dragon owned by
Rhonda Smith**



**Paige Sinclair's Rlc. Taiwan Golden
Peacock**



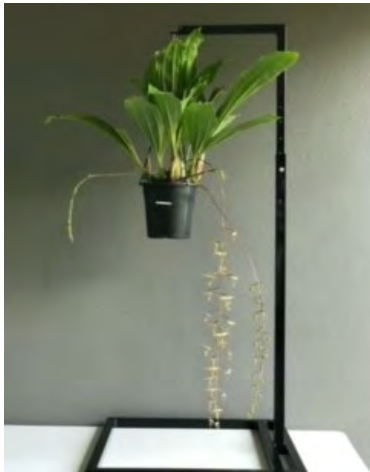
**C. Caudabec Candy Burgandy'
owned by Paige Sinclair'**



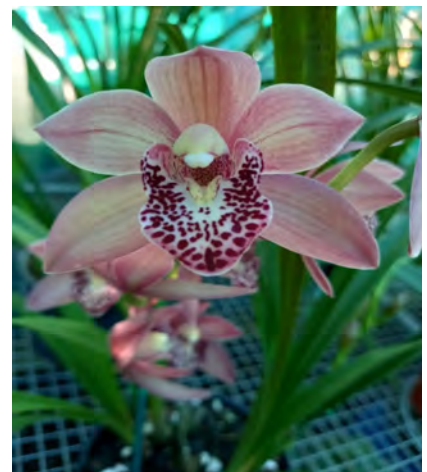
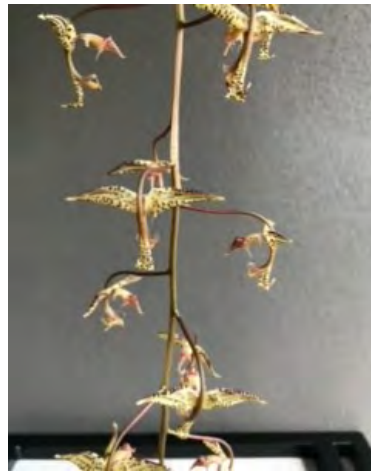
**Rhonda Smith's Howeara
Mary Eliza**



**Arth. Sea Snake 'Unforgettable'
by Rhonda Smith**



Rhonda Smith's awesome Gongora grossa



**Cymbidium Darch Curfew 'Pink'
owned by Malcolm Ide**

Guest Speaker at the July General Meeting will be Hans Schaible who will present a photographic talk on "Bulbophyllums". Hans will have a variety of plants from "Dark Star Orchids" for sale on the night. The July meeting has been delayed due to the School Holidays and will start at 7.30pm on Thursday 20th July 2023.



Blc. Little Toshie Owned by Rhonda Smith



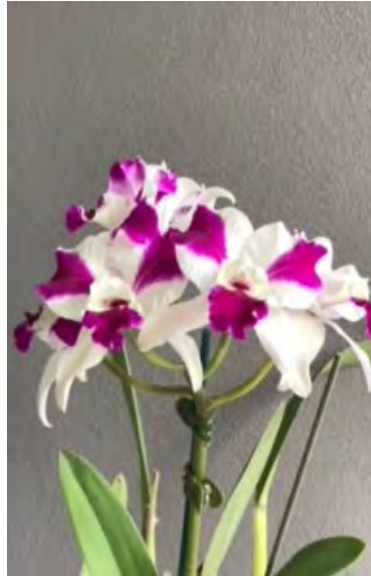
Malcolm Ide's Galeandra baurei



Cym. Foxfire Mint Pharaoh 'Malcome' - grown by Mal Ide



Malcolm Ide's Rlc. Yong Kong Sun No.16



Rhonda Smith's Blc. Keowee 'Vi Galaxy'



Cattleya Royal Beau 'Alex L' owned by Malcolm Ide



4. COMMITTEE MEETING REPORT:

Report from the Committee Meeting held on 6th June, 2023 at NCRB Gardens.

1. Review of June meeting—Dick Cooper demonstrated the use of the orchid data base, 'Orchid Wiz', as an informative tool for all orchid growers. The 'OrchidWiz' program will be available for members use at each monthly meeting.
2. A most enjoyable BBQ was held at the home of Frank and Cathy Pappalardo. Thanks to Frank and Cathy for their organisation and hospitality.
3. Bunnings Fund Raising BBQ—a very successful day which raised \$1,178.80 profit. Thanks to all those members who gave up their time to make the day a success.
4. Botanic Gardens Display Room has been booked for Meeting and Show dates for 2024.
5. Peter Gough (Paphs) and Bill Bright (Phrags) to make presentations at the August meeting.
6. Members' walk in Dorrigo National Park plus visit a local orchid grower has been set down for Saturday 19th August – more details at July meeting.
7. 2023 Spring Show Schedule was tabled and approved. Dates—Set-up on 8th Sept and Show on 9th and 10th Sept.
8. WDOS is to host the AOC Australian Conference in early October, 2025.
9. Frank Pappalardo will talk at the July meeting about CHOS members assisting with set-up and pack-up at each monthly meeting.
10. CHOS members to receive a Stabilo pencil and ten 140mm labels to test how useful this type of pencil is for long-term orchid labels. It is hoped to distribute these items at the August meeting.

Next Committee meeting will be on Tuesday 25th July, 2023 from 10.30am at NCRBG.

**JUDGES FOR 20TH JULY
MONTHLY MEETING**

MALCOLM IDE

PETER FUNNELL

5. ORCHID NOMENCLATURE CHANGES FROM MAY, 2023

There are number of Nomenclature changes that were discussed at the Orchid Hybrid Registration Advisory Committee (RHS).

Coelogyne *Coelogyne* has been expanded to include *Bracisepalum*, *Bulleyia*, *Chelonistele*, *Dendrochilum*, *Dickasonia*, *Entomophobia*, *Geesinkorchis*, *Gynoglottis*, *Ischnogyne*, *Nabalua*, *Neogyna*, *Otochilus*, *Panisea* and *Pholidota*.

These changes have now been endorsed by the RHS and should now be used in preference to the older names. All of the above Genera now belong to the Genus *Coelogyne* so you should change your labels as soon as it is convenient.

Changes were proposed for other orchid Genera but these were not supported until more evidence (especially DNA) is available. These included moving *Phaius* into *Calanthe* and *Ida* and *Anguloa* into *Lycaste*.

There has also been discussion about the place of "Patented" and Genetically Modified (GM) orchids in the future breeding of orchids in Australia. Most GM has occurred in *Phalaenopsis* especially with the introduction of a blue flower gene into the plant. It may have legal implications if this material is used in future breeding programs and it has yet to be tested in the courts.

6. ORCHID FAIRS AND CONFERENCES, 2023

News from Woolgoolga District Orchid Society—
This year their Spring Show will be held over two days on the first weekend in October and will be staged in the newly opened Wiigulga Sports Complex. As you can see from the flyer on the left, this year's Orchid Conference will be also held over two days with eight amazing speakers. Congratulations to WDOS on this initiative. All CHOS members should note these dates in their diary as these are events well worth attending. Hope to see you there.

OTHER DATES TO NOTE:

Nambucca Valley Orchid Society Spring Show—
31st August to 2nd September, 2023—Senior Citizens Hall. 11 Kent St, Nambucca Heads.

Tweed Heads Show and Fair—4—5 November (TBC)

Free Admission
Woolgoolga District Orchid Society Inc.

**2 Day
Orchid
Conference/Workshop**
Sat. November 18 & Sun. 19
Sat. 9.00am to 3.00pm Sun. 9.00am to 3.30pm

At the NEW
**WIIGULGA
SPORTS COMPLEX**
Solitary Islands Way, Woolgoolga

- 8 World-renowned Speakers
- Cultural Advice
- Potting Demonstrations
- Participants invited to bring 2 Flowering Orchids for Popular Vote Judging
- Coffee Shop onsite

Nurserymen's Orchids on Sale Prizes to be Won!
For more information contact - woolgoolgaorchidsociety@gmail.com

7. HOT OFF THE PRESS!

Woolgoolga District Orchid Society has been awarded the Australian Orchid Council Australian Conference to be held in the Wiigulga Sports Complex in October 2025. Congratulations to WDOS.

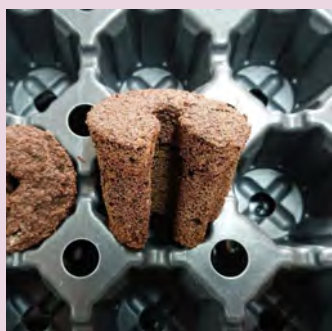
The conference will include Australian and International speakers, a high quality Orchid Show, an Orchid Fair featuring Australia's top orchid vendors and a number of associated orchid activities.

WDOS has already elected an organising committee and so watch this space for information as it becomes available (and the WDOS Facebook page).

8. PROPTEC XCELLENT COIR PLUG—40 MM

Instead of using Sphagnum Moss Wafers for deflasking seedlings a relatively new product is being trialled by Rosella Orchids. The Xcellent Plug® is the best plug for the cultivation of orchids from tissue culture. Thanks to the unique design of the plug, plant propagation and the growth phase can be completed in a single entity. The advantage comes from the airy plug structure in combination with the premium blend of raw materials. When growing Phalaenopsis, the Xcellent Plug® ensures a cultivation improvement of up to 4 weeks.

The unique split design of the plug creates the perfect condition for inserting the young tissue culture plant into the plug, minimizing the risk of damaging the root structure.



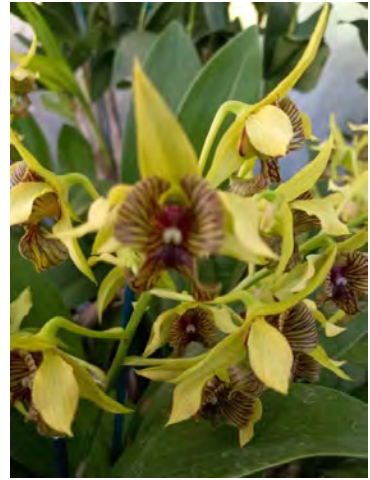
The overall composition of the plug ensures that the optimal amount of air and water can be provided to the root zone creating uniform growth of your precious laboratory plants.

The Xcellent Plug 40® comes in a bulk carton and the matching propagation trays are supplied as required. There are 432 plugs in a carton and priced at \$98. Check out the Proptec website at www.proptec.com.au.

9. POPULAR VOTE AT THE JUNE MEETING

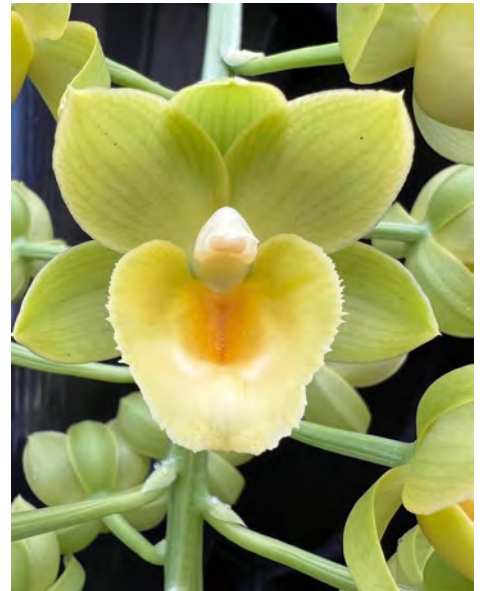


**Popular Vote at
the June General
Meeting was
awarded to
Malcolm Ide
for his
Dendrobium
Excelsa
Congratulations!**



10. POSSIBLE AWARD: Fredclarkeara Upgrade grown by Paige Sinclair. This is a spectacular flower that has been submitted for a Quality Award. Congratulations Paige! We wish you every success with your award application. Fredclarkeara is an artificial genus resulting from a three way cross of the genera *Catasetum*, *Clowesia* and *Mormodes*.

(The parents in this cross are *Catasetum spitzii*, *Mormodes buccinator*, *Clowesia rosea* and *Clowesia warczewitzii*).



I'd love to take you out
for coffee this week.

You spelled
wine wrong.

**ME: ALEXA, REMIND ME
TO GO TO THE GYM.**

**ALEXA: I HAVE ADDED
GIN TO YOUR SHOPPING
LIST.**

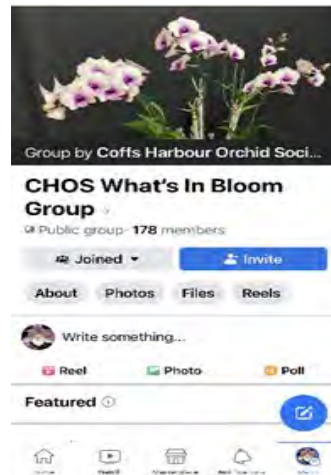
ME: CLOSE ENOUGH.

WWW.LOVEYOURGARDEN.COM.AU

11. Coffs Harbour Orchid Society Facebook

By Paige Sinclair

June 2023 – Currently, the Coffs Harbour Orchid Society has 682 likes. This is down by one person from May 2023. For our 'What's on Bloom' page we have 178 members up by 3 people from last month.



12. SPONSORS' SPOT:



Dark Star Orchids

Hans and Sue run a small nursery west of Bowraville. Check out their web site.

They specialise in rare, unusual and hard to find species of many genera particularly *Bulbophyllums*, *Stanhopeas*, *Coelogynes*, *Lycaste* and lots of other genera. They also stock selected unusual hybrids.

They have a regular stall at the Bellingen market every 3rd Saturday of the month with a varied selection each month. Orders can also be picked up there or can be picked up in Coffs by prior arrangement.

Due to an extremely difficult road the nursery is generally not open to the public.

www.darkstarorchids.com.au email darkstarorchids@skymesh.com.au

Dark Star Orchids. 0416 195832 or (02) 65644088.

SUPPORT THEM AS THEY SUPPORT US

13. CHOS FERTILIZER RECOMMENDATIONS

USING WDOS FERTILIZER OR CAMPBELLS A (YELLOW): Fertilize orchids once each week at the rate of 3 grams per litre of water.

Saturate each pot. (Weeks 1, 2 and 3)

If using Campbells Yellow then add Magnesium Sulphate (Epsom Salts) at 0.5g/L.

IN WEEK FOUR USE CALCIUM NITRATE: Mix 2 grams with 1L of water.

Only use Calcium Nitrate in Week 4.

NEVER MIX CALCIUM NITRATE WITH OTHER FERTILIZERS
or a precipitate will form and lock up other nutrients.



**Thank you to all members of CHOS
who benched plants at the recent
Nambucca Valley Orchid Autumn Show.
Your support was much appreciated.
NVOS Committee**

14. JOKE TIME : A. This man came home early and found his wife in bed with a man. He asked the man what he was doing. His wife looked at the man and said "See, I told you my husband was stupid" [Frank Pappalardo]

B. A woman was renting a small house next to a railway line. She told her Real Estate Agent that every time a train went past, her bed would shake. She also wanted him to come over and see it for himself.

The agent went there, and ten minutes before the next train was due, she got into bed and invited him to do so too.

Her husband turned up early and because he knew nothing about all of this, asked the agent what he was doing in bed with his wife.

Realising that the husband knew nothing about this, he replied "Look, I'm sure you are not going to believe this, but I am actually waiting for a train". [Frank Pappalardo]

C. The Welsh Choir – There wasn't much on the supermarket shelves that attracted me yesterday so I decided to improvise and make a risotto.

I bought the rice and a couple of basics from the supermarket but I forgot the mushrooms and had to collect some I foraged for locally in the bushland behind the house.

Not only was the risotto delicious, but soon after dinner a male welsh choir of pink elephants showed up and sang the whole of Meatloaf's Bat Out of Hell album all accompanied by a light show. Wow, what a night.

D. A martial arts master was deep in meditation when his young pupil stormed into the room, frustrated with another loss in a contest.

"Master, why does my ability not improve? I'm always defeated." he sighed.

The master, pensive and forever patient, answers: "My dear pupil, have you seen the gulls flying by the setting sun, and their wings seeming like flames?" The student, responded, "Yes, my master, I have." The master continued, "... and a waterfall, spilling strongly over the stones without taking anything out of its proper place?" "Yes, my master, I have witnessed it." the student replied. "And the moon... when it touches the calm water to reflect all its enormous beauty?" asked the master. The student nodded, "Yes, my master, I have also seen this marvellous phenomenon."

Master sighs, "Well, that is the problem. Your attention is being side-tracked instead of focussing on training and applying yourself."

St Ives Orchid Fair

'The Big One'



ST IVES SHOWGROUND, Mona Vale Road, St Ives

Friday 18th August 2023 9 am to 4 pm
Saturday 19th August 2023 9 am to 4 pm
Sunday 20th August 2023 9 am to 3 pm

ADMISSION \$8

Major Sponsors

Rosella Orchids - Garden City Plastics - Swagman Sprayers

ORCHID VENDORS

Alice's Orchids, Dark Star Orchids, Ezi-Gro Orchids, Fong Ping Orchids
Hills District Orchids, Macquarie Native Orchids, Nicky's Slippers
Orchid Care Services, Orchid Species Plus, Orchids of Distinction
Orchids on Newbold, Robertson Orchids, Rosella Orchids, Royale Orchids
The Orchid Mart / Serhan's Orchids, Tinonee Orchid Nursery
Woolf Orchidculture



In partnership with
Ku-ring-gai Council

For more information: Show Marshal: Garrie Bromley Ph: 0425 336 049
<http://www.stivesorchidfair.com/>

15. NEW SUPPLIES OF ORCHID BARK: As reported last month, the CHOS/WDOS has had to source a new supply of bark suitable for potting orchids. A large order of KIWI Orchid bark has now arrived

Kiwi Orchid Bark is a hard, clean, uniformly graded *Pinus radiata* bark suitable for growing orchids. Fred Clarke, Sunset Valley Orchids, California, rates it as the best orchid bark he has ever used. The Society will sell 50 litre bags for \$45 each.

Kiwi bark comes in four sizes— No.2: **3 to 8mm**; No.3: **8 to 20mm**; No.4: **20 to 25mm**; No. 5: **25 to 50mm**. (The 8 to 20mm size would be equal to mixing 9 to 12 and 12 to 18mm grades of Orchid bark and would be the ideal size for general potting purposes).

Supplies of 15mm charcoal (Orchid Char) are also available. These are in 19kg bags and sell at \$45 per bag.

Supplies are available from Paige Sinclair— Mobile: 0427 591 901

You can pick up the bark from 4 Jean Street, Coffs Harbour or make suitable arrangements with Paige regarding delivery. Payment can be via cash or Direct Deposit (Bank details Page 2).



SPRING SHOW ROSTER: The 2023 Spring Show is set down for three days from Friday 8th to Sunday 10th September. Set-up will be on Friday 8th Sept from 1pm and volunteers are needed to make the task an easy one. Help is also needed on the Saturday and Sunday with selling raffle tickets, on the plant sales table or assisting in the Show Room. If you can help would you please contact Bob Southwell on 0417 695 834 or bssouthwell@bigpond.com. Thanks.

16. Feature Article: What is it that defines a 'Good grower'?

A ramble of thoughts by a 'Wannabe' – Jim Brydie

[Printed with permission from the June Edition of KOS Bulletin]

Intro - For some time I have been becoming increasingly uncomfortable with how many times I write that Trevor Onslow and Garrie Bromley are top growers. Not because of any doubt about their quality as orchid growers but more because I don't want to imply that these two are rare cases and there are very few other top class growers about.

The main reason I keep using Trevor and Garrie as examples is because many individuals are embarrassed by such mentions and don't want to be mentioned in that way. The same likely applies to Trevor and Garrie as well but I have known both for a very long time and I judged that they would at least tolerate me praising them up.

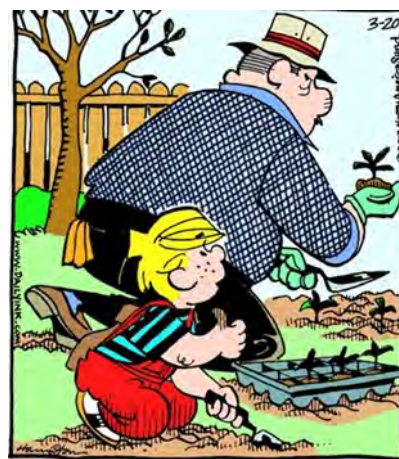
The truth is that Sydney is awash with many top class growers. I don't go to the meetings of more than 5 or so clubs, and these days only rarely for most of those, but I could easily name a dozen great growers around Sydney.

Such as (in no particular order and with apologies to all those I just haven't thought of) : Joe Gaffa, Seong Tay, Veronica Clowes, Jan Robinson, Gloria and Allan Cushway, Cary Polis, Bill Dobson, Paul McDonough, Lesley Bromley, Craig Scott Harden, Jody Cutajar, and perhaps even myself if you take a squinted view (I hope all those named will forgive me). There must be heaps more than that number if you looked wider because I am only throwing up names that come immediately to mind from my own small sphere and even I also see many more classy growers whose identity is unknown to me, benching at shows and orchid fairs.

But what exactly am I talking about when I say Top Grower, or Good Grower? Part of the answer lies in the past.

History - Orchid growing began as the plaything of the ultra-rich. In the 1800's rich Europeans sent explorers out all over what they called the 'new world' to find new species and new varieties of already known species, always seeking something new, something fantastic that no-one else had. Rather self-indulgent, even though it did advance the scientific recording and cataloguing of all plants.

However, no matter what we may think of motives, we owe much to those early explorers and experimenters. Methods for growing epiphytes and for trying to raise orchids from seed was all a giant laboratory experiment. There were no 'good growers' back in those days but there certainly were good gardeners. Man had been cultivating ornamental plants for his own pleasure and for food for a very long time and some were very good at it. We used to say that those who excelled at plant culture had a 'green thumb' as though it was some inherent genetic ability but I believe these green thumb gardeners had the same distinctions that define a good orchid grower. They learned about the plants, watched what worked and what worked better and they tried to read what the plants told them of their satisfaction with their circumstances.



*"HOW DO YOU GET A 'GREEN THUMB'?
MINE ALWAYS ENDS UP BROWN."*

Most Ornamental Orchids are Epiphytes

Having drawn the correlation between a good gardener and a good orchid grower, it would seem necessary to explain why there is still a distinction between them. Good gardeners always make good orchid growers too if they ever take an interest and decided to learn about orchids, but there are substantial differences. The vast majority of our large flowered, ornamentally grown orchids are Epiphytes.

Pause and redirect?

In the broader scheme of things, orchids are just another 'different' group of plants.

I don't want this article to become side-tracked into a botany lesson so this is just the broadest intro. Gardeners all know about diverse plant groups like ferns (Pteridophytes), pine trees (Gymnosperms), and flowering plants (Angiosperms), and even the many divisions within these groups. For example trees, shrubs, annual flowers, and grasses are all 'flowering plants', and so are orchids. Each family has its own

evolved idiosyncrasies.

For orchids it includes Epiphytism with its very different root structures, photosynthesis via the CAM pathway - similar to succulent plants, and a strong symbiotic relationship with fungi which dominates seed germination and in many cases, plant growth as well.

Back to Good Growers – For some time I have been pondering how I might explain the difference between an average grower and a good grower – both are meaningless terms invented purely for this discussion. Nearly all members of our club are orchid growers at some stage of their skill development, some just beginning, some reasonably successful and at least satisfied with whatever flowers they produce, some are well on their way to far better knowledge and skills, and some are already highly knowledgeable and skilled. There is no ceiling however. No one ever achieves knowing all there is to know. You keep learning and honing your skills while ever you keep trying. What I envision as that ‘good grower’ is that person who walks into the meeting hall every month carrying amazing looking orchids with flowers you envy and a plant of health and growth that you can’t help admiring.

That great orchid coming in the door that drops your jaw doesn’t have to be a new orchid you hadn’t seen before. It is the skill the owner has applied to growing and flowering it. You may even have one of that type yourself and now you recognise what it can look like, and it makes you want to strive to understand better and to improve your own skills.

That is a “Good Grower”. But how do you explain to less experienced grower what they should be doing differently.

There is no magic recipe book for growing orchids. No reproduceable methodology that every grower can apply. Each growers circumstances and growing conditions are different and require processes designed for them

While I was watching Trevor telling us about his two Best of the Evening plants last meeting, I could see an idea.

Trevor was talking about his Howeara (or Rydbergara) Mary Eliza and his Gomesa/ *Oncidium praetexta*. He told us there was nothing special about the way he grew the Howeara. He grew it in peat and perlite like nearly all his orchids, and all his orchids get watered at the same time - once a week in the warmer months (October to April) and every two weeks in the cooler weather.

. and then, without intending contradiction, he went on to tell us about the variations he just considered common sense in growing each orchid. Just small adjustments and accommodations to fit with the habitat needs of each orchid from things he had learned from a mix of research, enquiry with other growers, observation, and experimentation.

He told us that he grows his ‘Howeara’ up near the roof where it gets good light and drains quickly. He then gave some insights into his Gomesa *praetexta* – again growing hanging up for the light. He also told us that these Brazillian ‘Crispa’ group *Oncidium*s/*Gomesa*s, like *praetexta*, are not the kind of orchid for locking up in a glasshouse, they like to experience the wind and rain and open air.

So What You might ask? - Well what I drew from all that is that first, Trevor has first established a stable culture regime of medium/ watering/ and fertilising that forms the basis, or at least a starting point, for all his orchid cultivation. He has a stable platform to work from. But on top of that, as there are so many orchids with little quirks in their growing needs, he makes sure he understands his orchids and is willing to make variations where needed.

After the meeting I talked to Trevor about this idea I had about defining a good grower, with the objective of getting those who wish to improve their culture some tips on methods. Not on how to grow, but on approaches they should have. He offered these suggestions and some additional tailored or learned insights into different kinds of orchids.



“Be observant. Walk through your growing area regularly, always looking for a pest outbreak, an orchid that isn’t looking happy, orchids that need repotting, an orchid becoming overshadowed by its neighbour, any signs of things that might need some attention.”

“Be aware that there are always some orchids that won’t fit your standard regime. Learn. Not all the advice you get on the internet is correct and some may be inappropriate for your conditions. Sometimes it is better to find a local grower who succeeds with your subject plant and get their direct advice.”

“Regarding some specific types of orchids, he says: “Although peat and perlite is our chosen and preferred medium, there are some plants that we do not grow that way. One group is Sarcophilus. For these we use a mix of medium bark, with 15% of charcoal and 15% super coarse perlite. We also grow our Brazilian Oncidiums on slabs of cork, keep them under 50% shade cloth, and hang them up high (600 mm) from the roof, but they are misted in the hot or windy weather.” (misting isn’t watering them, just cooling them down and ensuring they don’t excessively desiccate). With misting, the when and how often is a matter of paying attention to the conditions where the plants are growing, and watching the plants themselves for any signs of stress.”

“We also grow our Cattleya (Sophronitis) coccinea in our bark mix, so as we can mist when needed and not leave the plants roots too wet which leads to rot. Some people grow coccinea on cork slabs, but we found they grow much slower mounted (and they are very slow at the best of times).”

“Another Genera to mention are Oncidiums: The varicosum type grow in peat and perlite in plastic pots, but we do not repot unless they are showing green growing tips on the roots which is usually a short time after flowering. These orchids only grow one set of roots per season so the timing is very important.”

“Oncidium (Zelenkoa) onustum is the exception, as we still use our peat and perlite mix but put them in clay pots which helps satisfy their very specific wet-dry cycle.”

This application of smart thinking and effort is common among our better growers. For example, Cary Polis, another top grower and current President at the Manly Warringah OS, used to write brief articles for their newsletter based on his frequent ‘rambles’ through his growing area and his observations and thinking there. Here are some examples :

“Cary’s Shadehouse” (extracts) - Spring has really sprung at my place, especially with the natives. The Dockrillias in particular have been outstanding. Things like calamiformis, teretifolia, fairfaxii, schoenina and pugioniformis. I’m really finding that the ones that are in mesh pots are doing far better than the ones on mounts, no matter which way they have been planted. I have used 3 basic methods: 1) just plant straight into the pot. 2) cut a window or flap on the side of the mesh pot and poke the roots through making sure that the plant is secure. 3) cut a window or flap in the base of the pot and poke the roots up into the pot. Seeing that they mostly have hefty roots, I use large or medium bark. This technique works well with other things as well, including Sarcophilus falcatus, especially on the side of the pot. In fact Guy Cantor just ties them onto the side and this allows the roots to find their own way in.

One of the really good things about growing orchids (and gardening in general) is that you can experiment quite a bit with your growing techniques. It can lead to unusual and spectacular results. How many times have you admired a plant on the bench which has been grown in an unconventional manner, ending up in not only a healthy, robust plant but almost a work of art? For example, it wasn’t that long ago that the idea of growing orchids successfully in water well pots would have been debunked by the “experts”. There is a whole range of orchids that are more than suited to this technique with brilliant results. I have never been able to grow Dendrobium agrostophyllum for any length of time, just standing by helplessly watching it go into an irreversible state of decline leading to death but now I have one in a water well pot and it is one of the stars in my bush house. Of course when trying different things you must be prepared for some failures, but this tends to happen anyway no matter what you do.

I still make the time every day at least once, to go into both the bush house and the hothouse and cast an eye over while doing the rounds. A walk past to ensure that nothing awful is happening anywhere. Like any interest, what you put into it is directly related to what you get out of it. “

And then more insightful commentary in extracts from a later newsletter in Dec 2022 :

.... I am making a huge effort to be more consistent and methodical with my culture and maintenance. I have embarked on a plan to systematically go through my collection plant by plant and do whatever I feel that it needs at the time, whether it is repotting, just a tidy up, scale control or even just topping up the mix. So last week I managed to do this for a day and a half, starting on the left side of my hothouse.

... it is easy to fall behind with watering and this can be time consuming. Even though I'm set up for it, I'm not a fan of sprinkler systems as they can be very hit and miss where invariably many plants will be overwatered and many will be underwatered. Apart from anything else there is the danger of making one lazy about hand watering which as I have noted before, is a great opportunity to observe and check on one's plants. There is no such thing as overdoing checking one's plants out."

Becoming a better Grower – Trevor couldn't have captured it better when his notes to me following the meeting started "Observe, observe, observe". From Cary's notes, you can't miss the constant inquisitiveness. Experimentation to try a better way but not by way of applying it to the whole collection in one go. In earlier times there would be a new orchid medium invented every year and some less experienced growers looking for that magic bullet would repot their whole collection only to find 6 month later it was a failure. If you experiment, do it on one or two subjects and record your observations.

Both Trevor and Cary (and many others) ask you to constantly wander your orchids and look them over more than superficially to see what is going on. Ask yourself why you are seeing whatever you see. Look for the ones needing attention and ask what happened. Insects? Watering? Disease? Left in the pot too long? Whatever it may be, it is your job to work it out and fix it. If you need help then don't be afraid to ask but make an effort first. Don't expect someone else to do all of your job for you. Attempting to work it out is the beginning of learning



And what advice could you possibly expect from Jim Brydie, other than to understand the orchid you are looking at. Where does it (or its parents) come from. What does that tell you.

How could anything hide in here?

Is it a seasonal grower, does it like shade or bright light, is it a warm grower that will not tolerate lower temperatures?

Remember that your path to be a better and better grower is never ending. Enjoy the process and help others along the road as you progress. Put in the effort and you will succeed.

17. NOT HAPPY WITH WHAT YOUR ORCHID SOCIETY IS DOING?

NOT SATISFIED WITH THE CONTENTS OF THE NEWSLETTER?

Write a letter to The Editor and we will publish your thoughts, suggestions, solutions and wishes for all to consider. If you don't want your name attached then sign it "Anonymous" or use a Pseudonym.

We would like to hear especially about aspects of what the Society can do to better meet your needs as an orchid grower. Tell us what you don't like about monthly meetings, what topics would you like covered or are there some practical activities or demonstrations you think may be useful.

Perhaps, if you are feeling positive you might outline what you think the Society does well.

How can we improve this newsletter?—Less jokes? No Editorial? Fewer or more Photos? Less pages?

Please tell us so we can improve what we do.