



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

(Established in 1947)

A.B.N. 92 531 295 125

16<sup>th</sup> Oct 2023 Volume 64 No. 10

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

## **Patrons - Pauline and Trevor Onslow**

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**Next Meeting : Mon 16<sup>th</sup> October 2023**

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

\*Attendees must be at least double vaccinated for Covid. Please tick your name off the attendance list on arrival & enter 'DV' for double vaccinated if your status has not already been recorded. Face Masks recommended.

**The hall is open from 6.30pm to set up the hall (please help).** Benching can begin from 7 pm but **PLEASE** no benching until all the class dividers and cards are in place. Give the set up team time to get everything organized.

**We will not be holding a culture class this month.** As our main feature is our **Member's Auction** we want to allow potential buyers time to view the auction plants and decide what to bid on.

As usual there will be the **monthly raffle**, the **library** will be operating, and the **sales table** will be open for sale of member's spare plants and for small quantities of pots and other growing supplies.

**The Supper Break** – Our supper Volunteers for **October** are **Mary and Lewis Mathews**. Thank you for helping 'team Mathews'. The society supplies the tea, coffee, milk, sugar etc, **but remember - we ask all members to bring in a contribution of cake, slice, or biscuits, etc for the supper table.**

**AND - please everyone, bring your own mug.** For those who forget to bring their own mug/cup, **despite all the reminders** - we have a few disposable cups but why not put your special supper mugs in your car in advance.

**NOTE - Supper is not self-serve.** Members are assigned to serve to minimise handling.

**After the break, in place of a 'Guest Speaker' we will be holding one of our very popular Member's Orchid auctions.** Each single membership is invited to bring 2 'lots' for auction, family memberships may bring 3. A 'lot' may be a bundle of more than one plant to be sold together. More details on the procedure can be found on pages 2, 3.

**Best of the Evening Hybrid – Rlc. Haadyai Delight x Rth. Wattana Gold - Gloria & Allan Cushway**



What a lovely colour. A splash petal in pure yellows.

These modern complex hybrids have come so far it has become almost a matter of choosing some raw materials and sticking them in the machine to produce a new Cattleya to design specifications.

Haadyai Delight was registered in 1999 and Wattana Gold in 1986. One is a mix of 15 different species, the other 16. Both have about 8 or more generations of breeding behind them. The yellow flowers behind Haadyai Delight are xanthina, aurea, dowiana, and luteola. The yellows in Wattana Gold also contain two of those but also yellows from a different source in the old rupicolous Laelias like pure yellow crispata and several of the orange type rupicolous species. Not a vital clue or

anything but interesting. Wattana Gold is also the parent with a little Cattleya intermedia in its background, and that is most likely where the splash petal feature comes from.

We are rather lucky to have top Cattleya growers like Gloria and Allan, Garrie, and Trevor, as well as a whole swathe of new and up and coming growers who do so well with these types. Our Cattleya benches these days are just brilliant and a wonderful mix of the best of the past and new and latest.

Congratulations Gloria and Allan. I hadn't seen this one before and I am surprised that it hasn't been registered as a hybrid as yet. It surely can't be long. It is such a beauty that it is sure to be mericloned and sold through the nurseries once they get the stock numbers ready to release.

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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](mailto:jimbrydie@aussiebroadband.com.au))

**President Dennys' Desk** – Due to unforeseen circumstance Janine and I were unable to attend the September meeting. That said, the minutes supplied by **Jenny** clearly show it was a busy meeting and I thank **Jenny** for her chairing of the meeting. There are so many people to thank for their contribution to making the meeting work so well – from Janine and myself – thank you everyone.

**Australian Government's Volunteer Grant** – As announced earlier, KOS was successful in receiving a grant which was facilitated via the office of the Federal member for Bradfield, the Hon. Paul Fletcher MP. We have now used the grant money to purchase a new computer and associated software & equipment, including some storage capacity that will be used to back-up our files & reference information. Once the laptop has been set up, we will start using it to support our meetings.

**Meeting Hall Scuttlebutt** – A KOS sub-committee has been working closely with the Council and a final decision on this situation will be made and announced at the AGM.

**The AGM** – The AGM will be occurring at the October meeting. If you are interested in nominating to be on the committee, please let me or **Jenny** know soon but not within 7 days of the AGM. It would be great to have some more folk on the committee.

**Spring member's auction** – There will be no culture class at the October meeting since **Lina** will be booking in plants for the member's auction which will be held after the AGM. So, if you have some special plants to sell, please make sure they are nicely grown and free of disease. Sole memberships are limited to two sales lots and family memberships may submit three lots. This can be fun and some special, well-established plants are often moved on.

**Sales Table** – Please remember that the sales table does not open until 7.00 pm since it takes some real time to get items set up. Please let the plants arrive at the table. If you are bringing plants in for sale, remember, the focus is on culture items so you may have to initially limit/manage your plant offerings accordingly and bring more in for sale from your vehicle as needed.

**Expected Purchases** – Please let us know by **EMAIL** soon if you need some bark or bulk culture items for the next GCP purchase. Bear in mind, last time we picked up the goods from GCP at Somersby, it worked out ok, but this means we **WILL** need volunteers to help when pickup time arrives. We will also be putting on order for some more pots from the Orchid pot Co.

**Tree displays** – Over the years I have been fortunate to visit the **Onslow** household from time-to-time and have seen the orchids that Pauline and Trevor grow so well in some of their trees. Back in 2019 I decided to have a go and tied a soft-cane, *Dendrobium nobile* in the fork of the north coast red cedar growing in our front yard. This year we have been rewarded with a beautiful display that seems to just keep on keeping on. It did not take much effort; I don't feed it and barely water it.

**Wearing masks** – Although winter has ended, the wearing of masks in high-risk settings is still recommended by NSW Health. If you are unsure about this, please visit, <https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/stay-safe/guidance-on-wearing-face-masks>.

Under normal circumstances, I will no longer be wearing a mask at our meetings. However, please feel free to continue to wear a mask at our meetings.

**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 News Items**

**1. New Members** – Please all welcome new members Gary McNeil, Carolyn Murtagh, Sam Icklow, and Ben Martin. Carolyn had been a member once so some of you may already know of her. As all members know, being a new member is a difficult time as you grapple with new faces, club processes, and also the strangeness of orchids and their culture. Please all take the time you can to help our new friends find their way and to enjoy our meetings.

**2. Annual General Meeting (AGM)** – By now I am guessing that you have all read somewhere in a bulletin or in all the notice emails we send you, that this month is out AGM. We have an AGM every year to announce our financial statement for the year, to hear our President's report on the happenings of the year, AND to elect our management committee for the coming year.

We have 8 members on our present committee and I believe most are willing to stand again, BUT, although it is now some time ago, when I first joined Ku-Ring-Gai OS, I can report that it was once common for there to be a dozen members on our committee. In just my second year as a member I was asked to join the committee and I can assure you it wasn't because I knew anything about orchids. I had passed my horticulture certificate but knew next to nothing about orchids. Still, I was willing to do some of the work where I could so I agreed. I thought that while I might not be much help at first but I would do what I could and it would be a good way to meet people with orchid knowledge and experience. It was one of the best decisions I ever made.

Why don't you speak to a committee member (they are listed on page 1) and offer your services? For a cooperative club to survive, it must have a committee that regularly cycles new people through its ranks and grooms people for potential senior roles in the future. Put your hand up and be a part of it.

**3. Sales Table Vouchers** – For some time we have given sales table vouchers as part of our Lucky Exhibitor's prizes and other things and issued them with an expiry date so that we don't end up with a problem in our finance records in that unused vouchers become an ever increasing debt that can't be removed.

The expiry date within each financial year is 30<sup>th</sup> Sept to coincide with the end of the Society's financial year but as our sales table stock available in Sept this year was limited, this year's expiry date has been extended to 30<sup>th</sup> Oct. *If you have a sales table voucher issued after Sept 2022, use it this month or lose it.*

#### 4. October Member's Auction – The Way it Works

- A. **General** – Remember participants, you don't need to fill in a form to buy or sell. **For sellers**, *Lina* will be managing **the booking-in process (see below)**. She will set up an intro point somewhere in the entrance hallway or nearby and you need to see her **before** you put your plants on the auction display tables. **Buyers**, when bidding, you just need to be bold and put your hand up to bid and make sure you are noticed. Speak if you aren't noticed. AND NOTE : if the lot is 'sold' to you, **you must pay cash on the night before you go home**.
- B. **Specifics for sellers**, (a). Go to *Lina* and get a benching card for each sales lot. Take the cards away and fill in the plant name, your name, and reserve price (if any). Much the same as for benching an orchid. (b) Take the cards back to *Lina* where she will assign lot numbers to go on the cards. (c) Now place your auction plants on the auction bench with the card in front. The cards then will remain with the plant throughout the auction until it gets to the auctioneer.
- C. **Reserve prices** - You may set a **reserve price** on any lot. If you do, ***in addition to it being written on the benching card we ask that you also clearly and visibly label the plant separately with the reserve price***. When the potential buyers are checking out the plants and deciding bids, its helps them be ready and decided before the sale.
- D. **Reserve Price Tags** - *In past years we have used yellow tags/price stickers to make the reserves obvious*. It doesn't matter what you use but please make sure bidders & auctioneers know what you are asking for the lot.
- E. **Presentation** – In real estate the mantra is location, location, location ***but in selling plants it is appearance, appearance, and information***. Clean up your plant and show it at its best. If it looks messy and poor, you will get half what it might be worth. And if it isn't in flower, ***put a picture on it. Show the buyer what it is.***
- F. **Plants must be Clean and Free of Disease** - Lots are inspected when they are booked in. We reserve the right to reject plants believed to be suffering from pests or diseases, or not well established, or not in good condition.
- G. **The Money** - The society takes a **15% commission** on all sales.  
**PAYMENT - Buyers must pay with cash before they go home**. There is no credit card facility. Please bring cash in appropriate size **notes**. Don't expect the society to have change for large notes if you spend just \$10.  
**Sellers are paid the following month** due to the workload on those running the paperwork during the auction.

#### Upcoming events

**Fri 13 - Sun 15 Oct** - Orchids Central (5 clubs), Club Condell Park, 178 Eldridge Rd, Bankstown

**Sat 21 Oct** - S.P.E.C.I.E.S OS (NSW) - Annual Show and Auction day, from 9am, West Pennant Hills Community Church, 43 Eaton Rd West Pennant Hills. Auction catalog available via website.

**Sun 12 Nov** - MWOS public orchid auction, Cromer Community Centre, 150 Fisher Road, Cromer, starts 9.30am

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**Airport Arrest** - A high school teacher was arrested today at Sydney's International airport as he attempted to board a flight while in possession of a ruler, a protractor, a compass, a slide-rule and a calculator.

At the press conference, the Attorney General said he believes the man is a member of the notorious extremist Al-Gebra movement. He did not identify the man, who has been charged by the police with carrying weapons of maths instruction.

'Al-Gebra is a problem for us', the Attorney General said. 'They derive solutions by means and extremes, and sometimes go off on tangents in search of absolute values. They use secret code names like "X" and "Y" and refer to themselves as "unknowns", but we have determined that they belong to a common denominator of an axis with coordinates in every country. As the Greek philosopher Isosceles used to say, "There are three sides to every triangle".'

When asked to comment on the arrest, the Federal Treasurer said, "If God had wanted us to have better weapons of maths instruction, he would have given us more fingers and toes". Fellow parliamentary colleagues told reporters they could not recall a more intelligent or profound statement by the Treasurer.

## Best of the Evening Species – *Cattleya trianae* grown by Peter & Jane D’Olier

This is one of the nicest *Cattleya* species of all. Not the showiest, not the fluffiest, not the biggest, but just delightful. The epitome of what a *Cattleya* is.

Unfortunately though, the pictures of Peter and Jane’s orchid turned out to be unsuitable so I have decided to widen the scope of our general Best of the Evening series and just give you a wider treatise on *Cattleya trianae*. For keen *Cattleya* growers you could have a collection of just this one species and still fill your glasshouse. It is one of the *Cattleya* species with a huge number of named cultivars and an enormous range of variations in combinations of colour and shape. Although many of those variations may be rather subtle.

There is a wonderful and very well written article on *trianaee* available on the internet that I recommend to you and from which I will be drawing heavily during this brief summary. It was written by A.A. Chadwick of Chadwick Orchids Inc in the USA, and can be found at - <https://www.chadwickorchids.com/content/cattleya-trianaee> .

And first of all, I must explore the correct spelling of the name of this species. As perfectly explained by Mr. Chadwick, : - *“It wasn’t until 1851 that C. trianaei finally made its debut when a Colombian botanist, José M. Triana, found large numbers of C. trianaei in the Eastern Cordillero. The plants were sent back to Linden and by 1855, Linden was offering them for sale in his orchid catalog for 150 francs per plant under the name “Cattleya Trianae.” The species was dedicated, Linden said “to that erudite and modest author of Flora Columbiana, José M. Triana.”*

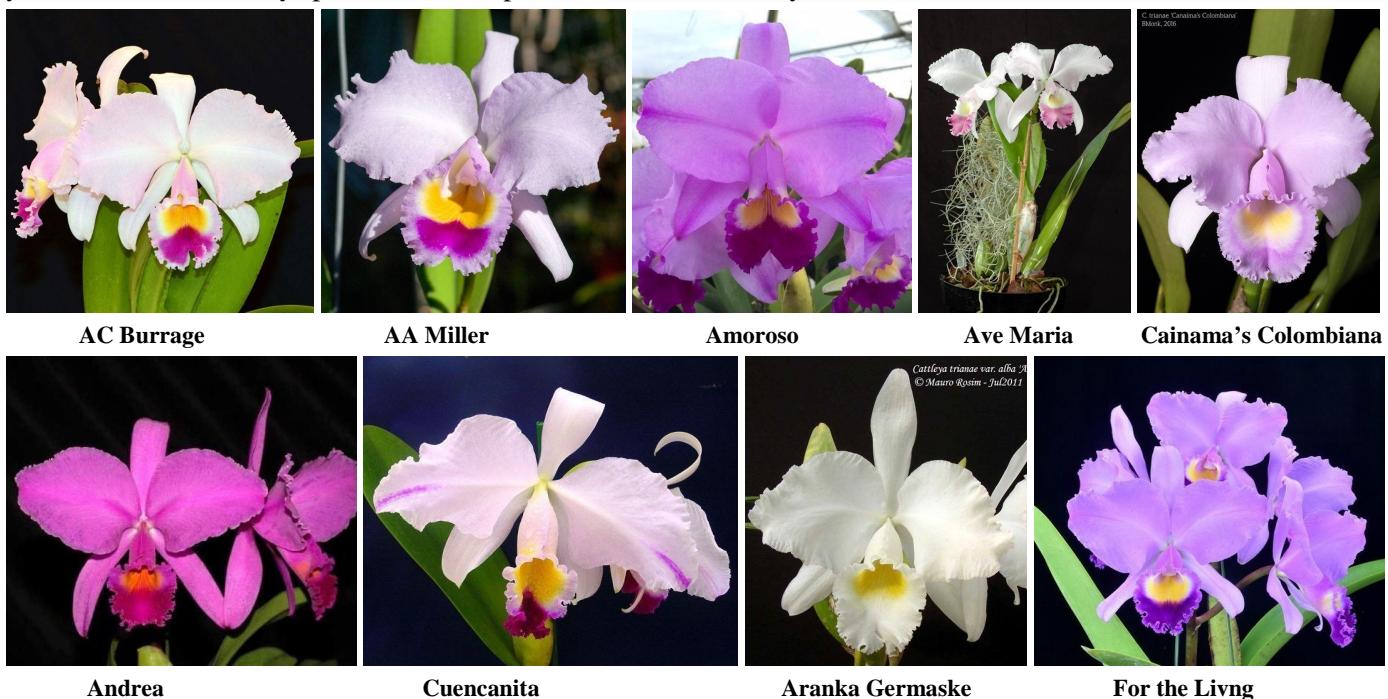
*Of the many new orchids Linden introduced to the horticultural world in Europe in the 1800s, C. trianaei seemed to have been his favorite. Its plentiful supply and wide variety of color types made it a collector’s dream, and Linden was happy and eager to promote it. He was the first to discover it and the first to have it commercially available. He pushed his friend, Reichenbach, to publish a description of it as a new species, and pictured 41 different clones on 28 full-color plates in his famous Lindenia, including a gorgeous double page spread of eight. He featured it at flower shows and even produced a special exhibition for it in 1870 at the Brussels Zoological Gardens where he displayed 240 different clones with more than 900 flowers.*

*Even Reichenbach acknowledged Linden’s contribution to the plant by using Linden’s name “Cattleya trianaei” in describing it and putting Linden’s name next to his in the species description, “Cattleya Trianaei Lind. Rchb. f.”*

*----- The name “trianaei” is pronounced “tri-an-ee,” which is strange because it ends in an “i.” Reichenbach in his original description spelled *trianaei* with an “i” at the end to reflect the male gender of José Triana. But almost everyone who followed Reichenbach for the next hundred years including Linden, Sanders, Veitch and even the Royal Horticultural Society, left the “i” off the name, spelling it “triana.” The spelling matched the way the name was universally pronounced, so the word itself was only changed back to Reichenbach’s original spelling in 1960 after much soul searching. But we still pronounce it “tri-an-ee.”*

What a wonderful story. But although I am sure Mr. Chadwick is correct about the original name and the ending in “i”, for practical purposes I have decided to fall back to the presently Kew approved name of *trianaee* without the “i”.

And how about that reference to 240 different clones (more correctly called ‘cultivars’) even as far back as 1879. There are many more than that known today and while I can’t show you more than just a sample, here are few to give you a feel for this lovely species. All the pictures below are *cattleya trianae*.



And that is just a teeny introduction to the variety. What a lovely species.

*Cattleya trianae* comes only from Colombia in South America and is that country's national flower. It is found (mostly?) in the valleys of the Magdalena river which rises in the Andes and flows north to empty into the Caribbean sea. The Baker's description tells us that "Plants grow near rivers or streams on trees and rocks at 800-1500 m. They are found in a rather dry region where numerous cacti and succulent bromeliads also grow.

These areas are tropical forests not far north of the equator. Temperatures stay between 20 - 30°C all year round, day and night. Rainfall is modest but consistent all year but with two heavier rainfall periods in Autumn and Spring. For 8 months of the year average rainfall would be between 50 and 80 mm, in autumn (our April to June) averages jump to 110 to 180 mm, and in spring (our southern hemisphere Oct and Nov) to 110 – 160. An unusual seasonal pattern.

Unfortunately, although it was once common in the wild it is now rather rare because of excessive over-collection and habitat destruction. In Mr Chadwick's article he tells us : "*C. trianaei was found in such great numbers that literally hundreds of thousands of plants were imported into Europe and the United States after its discovery. Cattleya trianaei was so plentiful and inexpensive to import that it was rarely raised from seed, and the cut-flower growers of the 1930s and 1940s could actually import plants, grow and flower them for a year or two, throw them away, and still make a good profit on the cut flowers.*" Thankfully, man's ability and skills at making seedlings and mericlones has almost certainly turned this situation around. Let's hope that environmentalists are reintroducing some of these mistreated species to their original habitats in these more modern times.

And lastly, we reveal *Cattleya trianae*'s secret popularity weapon. It flowers in the late autumn and early winter when there are few other *Cattleya* species in flower. Mr Baker says : "Research tells us that trianae initiates buds in the sheath in early autumn when days become shorter. Buds then begin to grow inside the sheath from mid autumn provided temperature and other conditions are suitable. However, plants will not flower if grown under conditions where day length is kept artificially long."

As to culture, I usually like to offer some of my own experience because orchid culture is so dramatically affected by the conditions available in each growers circumstances, but in this case I am at a loss. I am not a *Cattleya* grower and if I have a *Cattleya trianae* in my collection I couldn't tell you where it is. Sad I know, but there it is.

As an alternative, I once again defer to Mr Chadwick.

#### ***"Growing Tips - AA Chadwick***

*Cattleya trianaei is as easy to cultivate as most cattleya hybrids and it will grow well in any medium you use for them. If you start C. trianaei growing early in the spring, right after it finishes blooming, it will complete its first growth by early summer, and rush into a second growth that will be completed in late summer.*

*Be certain not to dry the plant off after the first growth is completed, however, or it may not start the second growth. Both growths should produce flowers in late December through February (JB: northern hemisphere seasons), after its autumn rest.*

*If you want to produce the best flowers, avoid repotting the plant as long as possible, and only repot when new roots emerge from the lead pseudobulb. Like other Cattleya species, C. trianaei should have lots of sun and air and the leaves should be a light green color. Do not let the leaves get warm to the touch, however, because this is too much sun and may burn the leaves. Always keep C. trianaei slightly dry during its rest period to avoid rotting the roots, and start the plant growing right after flowering with frequent light sprays of water on sunny days.*

*Cattleya trianaei usually produces only two or three flowers per stem, unlike most other major cattleya unifoliate species like C. mossiae, C. labiata and C. dowiana, which produce four or more per stem. Two growths in succession, of course, will give you a splashy five- or six-flower display, so the net effect is the same."*

This is obviously a species worth seeking out and growing but as already explained there are lots of quite different trianae varieties, and I am ashamed to say, there are orchids claiming to be trianae that perhaps are not. Still that latter problem is an almost universal one for nearly all orchids among amateur collections. Even nurseries sell plants that are mislabeled, despite their rigorous attempts to ensure all is correct.

Congratulations on another Best of the Evening Peter and Jane. Your growing skills are advancing like a racing car in full flight. Your benchings are a delight to all who see them.

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**The New York Flight** - 400 passengers but only 200 meals were loaded onto a flight from Delhi to New York City. It was only discovered after take off, when the flight attendants started going through their preparations for the meals. So, the airline had bungled, and the crew was in a fix. However, one smart flight attendant had an idea.

A couple of hours into the flight she nervously announced, "Ladies and gentleman; we don't know how this happened, but we have over 400 people on board, but only 200 dinners. Anyone who is kind enough to give up their meal to someone else, will receive unlimited free liquor for the duration of the flight!"

Her next announcement came six hours later: "Ladies and gentlemen, if anyone wants to change their mind, we still have 180 dinners available."

## Best of the Evening Novice - Paph Invincible grown by Ming Chin



Well how about that. The same BOE Novice as last month but from a different grower. And also beautifully grown. The quality of our up and coming growers these days is amazing. I must have been a slow novice as it took me years to become an even half decent grower. Well done all you newbies, if it isn't too offensive to use that term. You are ensuring the healthy future of all the amateur orchid clubs.

I won't do a repeat of the write up on Invincible. Everyone who wanted to would have read it last month. But perhaps another little observation about orchid flowers staking. Did you notice that the flowers on Ming's orchid seem to be bending over to the right? Well I am guessing that that is due to the fact that most plants and flowers steer themselves toward light. Light being the key element in how they grow and create energy.

In my own home I grow Phalaenopsis on our dining room table in front of an almost north facing window. And when those Phallies grow, their leaves always tend toward the light of the window. Likewise, when they develop flower spikes, those also grow towards the light. One of the things I have to take into special account is that if I take the plant off the table and into the kitchen to water, I have to be especially careful to put it back on the table facing exactly the same way it was before I moved it. If I don't do this and the orchid placement and facing direction keeps changing, flower spikes especially will change their growth direction and become full of ugly twists and turns.

In the case of Ming's orchid, I am guessing the direction of the light is exactly where the flowers are bending. To correct this, while the spike is developing, I would face the spike toward the light but gently stake it more upright until the flower opens and sets. After the flower opens and sets, you can turn the pot to face wherever you want to enjoy it. It won't bend again once set.

Congratulations Ming. A very well grown Paph.

## A Plethora Of Modern Phallies

On a recent visit to Coles supermarket I was impressed to see a sales table of small flowered green Phallies. They looked like small white flowered types but with lime green flowers. Very impressive but I am always a tad suspicious about strange coloured flowers in supermarkets. For years the cut flower trade has experimented with dyes in the water to change flower colours, and I did see some oddly pink and white hardcane dendrobiums for sale at Woolworths this year with a note attached that dye had been used to change colours.

Anyway, all that is just musing in advance to showing off some of the gorgeous genuine colour developments in Phals in modern times. Here (on the left) are three brightly coloured ones from our Sept meeting.



Phal Ox Lottery



Phal Magic Art



Phal Allura Tropica



Taida Smile 'Taida Little Green'

And, in continuation of my green thoughts at the opening, green Phallies are in experimental development at present and I don't think there are many genuine green greens. However, the one at the right is a genuine green hybrid but it was just one seedling from many that were more yellow to sort of yellow green.

Still, even if the desired result was just a curiosity, it shows it will be achieved eventually.

And finally, did you notice that each of the Phallies shown above actually has a registered name? Well I fear that the time of registered names for Phallies is coming to an end. Orchids raised to be sold to orchid growers through Orchid nurseries will continue to have registered names because we, the marketplace, won't buy them without it. However, many more orchids these days are being developed purely for sale to the public in place of bunches of cut flowers. They are sold through supermarkets and Bunnings and cut flower sellers, and that market doesn't give a hoot what the plant is called or what its parents were.

The breeders and developers of orchids in this market are constantly working to follow popular buying trends in different colours and patterns and plant sizes. They no doubt keep records of what their prized parent plants are and which characteristics are passed on but registering a hybrid name with the RHS (Royal Horticultural Society) in the UK who are the international keepers of the records, costs money and time and risks exposing your valuable inventions. They avoid it if they can.

Once we orchid grower purists become overly outnumbered, the system may well end.

But in the meantime, I know that there have been many attempts at intergeneric hybridisation with Phalaenopsis but we don't seem to be seeing these pumped through retail channels as yet. There must obviously be some roadblocks to be overcome but with the colours and floriferousness of many other Vandaceous cousins like Aerides, Vanda, Rhynchostylis, and others, perhaps there are some exciting lines ahead in hybrids between these traditional tropical warm growing genera and the rising stars of the genus Phalaenopsis.

Many intergenerics have been made and flowered, and some very nice ones indeed, but I believe problems arise in onbreeding some of these lines. Just the same we can dream can't we? How about these few beauties.



Vandaenopsis Henry Wallbrunn



Sarconopsis Noelene Russell



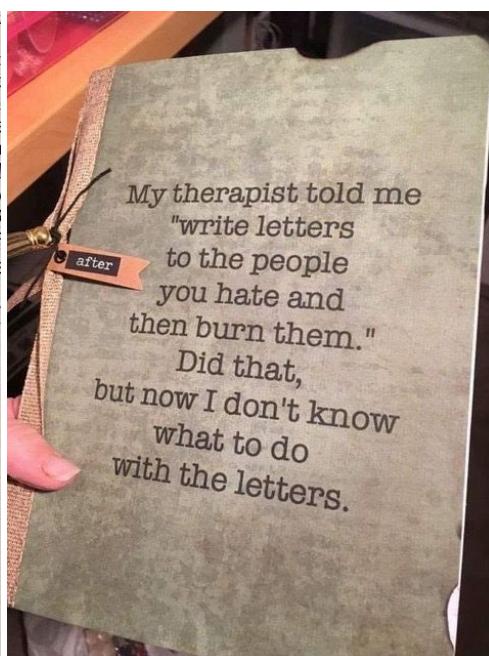
Vandaenopsis Irene Dobkin

But the crosses above nearly all date back to experiments in the 1970's and 80's. Have they stopped already or does it just take a new experimenter to try again?

And the final question that I can't tell from pictures is what the plant looks like? When we cross a Vanda with a Phalaenopsis, do we get a Phally plant with some Vanda flower characteristics? Or do we get a Vanda plant with some Phally flower characteristics. I suspect the latter which would perhaps kill attempts to try further.

The centre picture is a cross between Vandas and our Australian genus Sarcochilus and that is one cross with which I have a little experience. I still have a plant of a Phal x Sarc hybrid hanging in my shadehouse that has been there for 30 years. I think I flowered it poorly once in all that time with Sarcochilus like flowers something like Noelene Russell. The plant is also **very** much Sarcochilus like in form in that it is small and tightly clustered with Sarcochilus like leaves. I wonder what experiment might produce a Phalenopsis like plant with Vanda or Aerides like flowers?

#### And to lighten off those deep thoughts?



## As I was going to St Ives, I met a man with Seven Wives . . . . .

Jim Brydie

In all the years we have been holding the St Ives Orchid Fair I have been looking for an opportunity to open something with that ancient nursery rhyme riddle (circa 1730 A.D.), and here was my chance.

There were some wonderful orchids and supporting plants amongst the display at St Ives and I had intended to do a little discussion article on some of them in last month's September bulletin, but alas, I ran out of space and time. But all circumstances have a positive side so this month I get the chance to tell you about my favourites from the show and test you with a riddle at the same time.

Some of my pictures of the plants I wanted to tell you about haven't turned out to be quite up to the standard I wanted so I have had to find alternatives from other sources in some cases. Where this is the case I apologise to the growers for not featuring their 'star', but my main aim here is to tell you about those species or hybrids rather than praise up the grower. The grower's skills are not in question and all the plants I saw were fantastic.

Anyway, I will start with an amazing looking plant that caused much discussion. And what do you think of this weird thing from the Alice's Orchids tabletop display. It isn't an orchid. It's name is *Dischidia major*. Is it a banana? Are those leaves or seed pods? Or flowers?



Well, *Dischidia* are epiphytes. There are about 80 species in the genus and they are found from India, China, across nearly all of SE Asia, Malaysia and Singapore, PNG, and even a small number of species in Australia. They are a vine like plant related to Hoyas.

In Australia, I can see records of finding *Dischidia* species - *nummularia*, *ovata*, *major*, and *milnei*, but there may be others as well.

The form of growth for *Dischidia* is very similar to the Hoyas. That is they have a vine like growth that can be dangling between branches or clinging to its host surface. Unfortunately, unlike the more showy Hoyas, *Dischidia* flowers are generally small, white, and rather insignificant.

The leaves of *Dischidia* are fleshy like those of *Hoya*. Most are round and in opposite pairs but three species in the genus have also developed a different form of leaf called a bullate leaf. These leaves are hollow, bulbous structures, and they house the plant's root. The common name for *Dischidia major* is "rattle heads". Now guess again what those funny banana shape things in the picture in the upper picture are.

The lower pictures are of *Dischidia nummularia* growing on a tree in northern Queensland, and a close up of its flowers. It has several common names but two prominent ones are 'button orchid' (even though it is not an orchid), and 'string of nickels'.

*Dischidia* can be an amazingly different foliage plant but they are pretty much all warm to warmish growers. All the Australian species occur only in



Northern Qld but they can be quite common there in coastal areas. If you visit orchid nurseries (or even just general plant nurseries) around the Cairns area you will find them dangling from the shade house rails all over the place. In Sydney they aren't too hard to grow in a warm glasshouse but they are happier in the warm, moist, north.



Next, I want to talk once more about what I am sure will be one of the coming trends in mass produced *Phalaenopsis*, and those will be the Phallies with a petaloid lip. The one at the left was a feature in Gowan Stewart's lovely tabletop. Gowan has always had a flair and interest for the unusual and her displays always attract people just standing and admiring.

But before I try to define 'petaloid', I thought I might linger a moment on the definition of flower parts in general. Most growers know that an orchid flower comprises an outer whorl of 3 sepals and an inner whorl of 3 petals, and that one of the petals has evolved to become the lip. The evolutionary pressure to create a lip is no doubt related to the fact that the sexual organs of an orchid flower are combined into one structure (the column) and the need for the special petal to guide the pollinator into approaching the flower from one direction and to scrape its body against the column in just the right way to achieve pollination.

However, what do you know about sepals and petals? The flowers of all flowering plants have them but orchids are

perhaps the only type whose sepals have become virtual petals. The sepal is usually defined as the outermost layer of the flower (often green and leaf-like) that encloses a developing bud. The petals are inside the sepals and are often conspicuously coloured, acting as a visual attractant for the pollinators. The sepals are there to protect the flower before it opens, which is why they are usually stiff and leaf like but even so, they usually persist after the petals fade. If the flower has been pollinated they form the cup in which the fruit develops, such as the rose hip in a rose. (the pic at the left is a rose)

So getting back to the phalaenopsis and what is a petaloid lip. A petaloid lip is a lip that has lost some of its specialised lip characteristics and is reverting to the form of a petal.

And why would an orchid that took thousands of years to specialise a petal into a lip, now begin to “unevolve” it to be more like a petal? The answer is that it is just by accident. Most likely as a result of man’s intense but artificial breeding programs.

Den. Kuranda Classic ‘Violet’

Some years back there was some similar work done when a petaloid lip hardcane *Dendrobium* came up. See the picture of Den. Kuranda Classic ‘Violet’. These were much sought after for a while but hardcane *Dendrobiums* are not generally popular in Sydney because they are warm growers that require some skill to grow well.



And now we have petaloid Phalaenopsis. Gowan has shown us several different ones so far but they don’t seem to be generally available to the public as yet. I imagine that the breeders are busily making all sorts of experimental crosses as we speak, trying to create reliable, colourful, growable Phallys with that something different look. Once they do hit the market they will be everywhere and I am sure will be very popular because ‘Phallys’ are now accepted as a viable houseplant. This could be big.

#### ***Dendrobium nemorale***

Another plant in Alice’s Orchids display was a delightful little *Dendrobium* I had never seen before. It was Den. *nemorale* which I read comes from the Philippines on the island of Luzon. Unfortunately none of the photos I took at the show were up to scratch so I have had to borrow one of Ron Parson’s great pictures off the Flickr website.



Den *nemorale* is one of a small group of *Dendrobiums* within a side branch of the genus called Section *Conostalix*. There are between 10 and 16 species in the group depending on your reference source. I don’t think I have seen any of them benched before this one, so perhaps that says something about their popularity with growers. And for those wondering where these species fit in within *Dendrobium*, Section *Conostalix* are fairly closely related to Section *Grastidium* whose species were once recognised as a separate genus under the name *Grastidium*. The *Grastidiums* contain some quite attractive flowered species but the flowers are rather ephemeral (short lived) which has limited their popularity. Both *Grastidium* and *Conostalix* usually have flowers in one’s or two’s along the pseudobulb although *nemorale* can have up to four flowers in each group.

Den *nemorale* has a compact, 30 cm tall pseudobulb covered in hairy sheathes. It is only found at low elevations, up to 500 m and the Kew website says it grows in the wet tropical biome. In Hornsby, I think I might find supplying that habitat a little tricky but Alice is obviously doing it well. Her orchid was glowing with health and looked delicious.

#### **Oncidium Twinkle ‘Fragrant Fantasy’**



Next I want to talk yet again about a wonderful little Oncidium hybrid called Twinkle. I took this picture from one of the displays because I thought it looked great. Our bigger orchids like *Cymbidiums* and *Cattleyas* are the ones that always attract the most attention, but I am sure display team members will agree that one of the biggest problems is to fill in the spaces between as attractively as possible, AND, to find small, compact orchids to feature in the front.

Now what better orchid fits that requirement than Twinkle.

By coincidence, Trevor brought in a dark pink/red form of twinkle as one of the discussion items in the culture class he and I did last month. The cross that makes Twinkle is *Onc. sotoanum* (formerly *ornithorhynchum*) x *Onc. chierophorum*. The first is a pink species, the second is deep yellow, which perhaps explains why the hybrid Twinkle occurs in all shades between near white to yellow to near red. I wonder if the original breeder, the famous W.W.G. Moir in the 1950’s, foresaw that. We can never know because although he made the cross so far back,

Twinkle didn't become a popular hybrid until much later and as he is no longer with us, we can't now ask him.

One topic that came up in our culture class was some leaf tip damage that seems to occur sometimes on Twinkles, and one of our growers suggested that their experience was that it may be related to cold damage. I was able to add to this in that at my home which is part way down a valley, sometimes experiences harsh low temperatures in winter and I had also found that Twinkle handled that badly. We then discussed the parentage in that sotoanum is very cold hardy but the other parent, chierophorum is less hardy, being from the tropics of Central America down to Colombia, and often at only moderate elevations.

In milder parts of Sydney Twinkle grows easily but in colder areas it may need some protection in winter. It is very much worth it though and a well grown Twinkle is really lovely.

**Paph. wardii**

It has been a surprise to me how much public interest and desire has changed in the world of Paphiopedilum in the last 20 years. When I first became interested in orchids some 50 years ago, Paphiopedilum was one of the groups that interested me least of all. Many growers had a few species Paphs in their collections, gardeners grew pots of insigne on their shady porch, some specialist enthusiasts had some of those 'rare?' Paph. species and hybrids that grew taller spikes with multiple flowers but they seemed to be something only real niche enthusiasts were interested in. But the big interest in Paphs seemed to be in those manmade, round, saucer, shape hybrids that almost looked like they were made from plastic. For me, the hybrids had no delicacy to them at all, and the general species like venustum, insigne, and curtisii were curious but not particularly attractive.



Needless to say, my personal orchid interests jumped from one kind of orchid to another to another in those first 20+ years until I had a shade house chock full of all sorts of strange orchids. Some pretty, some just strange, and it even included a few Paphs. Don't ask me why – growers don't have to be logical.

Anyway ... as you might have guessed, times change, and despite all that prologue I do grow quite a few Paphs these days. I have developed a bit of an interest in the multiflora types and some of what we call the Maudiae species and hybrids, and I especially notice choice specimens in man's line breeding of some of the species like this wonderful dark coloured example of Paph. wardii benched at St Ives by Seong Tay. If this one doesn't attract your attention, perhaps it's just that your orchid addiction hasn't progressed far enough as yet. Just stunning.

And finally, weren't there some absolutely cracking **Australian Native orchids** in the displays this year.



**Den. speciosum**



**Den. Zip x delicatum x Hastings**



**Den. Kayla x Avril's Gold**

flowering seasons, and the growability of our Australian orchids. And most grow easily in a Sydney shadehouse.

I can only show you a tiny glimpse into some of the wonderful array of these types on show so I must apologise to the growers of the probably even better ones where I don't have a shot.

Like all kinds of orchids, the specialists in these areas are making great strides in improving the colours, the



**a section from the ANOS Warringah display**

I am by no means a specialist in this subject but I have to admit to being unable to resist buying new ones from time to time. It is a great pleasure to see their development year by year.

And of course there were the fabulous Cattleyas and Cymbidiums and all the others, but by now you all know I am attracted more to the oddball types. It is just the way it is I'm afraid so I will finish by returning now to the riddle about the 7 wives.

**The riddle goes on to say that each wife had 7 sacks, each sack had seven cats, each cat had seven kits.** and then asks the question **"kits, cats, sacks, and wives, how many were going to St. Ives?"**

*(Well, because the riddle is about me going to St Ives, the answer is "one".)*