



Australian Native Orchid Society - Macarthur Group



MARCH 2013

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President Mr. W. Southwell (Ph. 46818589)

Postal Address:- 43 Strickland Cres.,

Secretary: Mr. J. English (Ph.96079809)

ASHCROFT . 2168.

Treasurer: Mrs. C. Asquith (Ph. 46259874)

Next Meeting: THURSDAY , 16th May, 2013

Life Member: Mr. J. Riley

Conservation Officer: R. Hanman

ANOS Macathur Group disclaims any responsibility for any losses which may be attributed to the use or misuse of any materials published in this newsletter

Venue: BIRRAWA HALL

FITZPATRICK ROAD, Doors open 7.15pm, benching closes 7.45pm, meeting starts 8pm.

Mt. ANNAN.

President's Message.

Hi to all.

Many thanks to our guest speaker, John Siemon for his presentation and talk on the Seed Bank at Mount Annan Botanic Garden.

Show dates this year are confirmed with Narellan Town centre, 28th September and the 26th October. Both shows to be in our normal location near the Coles Store.

Congratulations to Ross for Plant of The Night at the last meeting, which makes three in a row.... Well Done...

The Sales table will be at the meeting this month, a good chance to stock up on supplies.

As usual, thanks to some very generous donations from our members for the annual auction which was a fun night again with many people putting their hands in their pocket.

Wally.

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The club now has Metarex Snail Bait – ring Margaret if you need some!

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Don't forget the Auction this month! Bring along an item or two to auction, not just orchids (and John loves Red wine)... this night helps keep the club to keep going!

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MEETING HELD 18 April, 2013

1. Meeting Opened: 8pm, and the President Wal welcomed members.
2. Apologies: Chris Munson, Peter Dowling, Phil Griffith, Ross Morrison, Graeme Morrison
3. Minutes from Previous Meeting:

Proposed by: Greg Knight seconded by: Alan Kneip

4. Business Arising from the Minutes: Nil
5. Treasurer's Report:

Proposed by: Carol Asquith Seconded by: Don Roberts

6. Inward Correspondence: Various Newsletters, Neutrog sent liquid "Strike Back", "The Orcardian"

Deciduous terrestrials thrive in a shadehouse of 50-70% shadecloth. In very cold areas, or where summer rain is heavy, a plastic roof is usually added. Light frost to -20C does not worry the majority of species. All terrestrials like good air movement and will not thrive in a stuffy humid atmosphere, especially if temperatures are high. Some species prefer heavy shade, others full sunlight, but most will adapt to a wide range of light intensity. The spring flowering species prefer higher light values at flowering time. It is essential to keep pots up off the ground on benches to deter slugs and snails. I like to use plastic pots because they are easier to clean and sterilize. Pot size should be neither too big nor too small. I recommend 125mm standard pots up to 175mm squat pots for specimen groupings of 20 plants.

The potting soil must be kept uniformly moist during active growth. If the pots are allowed to dry out during the growing season, the plants may become dormant. Fertilisers are not necessary, although *Pterostylis* species are very hardy and will benefit from weak applications of foliar feed applied whilst the leaves are developing. New tubers are produced in winter-spring. The colony types form several tubers per plant and within a few years the pots would become overcrowded if not repotted. I recommend annual repotting for these. Some of the showier species produce only one new tuber each year and have to be propagated from seed. Some of these can be made to produce a second tuber by carefully twisting off the new season's tuber in September/October and replanting the plant with the old tuber still attached for another month or two. This method works well with *Diuris* and the rufa group greenhoods.

As the days get hotter and drier in late spring, the leaves of terrestrials go yellow and then brown and dry. After the leaves have turned brown, the pots are allowed to dry out completely to dry up the old roots and tubers. Terrestrials must be given their own growing area, well away from evergreen plants which are watered regularly in summer. The tubers may rot if kept wet in hot weather. Seed pods ripen before the plants become dormant. Pods are checked daily and picked as they start to split open. Seed is stored in paper envelopes until autumn.

In summer the plants are knocked out of the pots and the new plump, firm tubers are repotted into fresh soil mix. My mix is 45% loam, 50% sand and 5% peat moss with a small amount of blood and bone fertiliser added. It has a pH of 5.5. Growers in other states use coarser mixes containing fine gravel and with leaf-litter or buzzer chips in place of peat moss. The new tubers are replanted with the tops 20-40mm below the soil surface. A thin surface mulch of *Casuarina* or *Pinus radiata* needles, chopped to lengths of 20-50mm, prevents erosion and keeps the leaves clean and healthy, as well as improving the appearance of the pot. Repotting is normally done in November, December or January.

Each tuber sends up a shoot to the surface in autumn. The leaves grow rapidly in late autumn and early winter as the rains set in. Seed can be sprinkled on top of the pots around mature plants in autumn. Protocorms develop in the cool, wet winter conditions and seedling leaves appear in spring. Seedlings produce tiny tubers by summer. Only the largest usually survive the long dry dormancy period of 4-6 months.

Some species set seed unaided but most require hand pollination. I use a piece of pine needle to transfer pollen from one flower to another of the same species. The flower collapses within a few days if pollination is successful. Seed pods develop rapidly and in springtime can ripen in 4-6 weeks.

The four commercially important deciduous terrestrial genera in cultivation are *Caladenia*, *Diuris*, *Pterostylis* and *Thelymitra*. Each genus has a large number of species, although not many *Caladenia* are in general cultivation. I am growing more than 50 terrestrial hybrids in pots and have a number of others in flask.

We have been very successful with the sun orchids or *Thelymitra*. All the colour of the rainbow, including the most beautiful blues, are found in the sun orchids. For exhibition work *Thelymitra*

are poor subjects because the flowers close at night and will not open unless the temperature rises above 22°C. They can be made to open on cool sunny days if the pot is placed inside a closed car. Thelymitra are all spring/summer flowering orchids in southern Australia. They are very striking plants, some growing more than 50cm tall with up to 20 flowers. The smaller species are the easiest to cultivate.

This article is a reproduction of part of a paper presented at the SGAP 19th Biennial Seminar which was held at Annesley College, Adelaide, 30 September to 3 October 1997.

Les Nesbitt has been interested in native orchids for more than 40 years as a propagator, hybridiser and exhibitor. He is the custodian of 20 hectares of bushland in the Adelaide hills containing 29 orchid species. Les was the inaugural president of the Native Orchid Society of South Australia and is an accredited judge of both native and exotic orchids. Since 1975 he has run Nesbitt's Orchids, a nursery specialising in propagating Australian deciduous terrestrial orchids for growers everywhere.

From website Australian Plants on Line

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Sarcochilus ceciliae

Sarcochilus ceciliae must surely be one of the most rewarding of our native orchids to grow in captivity; if well cultivated it can flower continuously for up to five months of the year. The dainty pink flowers which earn it the common name 'fairy bells' are an eye catcher on any show bench.

Sarcochilus ceciliae occurs naturally from the Manning River in NSW to at least the Atherton Tablelands in Queensland. It occurs almost exclusively as a lithophyte (rock dweller) and is a most hardy grower. Out of flowering season the plant can be hard to see as they grow on the rock with a bit of grassy detritus about them as camouflage, but of course, this all changes when those lovely little fairy bells appear in early summer.

Sarcochilus ceciliae is very easy as well as rewarding to grow in bushhouse conditions. Here the cardinal rule is exactly the same as for growing any plant and that is to check how it grows naturally and you will be halfway to success. The first thing that you will notice is that where it grows, it is more or less only wet whilst it is raining and for a short time there after. This appears to be the key to growing this species in captivity. More plants are killed by wet feet than by any other cause.

As with all cool growing *Sarcochilus*, *ceciliae* appreciates being fed, a little and often is the best way to go. Being a year round grower, it can be fed year round too. A suitable potting mix consists of 1 part bark, 1 part charcoal, 1 part sandstone, screened to suit the size of the plant and the pot being used. Shallow terracotta pots or saucers are best as these let the plant dry out quickly if it is allowed to get too wet. Place the plants on top of the mix rather than in it and secure it in place with a couple of stones to steady it while it gets a foothold.

Sarcochilus ceciliae is attacked by as many pests as any other orchid so be on your guard if you want a specimen plant. Small caterpillars can denude a plant in no time if not controlled with Cabaryl or similar sprays. The most serious pest however is a brown scale that gets down into the axils of the plant and causes serious, if not fatal, leaf drop. There are many preparations designed to control scale in particular and a preventative program combined by regular close inspection is the best course of action.

BEWARE THOUGH, treat all chemicals with a great deal of respect when using them- always read the instructions carefully and take every precaution possible. After all, we only want to get rid of the pests, not the orchid grower as well.

Article from Sutherland Orchid Society Bulletin, January 1998.

And a little story!

A Victorian Farmer was seeking damages for injuries he suffered when his horse was hit by a car.

In Court, The Defence Counsel asks “after the accident, didn’t someone come to you and asked how you felt?”. The farmer replied “yes, I believe that is so”.

The Defence Counsel says “And didn’t you tell him you never felt better in your life?”

The farmer replies “Yes, I guess I did.”

The Defense Counsel sits down and the Plaintiff’s counsel stands up and says “Will you tell His Honour the circumstances in which you made that response?”

The farmer, “Yes. Not long after the accident, my horse, which had sustained broken legs, was thrashing around. A policeman came up and put a revolver to its ear and shot it dead. Then he went over to my dog, which had a broken back and it was howling miserably. He put his revolver to its head and shot it dead. Then he came over to me and asked me how I felt”.

I said “I never felt better in my life!”

GOOD GROWING