



## MIRIAM ANN ORCHIDS NEWSLETTER ALAN'S COLUMN CHRISTMAS EDITION 2013.

The festive season has now started. Now is the time that our plants need a little more attention. Dividing season has now gone and the time has come to get our plants into growth to mature their bulbs to flower next year. Watch your shade or your plants may burn like mine! Don't forget you can spray your plants with ENVY® to help stop sun burn. Extra magnesium sulphate may also help your plants through hot summers. Water in the evening to help keep plants cool.

Alternate your fertiliser from inorganic to organic - hormones if needed to give your plants a boost after dividing. Watch for fungus and mite problems. All for now.

This month I will make this edition a technical edition. Over the years I have tried to keep the newsletter simple I have an article by Peter Albery which you will have to read carefully to absorb the information. A few tables etc. Why Xmas? You will have time to read this article over the festive season. This is in the form of a talk Peter gave at our beginners day in October relating to Noble type dendrobiums. I hope you enjoy reading it. The talk started with a plant brought along which was pure yellow and heaps of flowers. It was thought to have D. Montrose in the breeding some where.

1. The Dendrobium? Some D.'Montrose" in it somewhere. But nicely coloured!  
Grew In.
2. Old composted Bark, some coarse Coir, Coarse Perlite and some crushed tile.
3. The crushed Tile was to give it some weight as the canes can be long and heavy, causing pots to topple (if not hung).
4. This plant was in a clay pot for more weight!
5. So the mix was perhaps, too free draining. So, what fertiliser did I add in the first place?
6. Nothing, but the bark had a pH of 5.7 Coir about 6.7- The tile - neutral and contributes nothing, along with the Perlite.
7. So, feeding? Once new growth started just a few pieces of pelleted chicken manure. The stuff with sea-weed etc. etc. But only just a few pieces. Say a heaped teaspoon full for the 150ml pot (6 inch pot).
8. So, after the chicken manure, what too feed when, and why the chicken manure?
9. The chicken manure is used sparingly because it breaks down to a fine sticky pasty material, just what is NOT needed in an epyphytick Orchid growing media.
10. So why add it at all?
11. To supply all elements, including trace elements and the sea weeds provide natural gibberellins and Cytokinins!
12. What do these do:
13. The enhance cell size and cell division, which may result in more basal breaks!
14. After feeds are all liquids: Can be Aquasol, or Zest etc. or Alan's Orchid feed - or any of the Peters bran| fertilisers or NITROPHOSKA etc.
15. As long as they are fairly balanced N.P.K. type fertilisers.
16. How strong? Very dilute : ½ to one gram per litre only - as any root tip damage is a sure sign that the solution was too strong!
17. How often? Just look at the plant colour, etc. cane strength etc. and if the plant is still pale — not responding as desired but fairly hard growth - then use a high Nitrogen fertiliser such as Peters brand 30-10-10 or 30-5-8 N.P.K as a sort of SPRENCH.
18. What is a SPRENCH? Well a cross between a spray and a complete drench! Enough to wet down to the top 2.5cm of pot top and further waterings take it down further.
19. But what if I got carried away? And over supplied and was running away from the base of the pot?
20. Then give them a bit more! And wash it right through: What happens now, is feed water leaches feed water and provided the media is a coarse, fast draining mix, it very simply, costs you more money! That's all!

21. If however the growing media is too fine: Then serious damage can occur as the fertiliser does cling to the finer particles.
22. Most hobbyist growers are unlikely to own electrical salinity meters or pH meters.
23. But some growers do have these tools to assist in 'getting it right' as losses or set backs just are not affordable. Then if such a grower does have a more than satisfactory electrical conductivity from a poor quality water supply, plus added fertiliser, then use this rather peculiar equation.
24. Suppose, for example, we desire a media E.C ( electrical conductivity) of say 0.9 to 1.1 reading, but the irrigation water plus fertiliser reads E.C. 1-3.

Then multiply the desired E.C.x 5 . So say  $0.9 \times 5 = 4.5$ . Subtract the water E.C of 1.3 by  $3.2 = 0.406 \times 100 = 40.62\%$  leaching required. That means, pour say 41% more water onto the pots than the media can hold and presto! The media in the pot has magically become the E.C of 0.9 we actually wanted.

25. Weird math's? Yes: But it relies on the fact that the nutrient salts are clinging to the exterior of the water droplets. So when excess is used, the exterior droplets of nutrient and other salts therefore leaving the less salty inner droplet portions behind in the pot!
26. So, best just supply the right dose in the first place!
27. For some, who have not got the luxury of town water supply - may need to explore such math's if water quality is less than optimum!
28. For those who have just a few orchids, or other pot grown plants, the math's above are likely to be of academia interest only!
29. Well, lets now consider our Soft Can Dendrobe: Short about Vi grown, just a little more? Then apply a couple of feeds with increased phosphorus - This will thicken the cane as extra phosphorus increased sugar, started production which the plant will store.
30. Then % grown cane., No more Nitrogen but use potassium sulphate at 1A gram per litre of water. Say 3 or 4 feeds about a week - 10 days apart. But you must apply some magnesium mid week or so - as High potassium levels causes potassium/magnesium imbalances.
31. 2 level teaspoons of Epsom salts for 9-10 litre water can and feed!
32. As the canes mature, increase light if possible, but without sun burn, and decrease watering once the growth is about complete.
33. Don't decide to apply a full N.P.K. fee at this late stage - winter feed Nitrogen! All that plant will do with the stored starch is produce vegetative shoots instead of flowers.
34. Once good flower buds are visible. NOT before, you can apply a V-z strength N.P.K liquid feed: Don't overdo as flower life will be shortened!
35. So, to grow a real eye stopped soft can Dendrobe takes observation, care, skill, and tender love and care! Here's to good growing and success. Peter E Albery.

Many growers do not know the pH of their mix or check the EC. The main reason is that they do not know how. So here is a list of what to mix into your growing media.

Weights of materials to add to attain a pH of 6. This is for bark media plus a small amount of extras such as peat moss, sphagnum moss, perlite etc.

Note: 1 cubic metre = 1000litres

Starting pH	Soil Sulphur	Iron sulphate	Lime or Dolomite
8.0	740gm	5.33 Kilogram	“ “ “
7.5	651gm	4.145 K	“ “ “
7.0	444gms	3.26 K	“ “ “
6.5	96gms	2.07 K	“ “ “
6.0	96gms	2.07 K	“ “ “
5.5	96gms	2.07 K	3.72 kg
5.0	96gms	2.07 K	2.96 kg
4.5	96gms	2.07 K	5.92 kg

This is a guide: remember very coarse bark needs much less than fine bark.

So, small batches need to be made e.g. 10 litres of mix. Then moisten: wait 21 days for adjustment. To have the right ratio of calcium to magnesium mix 1 part lime + 2 parts dolomite together. Then

mix into your potting mix. Note: mix the two by weight, this will give you a ratio of 2:1 Ca to Mg. This will settle down to 4:1 in 5 months.

Iron in Coir 300gm/cu. Metre      Iron in Bark 600gm/cu. Metre.

## TO TREAT BARK (simple)

To one cubic metre

1.5kg Urea Lo B

600gm Iron sulphate

1kg Fine lime

If you want to use chook instead of urea.

- 1) Take out the urea
- 2) Take out the lime
- 3) Replace with Gypsum

If you keep getting Bacterial Blight on your Phalaenopsis, remember it spread at 87% R.H (wet leaves),

## TRACE ELEMENTS

Felo - 0.046g/litre every two weeks

B.M.X - 0.019g/litre every two weeks

One -the first week, then next week to other.

## EXTREME HOT WEATHER

Magnesium sulphate - 130gm per 100 litre of water.

## SIMPLE NUTRIENT MIX

Mono ammonium phosphate                      0.4 gm

Magnesium sulphate 0.2 gm

Potassium nitrate 0.8 gm

Calcium nitrate 1.3 gm

These are all per one litre of water and dissolve separately.

Or

Calcium nitrate 1.3 gm + Potassium nitrate 0.84 mix in one litre of water. Apply weekly in summer, winter monthly.

## COMPOSTING

In 8/12 weeks all of the phenyls in the mix will go. Did you know that mushroom mycelium helps keep out root diseases out? Compost needs about 27% air porosity.

Did you know sugar can be useful to take u excess nitrogen, maybe better root growth.

Magnesium leeches out quicker than calcium. Cheap wetter's take fatty acids away from roots especially those genera that have root hairs (+9 paphs).

Good mixes do not need fungicides in their mixes to control pythium.

In Pine Bark mixes - soil drench fungicides do not work. Ok in sand and peat mixes. A little peat moss

in bark mixes makes the roots of all genera grow better. Fungicides used as drenches work better if a

little peat moss is added to the mix. Use German or Canadian peat for best results.

Phytophthora: is harder to control in temperatures of between 30degrees C to 37 degrees C (root rots).

## THE FESTIVE SEASON.

We will be home over the Xmas break BUT please ring if coming up over Xmas. At last the shelves are starting to fill up again A lot of products have been in short supply and of coarse. Merri Pert and Merri Cote are available in 1, 5 and 20 Kg. Alan's favourite mix should be ready soon. The curing process has been nearly completed, ready to use Perlite in P500 medium and coarse in 100 litre bags, Pots by "Port Pots" and other suppliers.

STIMULIZER comes in 100ml, 1 litre and 4 litre containers. This certainly gets y our plants on the move.

B TONIC comes in 500ml, 1 litre and 4 litre containers. This is a general plant booster to make plants Perform better. Good for all general as a monthly tonic. It also helps control root rots.

SPHAGNUM MOSS in all sizes from New Zealand ZEALITES also available from 20kg down.

Nutrient - Trace Elements etc. AUXINONE to get those roots moving. A selection of agro

chemicals always on hand including MERRI KLEEN to sterilize your cutting implements. WIRE

BASKETS, PAPER BARK, LABELS, CLIPS, WATER BREAKERS, FOGGETS etc. WATER

WANDS. To make water easier we have the famous HYPONEX SYPHONS. We carry a wide

range of nutrients. We also have DEBCO BARK in stock. If out of stock, a phone call and it is back in stock.

ENVY IS NOW BACK IN STOCK we now have 1 litre containers of the famous "ENVY". Ideal to spray plants after repotting - dividing or for heat, wind, or frost protection. Ideal if you are doing some dividing during summer. This is the original.

## BOOKS.

Don't forget we still have copies of our DVD that was recorded up at Alstonville and a workshop there. Alan's Pest and Disease Handbook. Alan's Fertiliser Handbook.

Well this is about all for now. If you have any problems ring on send me an Email but please include you phone number so I can talk to you if necessary.

To all our ORCHID GROWING FRIENDS we wish you all a wonderful and joyous Christmas break and a wonderful New Year! For those who come to our beginners class, we will be resuming on Saturday the 8th February 2014 at 2pm all welcome. Hoping that Peter Albery will be along to talk about air space after drainage.

Till next time

GOOD GROWING

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MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL

P.S. If you want a shade house - Do - it - yourself ring Derek Kennedy on 0411 135 056 or Tel. 1300 881 143.

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I hope everybody had a terrific Christmas and may 2014 be kind to us all.

GOOD GROWING

And a little story you all may enjoy!!!!

### **Should I really join Facebook? (Priceless)**

When I bought my Smart Phone, I thought about the 20-year business I ran all without a cell phone that plays music, takes videos, pictures and communicates with Facebook and Twitter. I signed up under duress for Twitter and Facebook, so my kids, their spouses, my 6 grand kids could communicate with me in the modern way. I figured I could handle something as simple as Twitter with only 140 characters of space.

My phone was beeping every three minutes with the details of everything except the bowel movements of the entire next generation. I am not ready to live like this. I keep my cell phone in the garage in my golf bag.

The kids bought me a GPS for my last birthday because they say I get lost every now and then going over to the grocery store or library. I keep that in a box under my tool bench with the Blue Tooth [which is red!] phone I am supposed to use when I drive. I wore it once and was standing in line at Bunnings talking to Marilyn and everyone within 50 yards was glaring at me. I had to take my hearing aid out to use it, and got a little loud.

I mean the GPS looked pretty smart on my dash board, but the lady inside that gadget was the most annoying, rudest person I had run into in a long time. Every 10 minutes she would sarcastically say, "Re-calc-u-lating." You would think that she could be nicer. It was like she could barely tolerate me. She would let go with a deep sigh and then tell me to make a U-turn at the next light. Then if I made a left turn instead ... well, it was not a good relationship. When I get really lost now, I call Marilyn and tell her the name of the cross streets, and while she is starting to develop the same tone as Alice the GPS lady, at least she loves me.

To be perfectly frank I'm still trying to learn how to use the cordless phones in our house. We have had them for four years, but I still haven't figured out how I lose three phones all at once and have to run around digging under chair cushions, checking bathrooms and the dirty laundry baskets when the phone rings.

The world is just getting too complex for me. They even mess me up every time I go to the grocery store. You would think they could settle on something themselves, but this sudden "Paper or Plastic?" every time I check out just knocks me for a loop. I bought some of those cloth reusable bags to avoid looking confused, but I never remember to take them with me.

Now I toss it back to them. When they ask me, "Paper or plastic?" I just say, "Doesn't matter to me. I am bi-sacksual." Then it's their turn to stare at me with a blank look. I was recently asked if I tweet. I answered, "No, but I do fart a lot."

P.S. I know some of you are not over 60. I sent it to you to allow you to forward it to those who are. I figured your sense of humour could handle it.

We senior citizens don't need any more gadgets. The TV remote and the garage door remote are about all we can handle.

GOOD GROWING