



COFFS ORCHID NEWS AUGUST 2024 PUBLICATION OF THE COFFS HARBOUR ORCHID SOCIETY

7 Kotuku Street, Coffs Harbour. NSW 2450

Email: chorchidsociety@gmail.com

Web: www.coffSORchidsociety.org.au

EDITORIAL:

The shortest day of the year has passed and we are now heading for supposedly warmer weather. Certainly not this month, but we are all hoping for a short Winter and a warm Spring. Some growers are suggesting that the growing season is ahead of its normal schedule. Mild conditions, up to now, have encouraged orchids to form flower spikes earlier than normal. The cooler weather we are currently experiencing might slow down their growth but if spikes and buds have already been initiated then we may be in for an early flowering season.

Last year the opposite occurred and the flowering season was delayed. This year some growers are seeing *Speciosum*'s budding early and *Softcanes* looking like they will be flowering much earlier than last year. You will recall that last year there were very few *Softcanes* benched at either the Nambucca or the Coffs Shows but at Woolgoolga there were over 150 plants on display. We may see the opposite occur this year.

It is less than two months until the CHOS Spring Show, so growers should be starting to prepare their plants so they look fabulous on the Show bench.

The following tips will all contribute to producing a well presented plant that will look pleasing to the general viewer and take the eye of the judges.

- Proper cultural techniques, watering, adequate nutrition, good disease and pest control, etc, will result in healthy, actively growing plants which will always look great on the Show bench.
- Early staking is important to ensure that flowers develop with correct orientation and present well to the Judges. You can use clips in the early stages but it may be better to replace these with ties prior to the Show. Often an arching inflorescence of an orchid presents better than an upright one. Remember to remove any spacers or extra support material before you bench your plant.
- Follow the basic staking rules including how to tie a branching inflorescence. Do not tie or clip any part of the ovary of the flower. Make sure that stakes are cut short so they don't cause eye damage, etc. You can legally tie *Softcanes* up the flower spike to just below the top flower group.
- Remove any additional travelling ties so the orchid presents well. Sometimes removal of hanging hooks gives the orchid a cleaner look.
- Prior to the Show clean up the plant. Remove old flower stalks, dead leaves, etc. Cleaning the leaves (metho, etc) may help in presenting a healthy looking plant.
- Remove any signs of disease and pests. For example, a small amount of scale can be removed with a cotton bud dipped in metho. Please don't bring diseased plants to the Show. The Show Marshal will remove them as they may endanger plants of other growers.
- Each pot or mount needs proper support. Don't expect the Show Marshal to do it for you. [to page 3]

REMINDER:

**ALL FUTURE CHOS
MONTHLY MEETINGS
WILL START AT 7PM**

CHOS COMMITTEE 2023-2024

CONTACT DETAILS

PRESIDENT:	CAROLE DAVIS	026658 1354	carolenlarry@bigpond.com
VICE PRESIDENT:	PETER GOUGH	0409 045 645	hacc51@gmail.com
SECRETARY:	KERRIE GOSLING	0427 515 887	kerrie506@gmail.com
TREASURER:	PAIGE SINCLAIR	0427 591 901	paigesinclair@me.com
COMMITTEE:	CHRIS HATTON	0414 942 298	pchatton@bigpond.com
	PAUL HATTON	0426 978 923	pchatton@bigpond.com
	FRANK PAPPALARDO	0448 802 146	
NEWSLETTER EDITOR:	BOB SOUTHWELL	0417 695 834	bssouthwell@bigpond.com

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.

CALENDAR, 2024

27 July—Greenhouse visits

1 Aug—Tricks and Tips plus Appreciation Orchid Judging

17 Aug—Port Macquarie Visit

5 Sept— Deflasking Workshop

6-8 Sept—Spring Show

17 Oct—Giant Auction

7 Nov—AGM/Display Judging

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

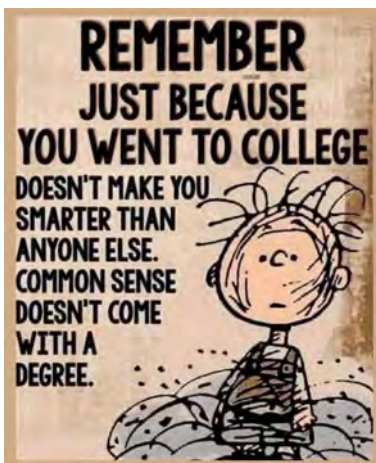
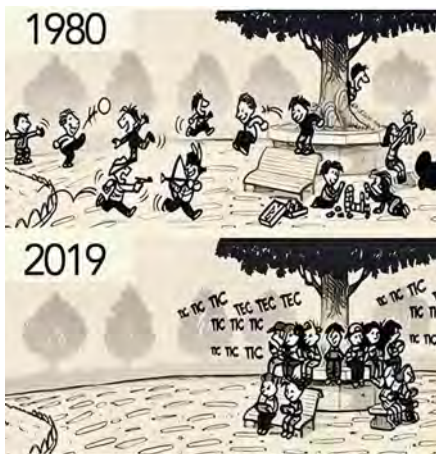
Located in South Grafton and can supply a wide range of orchids but specialises in Cattleya and Vanda genera. They also stock a large range of hardware and accessories for orchid growers. Nursery is closed to the general public except by appointment.

www.rosellaorchids.com.au

Plants that are not self-supporting may be removed from the exhibition as they can fall over and damage other entries. Use a larger pot, pot feet, etc, to make sure the plant is stable. Proper stands or upside-down pots may help to elevate the plants.

- Clear labels for each plant are desirable. If the name is not known, then say unknown on the label [Eg: Dendrobium Unknown or NoID]. It sometimes helps to look up the orchids name to check that it is spelt correctly. A proper label assists in deciding if the orchid is a species or a hybrid. Stabilo Aquarellable 8008 , 4B, 5B and 6B pencils can be used to make a long-lasting label. A permanent marker also does the job.
- Water the plant the day before benching or early in the morning if benching late in the day. The plant needs to survive without water for three days but it is important to avoid pools of water on the show bench from freshly watered pots. Avoid wetting the flower petals as this may cause spots, etc.
- Once you register your plant with the Show Officials you will be given a registration card for each plant. Use the double-sided tape dispenser to stick the card onto the side of the pot you want facing the Judges.
- Tables will be provided outside the Show Room so you can unpack and label your plants before benching.
- When ready, place your plants on the inside receiving table or hand to an official at that table. The official will then place the plant in the correct place on the bench. Please do not bench the plant yourself. If you have a large specimen plant then please talk to the Show Marshal who may then direct you as to where to place it to save double handling.
- It is also important that you read the "Notes" on the back page of the Spring Show Schedule. This outlines the rules and conditions under which our Show is conducted.

We wish you every success in this year's Spring Show.



CHOS COMMITTEE REPORT

The following is a summary from the CHOS July Committee Meeting conducted on 9th July 2024 at "The Workshop".

- ◆ Apologies from Chris and Paul Hatton.
- ◆ Excellent July meeting with a great presentation from Hans Schaible on African Orchids.
- ◆ Information sheets on Orchid Diseases were presented to all members present.
- ◆ Decided to revert to the original meeting room benching tables set-up from the August meeting
- ◆ The new Society logo shirts have been ordered for those who have placed orders with Kerrie Gosling.
- ◆ Members greenhouse visits will take place on Saturday 27th July at 10am— to visit greenhouses of Peter Gough and the Frame Family at Sandy Beach. Members will receive directions, etc, via email before the event.
- ◆ The Committee continues to investigate alternate venues for the CHOS Autumn and Spring Shows— Coffs Race Course, Coffs Guide Hall and a room at the International Stadium.
- ◆ The 2025 Autumn Show dates are to set down for 25th, 26th and 27th April rather than the 2nd to 4th May as those dates clash with Maclean Autumn Show.
- ◆ CHOS Website Upgrade—on hold for the present time as current website is still useable.
- ◆ Suggested that a Mini Display [not a judged show] be held in June/July 2025 to highlight Winter flowering orchids.
- ◆ CHOS to conduct a Bunnings Fund Raising BBQ on Saturday 12th October. Proceeds to go towards the cost of constructing Displays for the 2024 WDOS Show and for the AOC Conference Show in 2025.
- ◆ Two new members : Joy and Gordon Griffith. Welcome Joy and Gordon!
- ◆ Port Macquarie Visit— 17th August 2024. Itinerary tabled [Details elsewhere in this newsletter].
- ◆ Two orchid flasks are to be purchased for Deflasking Workshop at September General Meeting.
- ◆ Speakers for the August Meeting will be Sue Flanders, Malcolm Ide, Rhonda Smith and Paige Sinclair. Each speaker will present a number of Tips and Tricks which aid in their growing of orchids.
- ◆ Paige Sinclair is asking for ideas of activities and suggestions of guest speakers for the 2025 Calendar.
- ◆ Annual Presentation Function in December—Carole Davis investigating venues and dates.
- ◆ Next Committee Meeting will be held at 'The Workshop' on Tuesday 6th August 2024.

The Dilemma

A senior citizen said to his eighty-year old buddy: 'So I hear you're getting married?'

'Yep!' -- 'Do I know her?'

'Nope!' -- 'This woman, is she good looking?'

'Not really.' -- 'Is she a good cook?'

'Nah, she can't cook too well.' -- 'Does she have lots of money?'

'Nope! Poor as a church mouse.' -- 'Well, then, is she good in bed?'

'I don't know.' -- 'Why in the world do you want to marry her then?'

'Because she can still drive!'

The Benefits of a Good Vocabulary

I recently called an old engineering buddy of mine and asked what he was working on these days.

He said it was treatment of ceramics, aluminium, and steel in a constrained environment.

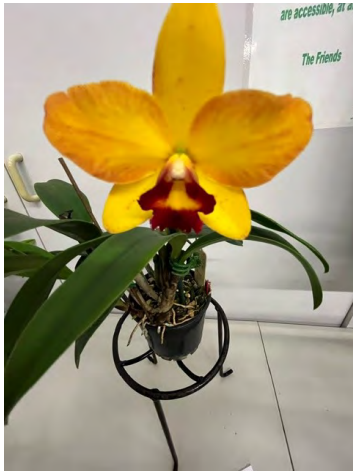
It turned out that he was washing the dishes at home under his wife's supervision.



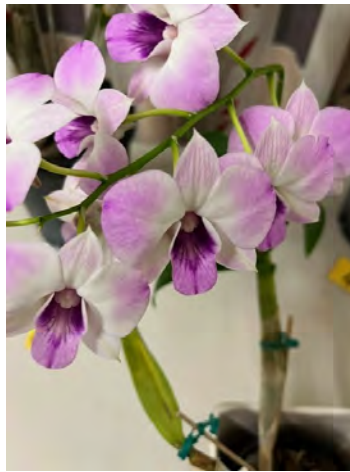
**Popular Vote at
the CHOS
July Meeting was
awarded to
Helen Seiver
for her
*Bulbophyllum
dearie X Bulb.
facetum*
Congratulations!**



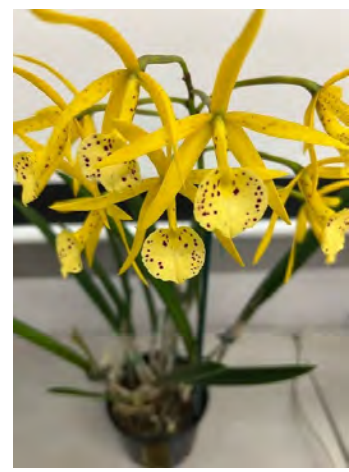
BENCHING AT THE CHOS JULY MEETING



**Rhonda Smith's
Slc. Tiny Titan**



***Dendrobium* Melody Fair
benched by Dick Cooper**



***Blc.* Sun Mei Gold benched by
Rhonda Smith**



**Di Blay's *Paph* Thunder Cat
'Future Shock' X World
Famous 'Mike Tyson'**



***Dendrobium* Fujiyama 'Fire
Cracker' benched by
B. G. Hall**



**A nice coloured
*Cymbidium***

MEMBERS TRIP TO PORT MACQUARIE—SATURDAY 17TH AUGUST 2024

It is proposed to conduct a car trip to Port Macquarie to view and enjoy this historic river town as well as have a members social day together.

ITINERARY:

8am: Depart from Coffs Botanic Gardens Car Park. [Car Pool if required]

9.30am: Meet at Ricardoes Tomatoes, Blackmans Point [Exit left before Hastings Drive].

Coffee, Tour of hydroponics system [\$2 pp], pick strawberries, etc.

10.15am: Depart for Town Centre near the wharf.

10.45am: Board Port Adventure Cruise for 11am departure. Cost of \$39 pp

Includes coffee and a light lunch.

1pm to 1.30pm: Walk in the historic part of town.

1.30pm: Depart for Bonny Hills Garden Centre—1055 Ocean Drive, Bonny Hills [towards Laurieton]

1.45 to 2.15pm: Bonny Hills Garden Centre.

2.15pm: Depart for Cassegrain Wines. [10 Winery Drive, Port Macquarie]

2.30 to 3.15pm: Wine Tour. [\$10pp]

3.30pm: Depart for Coffs Harbour.

If you are interested in participating then please add you name to the list at the August meeting or ring Frank Pappalardo on 0448 802 146

SPONSORS' SPOT: COFFS COAST MAZDA

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SUPPORT THEM AS THEY SUPPORT US

CHOS AUGUST MONTHLY MEETING—Thursday 1st August starting at 7.00pm.

“Tricks and Tips“

Guest Presenters will be Sue Flanders, Malcolm Ide, Rhonda Smith and Paige Sinclair.

Plus brief talk on Appreciation Judging—Paige Sinclair/Dick Cooper

It would be greatly appreciated if you would bring a contribution for members supper.

Don't forget to bring your Competition Plant, *Cattleya* Beautiful Sunset for it's next judging.

Duty Persons for this meeting:

Judges: DI BLAY AND SANDY HEALEY

Packing Up: Volunteers on the night **Cleaning Up:** Volunteers on the night

REMINDER : THE AUGUST MEETING COMMENCES AT 7PM

Coffs Harbour Orchid Society Facebook

July 2024 – Currently, the Coffs Harbour Orchid Society has 2.9K likes. This is up by nearly 200 people since June 2024. Our ‘What’s on Bloom’ page, is up by 12 people to 342 members, for the same period.

The image shows two screenshots from Facebook. The left screenshot displays the profile for 'Coffs Harbour Orchid Society' with 2,926 followers. It includes a donut chart showing 67% women and 32% men, and a bar chart showing the top towns/cities: 18-24 (3.0%), 25-34 (8.5%), 35-44 (11.4%), 45-54 (14.1%), 55-64 (19.9%), and 65+ (43.1%). The right screenshot shows the 'Current audience' for the 'CHOS What's In Bloom' group, listing top countries: Australia (23.8%), United States (18.9%), India (9.2%), Philippines (7.6%), and Pakistan (2.5%).

CHOS SUPPLIES OF ORCHID BARK: **NEW SUPPLIES—FRESH BARK JUST ARRIVED**

The CHOS now has a NEW supply of Kiwi Bark and Charcoal. Kiwi Orchid Bark is a hard, clean, uniformly graded *Pinus radiata* bark suitable for growing orchids. Due to price rises The Society has had to increase to price of 50 litre bags and these now sell for **\$50 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**. 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).



An Exchange of text Messages

Husband : You are negative

Wife : and you are stubborn, arrogant, care about no one but yourself and your friends, all you are interested in is your own self. In all your life you have not fulfilled even one of your promises. It is me who is putting up with such a miser and insensitive man. You good for nothing, fat, ugly man. Even your hair transplant failed.

Husband (after a substantial pause) :I was just informing you your covid test was negative.

Wife : ----- Oh. Sorry.

Proudly Hosted by . . .

Woolgoolga District Orchid Society
Inc.



International Conference & Show

Orchids from the Mountains to the Sea

23rd Australian Orchid Council International Conference & Show 2025

Wednesday, October 1 to Sunday, October 5

**Woolgoolga Sports Complex
Solitary Islands Way, Woolgoolga
New South Wales, Australia**

Register NOW
using this QR Code



or click on this link
<https://square.link/u/7QUWY0Y2>
to payment page

CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE REGISTRATION

For early bird registration price
paid before July 1, 2025
\$220 per person
Full price - \$300 per person
Contact Annie Houston
woolgoolga.dist.orch@gmail.com

FLOOR OR TABLE DISPLAY

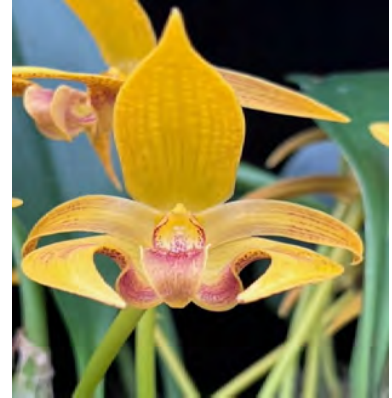
Hundreds of magical orchids and
flasks will be on sale by vendors
from around Australia and the world
to add to your orchid collection
This is a wonderful opportunity for
your Society to stage a magnificent
floor or table top display - contact
woolgoolga.dist.orch@gmail.com

**8 International and
Australia-wide
Guest Speakers**

See our Website for more information - www.aoc2025.org.au

OSNSW AWARD TO DARK STAR ORCHIDS

Congratulations to Hans and Sue from Dark Star Orchids for receiving a Quality Award from the Orchid Society of NSW [OSNSW] for a *Bulbophyllum* Wilmar Galaxy Star 'Sue'. The outstanding orchid received an HCC award and scored 77 points. It is anticipated that the Australian Orchid Council [AOC] will also award a HCC for this plant. Well done, Hans and Sue!



St Ives Orchid Fair

'The Big One'

ST IVES SHOWGROUND, Mona Vale Road, St Ives

Friday 16th August 2024 9 am to 4 pm
Saturday 17th August 2024 9 am to 4 pm
Sunday 18th August 2024 9 am to 3 pm

ADMISSION \$8

Major Sponsors

Rosella Orchids - Garden City Plastics

ORCHID VENDORS

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

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



Ku-ring-gai
Council

In partnership with
Ku-ring-gai Council

PREPARATIONS FOR POTTING SEASON

Most experienced growers suggest that it is best to not re-pot orchids until the weather starts to warm up. So in this area August-Sept-October are ideal months to carry out this essential task. The ideal situation would be where you aim to re-pot half of your collection every year which means each individual plant is re-potted every two years. There are exceptions to this rule such as many Phalaenopsis growers recommend re-potting annually after flowering. Large Cats, Cymbs or Native Specimen plants may not be re-potted until they have filled the pot. Preparation is important—clean and disinfect empty pots [or purchase new ones], have a supply of new labels and the essential potting material such as bark, perlite, charcoal, pebbles, etc. Place your bark orders with Paige Sinclair now so that you are not left short when the time arrives. Have a supply of slow release fertilizer if you plan to use it. Make sure your secateurs are sterile and in working order. Good luck!

LOCAL ORCHID SHOW DATES:

Put these in your calendar for future reference. Being a member of CHOS you are eligible to enter each of these Autumn Shows. Or perhaps you may wish to just visit and see what other growers have produced.

29th—31st August: Nambucca Valley Orchid Society Spring Show. Benching on 28th August.

30th—31st August: Grafton District Orchid Society Spring Show. Benching on 29th August.

7th—8th September: Coffs Harbour Orchid Society Spring Show. Benching on 6th Sept. 3—6pm.

5th—6th October: Woolgoolga District Orchid Society Spring Show and Conference.

FEATURE ARTICLE:

Home Culture of Epiphytic Orchids

by Jim Brydie

[Reproduced with permission from the KOS Monthly Bulletin]

Part 1 - Introduction and Principles

When growers first start out, their most common question is 'what do you pot your orchids in?'.

Of course orchid potting mediums are important, and I will eventually get on to talking about orchid mediums, but before I go there I want to tell you that the answer to that opening question is meaningless.

There are as many different epiphytic growing mixes and mix components as there are orchid growers. And just about every combination is successful in the hands of at least one grower, and maybe many, while it will at the same time be a hopelessly failure for another grower.

Now why would that be so? It seems there is much more to success than just the stuff you put in the pot.

First – the orchids are such a diverse family. There are many different kinds of orchids and different orchids that need different growing culture (including different mixes). Some need warm humid conditions, some come from mountain areas and can't stand hot summers. Some come from areas that are wet all year round, some come from areas that are much dryer, some from areas with very distinctly seasonal conditions. And, as you might expect, for each of those extremes there are hundreds of orchids occupying regions on a sliding scale of conditions between all the extremes.

Secondly - humans (especially orchid growers) are also amazingly individual and also inventive. Of course one individual will find a way to be successful with a variety of orchids in their own favoured mix. But successfully growing an orchid is a result of the hopelessly tangled blend of potting medium, environment, skill, and cultural practices. Those who get good at it seem to know instinctively what they need to do in each area.

Magic? Sometimes it may seem to be magic but I suspect that growers that can grow everything have just been around orchids long enough to have sufficient experience with dozens of different kinds to grow a wide range well.

And for any new types they don't know, their experience enables them to assess its likely needs by understanding where it comes from and what it looks like. They might not get the culture 'spot on' first go, but they will be close enough to start the orchid out on an acceptable path and to subsequently fine tune its culture as it grows. They get very good at assessing how a plant is growing and whether they think it is good/bad, or just ok.

So where does that leave a Less Experienced Grower? They can't yet do all that.

Unfortunately, there don't seem to be any short cuts to gaining years of experience and knowledge.

It is a little easier for a new grower if they decide to stick to a narrow subject range. For example to just growing Cymbidiums or just growing Australian native Dendrobiums, or some other clearly defined

type. If you are only growing one type it is easier to learn how to do it by research and by working with others already growing that type. But sadly, orchid fever seems to afflict nearly everyone and makes us want one of every gorgeous new orchid we see.

So assuming you like lots of different orchids, let's start with some principles.

Rule 1 – Don't Expect To Grow All your Orchids exactly the same way

You know you are going to have to learn a lot. Restrain your desires. You won't be able to grow everything well at the beginning so choose your most favoured types and learn to grow them first.

AND, if you are going to learn about something, don't do it superficially. Do it well and do it thoroughly.

Rule 2 – Have a Plan on becoming a good grower

I believe the best plan is to learn. And I don't mean learn to be a grower. I mean learn about orchids, and do it one type at a time. It is impossible to stand far enough back to see 'orchids' as a singular group.

Choose the orchid group you are going to study and start learning all you can about them. Understand the geographical region where that group come from, what that environment is like there, what the seasons are like, and what kind of situation the orchids grow in. Are they hot lowlands orchids or from the cooler forests on the sides of hills/mountains. Do they grow high up in trees where there is good light and good air movement – or do they grow low on mossy tree trunks in shadier conditions where the air is more humid and more still.

Having a confident understanding of what your target orchid grew up to expect as a premium will allow you to make adjustments when you believe these is something wrong. You don't need to perfectly match its gene imposed expectations. Orchids are generally much tougher and more flexible than that, but to know what you should be aiming for is at the heart of understanding orchid growing. Learn and be confident in what you know.

If you aren't confident in your knowledge and understanding, you will be forever second guessing what is happening.

Places to Look - For species orchids the needed info is often available on the internet, even if sometimes you might have to spend a little time looking and reading. One good site is the free access Internet Orchid Species Photo Encyclopedia at <https://www.orchidspecies.com/> Having that site as a bookmark in your browser is a good idea.

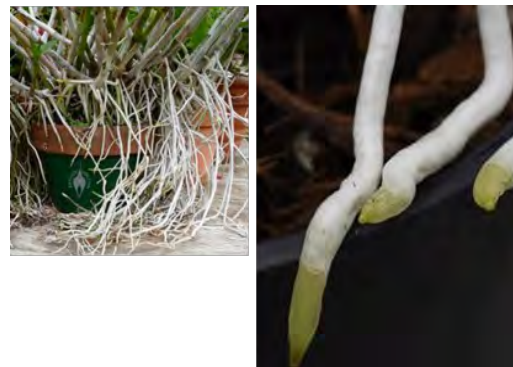
Another excellent source is the set of books written by Charles and Margaret Baker called Orchid Species Culture. Each of the 4 books focusses on one section of the orchid family like 'Dendrobiums', 'Oncidium/ Odontoglossum alliance', etc. The Orchid database called Orchidwiz had a license arrangement with the Bakers to include their environment and climate data and culture info, which has been tremendously helpful but Orchidwiz will not be continuing. If you can still purchase a copy of the last version it is well worth it.

Of course for hybrids, there is no native environment or habitat, but behind every hybrid there is one or more species and the genes of the parent species provide every characteristic of the hybrid. Considering the parents habitats and environmental requirements does provide the likely requirements of the hybrid and in many cases you don't need to look at every possible parent gene. For example, in large flowered Cattleya hybrids, the general background of many of the parent species are very similar

and that is all you need.

Hmmm. That sounds like a lot of learning, doesn't it.

You are probably thinking that you don't want to get in that deep, and don't really need all that, but your understanding of why an orchid looks the way it does - fat roots (far right), thinner roots (right), stiff thick leaves or grassy thin leaves, or big, wide, pleated leaves), and its natural environment, are all part of how it needs to be grown.



Rule 3 – Accept that you will discover 'Contradictory Truths'.

You read books, material on the internet. You go to society meetings you hear culture classes and guest speakers, you see fabulous orchids benched and talk to their growers.

Sometimes it will seem to you that the information you absorb is full of contradictions – and it is. One grower only uses Peat and Perlite, another swears by sphagnum moss, another pine bark. One will say this orchid needs a heated glasshouse, another says 'I grow it hanging under a tree in the garden'. How does the inexperienced grower come to terms with these contradictions?

A very small part of what you get told is just plain wrong. Not deliberately so - but people do make mistakes and sometimes we reach wrong conclusions. We are all learning all the time and sometimes our experiences make us think we have worked something out and we share our 'knowledge' only to learn later we were wrong.

But the biggest cause of contradictions is because every grower grows in an environment different to every other grower. Their experiences are very different. What is true (or works) for one grower doesn't make it true/work for every other.

Growers in Cairns in Qld experience very different conditions to growers in NSW. Even in a smaller habitat range within Sydney, growing conditions in the Manly area are very different to those that growers in Richmond experience at the foot of the Blue Mountains. You need to find your own truths. That is, those applicable to your local environment, your way of life, and the micro environment of your growing area.

When you are learning, take each growing advice as at least one way it can be done but don't read it as an incontrovertible law of the universe that must be followed. Apply it as part of your quest to understand how that species (or hybrid type) grows, what it needs, and what it can tolerate.

Rule 4 – Your Plan should be more than just absorbing data. Try to work out WHY things happen.

All things happen for a reason. The physical characteristics of every orchid came about through the pressures of evolution. Physical characteristics have a reason.

If an orchid has thick stiff leaves and minimised pseudobulbs like the mule ear orchid *Trichocentrum splendidum* (pic to the right), it doesn't take a genius to figure out that it probably evolved to tolerate dry conditions.



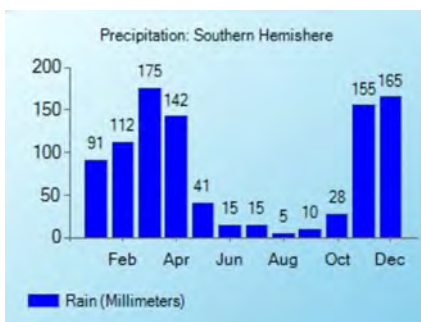
The habitat description in Orchidwiz says “Honduras, Nicaragua, and probably Guatemala. In Nicaragua, plants grow on rocky hillsides about 10 miles (16 km) north of Esteli at 2700-2800 ft. (825-850 m). Large colonies are found growing on rocks in other semi-arid areas around Esteli. In Honduras, plants grow near Tegucigalpa, but habitat details were not available”.

This orchid looks the way it does because of where it grows and what it experiences.

Naturally, appearances aren't always as cut and dried as that. Just about all *Trichocentrum*s have thick stiff dry looking leaves but they don't all grow in the desert. Perhaps the first primitive *Trichocentrum* species went this way thousands of years ago and all species of the genus since are just variations off that original plan.

The more you learn and see of the amazing variations among the orchids you can't help but begin to correlate an increasing range of physical characteristics to climate and habitat.

The annual rainfall chart provided by the Baker's for the Honduras area is shown at the left (but switched to relate to southern hemisphere seasons). It shows 6 months of only about 25 mm rain per month (that's one inch of rain) and even in the wet seasons the



wettest month only rising to 175 mm (7 inches). That is pretty dry.

The more you learn and see of the amazing variations among the orchids you can't help but begin to correlate an increasing range of physical characteristics to climate and habitat.

Start to learn and do it thoroughly.

Don't be satisfied with “*Cattleyas* grow in an open bark mix”. Find out why.



Rule 5 – Changes in growing progress also only happen for a reason

When your orchid was growing ok but now seems to be on the decline, something is going wrong. Be the detective again. Question your own actions first – the cause is frequently there. Have you changed anything? Did you change your potting medium, watering rates, did you switch fertilisers? Did you calculate the dosage rates right? Is that new potting medium a problem? Has it been in the pot too long and the bark is going off?

Alternately, check to see if mealy bugs or aphids or scale have suddenly appeared among your orchids? Has it rained every day and kept them soaking for long periods - drowning them? Is it getting too cold or too hot for them?

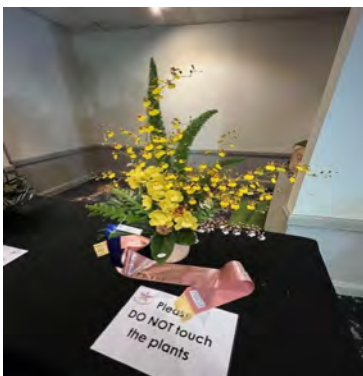
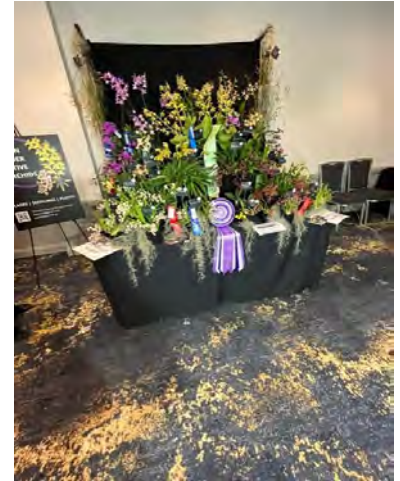
And finally, if you do decide to change something in your growing practices, never make multiple changes all at the same time. Not only is it 10 times more difficult to work out which one in its own right be responsible, the problem is even more complex because of issues that might arise from some combination of your alterations.

Be methodical in your culture. Do things for a reason. If you are of a mind to change some basic component of your culture, make changes on test plants first and only broaden out once you are satisfied over a reasonable time that results were positive.

Oh my goodness, look at the time. All that stuff above needed to be said but now I have run out of time to actually talk about potting mediums and such. I will have to do all that next month in Part 2. Still, potting mediums are just a tool in the grower's armoury so I hope I have at least started your thinking down a path that will help you eventually use your orchid tools more effectively.

Jim Brydie

ORCHID DISPLAY PRESENTATIONS AT THE MINGARA ORCHID SHOW, JUNE, 2024



Champion Floral Presentation



Reserve Champion



An impressive Bulbo.

Grand Champion

