Australian Native Orchid Society - Macarthur Group

APRIL 2016

Edited by Tony Asquith mail: aaasquith@bigpond.com. Phone 4625 9874

President: Mr. W. Southwell (Ph. 46818589) **Postal Address**:- 8A Boundary Road,

Secretary: Mr. J. English (Ph.86262934) **PARRAMATTA. 2150**

Treasurer: Mrs. C. Asquith (Ph. 46259874) **Next Meeting: THURSDAY , 21st APRIL, 2016**

Life Member: Mr. J. Riley, M. T. Cooke.

Conservation Officer: R. Hanman

Venue: BIRRAWA HALL
FITZPATRICK ROAD
Mt. ANNAN.

Doors open 7.15pm, benching closes 7.30pm, meeting starts 7.30pm

Hi to All

Great to see the Orchid Tray Company at our meeting again. And a big thankyou to Graeme Bradburn for his presentation at the last meeting.

Congratulations to Peter Wise for plant of the night and the popular choice as well. Well done Peter!

The speaker for this month is John Siemon from the Plant Bank at Mount Annan Botanic Gardens. He will be followed by the auction….bring plenty of odds and sods and your money….always a good night.

The 7th of May is the first show of the year at Rosemeadow…8.00am set-up…judging to start at 9.00am. this show also includes exotic orchids for both showing and to be included in the orchid sales.

Sales plants needed for this show

Wally

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MINUTES OF Meeting 17th March, 2016

Meeting Opened: About 7.30pm**,** and President Wal welcomed the attending members.

1. **Apologies**: Ian Lawson, Julia Bismire, Don Roberts and Peter Dowling.
2. **Minutes from Previous Meeting: as printed in newsletter**
   Proposed by: Graham Morrison **seconded by**: Terry Cooke
3. **Business Arising from the Minutes:** nil
4. **Treasurer's Report:** Moved Carol Asquith Second: Terry Cooke
5. **Inward & Outwards Correspondence**: Newsletters sent and received

Delegates Report nil to report

General Business:

Graeme Bradburn gave an interesting talk on NSW Orchids.

Michael Handcock gave an informative talk on Orchid Tray products.

The meeting noted that Tony and Carol Asquith had been made life members at Campbelltown Orchid Society.

Next meeting is our annual auction night.. John Sieben of Mount Annan Seed Bank is our Guest Speaker.

Raffle held : Wally Southwell, Ross Morrison, Peter Brown, Robert Moon.

Request to publish Annual Point Score details.

Next Meeting General Meeting 17 March 2016

And the meeting closed.. about 9.30pm

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This is Part 3 of this article published in last month's newsletter.. It was originally published in Wanneroo/Joondalup Orchid Society of Western Australia over February and March newsletters.

Water first or fertiliser first? (Part 3)

Back to Basics- Water & Orchids (Part Three) by Noel J. Grundon Atherton Qld

(Continued from last month.)

Waterlogging

The compost is where the roots live. To live and function correctly, roots need a source of energy that is provided by converting sugars such as sucrose into carbon dioxide and water. The sugars are transported down from the shoot. However, oxygen is needed to convert the sugars into carbon dioxide and water, and this oxygen is absorbed directly by the root from the air in the compost.

Good compost is composed of a solid phase, a solution phase, and a gaseous phase. The solid phase is the components of the mix, such as bark, gravel, peat moss, and the like. The solution phase is the water and dissolved fertiliser nutrients. The gaseous phase is the air from which the roots will absorb oxygen. Before watering, the compost will be mainly the solid phase and the gaseous phase. During watering, water enters the pores between the solid phase components. After watering, water drains from the larger pores, allowing air to enter the compost. Within an hour after watering, all three phases will exist within good compost.

However, if the compost is too fine, there may be no pores large enough to drain free of water and allow entry of air. The roots in such compost will be starved for oxygen, and will be unable to function fully. Such compost is said to be waterlogged. If you suspect that your compost is not draining enough to allow entry of air, open it up by using less peat moss or fine sand, and more coarse bark or small gravel. Remember, it is easier to water more frequently with a slightly coarser compost than to try to remove water from a waterlogged compost.

Over-watering

It is often said that more plants are killed from over-watering than from under-watering. However, the real killer is waterlogging, and the real problem is not over-watering but too fine a compost. You cannot over-water a compost which has been correctly designed with a graded size of components so that water will drain from the larger pores and allow entry of air within an hour of watering. Your compost must be sufficiently coarse that it will drain and allow entry of air even when it rains all day.' Over-watering[1] is a symptom of a poorly designed compost. Change the compost! Do not blame the water!!

Water quality

Most orchid growers do not need to worry about water quality. By water quality, I refer to the amounts of dissolved salts, especially sodium chloride, that are in the water. Most town or city water supplies contain low or acceptable levels of dissolved salts. However, some growers, especially those using bore water may need to check the quality of their water if they are experiencing difficulty in growing their orchids. From my own experience, I know that water containing more than 100 parts per million (ppm or micrograms per litre) sodium can kill Cymbidium, Oncidium, Odontoglossum, Lycaste, and many Australian native orchids. Especially sensitive are the terrestrial genera, the epiphytic Dcndrobiums from inland north Queensland (e.g. Dendrobiurn semifuscum, D. fleckeri, D. adae, D. agrostophyllum), all Bulbophyllums, and epiphytic members of the Sarcamhineae. The lithophytic species such as D. kingianum, D. speciosum, Sarcochilus ceciliae, S. hartmannii, and S. roseus, and the epiphytic species from coastal habitats, such as D. discolor, appear to be more tolerant of poor water quality.

Conclusions

Watering orchids is more than just grabbing the hose and splashing a bit about. So the next time you pick up the hose, ask yourself a few questions first.

- Does the compost or the bushhouse need the water?
- Am I trying to decrease the air temperature, increase the humidity of the atmosphere, or do I need to water the compost to prevent the orchid dehydrating?
- Is this the right time of the day or night to be applying the water?
- Is the compost moist enough already, or should I leave the watering for tomorrow, or, worse still, should I have done it yesterday? How much water should I apply? Will I waterlog the compost if I water now?
- By the time you have answered these questions, perhaps you will feel like putting the hose away, having a 'cuppa', and meditating on the problems of watering orchids correctly. And perhaps your orchid might grow better as a result.

It is difficult to kill an orchid, but it is more difficult to grow it well. Part of the answer to an orchid that is growing well is to firstly water it correctly.

The Secret of Fluffing Up Sphagnum Moss… By Jim Bridie

(Originally published in Ku-ring-gai Orchid Society and OSNSW newsletters.

On a visit to Royale Orchids just before Christmas,owner Kevin Hipkins gave me a tip on using sphagnum moss that has proven absolutely amazing to me. But first, do you all know what sphagnum moss is?

Sphagnum is a genus of about 200 species of mosses found throughout the world. They grow in bogs, which are more or less shallow lakes or depressions which have a layer of the living sphagnum and other plants growing over the surface above a very wet mush of decaying material underneath. These lower layers become what is called peat moss.

I have been using sphagnum moss as a medium for many years but in the early days I was always able to buy live 'sphag' which is supplied in a clear plastic bag, is wet but not dripping, and contains a mix of the green live moss and the yellowish brown moss from just underneath. The sphagnum moss we buy is harvested from certain bogs in various parts of the world (usually government controlled) so that they can continually regenerate, which can
take between 8 to 30 years.

Live sphagnum is nearly impossible to buy anymore. Most growers now buy dried compressed sphagnum moss which is sold in various sizes. I buy a 'bale' which weighs 3kg, is 80 litres of compressed moss, and makes 240 litres of moss
when wet, dampened and fluffed up. On Garrie Bromley's suggestion I bought one of those big see through plastic boxes with a clip on lid (at the Reject Shop) that is a perfect fit to store the dried bale. It fits under the benches in the shadehouse and keeps the bale dry while, over a period of time like a year or more, I harvest small quantities from
it to use. I have a smaller see through box I keep in my potting area, to hold a quality of dampened, fluffed up sphag ready to use, and here is where we get down to the secret. How do you wet compressed dried sphag?

I had never asked anyone how to do it. It seemed rather obvious - put it in a bucket, fill it with water until it is saturated, drain it off, and then squeeze out the moss to remove the excess water. This was my process for at least several years but the resulting moist sphag wasn't anywhere near as good as the live stuff. At first I thought that it was because the sphag I was buying just wasn't good quality, but it was all that was going- so I studiously
picked out and discarded the worst and put up with it. More recently I wondered if there was something wrong with the way I was using it.

About a year ago I was reading a Japanese website about growing Sophronitis coccinea in sphagnum moss and was
surprised that the grower said to dampen an amount of dried sphagnum but whatever you do, don't soak it and wring it out. I knew this was an important clue, but how else do you dampen desiccated sphag? When it is as dry as it comes in the bale, it doesn't seem to wet very easily - or so I thought. I didn't follow it up.

And then there was that visit to Royale. During the visit, he was showing a few of us a deflasking method using sphag. His sphag looked so fresh and fluffy and the perfect amount of moisture. I asked how he got the sphag like that and he told me that it was dried sphag and that he prepared it a day in advance. He sort of fluffed it up dry, dampening it with just small quantities of water, bit by bit, fluffing and mixing the dampening sphag all the time to allow the moisture to spread. I listened carefully. I could hardly believe that this small change in the way you wet sphag could make that much difference but the proof was in front of me in Kevin's hands.
When I got home I tried it and it worked. When you first start dampening the dry sphag it looks like the small amount of water you are adding is hardly doing anything but sphag seems to have an amazing ability to absorb and spread the moisture among a volume of itself. As you fluff and mix, separating the strands, the moisture spreads, and as you keep adding small amounts, the whole volume you are mixing becomes uniformly damp and fluffed up. Magic.

I don't know what squeezing water out of sphag does to it but it seems to damage it in some way. I no longer do it.

I spoke to Kevin Hipkins about this article at Castle Hill, and he advised that the technique was the secret to using sphagnum correctly

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While attempting to extend my newsletter email list, I looked at Native Orchid Society of South Australia (NOSSA) and then looked into their website. I found, amongst many good articles, the following article.

NATIVE ORCHID SOCIETY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA December 18, 2015 by NOSSA ORCHIDS

A TIMELY REMINDER.

This article is reprinted from Volume 39, No. 11, December 2015 Native Orchid Society of South Australia Inc. Journal.

Tuber Repotting Time is here

Les Nesbitt

Now that Australian terrestrial orchids have gone into dormancy it is time to think about repotting and preparing for the next growing season.

The best months for this activity are **December and January**.

I will limit this discussion to the easily grown colony forming terrestrial orchids as these are more likely to be available - for easily grown terrestrials, click here.

IMPORTANCE AND NECESSITY OF GROWING SOUTH AUSTRALIAN ORCHIDS

We need more terrestrial growers in NOSSA to feed the tuber bank and to supply spare pots for sale to the public at the Spring Show. I found it embarrassing to see so few terrestrials for sale at the 2015 Spring Show compared to the numbers available in years gone by.

Growing terrestrials is a rewarding hobby that does not take up much time or space and will pay for itself. Plus you are doing something effective orchids and the environment even if only the most common terrestrials are grown (eg the greenhoods and onion orchids). Consider easily grown, fast multiplying (https://nossa.org.au/2Q14/Q4/25/south-australian-terrestrial-orchid-culture-notes-part-two-of-four'parts/). *Pterostylis curia* (listed as rare in the SA Act) has been widely grown in NOSSA collections since the days Roy Hargreave's wash trough when NOSSA was formed.

Once the basic principles are understood it to move onto the rarer species as artificially propagated plants become available in future as they surely will. Members can draw on the tuber bank in December to get started seriously about it as a group of volunteers will be needed within a year or two to help look after the output of a number of projects already underway or about to start.

Year 8 girls at Kildare College have been repotting the school's terrestrial collection and this is how they did it.

EQUIPMENT ------- Prepare all the materials needed including:

- Pots
- crocking material,

- sand,
- organic matter - blood & bone, native compost, chopped up sheoak needles,
- 4B pencil and labels.

PREPARATION

- Water the pots lightly a day or two before repotting. The mix should be damp enough to not be dusty, yet dry enough to not stick to everything,
- Remove the label, wash it in a container of water and stand it aside to dry,
- Check on the label back to see how many tubers were planted last year.

REPOTTING --------Scrape off and dump the top layer of soil as this can be contaminated with moss, slimy bacteria and liverworts.

- Tap out the plug of soil into a sieve sitting on a bowl. Pick out any tubers that are visible on the outside of the plug,
- Gently break the soil apart and search for tubers while squashing the lumps of mix through the sieve,
- Very small tubers may go through especially with *Corybas.* If you have not got a sieve do this operation on a sheet of newspaper.

Place the tubers in a dish so they do not roll away.

- Count the new tubers to see whether they increased by 2, 3 or 4 times,
- Discard anything left in the sieve (old tubers, roots etc.),
- Work out how many new pots are needed to plant all the new tubers.

Add to the old mix in the bowl

- a pinch of blood & bone,
- a handful of sand and a handful of native potting mix,
- Also add enough of these ingredients for each additional pot and mix the contents of the bowl together.

Select new or sterilised 125 mm standard pots

- and place a square of shadecloth in the bottom to keep the sand in and critters out,
- Pour in mix to within 30 mm of the top and ram down with your fist,
- Place up to 10 tubers on top of the mix,
- Lay tubers horizontally if unsure which is the top.

Labelling and finishing the task

- Write out the orchid name on extra labels and fill in the numbers of tubers on the back for each pot,
- Almost fill the pot with mix and tamp down,
- Insert the label. Place a layer of cut sheoak needles on top of the mix,
- Water the pots and the job is done.

For show pots use 175 mm or larger pots and plant 20 to 50 of the largest tubers available.

If the tubers have decreased or look unhealthy, throw out all the old mix and replant in new mix.

Benching Results MARCH Meeting 2016.

Dendrobium Species	Den.schneiderea Major 'Weedsie'	P. Wise
	Den. Biggibum 'Jessica'	P. Wise
Dendrobium Hybrid	Den. Topaz Dream 'Sweet'	A. & C. Asquith
	Den. Unknown`	M. Warner
Sarcanthinae Species	Sarc. Hirticalcar	R. Morrison
Sarcanthinae Hybrid	nil	
Bulbophyllum	Bulb.exiguum	T. Cooke
	Bulb. schillerianum	R. Morrison
Aust. Species Other	Cestichis reflexa	R. Morrison
	Cestichis reflerxa	T. Cooke
Aust. Hybrid Other	nil	
Terrestrial Pterostylis	Pt. alucata	G. Bradburn
	Pt. truncata	W. & M. Southwell
Terrestrial Evergreen	nil	
Dockrillia	nil	
Terrestrial Hybrid	Pt. x furcillata	W. & M. Southwell
Terrestrial Other	Dienia opwydis	J. English
	Chiloglottis diphylla	W. & M. Southwell
Caladenia Species	nil	
Australasian Species	nil	
Australasian Hybrid	Den. Lemon Pepper x hepaticum	W. & M. Southwell
Seedling		
Seedling First Flowering	nil	
Growing Competition 1.	A. & C. Asquith	R. Morrison
Growing Competition 2.	nil	

Plant of the night and the Popular Choice was Dendrobium schneiderea 'Major 'Weedsie' grown by Peter Wise. Congratulations Peter

GOOD GROWING