



# Australian Native Orchid Society - Macarthur Group

JANUARY 2024

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**Secretary:** Mr. R. Morrison

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

**Next Meeting: 16th JANUARY, 2024**

**Life Members:** W. & M. Southwell, A. & C. Asquith & R. Morrison, M. Yabsley.

**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**

**Should you wish to pay into our account for your fees**

**FITZPATRICK ROAD**

**BSB 062517 A/C 00909929**

**Mt. ANNAN.**

**Doors open 7.00pm, benching closes 7.55pm, meeting starts 8pm**

Hi to All

A happy new year to all, and looking forward to a great year to come.

Congratulations to Mike Harrison on the presentation of the trophy for champion monthly table showing. A well deserved award for continuous showing of a great range of plants every month.

What a great night at the December Xmas party with a good time had by all.

Good Growing  
Wally

**VALE Elaine Wise....**I'm sad to advise that Peter Wise lost his wife last week.. I'm sure members will join with me in extending our sincere sympathies to Peter and his Family.

## 2024 Meeting Dates

16 January	20 February	19 March
16 April	21 May	18 June
16 July	20 August	17 September
15 October	19 November	17 December

**Just a short newsletter this month. Obviously, no minutes to publish. I hope everybody has had a terrific Christmas and will have a happy and healthy 2024!! Please don't forget our tuber night.**

**Just a short note ...Our Christmas Hampers were really great this year (Except Carol and I never won the big one!!) The hampers cost was quite low this year as donations from members was terrific and didn't require purchases to top up the items in the hamper...well done to all!!**

**Our meeting generally has a tuber night in January...however, Ross has advised that to date, he has not received expected tubers yet so it might be a small sales night for the tuber sale!..**

Hi everybody....I have been trying to find an article for the newsletter....gets harder each year...

I came across a really good article in three parts located in NOSSA website..

NOSSA .... Native Orchid Society of South Australia.

Written by Brendan Killen called "Rescuing apparently 'dead' Orchids. Lots of terrific photos to support the article...

HAVE A LOOK AT IT!!

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## Dendrobium Orchids - Hard Cane

**One of the main ingredients for growing good Dendrobiums is plenty of air movement. If you can achieve this you are half way there.**

**Housing** Your orchid house will require 70% shade cloth with a solar weave or fibreglass roof. A gravel floor dampened down 3 times a day in summer will provide good humidity. All my larger plants (90mm pots) are hung up to stop them from falling over also maximising airflow. During June, July and August cover the south and west walls with solar weave to stop the cold southwest and westerly winds. The reason for the roof come to the fore during winter, it stops the cold rain and drizzle from getting on your plants.

**Pests and Diseases** I use Supracide and Cabaryl, these are compatible and will control all sucking and chewing insects. Apply end of October/November when new growths are away, and again early March-just before buds start to open. From mid May to the beginning of spring I use 1 gram of Octave plus 2 grams of Mancozeb per litre of water to control Anthraenose = Colletotrichum/Glomerella which causes terrible leaf drop. This was recommended to me by the DPI after submitting affected leaves. I use this brew about 2 or 3 times during this period. Through the flowering season control flower spotting (Botryitis) by keeping the floor dry and clean and spray with a pool algacide e.g. Guardex. Spray plants and flowers with non staining Rovril every 3 to 4 weeks depending on weather conditions. I do not recommend spraying plants with Guardex.

**Watering** One of the main ingredients for growing good Dendrobiums is plenty of air movement. If you can achieve this you are half way there. In winter water early morning, only on clear sunny days every ten to fourteen days. During September to November water once or twice per week and November to mid March 2 to 3 times per week.

Now that you have grown and flowered you prize Dendrobiums you will want to win first prize on the show bench. Try to train flower spikes by facing them to the north. Always display racemes to their best advantage and make sure you separate multi racemes with a styrene wedge. Phalaenanthe Dendrobiums look best in their natural arching growth habit. If staking is required then stake in this manner. A well-displayed plant will always have a far greater chance of winning.

**Fertilizer.** Use at manufactures recommended strength. September fortnightly with high Nitrogen. October till end of December weekly with high Nitrogen. January till mid February weekly alternating between high Nitrogen and low Nitrogen. This will harden up the canes and help with flower production. Mid February to mid April weekly low Nitrogen. May through to early September every 3 weeks with low Nitrogen.

**Pots and Potting Mix.** Medium size bark or bark and charcoal and super course perlite may be used. Pot size Plants straight from community pots should be potted into 50mm tubes using a fine mix. They should stay there for 2 years before being repotting into 75mm – 90mm pots. Repot in early spring keeping pot size to a minimum.

These notes have been used at our Cultural and New Grower's Meetings. They are from various sources and we thank the authors. All articles are supplied in good faith and the Bribie Island Orchid Society and its members will not be held responsible for any loss or damage.

**Just an article on general orchid growing**

## **The Art of Maintaining Root Systems**

Some orchids produce massive root systems easily such as Cymbidium and Zygopetalum, others such as Paphiopedilum and Miltoniopsis don't. Producing a good root system starts with the germination of the seedlings, or the beginning of the meristem process, in flask. You can produce good plants in flask without any root system simply by omitting the hormones and chemicals that initiate root development. This is normally done where the combination of growing and rooting hormones retard top growth as in the tissue culture of Eucalyptus species, then two separate growth media are used, one to promote top growth and one to produce roots. After the plants have produced the required amount of roots, they are then deflasked and grown in a propagation area. This system can also be used for orchids as it is easier to work with them in flask at the early stages of development if they have little or no roots. They are then transferred to a medium containing the hormones needed for root development before being deflasked.

Plants coming out of flask without a good active root system are much harder to establish and losses could be high - hence the deflasking problems many growers suffer. Some growers say the roots produced in flask do not continue to grow once deflasked into a growing medium like bark or sphagnum, however, I do not find this to be true. Roots produced in flask do continue to grow if treated properly. As well, the plant then produces more roots as they harden off. Treating plantlets with hormones/chemicals such as "Best Grow" and "Nu Farm Growth Formula" when deflasking, assist in the retention of existing roots and the quick production of new roots. **These chemicals MUST NOT BE USED AT A STRONGER RATE OR MORE OFTEN THAN RECOMMENDED.** You will only succeed in producing stunted useless plants with huge root systems. Care should also be taken when using these products on larger flowering plants as the side effects can cause loss of flowers, etc. (see Australian Orchid Review, December 1995, page 21). Remember to use your personal protection gear when using chemicals. Treat them all as potential hazards. Selection of the growing medium for the plant's life from seedling to adult and beyond is crucial. Without a good active root system to hold the plant firm in its pot and to gather food and water, your plants will not perform to their optimum.

### **THE BASICS -- PURCHASING PLANTS**

**Flasks:** Look for a good balance between top growth and roots. Don't look for plants that have reached the top of the flask as these could have run out of nutrients and may be harder to establish. Also, the moisture congregates on the inside of the lid and any leaves against the lid will be growing "under water" and normally die off after deflasking, leaving dead tissue for you to cut off risking infection through an open cut. Select plants about two thirds of the height of the flask.

**Small Plants:** Seedlings or mericlones - look for well-established, well-grown plants that are firm in their pots. This normally means a good root system. When you get the plant home, gently slide it out of the pot and check the growing medium and the roots for health and pests. Repot into your preferred potting medium or slide back into the original pot.

**Larger Plants:** Look for live root tips and a good open potting medium. As soon as the weather permits (your normal potting time), repot into your preferred potting medium. After potting, a treatment of either of the products mentioned earlier (ONLY ONCE) will ensure the minimum of stress to the plant(s).

### **YOUR OWN COLLECTION**

**Small Plants:** The same as above - don't be frightened to slide plants out of pots to check the medium and roots. If you can't get the plant back into the pot, simply pot into a larger pot it evidently needs. This can be done nearly all year. Regular potting of small plants, even every six months, is beneficial. The plants seem to respond and enjoy the fresh growing medium.

**Larger Plants:** Repot every two years. Every twelve months remove the top inch of medium and sprinkle a little Blood and Bone, then top off with new potting medium. Select your growing medium with care (see growing medium next paragraph) and if you suspect a problem is occurring, take the plant out of its pot and check. Some orchids such as Paphiopedilum, Miltoniopsis, Disa and all terrestrials should be potted every year.

**GROWING MEDIUM** This is where your own cultural practices dictate the type and size of the product you use to pot your orchid into. The amount and quality of water, the type of house, be it shadecloth, fibreglass roof with shadecloth side or totally enclosed glass/fibreglass, the amount of air movement and fertilizer are all factors that place demands on your potting medium. Other factors such as very cold frosts also dictate the type of potting medium. Don't put your plants into a mix that will hold a lot of moisture if you get severe frosts. That moisture will freeze killing the plants' root system. After some 30 years of growing orchids and trialling many potting media and additives, I still return to good composted bark. There is nothing better for a mixed genera collection. In specialist situations and with good quality water, you can use other mediums successfully.

**Selection of the Potting Medium:** This, as stated previously, must be in conjunction with your own personal cultural practices. Choose a grade of bark that will meet the following criteria. You should do a set of trials using the same plants in the same type and size of pots in different grades of bark

- (1) The bark will last for two years
- (2) The roots are attracted into the bark
- (3) The bark drains quickly
- (4) The bark retains a coating of moisture
- (5) There is ample air space between the pieces
- (6) The pH of the bark is compatible with the type of orchid to be grown in it (fertilizer uptake is restricted if the pH is not correct)
- (7) The bark comes in the correct sizes for your usage - Fine, Medium, Coarse and Extra Coarse.
- (8) The bark is rough so it does not pack down over a period of time.

**Preparation of The Bark:** If the bark is already composted, as in Debco, a little Blood and Bone mixed into the moist bark and left for 3 to 4 days will suffice or you can use it straight from the bag. If the bark is fresh, it should be treated with a combination for fertilizers, moistened, mixed several times over a period of several weeks before use. It should have a good earthy fragrance, not a pine fragrance.

**POTTING:** The bark should be moist, **NOT WET**, when you pot with it. After potting, a soaking with either "Best Grow" or "Nu Farm Growth Formula" will be beneficial in reducing the stress on the plant and ensuring the roots get away quickly to hold the plant firmly and begin to feed the plant. Selection of the pot is important. **DO NOT OVERPOT**, select a size that will give your plant two years growth. Remember, clay pots dry out faster than plastic pots, so take this into consideration when selecting a potting mix. You may have to use a finer mix so the plants don't dry out too quickly. If you are a heavy waterer, clay pots might be the right option.

**Retention of a Good Active Root System:** If you have followed a similar program to the one I have outlined, you shouldn't have any problems. If not, then why not try changing a few of your plants to see if you can improve them and make sure they are "doing their best" for you. If they grow and perform better, change the rest over. Remember, unless they have a good root system under them, they will not perform to their optimum.

#### **HELPFUL HINTS:**

- (1) Select a medium that will last two years.

- (2) Select the right grade to suit your culture and the plant.
- (3) Larger pieces can be used in the base of the pot to add to the drainage.
- (4) The only additive other than fertilizer, I suggest is styrene foam
- (5) The bark must drain freely.
- (6) Ensure the bark is properly treated and not too fresh so the roots will be attracted to it.
- (7) An application if either of the two products mentioned is beneficial.
- (8) Use the correct type of fertilizers, totally chelated forms are recommended.
- (9) Remember, organic fertilizers are beneficial from time to time but constant use can break bark down quickly.
- (10) Flood the pots regularly with water to remove stale air from between the bark and replace with fresh air containing oxygen.
- (11) Check your root systems regularly at least twice per year

**Good Growing. John Woolf (Toowoomba)**

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**As you can see, both articles are from Bribie Island Orchid Society's Website**

**Good Growing all**