

*AUSTRALASIAN NATIVE ORCHID
SOCIETY
GEELONG GROUP INC.*

Reg. No A0014062S

BULLETIN NUMBER 237

MAY 2009

The Australasian Native Orchid Society promotes the conservation of Native Orchids through cultivation and through preservation of their natural habitat.

ALL NATIVE ORCHIDS ARE PROTECTED IN THE WILD; THEIR COLLECTION IS ILLEGAL

President	Frances Wilde 15 William Rd Little River 3211 Phone: 03 5283 1364
Vice President and Editor	Neil Anderton 03 52815382 anderton@aanet.com.au
Secretary	Peter Kiernan 2 Cooper St Melton South 3338 Phone: 03 9743 6040
Treasurer	Eric Wilde 15 William Rd Little River 3211
Committee	Everett Foster OAM Winston Huggins
Immediate Past President	Kevin Cummins



Thelymitra Xmerraniae

MAY MEETING

Where: Uniting Church Hall, Moorabool St South Geelong
When: Wednesday May 13, 7.30 p.m.
Speaker: Mike Duncan
Subject: Around the World in 80 Orchids

JUNE MEETING

At the meeting on Wednesday June 10, Keith Risely will be speaking on epiphytes.

COMMITTEE MEETING

The meeting of the committee on Monday June 1 will be at 15 William Rd, Little River, commencing at 10:30 a.m.

WEBSITE: ANOS Victoria and Geelong Website: www.anosvic.org.au

ANOS Geelong Group Inc. takes no responsibility for any loss or damage that may be caused by the use of any products or information that is mentioned in this Bulletin. Always seek a second opinion and/or professional advice

April Meeting

Syllabus Item Presented by Colin Rowan

Some Orchids of New South Wales

Since Colin and Mischa's daughter moved to Sydney, trips up and down the Hume highway became a frequent occurrence – usually a four day trip, including 2 days of travelling.

Since they retired, these trips have been taking considerably longer, with many a detour on the way to look for orchids. Colin led us through a delightful slideshow of orchids, many of which are not found in Victoria.

The main areas covered were the Snowy Mountains, Blue Mountains and Barrington Tops (about 120 km north of Newcastle).

Starting in January in the Snowy Mountains, two yellow orchids growing in this area are *Diuris subalpina* and the slightly larger *D. monticola*. Although the flowers are very similar, *D. subalpina* can be identified fairly easily as it only has two leaves.



Diuris country

crassicaulis although if they had turned left rather than right at the start the walk would have only been a few hundred metres.



Diuris Subalpina
Small Snake Orchid

Other alpine orchids in flower during January are the Bird Orchids, *Simpliglottis turfosa*, *valida* and *pluricallata*, Leek Orchids, *Prasophyllum sphaclatum* and *candidum*, and the Potato orchids *Gastrodia entomogama*, *procera* and *sesamoides*. One orchid, was found after a five kilometer walk – the Alpine Swan Orchid, *Hymenochilus*



Hymenochilus crassicaulis
Alpine Swan Orchid



An orchid that appreciates a view! The Escarpment Greenhood, *Diplodium pulchella*, is found growing next to rivers above waterfalls in the Blue Mountains



Diuris venosa
Veined Doubletail

One of the most striking orchids was the Veined Doubletail from Barrington Tops. It has the same shape as the Golden Moths that are common in Victoria, but has purple markings on a white background.

Not to ignore the epiphytes, Colin showed a photo of *Adelopetalum exiguum* (*Tiny Strand Orchid*), otherwise known as *bulbophyllum exiguum*, the same species as the plant of the night. It was interesting to compare the cultivated plant and its wild cousin.



Adelopetalum exiguum
Tiny Strand Orchid

Thanks to Colin and Mischa for sharing their experiences and superb photos in such an interesting presentation.

The Display Table

Frances Wilde and Peter Kiernan put on a small but colorful display of epiphytes, with three Greenhoods representing the terrestrial orchids, courtesy of Peter. Of the nine plants on display, four featured in the presentation on NSW orchids – the three Greenhoods and *Bulbophyllum exiguum*.

Epiphytes

Sarcophilus Hybrids: Fitzhart x Velvet, Nicky x Riverdene, Melody “Mel” x Riverdene “Red Speckles”, Beverley Joan

Dockrillia cucumerina

Bulbophyllum exiguum

Terrestrials

Diplodium coccinum, *Diplodium truncatum*, X *Taurodium furcillatum* (natural hybrid *Taurantha ophioglossa* by *Diplodium alveatum*).

The plant of the night was Peter Kiernan’s *Bulbophyllum exiguum*. Peter commented that for the last couple of years he has treated the plant as a raft rather than a hanging mount, and has had much greater success this way.



Plant of the night *Bulbophyllum exiguum*, grown by Peter Kiernan

Seedlings

Most were showing good growth, in a wide range of media, ranging from sphagnum, peat/perlite, bark/coconut to coconut fibre. It will be very interesting to follow the growth of these to see which medium gives the best results.

In the Field

Anglesea: Things are starting to happen out in the field.

An exciting find - Tom Fletcher (one of our valued bird observers who we have trained to also look for orchids) found a very fine specimen of *Corunastylis despectans* (Sharp Midge Orchid) on the Anglesea Heath. Further scrutiny of the area resulted in a count of approximately 20 of these orchids flowering amongst leaf litter on the roadside verge. This is, a very rare orchid in our area - the only other known location is Iron Bark Basin where Mischa found one in flower in March 2008.

Our other two species of Midge Orchids *C. morrissii* (Bearded Midge Orchid) and *C. ciliata* (Fringed Midge Orchid) are both flowering. The Fringed Midge Orchids are very small but there are some very nice specimens of Bearded Midges.

A few *Eriochilus cucullatus* (Parson's Bands), *Pterostylis parviflora* (Tiny Greenhood) and *Leporella fimbriata* (Fringed Hare Orchids) and one *Chilloglottis reflexa* (Autumn Bird Orchid) have been seen.

A small colony (5 flowers) of *Pterostylis revoluta* (Autumn Greenhoods) are in flower at Aireys Inlet on private land and buds are appearing in the Greenhood Reserve where we had permission to translocate a few tubers about four years ago - this is exciting. Last year we had some rosettes but this is the first time we have seen buds.

Some recent burns could provide interesting finds later in the year - *the Melaleuca* swamp of the Anglesea River would certainly be worth checking for *Burnettia cuneata* (Lizard Orchids).

Barwon Water's installation of the pipeline for the Anglesea Borefield Project has seen a great amount of damage done to the area alongside the former water channel parallel to Forest Road. Adam Cunningham (Barwon Water) is working with Ecology Australia and DSE to see if any damage can be repaired. ANGAIR is involved with these discussions.

Margaret MacDonald

Honorary Life Membership awarded to Winston Huggins.

At the April meeting, members present enthusiastically endorsed the motion to award Winston Honorary Life Membership for services to ANOS Geelong.

Winston is an inaugural member, having joined at the meeting of 9/6/87, when the Group was formed. At this meeting he was elected to the committee, and has been on the Committee ever since.

He was elected President at the Annual General Meeting in 1993 and served till the Annual General Meeting of 1996, and was Immediate Past President till the 1997 Annual Meeting.

Winston has worked for the Group at the Annual Show, being the doorkeeper from 1989 to 2007, and has assisted with the Botanic Guardians Surveys at the You Yangs.

Congratulations, Winston, and thank you for your efforts over the past 22 years.

Membership Fee Increase for 2009/2010

For the past six years, the membership fees have been \$8 for a single, \$10 for a family with Bulletin postage set at \$6.

Unfortunately, the fees no longer cover costs. Affiliation fees to the Royal Horticultural Society have increased, the minimum Public Liability Insurance we are required to carry has increased to \$20,000,000, with a consequent increase in premium, and printing and postage costs for the Bulletin have increased – the Bulletin fee doesn't even cover the postage.

Members agreed at the April meeting to an increase in Membership fees to \$10 Single, \$12 Family with Bulletin Postage \$7, starting in 2009/2010.

An electronic version of the Bulletin will be available as an alternative to a posted copy or picking the Bulletin up at the monthly meeting. An advantage of this format is that it will be in colour. This will commence from the July issue – either see Neil Anderton (or email: anderton@aanet.com.au), or fill out the appropriate information on the membership renewal form.

Dendrobium bigibbum

by Ross and Rhonda Harvey of Cedarvale Orchids

(Reprinted from KABI Group Bulletin via the Macarthur Group Newsletter)

At a meeting of ANOS (Qld) Kabi Group Inc. we presented a number of plants of *Dendrobium bigibbum var compactum* which were in flower to demonstrate to members the natural beauty of some of our Australian native orchids. We grow a large number of *Dendrobium bigibbum* at our nursery and find them very easy to grow and flower.

There are three varieties of *Dendrobium bigibbum*, *var superbum*, *var bigibbum* and *var compactum*. These varieties are found only from just north of Cairns to the tip of Cape York and some Torres Strait Islands. *D bigibbum v compactum* is a plant that grows on rocks and exposed cliff faces at low elevation (around 300 metres) from just north of Cairns to the Windsor Tableland west of Daintree. We understand that the ranges upon which it grows are mainly close to the coast but have heard stories of finds on mountains some distance inland. It is a short form with pseudo-bulbs up to 250mm tall with normally open flowers variable in size, shape and colour but

resembling the **var *superbum***. *D bigibbum v bigibbum* is a plant with tall thin pseudo-bulbs up to 1 metre in length carrying multiple flower racemes of up to twenty pansy-like flowers normally 25 - 35mm with reflexed sepals. *D bigibbum v superbum* also has tall, more robust pseudo-bulbs up to 1 metre in length also with multiple racemes but with flowers generally much larger than *v bigibbum* (up to 70mm across). The distribution of both of these varieties seems unclear so we suggest that they occur on both the east and west sides of the cape from sea level (sometimes overhanging salt water), to low elevation inland dry scrub. The important aspect of their distribution is that the areas in which they grow have two seasons, wet and dry - dry meaning no rain for two to three months with minimum temperatures seldom below 10°C for long periods. We believe that understanding this point is beneficial in the cultivation of the plants.

We are firm believers in that if you get the environment right you are 70% there in growing the plant; culture accounts for 30%. The environment has three aspects, **Location or Growing House, Light and Ventilation** and our growing notes talk about these in depth.

Location or Growing House: We grow the plant in a tunnelhouse covered with opaque solarweave with front and rear vents and full length side vents able to be closed so that in winter the house is fully enclosed during the evenings. This enables us to keep the plants dry in the winter and, by closing the vents in mid-afternoon, slightly warmer. We believe that the plants will tolerate the cold (that we get - SE Qld) and tolerate the wet but not a combined cold and wet. We have found plants in a shade-cloth covered house to deteriorate in cold, wet winters.

Light: We grow the plant in bright light, given that opaque solarweave transmits 50% light. There is another cloth placed under the roof to try to reduce the heat more than the light (not sure that the light levels are changed given the manner in which the solar-weave refracts the light).

Ventilation: We believe that ventilation is the most important aspect of good orchid culture in general. "Orchids love to be wet and love to be dry" and good ventilation will dry them rapidly, dramatically reducing fungal and bacterial rot occurrences, reducing the need for chemical sprays and thus saving you money. We are lucky enough to have very good ventilation without the standard small block problems of nearby houses, sheds, fences, trees, etc. When the vents are open the breeze blows virtually unobstructed through the orchid house.

We suggest that culture again consists of three aspects, **Watering, Fertilising and Spraying**.

Watering: Watering is an individual action and is dependent upon the individual conditions that the plant is grown in. Such aspects as ventilation (how fast do the plants dry out), potting medium eg bark or sphagnum moss, is the mix new or old? The best general advice is that if the mix is open, drains and dries well then you can water freely in the summer (September to March). In winter (April to August) cut back on the water to once a week or fortnight (depending on whether there is a westerly wind or not). **More native orchids are killed by over-watering than any other action. Resist the urge to water and go and have a drink yourself.** Slight shrivelling of the canes of the plants during winter is not a problem; summer watering will fatten them up again. Remember where they grow naturally they have monsoon downpours in the summer and can have no rain at all for 2 - 3 months in the winter. When we water in the winter we do so in the morning on a bright sunny day, breezy if possible, to ensure that the plants are relatively dry before nightfall. In summer we water from 4.00pm onwards to avoid water laying in new growths during the heat of the day, which we have found encourages bacterial rot of the new growths. We have an automatic misting system located under the benches which waters the floor each day to try to maintain humidity all year round. We believe this helps prevent leaf-drop.

Fertilising: We try to fertilise weekly and weakly (1 gram/litre) in the growing season, September to January, with a low level nitrogen fertiliser, NPK 14:5:22, and change to higher level phosphorous and potassium fertiliser, NPK 7:11:27, in flowering season, February till the flowers drop. The plants make new growths, flower from those growths and set seedpods between September and April so frequent feeding is almost mandatory for best results.

Spraying: Our approach to spraying is rather as prevention more than a cure. We try to prevent problems not try to overcome them when they occur. We find that Diazinon kills most insects, bugs, ants, cockroaches, scale and aphids, and we spray four to five times a year. If an outbreak occurs then we have to spray to stem the outbreak. But be aware that some sprays which are organophosphate-based can cause bud/flower drop and flower marking. It is safer to use a wettable powder if you have buds; wettable powders can still mark flowers. Similarly we spray fungicides for prevention rather than cure and do this four or five times a year and sometimes again after continuous hot wet weather- We use two fungicides mainly Mancozeb (dithane) and Bravo (chlorothalonil).

As a final note we try to keep water off the flowers until they 'set'. Failing to do so will cause the flowers not to open widely, the spikes to droop and finally to drop in a much shorter time than if kept dry.

AOF Awareness Campaign

GROWING ORCHIDS IN POTS

by David P. Banks

For convenience and practicality, most orchids are grown in pots. All terrestrial and most epiphytic orchids are grown in pots, which accommodate the plants' root systems and help to retain moisture. Pots are easily transported, displayed, acquired and are relatively inexpensive. Another bonus is that they are reusable after cleaning and sterilising in a mild bleach solution.

There is a wide range of pots available. It is most important that the pots be sturdy and that they have generous drainage holes. Today, plastic pots are the most frequently used, and are available in a variety of sizes, styles, colours and depths. There are now businesses, such as The Orchid Pot Company in Port Macquarie, that specialise in the production of orchid pots, and use a durable, black plastic that does not deteriorate in sunlight. They have created a range of pots, designed for specific orchid genera, which offer excellent drainage.

Personally, I detest square pots! I'm sure that the orchid's roots don't enjoy heading off at right angles all the time, and that they would much rather go round in circles! I use only black, bottle green or terracotta-coloured plastic pots, with a preference for black, which are less inclined to deteriorate in sunlight. Brightly coloured pots look great for marketing annuals and other garden plants but look rather tacky in the orchid collection. Many orchid growers in North America use clear pots (which are invariably square!) with success. Their advantage is that the root system of an orchid can be monitored without disturbing the plant. Care must be taken not to subject the sides of these pots to direct sunlight, to avoid cooking the roots. Algae growth on the sides of these pots may also become a problem.

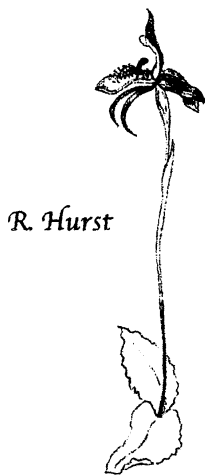
If it is possible, try to keep plants in the same sized pots together on the bench. Not only does it look tidier but the pots will all dry out at the same time (if planted in the same mix), thus simplifying watering.

Make sure that you remove weeds from your pots and from the floor of the orchid house. If left to seed, the weeds will spread right through your orchid collection. A pair of tweezers is handy for removing stubborn weeds with long taproots. Weeds under the bench may be carefully sprayed, in still conditions, with herbicide solution. You are left with the decision of spraying the ferns or not! Beware of weeds in hanging baskets, as they can disperse their seeds quite a distance. With diligence, it is possible to eliminate weeds from your collection totally.



Anglesea Orchids

The recent autumn rains will have been welcomed by the terrestrial orchids, and we are beginning to see a few specimens appearing in some of our favourite sites. Some nice specimens of Bearded Midge Orchids *Corunastylis morrisii* were seen in flower in mid March. Although a very small orchid, usually less than 25 cm tall, the Bearded Midge Orchid is well worth looking at through a hand lens. Up to twelve tiny, reddish-purple flowers are arranged in a spike at the top of the flower stem. The sepals and petals open widely, with the dorsal sepal, petals and labellum having purplish hairs as a flange. The lateral sepals, which point forward and slightly upward, are without hairs. The leaf closely sheathes the brownish flower stem.



Autumn Bird Orchid

Disappointingly, we have not been able to find the Sharp Midge Orchid *Corunastylis despectans*, even though we found one specimen in March last year, the first time the species had been seen in the district for many years.

We did observe some buds of our third species of Midge Orchid, Fringed Midge Orchid, *Corunastylis ciliata*, in mid March, and one specimen of Parson's Bands, *Eriochilus cticullatus* was also flowering at that time.

Hopefully many more of these species will appear in the next few weeks, as well as some of our other autumn orchids - Autumn Bird Orchid *Chiloglottis reflexa*, Mosquito Orchid *Acianthus pusillus*, Fringed Hare Orchid *Leporella fimbriata*, Tiny Greenhood *Pterostylis parviflora*, Brown Tipped Greenhood *P. sp. aff. parviflora* and Autumn Greenhood *P. revoluta*.

The autumn species are more difficult to find than our spring orchids, but they are certainly well worth looking for.

Change in Bulletin Editorship

As was mentioned at the April meeting, Everett Foster has stepped down as editor after many years at the helm. Thanks Everett for your sterling work in producing such a great Bulletin. I now have a much greater appreciation for your efforts than I did a month ago!

If you need to contact the editor, you can phone me on 5281 5382 or email on anderton@aanet.com.au

Neil Anderton