



THE MONTHLY BULLETIN OF THE KU-RING-GAI ORCHID SOCIETY INC.

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Annual Membership : **\$15 single, \$18 family**

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Next Meeting : Mon 16th April 2022

Venue : *The West Lindfield Community Hall, corner of Bradfield Rd and Moore Avenue, West Lindfield.*

Covid Restrictions – Advance registration is no longer required **but attendees must still be double vaccinated.**

Your vaccination certificate will be checked (unless it was previously checked and registered upon attending a meeting).

Please be considerate to those managing this process. Also, if you aren't feeling well on the night, please stay home. It may turn out to be nothing but think of your friends if it isn't.

A face mask is no longer mandatory but is strongly recommended where 1.5 M spacing can't be maintained!! We know masks are uncomfortable but please have a mask with you and comply.

The hall is open from 6.30pm. Please try and get there early to help set up tables and chairs. A small number of members do already help but it is true that many hands make light work (and that doesn't just refer to the hall lights). And please, **No** benching until all the benches and the class dividers are in place. PLEASE give the set up team time to get everything in place. If you start benching too soon you just delay the whole process.

Finally, when benching, if you aren't sure where your orchid should go, ask for help from one of the committee or any of the more experienced members, they will guide you, or point you to someone else who can help.

There are no Culture Classes at present due to Covid. The **sales table** will be operating for sale of members plants and for small quantities of pots and other supplies. There will be the usual **monthly raffle**, and the **library** will be operating. **The actual meeting commences at 8pm.** We start with the meeting formalities run by the President while the judges review the benched orchids. Once judging is complete, and winners announced, we will break for supper.

The Supper Break – Coffee, tea, milk and hot water will be provided at the meeting. But **remember**, you will still need to bring your own **sugar/mugs/cups and stirrers**. The club will supply some wrapped biscuits but members may also **bring their own nibbles. No food sharing please.**

After the supper break – There will be a talk by Jim Brydie titled **“The Things Orchids Do To Make Us Grow Them”**. I presented the first version of this talk back in 2013 so some of you old hardheads will have seen it before. But then, you old hardheads have seen everything before anyway. If you are thinking you might be bored, I have tweaked it a bit and will try and throw in a joke or something to keep you entertained. Come along and welcome me back to a meeting after a few months off.

Best of the Evening Orchids from last meeting – what magnificence (more on each inside)



Brassidium Golden Gamine 'White Knight'



Lc? Mari's Love 'Taka'



Gomesa praetexta

Another 3 beauties for best of the evening last month, and wonderful photos from Jane D'Oliver.

More information on each of them inside this month's bulletin.

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Society News (if anyone has a news item, please phone Jim on 9476 3383, or email at jimbrydie@aussiebroadband.com.au)

President Dennys' Desk – At our March meeting we had 35 people attend and listen to an excellent talk by Joel Cohen about collecting terrestrial orchids in NSW. We don't require pre-registration anymore but there is a need to keep to our COVID plan and I thank all those members who kept their masks on just to give that extra effort to keep the risk low. Our culture classes are still postponed until we can use the annex without seating restrictions. More recently, some of our colleagues have had to wrestle with positive RATS and such and I wish them all the best while they manage their situations.

Rules are necessary to reduce the personal COVID risk of members to the lowest level possible.

Flasking class – Chris Wilson has offered to run a class at his residence for those who are interested in learning about flask culture procedures. Chris has indicated that he can show people how he does it and include more technical details about the chemicals he uses etc. If you are interested in this activity, see Chris at our next meeting or send an email to KOS and we can connect you directly with him. He is prepared to cater for a maximum of 6 people but is willing to run a repeat class if it is needed.

New pots coming - Hopefully we will have had a delivery of supplies for our sales table by our May meeting. New items we have ordered for the sales table will include pots for Vanda and Stanhopea orchids as well as pots for large cymbidiums and specimens.

Seller's commission – Members please note that KOS has increased the commission on plants sold by members from 10% to 15%. This increase is needed to help offset the increase in rent and is generally in line with other societies. The new commission became effective at the April meeting.

Coffee and Tea – We will be offering coffee and tea and hopefully some biscuits at the May meeting. You will still need to bring your own mugs/cups and stirrers. By all means, bring your own supper if you need to but no sharing, please. We will need one or two volunteers to be on hand to dispense the milk during the break. Thank you, Janine, for doing so at our last meeting.

Member's welfare – personal challenges occur all the time, so please remember, if you need to speak to someone immediately then you are most welcome to contact me at any time, 24/7 on 043 88 77 689.

Other Society items

1. New Members – Hello to another two new members this month - Loretta & Paul Au. Welcome to the club Loretta and Paul, I hope you enjoy meetings with us. Please don't be shy about asking other members about the orchids or the way meetings work.

To our existing members, as always, please seek out Loretta and Paul at the next meeting and say hello. Sometimes it takes a while to find your way at a new club.

2. Sales Table Commission – Don't forget members. Sales table commission is now 15% on your sales.

3. Membership Fees – If you haven't paid yet we have to assume you don't want to continue. We hate to see friends drop off but we wish you well wherever you are now heading.

Upcoming events: (please check at source for any last minute changes)

27 – 29 May - Orchids Out West, Hawkesbury Race Club, 1 Racecourse Rd, Clarendon

25-26 June - Mingara Orchid Fair, Mingara Recreation Club, Tumbi Umbi

12-14 Aug National Orchid Extravaganza & Paphiopedilum Society of NSW, The Arena Sports Club, 140 Rookwood Rd, Yagoona

19-21 Aug - St Ives Orchid Show, St Ives Showground, Mona Vale Rd, St Ives

A couple of Seadog Tales

An old sea captain was sitting on a bench near the wharf when a young man walked up and sat down. The young man had spiked hair and each spike was a different colour: green, red, orange, blue and yellow.

After a while, the young man noticed that the captain was staring at him. "What's the matter, old timer? Never done anything wild in your life?"

The old captain replied, "Got drunk once and married a parrot. I was just wondering if you were my son."

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A man fell overboard from his sailboat, and was thrashing around in the water when another boat pulled up. "Jump in, we'll save you," screamed the people in the boat.

"No," cried the drowning man, "God will save me."

The scene was repeated twice more with different boats and then a helicopter hovered over the man. "We came to rescue you," yelled the pilot. "No, God will save me," was the response again.

The man drowned, and as he crossed the Pearly Gates, he ran straight towards Jesus.

"I placed my faith in You, and You still let me drown!"

"Hey!" said Jesus, "that's hardly fair, I sent three boats and a helicopter."

BOE Open Hybrid – *Cattleya Mari's Love 'Taka' AM - AOC* grown by Gloria and Allan Cushway

This one has been Best of the Evening previously so I won't repeat all the data but isn't this a delightful combination of colours.

Despite it being benched as a Laeliocattleya, it has been officially declared just a Cattleya since the recent big taxonomic re-arrangement of the Laeliinae subtribe. Mari's Love was a mixture of a whole bunch of Cattleya species and one Laelia but that Laelia component (*sincorana*) is now accepted by all as just another Cattleya.

One of the other Cattleyas in Mari's Love's breeding is Catt. Intermedia. It seems certain that somewhere in the mix they used intermedia variety *acquinii* because that famous variety is a 'splash petal' where the petals have much of the shape and colouration of the lip, just as in Mari's Love. As in any cross, Mari's Love has many variations among its cultivars and many colour variations but nearly all I have seen are splash petal. I have only found one picture of a non-splash petal type so I assume that they rarely occur. For a more detailed background on Mari's Love's breeding and background you might look for the June 2017 edition of this bulletin.



Gloria is the 'Cattleya aficionado' in the Cushway family and grows them just so well, although with Allan's skills I am sure he does some of the hard work too. Congratulations on another Best of the Evening Gloria and Allan.

BOE Novice – *Brassidium Golden Gamine 'White Knight'* grown by Anthony Mobbs



I love these startlingly dark coloured orchids. They are hard to photograph but in real life in front of your eyes they are very captivating.

This one has quite large flowers at around 8 cm or more natural spread, both across and up and down. I can't quite see the name "Golden Gamine" as all the pictures available seem to be these foreboding dark flowers but who knows, perhaps the very first seedling to flower was yellow.

The breeding is very unusual. The typical Brassia spreading, narrow segmented shape comes from *Brassia arcuigera* and a lot of the dark colouration comes from there as well but 50% of the genes come from the popular pink *Oncidium sotoatum* which used to be known as *Oncidium ornithorhyncum*. *Sotoanum* has shortish, wiry, branched spikes that get all tangled together very easily, and delightful 2 cm pink flowers. There is no sign of that spike habit or flower colour here unless the pink has darkened the *arcuigera* colours. The other partial parent is *Oncidium wentworthianum*, one you don't see benched too often. It has 2.5 - 3 cm typically *Oncidium* yellow and brown flowers but has a very tall (up to 2m), very vertical spike. I imagine that *wentworthianum* is where the spike habit of Golden Gamine comes from but the height has been brought down to around 45 cm, perhaps by *sotoanum* or *arcuigerum*. Much more manageable.

The Brassia ancestor (Brs. *Arcuigera*) is an epiphyte from cloud forests or wet lower elevation rain forests. It occurs at only moderate elevations in Costa Rica, Panama, and many countries in the northern end of South America. In some areas it occurs as low as sea level, in others 500 – 1200 m, and in Colombia up to 1800m. I would anticipate that it would grow cool in Sydney but struggle below 5 or 6°C. Crossing it with the two *Oncidium*s would give the hybrid a little more low temperature tolerance but if you intend to test Golden Gamine to extremes I would try it in stages.

Congratulations Anthony, you are growing this one really nicely.

BOE Open Species – *Oncidium enderianum* grown by Trevor and Pauline Onslow

Now that's deep chocolate. Couldn't you just eat it?

I grow this one as well and haven't changed my label either but I know those who love having the right names would want to know so I have to tell you this one is no longer an *Oncidium*. It was part of the *Oncidium* genus that was split off and moved to *Gomesa*, so in 2009 it became *Gomesa enderiana*.

Unfortunately though, some purist taxonomist discovered that way back in 1873 when it was first described as a new species as *Oncidium enderianum*, someone else had also described it as a new species, just a little earlier, and called it *Oncidium praetextum*. As the name rules proscribe that the earliest published name is the one that should apply, *Gomesa enderiana* got changed to *Gomesa praetexta* and that is the correct name today.

I'm still not changing my label because this species is so well known as *enderiana/um* no one would know what I was talking about if I called it *praetexta*. In due course when 'praetexta' becomes better known, I will alter the label.



So, with all that guff out of the way, what can we say about *Gomesa praetexta*? Well it is one of about 10 species that used to make up section *Crispa* of the genus *Oncidium*. I have no idea whether there is still an equivalent Section *Crispa* in *Gomesa* but I presume so. The *Oncidium* 'Crispa' group included the popular species: *marshallianum*, *crispum*, *forbesii*, *gardnerii*, *gravesianum*, *enderianum/praetextbox*, *curtum*, *pectorale*, *novaesae* (used to be *zappii*). These are all lovely orchids and well worth growing, but a little unforgiving if you don't understand their quirks and what is needed to grow them properly.



All of this group come from Brazil, mostly in the coastal mountains just north and south of Rio. In its natural habitat, *enderianum* prefers bright open sites, even full sun. In the growing season it would get regular, almost daily rain, but in winter these areas are dryer and brighter, with cool nights. In these habitats they start a new growth with the first rains of spring. The new growth develops rapidly and the plant flowers off the new growths in the same season. After flowering, there is a period of further root development before active growth ends with the beginning of winter.

In keeping with this pattern, *Oncidium*, or *Gomesa*, *Crispa* species and their hybrids need a distinct drier rest in winter. If the roots remain wet and cold while the plant is resting, it is almost certain that they will be lost, so in winter, hang 'em high, and hang 'em dry. Don't be tempted to overwater.

Trevor has the pattern down to perfection but many fail with these lovely orchids. If you want to give them a go, find someone who knows how to do it, and why, and adapt the pattern to your own environment.

Congratulation Trevor and Pauline. Your orchids are always a credit to your skill and experience.

Some other Beauties benched last month

1. *Oncidesa Ku-Ring-Gai* 'No.7' – Chris Wilson.

Now here's something you don't see every day - this orchid is a real local. It was made by a Ku-Ring-Gai member, registered by him, and grown by him too. And, if I do say so myself, it's a pretty damn good one too.

Curiously, Orchidwiz lists it as "Kuring-gai" with no hyphen after the Ku but I'm sure Chris would have used the correct spelling so there must be a typo in somebodies records somewhere.

Chris registered this cross back in 1989 and it is a very nicely shaped showbench *Oncidium*. The big 'senorita skirt swirl' lip comes from *Oncidium varicosum* (now *Gomesa varicosa*) which is famous for its huge and magnificent yellow lip.



The problem with many *varicosum* hybrids though, is that proportionally, the upper segments (the petals and dorsal sepal) are often ridiculously small. In *Ku-Ring-Gai* they are much more balanced. The picture at the right is of *Onc. varicosum* variety *Rogersii* and while not all *varicosums* have such small upper parts, it gives you an idea of what I am talking about.



Ku-Ring-Gai is a mix of three subgroups of *Oncidiinae*. Before the split of *Oncidium* to move many species to *Gomesa*, I would have described *Ku-Ring-Gai* as a mix of *Onc. varicosum* (from *Onc. section Synsepala*), 3 species from *Onc. Section Crispa* (*marshallianum*, *forbesii*, and *crispum*), and one other slightly oddball species *Onc. tigrinum* from *Section Oblongata*. Which probably tells most of you absolutely nothing but if you look at the write up of Trevor Onslow's *Onc/Gomesa enderianum/praetextbox* you will see pictures of 3 of the species which have been used in Chris' hybrid to increase the relative size of it's upper segments. i.e. *marshallianum*, *forbesii*, and *crispum*.



As I said at the start, the big lip comes from *varicosum*, which leaves the question, what was *Onc. tigrinum* doing in the mix? Well, *Onc tigrinum* (the tiger striped *Oncidium*) is a very attractive orchid in its own right but different to the others. It comes from Mexico on the slopes facing the Pacific Ocean. It comes from quite high elevations at 1600 – 2500 m which makes it rather useful for imparting some cool tolerance. It has a very tall spike, up to 90 cm, with short side branches, and lots of rather attractive, 7.5 cm, long lasting flowers. It's upper segments are a little narrow but relatively long, which no doubt also helps the upper shape of Chris's hybrid. The taller spike must help too.

So that just leaves us with one question. How does it become an *Oncidesa*? Well, after *varicosum*, *marshallianum*, *forbesii*, and *crispum* all got moved from *Oncidium* to *Gomesa*. The only *Oncidium* left in the mix was *tigrinum*. When you cross *Oncidiums* with a *Gomesa* the hybrid becomes an *Oncidesa*. (Nice one Chris, and well grown too)

2. A couple of Interesting Paphiopedilums. A - *Paph charlesworthii* – benched by Allan and Gloria Cushway



Paph. charlesworthii is a quite unusual species in that it is essentially a two tone orchid. It has a huge pinkish red dorsal sepal and all the rest is brown tones of one shade or another. Colours vary in depth from one cultivar to another and mankind has made an art form of line breeding to accentuate the styles we like, but regardless of that, this is clearly the only Paph. that looks like anything like this.

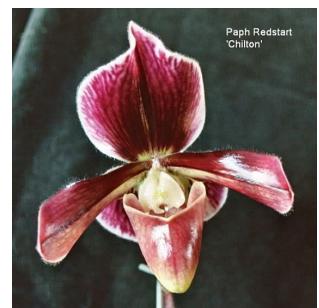
Charlesworthii is found in a smallish area from NE India, to Myanmar, Thailand and SW China. It occurs on isolated peaks (1200 – 2000 m) growing on leaf mulch on limestone rocks and cliffs, usually in deep shade. It is a smallish plant

with a fairly short flower stem of about 25 cm, and has a single, long lasting flower.

The flower at the left is Allan's high class line bred cultivar and for contrast, the one on the right is my rather ordinary seedling from less sophisticated parenting. I haven't found *charlesworthii* all that easy to grow and I was so pleased when this little baby flowered last month, but I must admit it pales significantly against Allan's beauty.

Just the same, that big pink to rose dorsal has to have been a huge attraction for breeders in their development of hybrid Paphs. It is hard to tell a full history story as there are often no pictures available of the old first, second, and third generation Paph. hybrids but I can tell you a bit about one important *charlesworthii* hybrid line.

Back in early days of orchid addition, I didn't think much of Paphs. I thought they were rather ugly, clumsy things compared to other orchids. However as we all know, without you even noticing, your views on the beauty of various aspects of life change over time. Somewhere in about the 80's, I saw Paph. Redstart and thought it was stunningly different and attractive. I even bought a flowering size piece of Redstart 'Chilton' at Adelaide Orchids. What surprised me for many years afterward was that no one else in my circle of orchid friends thought much of it at all. At that stage Paph hybrid breeding was focused on the big circular, plastic looking, saucer shape flowers.



Eventually all that changed, especially when more species looking hybrids along the style of *Paph. Maudiae* began to become more popular and then when the first really dark red *maudiae* types started to show up, there was another surge to incorporate that flamboyant dorsal from *charlesworthii*. For the first 10 years of the 21st century, there were some magnificent *charlesworthii* hybrids in those dark red lines.

The line below gives a little time line in pictures of hybrids taking advantage of the *charlesworthii* dorsal.



Bingleyense 1899 Mrs Haywood 1905 Redstart 1935 Battle of Egypt 1942 Starr Ruby 1988 Apollo Creed 2005

Most of the earlier ones are lost to cultivation today which is rather a shame, although every now and then one pops up as a Paph unknown where the label has been lost over the years. It is curious to me that artifacts of mankind's industrialisation, such as pieces of hundred year old, or more, furniture or the early forms of computers, are prized as 'valuable antiques' yet historic orchid hybrids are poo-pooed and cast aside. I wonder if that will change at some point in the future? What will an original cultivar of Paph Bingleyense will be worth in 50 years time?

B - *Paph. Transvaal* – benched by Lee Payne

I grow what may be the sister of Lee's orchid, or perhaps at least its close cousin. Lee's Paph Transvaal is the cross between Paphs. chamberlainianum and rothschildianum. My orchid was labelled moquettianum x rothschildianum when I bought it as a seedling back in 1983 and that cross was registered in only 2004 as Paph. Caroline Hands. However, for many years prior to moquettianum being finally accepted as a species, moquettianum had always been regarded as just a variety of Paph. glaucophyllum. i.e. glaucophyllum variety moquettianum. Thus I suspect that in the years after my seedling was made it was regarded as Paph. Vanguard and that is what I used to call mine before the long 'after the fact' registration creating Caroline Hands.



All 3 of glaucophyllum, chamberlainianum, and moquettianum are very, very similar. They are sequential flowerers with 2 or 3 fully open flowers at any one time, and as the spike extends, can ultimately have 20 or more flowers. Very nice orchids, and their hybrids with rothschildianum are all excellent as well. A lovely orchid Lee - great colour.

What do you Know about Sobralias and Elleanthus? - by Jim Brydie

A goodly proportion of orchid growers end up with a Sobralia in the backyard somewhere at some point in their orchid growing lifespan. And why not? Sobralias are large flowered, absolutely spectacular, like big Cattleyas. Elleanthus on the other hand tend to have a multiflowered inflorescence of much smaller flowers.



Sobralia macrantha

Ell. Arpophyllostachys

E. caravata

E. conifer

I know that most growers could do without the taxonomy stuff, but perhaps in time, I hope some may reach the same conclusion I have, that understanding relationships among genera and their evolution is key to understanding orchids.

Anyway, the two subject genera Sobralia and Elleanthus are the two largest of 4 genera in the subtribe Sobraliinae. You are unlikely to run across either of the other 2 - Epilyna and Sertifera, and presently the Epilynas are all regarded as Elleanthus anyway. Exactly where the subtribe itself fits is still being debated but it is somewhere in subfamily Epidendroideae which makes it vaguely related to the Cattleyas and Laelias, but not too closely.

There are about 100 Sobralia species and 118 Elleanthus. I used to consider the key difference between Sobralia and Elleanthus was that Sobralia were the ones with huge single flowers and Elleanthus had multiflowered inflorescences of much smaller flowers. However, more recent DNA analysis shows that the two genera are much more entwined than we used to think. The two genera are very closely related and it is proposed that Sobralia be split into two genera (Sobralia and Brasolia) and incorporating many Elleanthus into one or the other. You may have noticed that Brasolia is an anagram of Sobralia - not very imaginative but understandable.

It seems Sobralia and Elleanthus certainly have a common evolutionary parent but the evolutionary path to today is nowhere near as clear as once thought and the family tree shows mixes of the two on some branches. I am not sure how that can be so for the moment at least I will stick with big and showy Sobralia vs colourful/smaller Elleanthus.

Other than the flowers, plants of the two genera are very similar. They both have thin, leafy, reed like stems (rather than pseudobulbs) and both have prominent plicate (pleated) leaves. Elleanthus plants are generally not as big.

Try a Sobralia ? – the 100 or more species of Sobralia, are distributed from Mexico all the way down through Central America to the tropics of South America, with around 40-50 in Colombia alone. They are pretty much all terrestrial growers, or at least what I call quasi terrestrials, in rocky mulch covered areas. They do occasionally occur as epiphytes but it is not common. Most Sobralia are bee pollinated but while some species produce nectar as a reward, others produce none so there are tricksters among them in attracting the bee.

These are tropical orchids and come from a wide range of elevations, from sea level right up into the mountains to over 3000 m. As terrestrials, most Sobralia habitats are from relatively moist areas with regular rainfall for at least a good part of the year although many do have distinct wet and dry seasons. Those from higher elevations probably also get moisture from afternoon cloud condensation and overnight dews.

Here in Sydney we generally only see a few species available through members plant auctions and sales tables, but at least these are the ones that better tolerate our cool temperate climate. The most common we see are Sobralia macrantha and Sobralia leucoxantha. Both of which have big gorgeous flowers and grow well here.

Sobralia macrantha usually comes in lavender pink with a white and yellow throat in the lip but the colour is quite variable. Some are darker, some lighter, and there is a white flowered 'alba' form. Leucoxantha varies from good yellows as shown, to cream yellow and creamy white.

The smaller Sobralia species, including macrantha grow to perhaps only 45 - 60 cm tall. Leucoxantha can be from 60 – 90 cm but other species can be well over 3 metres. However, with the taller ones not all the length ends up as height. When visiting South America and thrilling to the sight of Lake Titicaca and Machu Picchu whilst also searching out orchids, I saw many plants of the tall Sobralia dichotoma growing in the mountains



Sobralia leucoxantha

near Machu Picchu. They tended to grow up among other understory plants and to use their cane length to wend their



way in all directions through other plants to get their flowers where they would be noticed by pollinators. Very untidy growers and impractical for horticulture.

Ah Yes. I can hear the more experienced growers whispering in the background, but he hasn't told them yet that these are rather short lived flowers. In a few species the flower only lasts a few hours but in *S. macrantha* it is 1 – 2 days which isn't too bad when you consider that a decent sized *Sobralia* flowers off multiple canes at the same time and also that other canes will throw up flowers so that a plant can have flowers for many days. They make a very eye catching display.

As the culture of both *Sobralia* and *Ellenathus* are substantially similar, I will discuss their culture together after I introduce *Elleanthus* and tell you about some the key differences.

Elleanthus - These are much more rarely seen in Sydney but I suspect that this is more to do with lack of their introduction to orchid growers in Australia. If you don't know about them, you don't look for them. However, many more of the *Elleanthus* grow up in the Andes mountains where their elevation makes them more compatible with our cooler winter temperatures and if you think a *Sobralia* is attractive I am sure you also find many *Elleanthus* attractive and worth a place as well.

Unlike the bee pollinated *Sobralia*, *Elleanthus* are hummingbird pollinated or occasionally moth pollinated. Which at least means that you are rather unlikely to get unplanned seed pods here in Australia.

I have tried 4 different *Elleanthus* species while experimenting but alas, several were warmer growers and I was still learning and I could not grow well enough to keep 3 of them going. My remaining *Elleanthus* (*E. robustus*?) was in full bloom in April on the wall at the back of my house and was a delight each time I passed.



An *Elleanthus* inflorescence flowers sequentially from the bottom up but can have up to a third of the inflorescence in flower at any one time. Similar to *Sobralias*, each flower is relatively short lived, but as it flowers sequentially a head is in flower for perhaps a week or two.



***Elleanthus myrosmatis* in the wild**



Elleanthus oliganthus



Elleanthus latteus

Culture - I don't understand the habitat of every species but all the species of either genus I have grown have had similar characteristics in that they are coarse rooted clumping plants and all were what I call pseudoterrestrials.

As you can see in the habitat picture above, the plant being photographed is on a hillside among other low scrubby plants and grasses. You can see either ocean or a lake in the top right hand corner so I suspect this location is not a very high elevation even though that species is found from about 400 m elevation right up to 2800 m. Hillsides are VERY well drained and I am guessing that the orchid would be growing in only 5 cm to 10 cm of "soil" at best and that the "soil" would be mostly open mulch like humous mixed with coarse rocky material. There would be some finer more composted down soil like material but the whole layer would be very airy.

To imitate that kind of terrestrial potting material, I have tried all sorts of combinations but the detail of specific components hasn't proven to be vital. It just needs to be a mix of open epiphytic materials and more composted soil-like materials so long as the end result drains perfectly and doesn't break down into a finer and finer mix too quickly. I suggest something like :

20% 15 – 20 mm pine bark, 20% 9 – 15mm pine bark, 20% - crumbled styrene foam, 20% - coarse river sand, and 20% - hi grade bagged potting mix.

Neither *Sobralia* or *Elleanthus* like being repotted. The root mass is usually densely compressed and tangled and it is impossible to repot or divide without causing significant root damage. After a repot a plant can sit and sulk for a while

and you are always left wondering whether you really had to do it. However, both genera also hate sitting in overly composted sour potting medium and if they get in that condition, can go backward faster than imaginable.

So, you need to repot but make a mix that can be left alone a fair while by using some inert materials like styrene foam, and a free draining combination. Aim to keep the mix moist. Don't let it dry right out if you can help it but don't let it sit 'wet' for long either - no saucers of water for these. That should be easy shouldn't it?

And, when you do repot, DO IT AT THE RIGHT TIME. An article on the American Orchid Society website gives good advice. "Sobralias should only be repotted or divided when new growth AND new roots are present. They do not like being disturbed. When potting up, if the root ball is intact and healthy, there is no need to disrupt the root system. If dividing wait until new growth and roots are breaking and keep at least three canes per division. If a plant has any evidence of rot, repot immediately trimming all affected roots down to the rhizome. Any discoloured rhizomes should be removed." If you follow these principles you will find that these types of orchids grow well and without trouble.

I have grown both genera in plastic pots and terracotta but I prefer the latter if for no other reason than to help with drainage and correct pot moisture. The Elleanthus species at the right (mine) is potted in a 30 cm terracotta pot and sits in the larger pot for decoration and to stop it blowing over in the wind.



Light – Apart from potting, the one other vital component to culture of these orchids is light. I am sure there are probably species that come from shadier habitats but all the ones I have grown here in Sydney need **HIGH light**. I grew them in my shade house with no flowers. I grew them on a more open bench in front of my glasshouse where they get good light for a few hours in the morning. In that location I got a few flowers but I wasn't happy. I moved the Elleanthus to the brick wall at the back of my house facing east. Here it gets direct sun from about 8 or 9 am depending on the season, until about 12.30pm when the sun casts a shadow from the house itself. This is the light these orchids need. On my back wall, it stands alongside a big Arpophyllum species that has also thrived in the brighter conditions and flowers wonderfully there.

You **can't grow** these kinds of orchids in Sydney without **at least** a little direct morning sun or without that, a **very** bright amount of light most of the day.

As for the rest of their culture, just follow general orchid rules. Water only when needed, supply fertiliser regularly but not too much, and keep your eye out for bugs.

In general, these genera are more oriented to the tropics than Sydney so we are limited to those that will do well in our temperatures but there are some outstandingly decorative orchids among them and with correct care they are easy to look after. They are not so much for the monthly club benching, but rather the back or front porch depending on the light. We currently don't see Elleanthus traded so much, but tastes are widening and we are seeing more and more of the exotic types coming in. Keep your eye out. They are worth a try.

Closing Humour

Beginners Rules for Caring for a New Orchid.

1. Do not deprive the orchid of sufficient light. Do not bombard your orchid with too much light.
3. Do not touch your orchid without hygiene gloves.
4. Do not look too intensely at your orchid, you might upset it.
5. Do not ask the orchid why it is mad. They are very sensitive.
6. Do not forget to take the orchid out once in a while, like to a movie. (something that shows you are making an effort)
7. Do not overwater the orchid or over fertilize the orchid.
8. If the orchid is sulking and not growing or flowering, its all your fault.

**By replacing
your morning
coffee with green
tea, you can lose
up to 87% of
what little joy
you still have
left in your life.**



They're cute and look so harmless, but they are loud, incredibly expensive to keep, and absolutely untrainable. The other one is a kangaroo, I don't know anything about kangaroos

**No matter how long
you have traveled
in the wrong
direction,
you can always
turn around.**

