



Australian Native Orchid Society - Macarthur Group



NOVEMBER 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, 20th December, 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

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newsletter

Venue: BIRRAWA HALL **Should you wish to pay into our account for your fees**
FITZPATRICK ROAD **BSB 062517 A/C 00909929**
Mt. ANNAN. **Doors open 7.15pm, benching closes 7.55pm, meeting starts**
8pm

Hi to All

A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all, a wonderful time of the year and Santa will bring us lots of presents.

Congratulations to Colin for plant of the night and popular choice.

This month is our Christmas Party function, so come along, have some fun and don't forget the monster hamper raffle on the night.

Tuber sale night will now be held in January, so any spare or extra tuber for this night will be appreciated.

Starting in January next year the meeting night will be the 3rd **TUESDAY** of the month.

Wally

General Meeting – 15 November 2018 7.55 pm

Minutes of Meeting

The Chair – Wally welcomed everyone to the November meeting.

Apologies: Terry Cooke, Noel Bates.

Acceptance of Previous Minutes: Moved: Gordon Bush Seconded: Graeme Morrison **Carried**

Business Arising: The Secretary has contacted ANOS Inc to have the Macarthur Group address changed in the Orchadian. ANOS Inc has advised the Secretary of our non-subscription status. Secretary to rectify for next meeting.

Correspondence: Nil

Treasurer's Report: Various income and expenditure was noted - Balance - \$3631.51
Moved: Carol Asquith Seconded: Mary-Anne Warner **Carried**

General Business

- Sales table monies from October Show was distributed
- October Show sashes were presented by the President to –
 Don Roberts Champion Sarcanthanae Species collected by Mary-Anne Warner
 Noel Bates Champion Sarcanthanae Seedling collected by Mary-Anne Warner
 Greg Steenbeeke Champion Orchid Other, Champion Sarcanthanae Hybrid, Reserve Champion of Show,
 Grand Champion of Show
 Note: Clover Bradley Champion Specimen Orchid – was presented at the show.
- Kim Hines was belatedly presented with Aub Brundiges – Champion Speciosum Trophy from the Spring Show.

- Tuber Night has been held over to January meeting – 15 January 2019.
- 2019 Meeting Nights need to be changed to the 3rd Tuesday of each month due to the availability of the hall.

Motion: Macarthur and District ANOS group meeting to held the 3rd Tuesday of each month beginning January 2019.

Moved: Margaret Southwell Seconded: Ralph Martin

Carried

- Christmas Party will occur at the next meeting – everyone to bring a plate.
- Soft Wood offcuts available – take as needed.
- Budget Concerns– the President presented a draft 2019 budget (see TAB A) highlighting a possible loss of \$914 and the non-sustainability of the club in the long term unless this was addressed. Following a lengthy discussion , it was decided to review possible suggestions (see TAB B) to alleviate the situation with a motion to be put forward at February’s meeting.
- Draft – 2019 Sarcophilus Schedule to be presented at the February meeting for ratification
- The Secretary highlighted that the October Show had 10 exhibitors – all of which received a first or second place certificate. Well done.

Benching Results Class	Place	Plant Name	Owner
Dendrobium species	1	Dendrobium fleckerii	Ross Morrison
	2	Dendrobium prentici	Margaret and Wally Southwell
Dendrobium hybrid	1	Den. Gillian Leaney	Margaret and Wally Southwell
Sarcophilus species	1	Sarc. hartmannii	Ross Morrison
	2	Sarc. hartmannii ‘Marjory’	Ross Morrison
Sarcophilus hybrid	1	Sarc. Elizabeth	Ross Morrison
	2	Sarc. Kulnura Sanctuary x Smoothie	Chris Paterson
Rhizobium species	1	Dock. hepatica	Margaret and Wally Southwell
Australian Species Other	1	Cym. sauve	Colin Long
	2	Cym. maddidum	Margaret and Wally Southwell
Diuris species	1	Diuris parvipetala	Greg Steenbeeke
Terrestrial species other	1	Microtis punifolia	Greg Steenbeeke
	2	Microtis parviflora	Margaret and Wally Southwell
Seedling	1	Sarc. Nabiac x Elegance	Ross Morrison
	2	Plecto. Orkology Jade	Greg Steenbeeke
Novelty	1	Sartylis Blue Knob	Greg Steenbeeke
Judge’s Choice		Cym. sauve	Colin Long
Popular Choice		Cym. sauve	Colin Long

Raffles - Margaret Southwell, Tony Asquith, Julia Bismare.

Meeting Closed at 9.00 pm

HOW OUR HOBBY GREW by Brian Milligan

Over a hundred years ago an English orchid grower, Frederick Boyle, wrote a book called 'About Orchids : A Chat'. He described the way in which various orchid species were collected around the world and imported into Britain. Boyle's aim was to dispel the myth that orchids were incredibly expensive and difficult to grow. He pointed out that orchid prices had fallen because sailing ships were being replaced with modern steamships, and that orchid growing was no longer the preserve of the aristocracy and the fabulously wealthy. Of course, it helped if you were rich!

Although man-made hybrids were known in Boyle's day, they were not commonly available until the development of sterile culture seed-raising techniques (flasking) in the 1920s. Most of the readily available orchids a hundred years ago were species or natural hybrids. Even so, it was estimated that there were 1500-2000 species (including varieties) in cultivation at that time. Boyle remarked that this was "a startling figure, which almost justifies the belief of those who hold that no others worth growing will be found in countries already explored". We now believe that there are between 20,000 and 30,000 orchid species throughout the world.

In 1893 the big nurserymen, such as Rollinson in Twickenham, Veitch in Chelsea and Low in Clapton, were major suppliers of species orchids in London. But the best bargains could be obtained at the auction rooms of Stevens or Protheroe & Morris. It was there that shipments of orchids, freshly arrived from overseas, were sold. Boyle's list of those present at an auction included "a duke,...some clergymen, gentry of every rank, the recognised agents of great cultivators, and of course, the representatives of the large trading firms". He observed that orchids "sell best in Spring, when they have months of light and sun before them in which to recover from the effects of a long voyage and uncomfortable quarters...The buyer must make them grow strong before the dark days of an English Winter are upon him; and every month that passes weakens his chances".

The first large shipments of orchids introduced to Britain were imported by the Royal Horticultural Society. Wealthy amateurs, such as the sixth Duke of Devonshire, followed suit and then the big nurseries, realising there was big money to be made. These nurseries employed "travellers" (collectors), whom they sent to almost every part of the world. It was a risky business – financially to the nurserymen, personally to the collectors. Even if the collector managed to escape being killed by a tiger, speared by a native, or bitten by a snake, his greatest danger was probably being bitten by a mosquito! There were no inoculations against yellow fever, typhoid, cholera etc., and in Boyle's words "the fever, of various sorts, comes as regularly as Sunday" to the collector. Among Sander's collectors, Falkenberg perished at Panama, Klaboeh in Mexico, Schroeder in Sierra Leone, Arnold on the Orinoco (Venezuela), Digance in Brazil, Brown in Madagascar and Endres at Rio Hacha. Even more unfortunate, perhaps, was the collector sent to Madagascar to find birds and butterflies. He shot at a native idol, and was promptly soaked in oil by the priests and barbecued on their altar!

Some idea of the difficulties and costs involved can be gained from Boyle's description of the importation of *Odontoglossum crispum* from Colombia. "Those who seek her make Bogota their headquarters". To reach the desired broad-petalled variety the collectors then had to make his way ten days to the south along mule tracks. He then "hired" a tract of mountain clothed with timber, presumably from the local chief. Next he hired

"natives, 20, 50 or 100 as circumstances advise", and set them to cut down all the trees, while he built a wooden stage on which to sort and dry the orchids. Each large tree held up to five plants of *Odontoglossum crispum* and up to fifty "comparatively worthless" plants of the related *Odontoglossum gloriosum*. Neither the natives, nor the collectors, would climb the trees to collect the orchids, because the trees were home to millions of stinging ants!

When the plants had been cleaned and dried, they were fastened to sticks with copper wire, and these sticks were then nailed across wooden boxes for transport. It was known that if plants were to travel well, they had to be kept separate and dry, otherwise they would rot. The boxes were then loaded onto mules, which took ten days to return to Bogota, and then a further six days to reach Honda on the River Magdalena. Next the boxes were transferred to the deck of a flat-bottomed steamboat for the seven-day trip to Savanilla on the coast. During this trip the boxes were covered with blankets, which were kept continually wet in an effort to keep the plants cool. Finally the boxes were loaded onto a Royal Mail steamer for the long voyage back to Britain.

No wonder orchids were expensive! And who are we to criticise the South Americans for cutting down their forests today? As Boyle wrote “If we estimate that a good tree has been felled for every three scraps of *Odontoglossum* which are now established in Europe, that will be no exaggeration. And for many years past they have been arriving by hundreds of thousands annually!”

Plant losses during transport were expected to be high. Boyle described the reaction of Mr. Sander, the nurseryman, when 40,000 plants of *Miltoniopsis vexillarius* arrived in London – “he hugged himself with delight when 3000 proved to have trace of vitality”. He could probably have turned a profit if only 300 had survived. By contrast, Roezl was almost ruined when only two plants survived out of a shipment of 27,000 plants of *Masdevallia schlimii*. Each of these plants sold at auction for 40 guineas, but the cost of sea freight alone on big shipments was in the order of £500.

Fortunately, the advent of efficient means of raising both species and hybrid orchids from seed gradually reduced the demand for wild-collected plants. And more recently, the introduction of restrictions by CITES has halted the export of species from most countries. Many species, raised from seed are now available from Australian nurseries. In most instances, because they have been bred from selected parents, they will have larger and more colourful flowers than the average bush-collected species.

GROWING ORCHIDS ON MOUNTS by Brian Milligan

Most of the epiphytic orchid species in our collections grow in nature with their roots partly or fully attached to tree branches or trunks. Why then, do we try to grow them in pots? Mainly for convenience – most orchids on mounts need to be watered daily during their growing season, whereas those in pots may be left for two or three days between waterings in summer and for a week or two in winter before they need to be watered again. But there are disadvantages in trying to grow some species orchids in pots; it's very easy to rot their roots by keeping the potting mix too wet, especially when the orchids in its natural dormant season and its roots are incapable of transferring the moisture to the rest of the plant. Those species with long dormant periods, such as *barkerias*, *Encyclia citrina*, *Laelia speciosa* and some *oncidiums*, grow much better on mounts; cultivation in pots often leads to slow decline unless great care is taken to water only when absolutely necessary.

Tree branches are the natural hosts for many orchids, so it seems logical to use tree branches for mounts. In nature, however, many orchid species prefer particular tree species and it follows that these orchids may not do as well on some mounts as they do on others. Unfortunately in many instances, especially with exotic species, the natural host is unprocurable here in Australia, so we must make do with branches from our common garden trees. Generally the branches of rough-barked hardwood trees, such as oak, casuarina, peach, apricot etc., are most suitable. Orchid roots seem to cling better to rough bark than to smooth, and rot-resistant hardwood is more durable than many softwoods, such as pine. Unfortunately no timber mount lasts forever and eventually the orchid will need to be remounted when the mount sheds its bark, rots or is attacked by borers or other insects. Some growers dip their mounts periodically in insecticide solution to deter insect attack.

Alternatives to tree branch mounts include natural cork (the bark of cork oak trees grown specifically for producing cork, mainly in Portugal) and old (weathered) hardwood fence palings. All of the above mounts dry out quite rapidly and need watering daily during most of summer – even more often on very hot days. Some growers prefer to use tree fern mounts (aged, black material is best), because it retains more moisture and therefore needs watering a little less often. However, in my experience orchids mounted on tree fern do well only for a few years before they begin to decline. This behaviour is generally attributed to the development of acidity in the mount. Some growers dip their tree fern mounts periodically in lime solution to counteract it. Perhaps I should have applied the lime treatment earlier or more frequently because I've never had much success in resurrecting sick orchids mounted on tree fern in this way.

Many alternatives to timber, cork or tree fern mounts have been tried as orchid mounts. Examples include slate, sandstone, upturned terra cotta pots and terra cotta agricultural pipes. One ploy to avoid the need for frequent watering is to mount the orchid on a terra cotta pipe blocked at one end by a suitable plug. The pipe is then hung from the shade-house roof and (during the summer months) filled with water. Slow diffusion of water through the porous pipe keeps the orchid's roots damp and also helps to maintain a more humid environment. I've seen this method used for growing the Australian thumb-nail orchid, *Dockrillia linguiformis*, but don't know how well it works in the long term.

A recent innovation, which I first heard of about a year ago, is the use of recycled rubber floor matting for orchid mounts. These mats are made of shredded car tyre rubber which has been bonded together to form a water-permeable mesh about 12 mm thick. The matting holds a lot of water when first wet but drains and dries quickly because none is absorbed by the rubber itself. These mats are not cheap (about as expensive as natural cork) but have the advantage that they should be almost indestructible, being resistant both to decay and to attack by insect pests. Mounts can be cut to size with a pruning saw and drilled like tree branches to attach wire hangers. They have a very coarse surface, to which most orchid roots readily attach themselves. Orchids growing successfully for me on rubber mounts include *Dendrobium*

Ioddigesii, *D. schneiderae*, *Maxillaria sophronites*, *Encyclia polybulbon*, *Baptistonia echinata*, *Zygostates grandiflora* and *Polystachya pubescens*.

When tying orchids to mounts, it's important that the plant be secured firmly so that the developing root tips are not damaged when the plant is moved during handling or by wind. The plant should always be placed directly on the mount, never with a layer of moss between the two. A thin layer of moss may be placed over the roots to conserve moisture but the new roots seem to attach themselves faster to the mount if no moss is used (assuming that you can water the plant daily).

Nylon fishing line is often used to secure an orchid to its mount. It must be pulled tight enough to fasten the plant to its mount firmly but not so tight as to cut the pseudobulbs or roots. Copper wire is sometimes used for large plants. I prefer to use plastic-covered wire because it is less likely to damage the plant, even when pulled tight. Yes, I agree that it's unsightly, but it can be removed within a year or two, as soon as the roots have taken a good hold of the mount. If you are unable to water your mounted orchids often enough to maintain good growth, try placing their mounts on the bench rather than hanging them. Hanging mounts seem to dry out twice as rapidly as those lying flat. Mounted orchids are best fertilised by dipping the entire mount in a dilute solution of liquid fertiliser. I dip my mounts in a very weak solution stored in a 40-litre plastic bin in my glasshouse on most days during the growing season.