



Australian Native Orchid Society - Macarthur Group



JULY 2018

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

President: Mr. W. Southwell (Ph. 46818589)

Postal Address:- 20 Colo Street,

Secretary: Mr. R. Morrison

COURIDJAH. 2171

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

Next Meeting: THURSDAY, 16th August, 2018

Life Members: Mr. J. Riley, M. T. Cooke, and W. & M. Southwell, A. & C. Asquith. (J. English)

Conservation Officer:

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
Mt. ANNAN.**

**Should you wish to pay into our account for your fees
BSB 062517 A/C 00909929
Doors open 7.15pm, benching closes 7.55pm, meeting starts 8pm**

Hi to All

A big thank you to Tony for his presentation of books at the last meeting.

A great night for Tony and Carol to be honoured with life membership. Ross spoke on their service to the club over a very long period. Well done Tony and Carol.

Congratulations to Margaret for plant of the night and Terry for popular choice.

Thanks to Graeme for a good job as the returning officer for the elections.

The sellers licence application is still proceeding and hopefully will arrive before our next show at Oran Park.

Show Schedules for September show will be available at the next meeting.

Wally

Minutes of Meeting JULY 19/7/2018

General Meeting - 19 July 2018

8.10pm

Minutes of Meeting

Apologies: Terry Cooke, Phil Griffiths, Carol Asquith, Mary-Anne Warner, Don Roberts, Ian Lawson, Noel Bates.

Acceptance of Previous Minutes: Moved: Margaret Southwell Seconded: Graeme Morrison (Carried)

Business Arising: Discussion relating to table placings / spelling was bad.

Editors note: spelling was not the issue...rather the omission of some benching results)

Correspondence: Various newsletters

Treasurer's Report: as per the AGM plus one account for payment \$56 for T Asquith

Moved: Graeme Morrison Seconded: Margaret Southwell

General Business

- The Secretary provided a draft sales table sheet to members for comment. Discussion centred on the need for an additional column for indicating sold plants. Another draft to be presented next month.
- Licensing Update – the President highlighted the current requirements and need to indicate possible sales plants. All native plants for sales will need to be named and recorded. MANOS awaiting registration to be provided.
- Guest Speaker – Tony Asquith – presented on published orchid and plant books and the wealth of knowledge provided in books and on websites.
- The President acknowledged the tremendous contributions made to Macarthur ANOS by two members – Carol and Tony Asquith, who were duly awarded Life Membership.

Raffles
Meeting Closed at 9.10pm

Mike Morris, Wally Southwell, Chris Peterson

2018 Show Dates

Spring Show **22 September 2018**
October Show **27 October 2018**

Annual General Meeting - 19 July 2018 7.50pm

Minutes of Meeting

Apologies: Terry Cooke, Phil Griffiths, Carol Asquith, Mary-Anne Warner, Don Roberts, Ian Lawson, Noel Bates.

Acceptance of Previous AGM Minutes: Not presented

Business Arising: Nil

Correspondence pertaining to AGM: Nil

President's Report

A verbal report was provided to members. The President congratulated members on the growing and presentation of orchids at 2017/2018 shows and meetings. The President thanked members for their ongoing support of the club and the help they provided at meetings, shows and other club activities.

The President highlighted the ongoing challenges with the new licensing arrangements but believed things would be better understood in the near future.

Moved: Graeme Morrison

Seconded: Greg Steenbecke

Carried

Treasurer's Report

Tony Asquith delivered the Treasurer's report in Carol's absence.

Annual Income	\$2356.25
Annual Expenditure	\$2566.40
Current Balance	\$4395.00

Moved: Tony Asquith

Seconded: Margaret Southwell

Carried

Secretary's Report

The relieving secretary refrained from providing a report out of respect for our dear departed friend – John English

Elections

The President instated Graeme Morrison as returning officer. The returning officer declared all positions vacant and conducted the elections.

Position	Nominee	Moved	Seconded	
President	Wally Southwell	Tony Asquith	Ross Morrison	Carried
Vice President	Greg Steenbecke	Wally Southwell	Tony Asquith	Carried
Secretary	Ross Morrison	Wally Southwell	Greg Steenbecke	Carried
Treasurer	Carol Asquith	Tony Asquith	Ross Morrison	Carried
Editor	Tony Asquith	Marge Yabsley	Greg Steenbecke	Carried
Conservation Officer	Robert Moon	Greg Steenbecke	Ross Morrison	Carried
Show Marshalls	Terry Cooke Greg Steenbecke	Tony Asquith Ross Morrison	Robert Moon Robert Moon	Carried
Librarian	Margaret Southwell	Tony Asquith	Marge Yabsley	Carried
General Committee	Marge Yabsley Graeme Morrison Colin Long Peter Brown	Tony Asquith Wally Southwell Wally Southwell Margaret Southwell	Wally Southwell Tony Asquith Tony Asquith Tony Asquith	Carried

General Business

The President acknowledged the tremendous contributions made to Macarthur ANOS by two members – Carol and Tony Asquith, who were duly awarded Life Membership.

Both Carol and Tony Asquith became members of the organisation in March 1991. Tony took on the role of Editor in late 2004 a role he continues to successfully achieve in. Carol took on the role of Treasurer in August 2005 and continues to hold this position currently. Acclamation from all members was provided on the night.

Meeting Closed at 8.10pm

BENCHING RESULTS

Class	Place	Plant Name	Owner
Dendrobium species	1	Dendrobium lichenastrum	Marg & Wal Southwell
	2	Dendrobium lichenastrum	Ross Morrison
Dendrobium hybrid	1	Den Jonathon's Glory' Dark Joy' x (Aussie Angel x Kingrose)	Marg & Wal Southwell
	2	Den Lustrous 'Royal Flame' x Den speciosum (capi. X yeppon)	Marg & Wal Southwell
Sarcanthinae species	1	Sarc hirticalcar	Ross Morrison
Bulbophyllum	1	Bulbo shepherdii	Ross Morrison
	2	Bulbo macphersonii	Marg & Wal Southwell
Dockrillia hybrid	1	Dock Wamberal	Marg & Wal Southwell
	2	Dock Waverly x remosa	Ross Morrison
Australian species other	1	Phol imbricata	Marg & Wal Southwell
Pterostylis species	1	Pte ophioglossa	Terry Cooke
	2	Pte ophioglossa	Colin Long
Terrestrial species other	1	Corybas aconitiflorus	Terry Cooke
	2	Microtis parviflora	Mike Morris
Terrestrial hybrid	1	Pte aff. tenuicaude	Terry Cooke
	2	Pte aff. tenuicaude	Greg Steenbecke
Australasian hybrid	1	Den Aussie Pink	Marg & Wal Southwell
Seedling	1	Den Jesmond Sparkle x tetragonum 'gigi'	Greg Steenbecke
	2	Sarc Ozzy Dill	Ross Morrison
Growing Comp - Dockrillia	1		Carol Asquith
	2		Tony Asquith
Growing Comp - Dendrobium	1		Carol Asquith
	2		Tony Asquith
Judge's Choice	1	Dock Wamberal	Marg & Wal Southwell
Popular Choice	2	Pte ophioglossa	Terry Cooke

St. Ives Orchid Fair at St. Ives Showground will be held this coming weekend...Friday 17th to 19th August
This show is always worth a look.just take your money with you!!!See you there!!!!

Good growing..

A Discussion on Media for Epiphytic Orchids (updated version 2017) by Jim Brydie

From what I have seen on my travels, very few orchids grow in pots in nature - orchids grow on trees, on rocks, and in the ground. We put orchids in pots purely for our own convenience, which brings us to the need to provide a medium in the pot. It is impossible to reproduce an orchid's natural root environment in a pot or any other way but what we can do, in our artificial growing houses, is to provide a benign root environment with an appropriate balance of air, moisture, and mechanical support. Luckily for us, orchids are very adaptive little devils and most will take to our pot culture without too much fuss.

The balance of air and moisture in the pot seems to be the critical factor. They will all put up with being saturated temporarily when we water them but they need excess water to be shed pretty quickly. As the pot then dries out after watering, the medium needs to provide an airy but moist environment in which the roots can live and thrive. The need for moisture hardly needs explanation but keep in mind that air is an equal necessity. Roots are a living organ of the plant and they have to breathe as they work. In a well functioning medium, fresh air will be drawn into the pot as the medium dries out, and be exchanged evenly throughout the pot. There will be no stale pockets of air.

Different plants require different rates of drying out and it is this that we design into the various mixes we use. Any number of the commonly used potting materials will do the job provided that :

- you get the air/water balance within bounds acceptable to the plant concerned,
- you give the plant regular food and water,
- the mix provides a reasonable pH in which the roots can live and grow.

The latter point is very important. The recommended pH range for orchids is 6.0 to 6.5 as this optimizes the availability of the nutrient elements in the fertilizer you provide. Orchids will of course tolerate a much wider range of pH than this but some kinds of orchids are touchier than others in this regard. In my experience, the roots of some, like *Paphiopedilum* and some of the *Oncidiinae* (eg those that used to be called *Odontoglossum*), decline rapidly as the mix ages and I think this is because it gets too acid.

As I said above, many different combinations will serve adequately if other factors are right, but to improve on 'adequate' I think you need to focus on the root system. Roots are the key to maximizing growth. The bigger and more vigorous the root system, the bigger and more robust will be the rest of the plant. Fine tuning the potting medium is the way to maximize root growth and to do that you need options with your potting materials.

When you take your car to a garage for repairs you expect the mechanic to have a full set of whatever tools are necessary for the repair. Why then, do we think we can grow orchids to their potential if we only keep two kinds of bark in the potting shed. For any reasonably sized, mixed orchid collection, the range of environmental needs will be far too wide for any medium to suit all. It is my contention that we need more tools in our shed than that.

There are 4 basic potting medium components that I recommend you keep on hand. These are bark, sphagnum moss, perlite (with peat moss or coco-peat), and coconut fibre. Each has different characteristics and its own strengths and weaknesses. There are a range of other materials that are useful, such as styrene foam, pebbles, sand, etc) but I consider these fringe additives as opposed to major components and I am sure you can succeed without them.

The challenge in a mixed collection is that the plants are usually all jammed together. Watering often takes place for all at the same time regardless of the needs of some plants for different moisture requirements and different drying times. Some differences can be accommodated through choice of microclimates in your growing area. eg hanging plants higher, placing them in the bright end versus the shady end, or nearer the fan etc, but beyond that, adjusting the potting medium gives us a mechanism that can have a multiplier effect on microclimate differences.

1 – Bark - Bark is readily available, relatively cheap, and comes conveniently graded by the size of the bark pieces. One brand calls the bark fine, medium, or coarse, another by approximate particle size in millimetres. There are also more specialised mixes such as Miscellaneous Mix (a combination of sizes and components perfect for natives) and Cymbidium Mix (in its various brands and forms) . Some of the bark quality isn't what it was 20 years ago but it is still a very useful medium. I use medium and coarse barks for Laelias, Cattleyas, Vandaceous, and other coarse rooted, dryer growers, and a blended mix of sizes and components for more general miscellaneous orchids. **medium bark (coins are 5,10,20cents) ►**



With bark, the pH in the pot can be a serious factor. It will usually start out around pH6, which is good for most orchids, but can eventually sink down to as low 3.5 to 4. The pH getting lower and lower is associated with the decay of the bark as it composts in the pot and is often exacerbated by watering too heavily. In overly wet conditions the bark can tend to go off fairly quickly, staying wetter and wetter after each watering, and the orchid may need repotting after as little as 1 or 2 years. However, judicious use of a little garden lime or dolomite, sprinkled over the top of the mix once a year, can extend the life of bark in the pot, and aid in balancing the pH. Just make sure you don't overdo it. A teaspoon of garden lime/dolomite sprinkled onto a 15cm pot is all you need.

When you use bark, make sure you feed the plants regularly and watch the wetness of the pot. If they look too wet they probably are, so either try to water less often or place the plants where they will dry out more quickly.

2 - Sphagnum Moss - Sphagnum Moss is an amazing medium. It has terrific remedial properties for sick plants and there is nothing better for striking backbulbs and divisions. It can be obtained as live moss, or in dried compressed blocks, and both work well. The dried product keeps well and the amount you need can be rehydrated as needed. Every grower should have at least a small supply available. Even for healthy plants it is a very good medium in its own right but like all media, it has its drawbacks. It is expensive and it is getting harder and harder to obtain good quality moss. Good moss lasts about 12 months in the pot but less if it gets regular fertilizer. Once the sphagnum moss has "gone off", you need to get the plant out of it quickly because all of its positive qualities are reversed and roots quickly die.



3 - Peat and Perlite ("P&P") - Perlite is an expanded volcanic glass that is completely inert & pH neutral. The perlite most growers use comes from Chillagoe in Queensland and comes graded in particle sizes called "coarse", "super coarse", and "jumbo", where jumbo is the largest (particles up to at about pea size). Perlite on its own doesn't provide any organic interchange buffer for fertilizer and once it starts to dry out, perlite by itself goes from moist to dry very quickly. It is usually used in combination with medium Lithuanian peat moss, to provide the organic ion interchange. The basic formula most people use is 1 part peat to about 5 or 6 parts jumbo perlite. I have experimented with ratios of 12, 16, and then 20:1 but I concluded that it doesn't work properly with less and less peat. **different grades of peat ►**



P & P mixes are very stable. The perlite is inert and the peat has already reached a point of almost nil decay over thousands of years in the ground. The combination has a slightly acid pH around 6.0 (perfect for most orchids) and lasts virtually forever. However, you still need to repot relatively regularly because plants outgrow pots and because dead roots eventually accumulate in the pot and need to be cleaned out.



Be Aware – peat and perlite mixes are generally wetter than fresh bark mixes. Some growers have tried it and rejected it because it works differently to other media and growers can have a problem if they use a wide range of media for different orchids and water everything together. Reduce your overall watering for best results. Varying the P : P ratio, choosing the grade of perlite you use, adding styrene foam, and/or mixing perlite grades together, can also give you some control over how quickly the mix dries. I use P&P mainly for Pleurothallids, Dendrochilums, some Dendrobiums, and a few others.

4 - Coconut Fibre - Although commercial nurseries here and overseas have been using it for quite a few years, coconut fibre is a relatively new medium to most of us. It obviously has great potential. As a medium it is long lasting, slow to bio-degrade, and depending on the brand and the washing process, has a pH of about 6.0 – 6.5. The material comprises two natural materials which form the husk of the coconut. A coarse, stiff, woody, thread like material we call coir, which is the same fibre used to make coir doormats etc, and a peat like material that fills the spaces between the coir fibres. Sort of like an insulator and moisture absorber.



The commercial orchid potting material, is basically the chopped up fibrous husk off coconuts, a byproduct of the copra production plantations in India and Sri Lanka among other places. It comes in dried, compressed blocks of more or less cubed chunks, pre-cut into specific sizes to different grades of fineness. There are

various brands available - one used to be available from Bunnings hardware stores but I am not sure that source is still available. I believe that Ray Clement's 'Tinonee Orchids' still markets another type.

The material needs to be soaked and rinsed before you use it. Stories are told that some supplies are contaminated with sea salt from the discarded coconut husks being stored too close to the ocean before they are processed and compressed for horticultural use. I don't know if this is true, but I heed the need to wash and rinse.

To prepare the material for use, I soak a **half a dried compressed block** in a garbage bin for 3 or 4 days to let it stew, then tip it out into foam boxes fitted with a couple of layers of shade cloth in the bottom. A half a block fills 2 foam boxes after soaking. I then give the boxes a thorough rinse with a hose to wash out any salts released by the soak. Be careful when you rinse it however. All these coconut fibre products include a significant proportion of the fine peaty material and you need to retain a decent proportion of these fines as an integral part of the mix. If you remove too much of the fines by washing or sieving, the mix dries faster than is practical for most orchids and doesn't retain sufficient water. A dry mix can be a useful trick for one or two oddball orchids, but it isn't suitable for most.

As with bark and perlite mediums, you can adjust the moisture content of your coconut fibre potting medium by choosing the coarse or fine grades, reducing the peaty component, or by adding other components like styrene foam. I experimented with various mixes of fine, medium, and coarse coco-fibre, added perlite, and added styrene foam. I was very impressed with results in the first 6 months or so but after that I began to experience rots killing off some plants and others just suddenly stopping their forward progress. I am not sure why, but I think part of the problem was that the finer, peaty materials may have wash out from between the coir strands and accumulated in the bottom of the pot, creating a bog zone, which would have resulted in root decline.

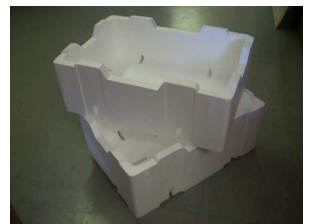
At present, I have cut back my use of coco-fibre to using it as an additive to some of my specialist mixes to purposely retain a little more moisture – such as for Paphs. However, I know that many nurseries and other growers are still getting excellent results in coco-fibre dominant mixes so the problem may just be the way in which I was using it.

Fringe Materials - As I mentioned earlier, there are dozens of side components that experienced growers use as additives or even as major components. For example: shellgrit, charcoal, fly-ash, pebbles or stones, wine corks, crumbled cork. Over the years, I have tried just about all of them as each wave of "new discovery" swept the orchid grower world. I probably still have half bags of some of the stuff stashed away in the shed somewhere.

Many are useful, and have their place, but none are the new magic potting material that they were once thought to be. However, there is one 'side material' I do use in nearly every blend, and that is crumbled styrene foam. I use it in quantities from 10% to 25% in nearly every combination and I am convinced it provides a substantial positive benefit - mainly in improving drainage and air content in the pot.

However, before you rush off to smash up one of those white foam boxes you carry your plants in, or to buy a bag of bean bag balls, let me stress that there are many types of styrene foam. The boxes we all use are very dense, strong foam and unsuitable for this purpose, nor do I like bean bag balls. Their perfect roundness makes them too hard to blend with other components and they seem to have a hardened surface that repels water.

The foam I use is the softer more easily crumbled type that is often used as packing material in glassware, or electrical equipment. However, even this more easily crumbled type of foam can vary a lot. I search out the types made from 'larger' rather than 'finer' bubbles of styrene, and that can be fairly easily broken up by hand, or shredded on something like a cheese grater etc.



Sheets of soft, coarse foam ▲

Electrostatic attraction is somewhat of a problem when handling styrene foam, or when smashing up blocks or sheets of styrene, but this can be managed reasonably if you do it directly into a tub of whatever bark or potting mix you are adding it to. The mix needs to be moist and you need to keep mixing the foam into the moist mix as you shred or crumble the styrene. Just take your time.

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