



# Australian Native Orchid Society - Macarthur Group



JULY 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)

**ext Meeting: THURSDAY , 15th August, 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.**

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## President's Message

Hi to all,

A full committee was elected at our annual general meeting which continues with our stability and progress for the next year. When many clubs are struggling to form a committee, it's a very good result from our elections.

Congratulations for Greg Knight for Plant of the Night at our last meeting.

Schedules and hand out sheets will be available for the Spring Show at the August meeting.

**NOTE:** Dockrillia is now changed to Section Rhizobium.

Denis Wilson was to be our Guest Speaker at our August meeting but is now scheduled for next month. Peter Gibson agreed to give talk on Speciosum.. Thanks Peter!

Fees are now overdue... \$10 for single, \$12 per couple.

See you all at the meeting  
Wally.

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**The club now has Metarex Snail Bait. Ring Margaret if you need some!**  
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## MEETING HELD 18 July, 2013

1. **Meeting Opened:** 8pm, and the President Wal welcomed members.
2. **Apologies:** Chris Munson, Phil Griffiths, Kim Hines, Carol Asquith, Ross Morrison, Ian Lawson.
3. **Minutes from Previous Meeting:**  
Proposed by: Marj Yabsley      Seconded by: Terry Cooke
4. **Business Arising from the Minutes:** Nil
5. **Treasurer's Report:**  
Proposed by: Tony Asquith      Seconded by: Terry Cooke.
6. **Inward Correspondence:** Various Newsletters,
7. **Outward Correspondence:** Newsletters





them with optimal amounts of light, water, warmth and fresh air than with large amounts of fertiliser.

Fertilisers can be divided into several different types. Liquid fertilisers (which are usually solids!) are so called because they are dissolved in water before application. Their nutrients immediately become available to the plant via the roots, and in some cases also via the leaves. Slow release is the term generally used to describe fertiliser granules or droplets with polymeric coatings, which are essentially small plastic capsules of soluble fertiliser. These slow -release fertilisers should be incorporated in the potting mix. Their nutrients are slowly released during watering, especially in warm weather.

Other fertilisers, such as Magamp®, Hoof-and-Horn® and Blood-and-Bone, also release their nutrients over a long period as they dissolve or are degraded by bacteria present in the potting mix. Liquid Fertilisers contain major amounts of nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P) and potassium (K) in their chemical make-up. Smaller amounts of magnesium, calcium, sulphur and other elements needed for plant growth are also present. Magnesium is important because it is a constituent of chlorophyll, the pigment responsible for the green colour of plants. Chlorophyll catalyses photosynthesis, the primary step in the manufacture of cellulose, the structural material of plant tissue. Fertilisers containing a high proportion of nitrogen stimulate plants to produce leaf growth at the expense of flowers, whereas those containing relatively high proportions of phosphorus and especially potassium promote flowering.

Thus fertilisers with different proportions of these elements (usually referred to as the NPK ratio) will have differing effects on plant growth and flowering. An alternative is to use a 'balanced' fertiliser in which the ratio of nutrients is such as to provide optimal orchid growth during the whole year. Other liquid fertilisers used successfully with orchids include Aquasol®, Thrive®, and Maxicrop®.

Orchid growers with large collections usually fertilise nearly every time they water by using a proportioning pump which adds a concentrated fertiliser solution to the water feeding the sprinkler system. A system sold for home use dilutes concentrated fertiliser solution approximately 20 - fold with tap-water as it is applied by the garden hose. If applying fertiliser regularly in this way, the final concentration should be only 10% of the manufacturer's recommendation. However, when applying liquid fertilisers at weekly or fortnightly intervals, concentrations up to 50% of the manufacturer's recommendation can be used.

Slow Release Fertilisers are valued by the lazy grower and I use them extensively on my cymbidiums and zygopetalums! Osmocote®, Osmocote-Plus® and Nutricote® are three of the best known brands. I apply one or two tablespoons of Osmocote-Plus® to my 8-inch pots in October, together with smaller amounts of Magamp® and Hoof-and-Horn®. Often I add a little more in January. Slow-release fertilisers function by allowing their nutrients to diffuse slowly through their polymeric coating. Little fertiliser is released in cold weather, but the rate of release increases as the pot temperature reaches 20°C, coinciding with rapid plant growth.

Some growers have excellent success using pelletised animal manures such as Dynamic Lifter®, which is essentially pelletised fowl manure. Some use it as a mulch on the top of the potting mix but others believe that it accelerates the breakdown of pine bark. The above discussion applies primarily to fertilising cymbidiums and zygopetalums, which are regarded as 'heavy feeders'. I suggest caution when using slow -release fertilisers or animal manures on other orchids. It is safer to use liquid fertilisers at low concentrations and to apply them only to plants in active growth.

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## What kind of pots should be used?

By Linda Fortner

Clay pots are good if you grow your orchids in high humidity or if you tend to over water because the surface of the pot is porous and the moisture will pass through it. They are more expensive and heavier than plastic pots. Most commercial growers use plastic pots because they are cheaper and much lighter than clay. At the current cost of shipping, every ounce of weight is significant.

Many orchids (Dendrobiums, Cattleyas, Oncidiums just to name a few) grow better mounted on tree bark, pressed tree fern, or cork bark with a little sphagnum moss around the roots. Mounted orchids need to be watered more frequently than potted orchids. What kind of media should I use? Now that is a harder question to answer than the pot question. There are many types of media available that can be used for your orchids. Cork nuggets, wine corks, bark (small, medium, and large, rock wool, New Zealand Sphagnum moss, tree fern, lava rock, and, I know you won't believe this, but I heard about a man that swears by horse manure !

You may purchase all of the above from various sources. Or, you can make your own mix like I do. I use equal portions of small size fir bark, small charcoal chips, and perlite. This mix is best for orchids with tiny or fine roots. I make a similar mix using medium size fir bark, medium size charcoal chips, and a larger grade of perlite for my large-root type plants like my Cattleyas. I have also had good luck with a peat-based mix for my Phalaenopsis and Miltonias. My Phaphiopedilums are potted in either the fine bark mixture or N.Z.sphagnum moss.

PEANUTS! Those little peanuts you find in all your packages are just the thing for lining the bottom of your pots (they create a large air space to collect and drain any excess water). You can use broken pieces of clay pots or rocks, but these materials are heavy.

What size pot should I use? Never over pot (using a pot larger than necessary)! If the orchid has good root growth (a lot of healthy roots -- white with green tips), the next size larger pot would be just right. IF you have lost a lot of the roots (due to trimming brown and mushy roots -- see below) a one size smaller pot may be what you need.

How do you re - pot? Always trim away most of the dead roots before potting. I soak my media in a pail of water and use it wet when I pot. Another thing to remember is there is no way you are going to keep all the roots inside the pot! It is ok to let the roots grow out of the pot. I always like to tell people that orchids are in the pots for your benefit, not theirs. I am sure many of the potted orchids would be happier clinging to a large tree high above the jungle floor. If I have divided an orchid, I always dust the places I cut with sulphur. The sulphur helps avoid rot

GOOD GROWING