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

(Established in 1947)
A.B.N. 92 531 295 125
20th Nov 2023 Volume 64 No. 11
Annual Membership : **$15 single, $18 family**

Next Meeting : Mon 20th November 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.

Our Culture Class this month will be run by **David Floyd** and his subject **– *'Hanging basket culture'***. It is terrific to see members like David and others taking active roles in growing the skills of our members. We have such great growing experience among us and it is being passed on to coming generations. Thank you Dave.

As usual there will be the ***monthly raffle*** 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 – We do not have nominated supper Volunteers for our **November** meeting so if you are willing to assist, please let us know when you arrive. 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, ***as a 'Main Event'*** instead of a guest speaker we will try a ***'Member's mystery plant pick.'*** Five members from the lucky exhibitors list will be selected to choose one benched plant for open discussion. Comments will be invited from anyone at the meeting on its culture.

Best of the Evening Species – Bulb. mastersianum – *grown by* ***Jean Fulcher***

Isn't this just one of the most delightful of orchids. But Bulbophyllum is a genus that requires some study. It is one of the largest, with over 1500 species and like Dendrobium, has been subject to attempts at re-organisation.

When I was getting started, we called these Bulbo's that had a multi flower arrangement like a daisy, a 'Cirrhopetalum' and all expected the group to be separated as a genus with that name. That hasn't happened, and in fact the old Cirrhopetalums have now been split into at least three sections. Isn't life complicated.

Anyway, the lovely mastersianum is found in Borneo and in the Moluccas islands. It occurs from sea level to about 500 meters elevation, and, as this is virtually around the equator, you can imagine this represents rather warm, moist conditions. To grow this one you need a glasshouse or equivalent.

The plant is only moderate in size with single, strap shape, 10-12 cm leaves atop a conical pseudobulb. The bulbs are fairly well spaced so growth sort of marches across a pot. However, like many Bulbophyllums, this one likes a shallow container like a 25 – 30 cm terracotta saucer and with a little assistance will then grow back and forth across itself making a nice dense matt. The dozen or so flowers of mastersianum are about 4 cm long and can come in almost pinkish red, to pink, to pinkish orange, to orange, to bright yellow. All are popular.

Congratulations Jean, a gorgeous orchid and one I haven't yet 'mastered' but greatly admire. Wonderful.

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

President Dennys' Desk – Well, our AGM is over for another year. It was a dynamic evening with 46 members and 3 visitors present. We also had a lot of apologies and I hope all who were not able to attend are managing their personal situations positively. The news is that I will be President for another year ably supported by Jenny Richardson as Secretary and Lina Huang as Treasurer. Jessie Koh and Herb Schoch have also signed up for another year which is wonderful. We will still need 3 or more committee members to make the running of the society easier. It is not a difficult job and we run an agenda at our committee meetings to keep us on track. You don't have to know a lot about orchids but can look forward to making our society a friendly and productive organisation to belong to.

There were a lot of flowers at the meeting, and I thank the judges for their dedication to the large task that unfolded before them. I also thank Lina for her hard work preparing and running the auction assisted by Janine who also wore more than one hat on the night. Thanks, are also extended to Mary and Sonja for preparing the supper, to Herb for looking after the sales table, to those members who brought in plants for the auction and to Jane for taking the photos we always seem to need. Thank you also David, Stuart and Chris for staying right up to the end to help pack away the chairs, tables and sound gear. Finally, I thank Peter D'Olier for chairing the AGM transition and the nice comments he made about our society. It is a friendly society, and it was nice that Peter publicly acknowledged it to be so. Congratulations Jane and Peter for finally winning a raffle plant for the first time in 3 years – just brilliant.

Supper offerings – Our supper is an important part of our meetings where members can chat about orchids and meet new people. We are having new people come to our meetings quite regularly. That said, we need members to bring in a small offering for the supper table. It just adds that little bit of lovely social structure to the evening and it is also a nice experience.

Setup and pull down – Our committee members spend a lot of their overall meeting-presence before and after the meeting setting up and pulling down. We need more people to help make it easier, especially after the meeting. I invite able members to help us in these crucial activities.

Meeting Hall Scuttlebutt – It was announced at the AGM that KOS will be staying at the West Lindfield Hall, and we will work out a way we can still have culture classes which are highly valued.

Social event – The social event organised by Jessie on the 6th of October last at the West Pymble Chinese restaurant was excellent and attended by 25 members. It was a little chilly, which was surprising, given the hot weather we had been having. We had plenty of coats, blankets, beanies and hats to make everyone comfortable. Surprisingly, Adrian said he was not cold given he was not wearing a sweater in contrast to myself as per the accompanying image.

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. Once we receive the next GCP order we will have some Orchiata bark in stock.

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 Member – Georgia Lee** joined our society last month. We all remember what it's like being the new person in a group, so if you see Georgia, please make a point of saying hello and make her feel welcome. We are very pleased to have you in the society Georgia & hope you enjoy our meetings. Jim – line below comma not fullstop
2. **Committee members & general helpers needed**: As mentioned in the Desk, our executive members Dennys, Lina & Jenny were re-elected along with Jessie & Herb. The committee would very much welcome some new members. Different people bring fresh ideas & perspectives which all helps keep our society interesting for all. We are also always looking for extra non-committee members to assist with various regular tasks, this is even more imperative with the reduced committee so if you are willing to assist in any capacity please let one of the committee know, your support would be most appreciated.
3. **Huon Park** Christmas Fair Wed 29th Nov. As mentioned at the last meeting we are running a small outreach event at Huon Park (a retirement village) again this year. We will have a few flowering orchids on display, a small member's plant sales area and will be providing culture advice.

   The address is Huon Park, 381 Bobbin Head Road, North Turramurra. If you have a few plants to sell they need to

be established, well presented, medium sized, perhaps in flower & free of disease. You need to attach a yellow sales tag the same as at meetings, with your name or initials & price. If you need Australian Native Orchid tags Dennys will have these on site & a sales sheet will be sent out with this bulletin. 15% commission will apply. Setup starts at 8 am, if dropping plants off, the best way to approach is from Bobbin Head Road. Drive into the center as indicated on the map and find some drop off parking in the area shown. Once you have unloaded, please move your vehicle back up to Bobbin Head Road or try and find a vacant visitor's spot. We don't need many people during the event, but you are most welcome to stay and help sell and discuss plants with people at the fair. It is about having some fun in an orchid context. We will be located on the verandah area of the Fair Hall building.

Upcoming events

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

Sat 18 Nov - ANOS Sydney, Australian Native Cymbidium Celebration, show, sales & guest speaker, Baulkham Hills Community Centre, 15 Conie Ave. Baulkham Hills from 10am

Wed 29 Nov - KOS sales & display tables at Huon Park Xmas Fair, 381 Bobbin Head Road, North Turramurra

Mon 11 Dec **– KOS Christmas Party – ONE WEEK EARLIER THAN OUR NORMAL MEETING NIGHT**

Best of the Evening Hybrid – Wilsonara Kolibri *grown by* ***Gloria & Allan Cushway***

What a bright, colourful beauty this is. Currently listed on the Royal Horticultural Socity site under the genus name of Cyrtocidium (Ctd) (syn. Wilsonara or Wils.) Kolibri. This cross between Cyrtocidium Intermezzo x Oncidium nobile was registered in 1984 by Kuno Krieger, from Germany. There are 5 species in it's ancestory; 50% from one of the old Odontoglossum species – O. nobile (which is now an Oncidium), then two small flowered pink Oncidium species (25% Onc sotoanum and 12.5% Onc incurvum), 6.3% from an unusual old pink/mauve ex Odont which is now Cyrtochilum edwardii, and lastly of course 6.3% from the bright red Cochlioda noezeliana which is now an Oncidium. This certainly isnt your typical "Wilsonara" and its contributors have certainly been through the name change mill.

Lets have a look at the flowers of the species involved.

First, the two pink Oncidiums. While pink may seem to you a bit 'so what', I assure you there just aren't many pink Oncidiums and these two look rather significantly 'un-Oncidium' like.

Oncidium sotoantum ***(far left picture)*** has wiry, many branched, 30-60 cm horizontal to arching spikes, and flowers around 15-20 mm diameter. Onc. incurvum ***(centre pic)*** has an upright then archng, 90 cm tall inflorecence with fewer branches and 25 mm diameter flowers. Neither looks like something you might traditionally think of as an Oncidium.

Next, the two that were previously Odontoglossums. This was the group that usually provided hybrids with the desirable round shaped, larger flowers with more or less broad sepals and petals. In Kolobri, the two Odonts are nobile ***(pic right above)***, (also previously known as Odont pescatorii) which fits the old classic Odont model, and Odont edwardii which is a little more wierd.

Onc nobile is a beautiful flower and there are many awarded cultivars with subtle variations in colour and patterns. The basic colour is usually white or a mix of white and pink but all can have more intense and more variable pink to purple splashes of colour. The inflorescence can be 30-60 cm and the dozen or flowers are generally 7 cm diamter. Its

not hard to imagine why Onc nobile is a popular parent in Oncidiinae and is a direct parent in Kolobri.

The other "Odont" is edwardii ***(picture at the right)*** but this is not really one of the classic Odont types. Its flowers look much more like a Cyrtochilum which is an unusual genus of about 185 species, nearly all from quite high elevations. Edwardii has a very tall, 90 -120 cm, almost vine like inflorescence with branches and sub-branches. The flowers are only about 25 mm diameter but are coloured a sort of deep rose purple. With its unusual inflorescence and moderate flower shape, its use in Kolibri seems to be as a contributor of colour more than anything else.

Which brings us lastly to the last of the 5 species in Kolibri. That one of a kind Oncidiinae species that used to be called Cochlioda noezeliana before DNA analysis decided it and a huge number of other genera were really just Oncidiums. Its stunning red colours are always the reason for its inclusion in hybrids. It only represents 6% of Kolibri's genes and few Kolibri cultivars show much red influence. However, some do and in Kolibri those red genes are hiding away in there somewhere. Perhaps we will see more red influence in future breeding from Kolibris.

Kolibri 'Pink Angel'

Kolibri (pic by Todd Boland)

Kolibri 'Woodland Marvel'

Over the years 11 different Kolibri cultivars have been awarded and there is substantial variation in size, shape and colour among the flowers in this hybrid. The underlying color ranging from white, pink, pinkish red, violet to purple. The colours are usually vibrant with strongly contrasting markings. Size also varies. The largest seem to be around 4 cm across but some cultivars take after the smaller flowered species in its make up and have flowers between 2 – 2.5cm. The three pictures above are quite richly coloured but not all Kolibris are so lucky. If you look to buy a Kolibri perhaps you should select a variety you know. It is a very unusual hybrid.

The Cushway's plant is certainly a stunner and one of the better ones but no cultivar name was given. Congratulations on another Best of the Evening Gloria & Allan. We wait each month to see what you will show us next.

Last Orders

A barman in a pub next to a hospital was rather surprised when this guy walked in in a hospital gown and holding on to a wheeled stand bearing a drip that was still connected to his veins. The barman asked if he could help.

Bizarrely the guy said, "Can I have 2 pints of lager, 2 pints of Guinness, 4 Jack Daniels and coke, 3 gin and tonics, and 6 shots of tequila?"

It's a free country so the barman started to pour the drinks and put them on the bar one at a time. As he finished pouring all of the drinks the guy from the hospital downed them in order and finished on the shots of tequila which he dispatched one at a time at a quick pace.

When finished, he then looked at the barman really sad and said, "I shouldn't have drunk all that with what I've got."

"Why," said the barman, "what have you got?" --- He said, "About $3.50."

Best of the Evening Novice - Wilsonara Pacific Panache 'Dorothy Jean' *grown by* ***Loretta & Paul Au***

Now that is a well grown orchid. It is desperately trying to leap out of its pot.

Paul and Loretta also won Best of the Evening with the same orchid last year (see KOS bulletin Aug 2022) so I won't bug you with a repeat of all the species in its make up but I will pause briefly on the curiosity of the orchid subtribe Oncidiinae. And of course Pacific Panache is a hybrid made up from at least 12 species within the subtribe. After all the recent taxonomic rearrangements within Oncidiinae its present official genus (probably not its last) is just Oncidium, however, despite all the DNA analysis I still find it hard to see some of them as Oncidium and I wonder if might be an illustration of lumpers temporarily winning out over splitters. ***(no emails please)***

Anyway, despite the particular make-up of Pacific Panache, it is a fact of nature that a huge number of genera within Oncidiinae are capable of breeding together and producing viable and fertile offspring. **And**, such intergeneric hybrids often make some stunningly beautiful orchids reflecting identifiable aspects of the various genera involved.

Perhaps not a valid comparison, but it is like crossing several different types of mammals and creating a new, viable, and improved 'being'.

Amongst mammals, most genera are not genetically close enough to cross breed. The same applies among very different orchids but many branches of the family do cross breed and we just take it for granted. In reality, it is amazing. Evolution with the accelerator pedal down.

Congratulations Paul and Loretta, great growing.

Arpophyllums and Classification by Jim Brydie

Back in the November 2020 KOS newsletter I wrote up Arpophyllym gigantem in a Best of the Evening description of a plant benched by Lina Huang but for some reason, for such a showy, easily grown group of orchids, we don't see this genus on the bench as often as we might.

I don't bring many orchids to meetings these days but last month my giganteum was looking quite nice so I decided to bring it in and stick it in the 'Specimens' class. When I got to the hall I realised I had overlooked the fact that this was also the flowering month for most of the section Calista Dendrobiums *(thyrsiflorum, densiflorum etc).* The Specimen class was well packed with golden and white beauties. Ahh, the trials of an orchid grower. Instead of having plenty of room for my 30 cm pot of Arpophyllum (with a plant spread more like 75 cm) I had to spend ages with some help to rearrange benching space to get it in at all.

Now, this is where I was intending to launch into a slightly more detailed overview of the genus Arpophyllum than my previous attempt. Alas, it has proved more difficult than I had expected.

Genus Arpophyllym is one of those orchid groups that has been a subject of debate as to where it should fit. In addition, although perhaps 11 species have been described over the years there is also conjecture as to which should remain as valid species and which should be lumped together as one.

Arpo. alpinum

As I wrote in 2020, today the official ruling by the RHS in London is that there are only 3 species – A. giganteum, A. laxiflorum, and A. spicatum. I guess if that is what the DNA specialists tell us, then we have to accept it, but I have one of the Arpophyllums labelled A. alpinum and if its differences from the average giganteum are just variations of form within a broad species I have to wonder at which point a local adaptation to habitat, or conditions, or even pollinators, becomes sufficient to give it species rank. Alpinum and giganteum sure look different to me. Alpinum has a much shorter more compressed inflorescence with fewer but slightly larger flowers. And, while I acknowledge that flower colour is not a species differentiator, the flowers of 'alpinum' (***or giganteum var. alpinum?***) are much darker than giganteum and I wonder if that may indicate a change in pollinator.

So how different are the three currently validly named Arpophyllums? They are different, but not startling so in general appearance. As you would have seen last month jn regard to Cattleya trianeae, the individuals within a species can vary substantially. If I were to use photographs to try to separate the 3 species it is very tricky to try and 'typify' each species in a few photos.

Therefore, in the table below I tried to tabulate the key descriptive elements of each of the 3 to see what distinguishes each of them. Unfortunately, the description information is far from distinctive. See if you can grasp it from the table.

The main source of data was Orchidwiz V9 (the last version I believe) and the data was from Charles and Margaret Bakers wonderful database of species information, ***EXCEPT for*** A. laxiflorum. The data there comes from Jay Pfahl's Orchid Species Photo Encyclopedia. The source for any other data added is identified in place.

	A. spicatum	A. giganteum	A. laxiflorum
Locations	Mexico and possibly Central America to as far south as Costa Rica. normally found below 1500 m	Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Jamaica, Colombia, & Venez. Elevations from 350 to 2100 m.	Mexico and northern Guatemala. Elevations 1400 to 2500 m
Pseudobulbs	up to 10 in. (25 cm) long	17-35 cm long by about 0.3 in. (0.7 cm) in diameter near the base	
Leaves	Up to 50 cm long by 4 cm wide, (J. Cullen adds strongly folded along the midrib)	30-65 cm long by 2.5-3.5 cm wide (J. Cullen adds lvs leathery, folded at the base, flatter above)	
Inflorescence	Up to 40 cm long	About 25 cm long. Dressler adds: flower cluster 4 or 5 times longer than wide.	
flowers	Many. Flr usually less than 12 mm across Sepals 5 or 6mm x 2 or 3mm Petals 5mm x 2mm), round or bluntly tipped apex. margins irregularly notched. The uppermost lip, is 6mm x 3mm, has a sacklike base, narrowed then expanding to an egg-shaped blade, arches to form a hood over arched 4mm long column.	Overallsize 1cm, ~cup-shaped, rose-purple. Sepals somewhat fleshy, 7 x 4 mm. Lateral sepals completely separate all the way to the base. Petals, less fleshy than sepals, about 7 x 0.3 in. (0.7 cm) long but less than 2mm wide. Lip is deeply sacklike at the base, 7 x 4mm. somewhat irregular margin in apical half. Column up to 4 mm long.	Flower size 1.5 cm. As indicated by the species name, lax flowered means flowers more loosely arranged in the inflor. See close up pictures below.

If you can sort one from another based on that, as Kipling once said, "you are a better man than I am Gunga Din".

It seems a significant issue to me that the inclusion of older definitions like A. medium, and A alpinum into giganteum, makes giganteum a farcical name. A. medium and alpinum had much shorter flower clusters and much smaller plants. And yes, I know its just a name, but a farcical name is ridiculous. There are some really big 'giganteums' with big, spectacular flower stems but now not all of that name are like that.

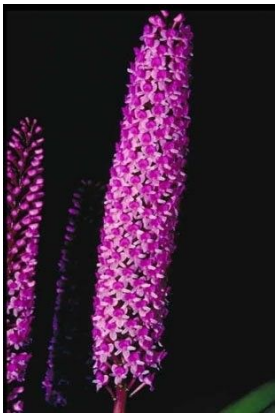
Despite all that however, pictures do give us some chance. I have never grown A. spicatum so I have no personal experience of it but I suspect that the leaf description distinction between spicatum and giganteum by J Cullen is very meaningful. The leaf of spicatum is more strongly folded and probably acts to direct water to the base of the plant.

To give you a general idea of the visual differences. First look at the close ups. One obvious distinction between laxiflorum and the other two is its flatter tipped lip whereas the other two sort of form a little hood over the column.

A. laxiflorum

A. spicatum

A. giganteum



A. giganteum (a big one)

A. laxiflorum (spread out flrs)

A. spicatum

Next, the overall inflorescence. Giganteum (in general) has a long, narrow, densely packed inflorescence. Laxiflorum is perhaps a little shorter, but not always, but is certainly wider and each flower is on a longer stem, opening up the cluster. Hence the name laxiflorum.

Spicatum is tricky because there are many pictures of spicatum that are really giganteum. Even in the real spicatum, cluster length

can vary substantially so make sure you also look at the leaf structure to check.

Which brings us back to the matter of the classification of Arpophyllum. A subject which offers me the perfect opportunity to offer up a little insight into how the complications of orchid classification apply themselves in practical terms. I will try not to get too deep, but the subject is very broad and regardless of the science, decisions are affected by the curious idiosyncrasies of mankind's mind. Our desire to understand drives us, but other human idiosyncrasies can get in the way. For example - our vanities (such as the desire to be the one to name a new species or to name a species or hybrid after ourselves), our competitiveness, but also our willingness to find compromises or find what we deem 'best fits' when there is no answer with what we do know.

I have discussed orchid classification systems previously but at the risk of boring you with repetition, I feel I must repeat some of the history of orchid classification systems to give you a view of their development over time. There won't be much reference to Arpophyllum here, but it is a relevant example.

Anyway, as you must already know by now the binomial system we use for plant and animal names that 'man' has been using for over 200 years, was originally developed and proposed by **Carl Linnaeus in the mid 1700's**. Broadly speaking, genera were defined by grouping various species of plants (or animals) that had ***a clearly common group of morphological characteristics*** that would seem to indicate that they were closely related and probably part of one branch or twig of the evolutionary tree. In the case of orchids this was mostly based on characteristics of the flowers, and more particularly the sexual parts of the flower. ie regarding reproduction.

However, over the many years that this system prevailed, more detailed analysis began to show that some of the members of genera defined this way were not natural evolutionary buddies. Some genera were actually a mix of species from quite a few different genera. Probably as a result of parallel evolution in different groups to meet the same ecological or reproduction niche. Some better system was needed but such a massive overhaul of a whole classification system was a task not easily taken on.

There were many attempts that contributed greatly to our pool of knowledge. Many highlighted errors here and there, but no new classification system achieved acceptance until (in my opinion) in 1981 when Robert Dressler published a book titled "**The Orchids – Natural History and Classification**".

The fly cover of this book starts out : *"This lively examination of the structure, classification, evolution, and ecology of the Orchidaceae will appeal to anyone with an eye for beauty or a bent for natural history. It will provide professional biologists and amateur orchidists alike with a deeper understanding – and a thoroughly new classification - of this, the largest flowering family in the plant kingdom"*. That says it all.

I acquired a copy of this book in the late 80's as my interest in orchids was developing and although I have still never read the whole thing as a book, I have used it comprehensively to understand how everything fits together. It was my bible as I became fascinated with one kind of orchid after another.

Dressler's proposed structure of the orchid family was widely accepted as a substantial step forward although I am sure there were many who had issues with it. It didn't ever claim to be the end of the story. We all knew there was still more knowledge needed and that the research in some areas hadn't even yet begun. It was based on some assumptions and interpretation of knowledge but at least it explained what those bases were.

However, information was now coming to hand at an increasing rate from all sorts of research and it wasn't long before Dressler himself wanted to revise his work. According to Wikipedia, his initial scheme of 1981 was modified in 1986, twice in 1990, and then again in 1993.

The latter was with his publication of a new book in 1993 : "**Phylogeny and Classification of the Orchid Family**". In its Introduction he wrote :

"When I agreed to publish (the 1981 book) I found myself with a dilemma and only limited time for a resolution. …..

The original classification system was artificial but how best to improve the system was not clear. I associated the Neottieae with Orchideae, convinced myself that the vandoid orchids were a natural group, and treated number of pollinia as an important feature to distinguish the vandoid groups. Now it is clear that none of these was a wise decision. …..… new data appeared while the 1981 book was in press and very useful information has been published since then. One can now attempt a more complete revision of orchid classification, using information that was unavailable in 1979. There are still many questions in need of answers and we can not produce a long lasting, definitive classification with the available information. Still, it is useful to revise our old ideas (especially when they are wrong) and offer new ones"

JB: Isn't it refreshing to hear from someone who can acknowledge an error and immediately seek to correct it?

In my view Dresslers 1993 book offers a much superior classification system but as we all know, the world stands still for no one and our knowledge is still increasing by the day.

The next step forward was in 2015. A new comprehensive and updated system was published by a group of eminent scientists (Mark W. Chase, Kenneth M. Cameron, John V. Freudenstein, Alec M. Pridgeon, Gerardo Salazar, Cássio van den

Berg, André Schuiteman). It was titled **"An Updated Classification of Orchidaceae"** and incorporated a lot of the most recent DNA research evaluating evolutionary paths in orchids.

I have only read the abstract and the provided analysis of changes to major families and tribes but it does seem another big step forward. I note that 2015 was nearly 8 years ago so I imagine that there must be even more information coming to hand every year to give direction to areas of uncertainty but unless I have missed it, there has been no later comprehensive overhaul.

Which therefore brings me back to the idiosyncrasies on **man**kind. I use that term in full acknowledgement of its gender bias, but, in my view, words are just vehicles for transferring ideas/concepts/opinions/information from my mind to your mind. And if that is the case, it matters not whether I say Mankind, Womankind, Humankind or any similar word. So long as 'you' (in the broadest sense) understand what I am talking about, my purpose was fulfilled.

Anyway, gender bias is just a silly side issue as another illustration of our mind games. In orchid classification, for those who thought that science was now the one and only basis for decision making, here are some minor extracts from the 2015 paper. My inclusion of these quotations is in no way a criticism of the paper or its decisions or conclusions. It is merely to show that complex work such as this always includes decisions and interpretations by a human. It can never be as simple as comparing DNA strands and deciding which orchid species evolved from which.

"…. Our general philosophy in developing the classification of Orchidaceae has been to minimize the number of tribes in order to make the system as simple as possible. ….."

"…. Five is a reasonable number of subfamilies and is easily remembered by everyone, but, in other large families, the number of subfamilies has been greatly increased as a result of molecular studies and a tendency to split in order to maintain some long-recognized subfamilies, making these systems much more difficult for students and non-specialists to use."

"….. From a biological point of view, such an association also helps to understand the biogeography of Epidendreae as a whole. We have applied this same principle to subtribes, and so, for example, have placed Dilomilis, Neocogniauxia and Tomzanonia in Pleurothallidinae, Arpophyllum in Laeliinae and Coelia in Calypsoinae. In each of these cases, the group or genus was sister to the larger clade and could have been maintained, perhaps arguing for this on the basis of continuity or morphological homogeneity."

"At the generic level, the prevailing principle is that of lumping: (JB: as opposed to splitting) (the broad treatments of Bulbophyllum, Dendrobium and Epidendrum being the most prominent examples), but there have been exceptions…."

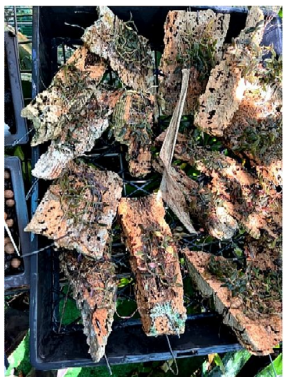
…. ***Tribe Arethusea*** *(JB: within subfamily Epidendroideae which also includes subtribe Laeliinae and the Cattleyas and Epidendrums etc)*
"…… The position of Arundina in this tribe seems clear, but in which of the two subtribes it should be included varies. The best-sampled analysis in terms of data, Freudenstein & Chase (2015), also provides a mixed result depending on the type of analysis (maximum likelihood versus parsimony). Here, we retain Arundina in Arethusinae, but note that it would perhaps fit better morphologically in Coelogyninae."

And finally as to Arpophyllum, you can see from the third quoted reference above, placing Arpophyllum in Laeliinae is correct but somewhat arbitrary. It is related to Laeliinae but exactly how close and where it may end up being attached, remains to be seen.

(and a roadrunner around the corner?)

Cary's Ramble – October 2023 – by Cary Polis, President MWOS

Copied from Oct 2023 MWOS bulletin with permission of the author.



Lately, due to many distractions and commitments during the day, I've taken to doing some work on my plants "after hours" ie with a work table set up in front of the television at night. I know that in some households this would not be allowed, but seeing that Jill has been preoccupied with sewing duties for the grandkids' musical, I've been able to do this without any repercussions.

I started with rejuvenating some cork mounts where for one reason or another, the plant had died. Often it is just a matter of a good scrape with a wire brush or in more severe cases creating a totally new host surface by removing the top layer with a pruning saw. Some of these cork pieces are quite perforated and you don't realise this until you cut off the top layer. Sometimes the mount is beyond redemption because of excessive perforation.

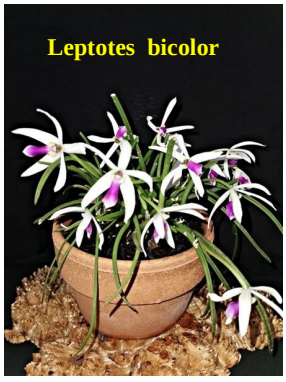
You can just imagine what the floor looks like when doing this job with fine cork dust all the way up to chunks, not to mention what I finish up looking like. The floor is polished concrete so the cleanup is not a problem. *(JB comment: brave man Cary)*

One of my target plants for propagating is a large mounted specimen of Neolehmanniana porpax. This plant has been going gang-busters and it was a prime candidate for a "haircut". Would you believe that I took 17 divisions and the mother plant barely looks like it's been molested. It is mounted on tree fern which means that it needs to be monitored for deterioration of the mount but so far so good. It will be interesting to see how the divisions perform mounted on cork.

I normally keep newly mounted plants horizontal so that they don't dry out too fast, to allow them to become established more easily. I also have another plant of this species and it couldn't be more diametrically opposed. This was a potted plant that I got from Bill Dobson some time ago. It was in a mesh pot and was alright when I first got it but it started to go into a decline to the point that it was all dead in the middle but still making new growths which were very weak. So I took the dregs before it was too late and made a few mounts with them. It will be interesting to see how they fare compared to the others.

I also have a plant of Oncidium longipes ***(right)*** which is a very beautiful species that you don't see all that much these days. It has grown fine for me on a mount but was starting to outgrow it and I don't think that the hot spell that we had recently did it any favours. So it started to look a bit ratty and was starting to outgrow its mount. This made me bite the bullet. Due to the amount of dead material in the middle of the plant I decided that division was the best way to go and it turned into 5 plants. It's a very worthwhile plant which is a relatively easy grower and it is worth getting if you ever see it for sale. It has a synonym but I can't think what it is.

I'm quite excited about another mounted plant at the moment and that is a lovely specimen plant of Dendrobium jenkinsii ***(left)*** that I've had for a few years. It has always grown okay for me but has always been a non flowerer or at best a shy flowerer. Well, this time it has buds all over it and it's going to be pretty spectacular if nothing untoward happens to the buds. I'm not really sure if the sudden influx of light thanks to the removal of my neighbour's tree is responsible but it's a plausible theory.



You may remember in one of my previous articles when I was lamenting the situation of a Leptotes bicolor ***(left, beside jenkinsii)*** that had been attacked by a borer in the mount that it was on and it fell apart in my hands. I put the fragments into sphagnum moss and thankfully, most of them have come away with new leads, so I've mounted those as well now. This is another charming species that is well worth growing.

Orchid growing is in many ways, no different to normal gardening in that your work is never finished ie it is a work in progress. There is always something that you could be doing. It's a little bit like the quest for enlightenment. Enlightenment is unattainable. Orchid growing is no different. Even the most successful growers will all tell you that they have trouble growing such and such or they kill this or they wish they could grow that etc. So don't be too hard on yourselves if something dies on you or is not doing well. It happens to everyone.

You are not alone. Happy growing.

A quick glimpse at some of the lovely orchids benched at the October Meeting

Cattleya Jin

Den densiflorum

Onc. Tigers Answer 'Trappers Gold'

Den Yodigimi x Spring Beauty

Cym. canaliculatum (alba)

Cattleya Maries Magic

Den. chrysotoxum

Sarc. Unknown

Sarc. Cliona 'Spangled'