



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

(Established in 1947)

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20<sup>th</sup> January 2025

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

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**Vice President :** Jim Brydie

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Committee : Jessie Koh (Membership Secretary / Social Events)

Committee : Stuart Ruthven

Committee : Julie Iyengar

Committee : Adrian Zderic

Committee

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**Next Meeting :** **Mon 20<sup>th</sup> January 2025**

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

COVID and even common old influenza remain a problem. **Please, if you are feeling unwell - do not attend.**

**YOU MUST SIGN IN** – Our insurance requires that you SIGN the ATTENDANCE SHEETS at the front door on arrival.  
**Please do it.**

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

**The Supper Break** – Supper is **not self-serve**, members are assigned to serve to minimise handling. **However, we don't have nominated supper Volunteers for our January 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 - we ask all members to bring in a contribution of cake, slice, or biscuits, etc for the supper table.** **Please bring something to add.**

**AND - please everyone, bring your own mug for tea or coffee.**

January is our first month back. There will be no culture class, but the ***sales table*** is operating for sale of members plants and for small quantities of pots etc. There will also be the usual ***monthly raffle***.

As is our January tradition, there will be ***no guest speaker, but instead, we will hold one of our "Plant Doctor" nights*** where we set up a Plant Doctor panel at each end of the hall and rearrange the chairs. If you have an orchid you are worried about, perhaps one that just isn't growing well or has some other problem that concerns you, this is your chance to get some advice from more experienced growers. Bring your plant along to the meeting for the experts to assess and advise. It is interesting to watch the experts assess an orchid. Their process reveals much about what you should start to look for, what various 'symptoms' mean, and ***why*** they mean it.

Let the experts give you some practical suggestions for changes to your culture and/or some immediate action that needs to be taken. There are no limits on the number of plants but my suggestion is to limit it to one or two so that more growers can receive advice. The doctors reserve the right to prioritise which 'patients' they see on the night.

**Some Gorgeous decorative benchings at the Christmas Party.**



There were only a few orchid benching to decorate our Christmas party but what a surprise, three different cultivars of the hybrid Miltoniopsis Breathless. When you stood right in front of them you could see the slight differences in the colouration of the fringe around the lip and in other minor areas.

The largest specimen was the one at the left which was labelled Breathless 'Beauty', and boy, what a magnificent specimen.

Thank you to all the growers. All those benching were beautiful

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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))

**Dennys' party-review** – Our Christmas party was well attended by 69 special guests, members and their partners. I was MC for the party assisted by **Jenny** and **Lina** during the presentation of awards. At least one person fell into the trap and was going to arrive the following Monday, but I managed to catch them. I think it would have been very weird for them if they had. We do this to give people more time to relax and reduce the seasonal pressure on members as we get closer to Christmas Day.

The feedback was wonderful, and many said to me in person or by email that they had a great time. The food was nice but a bit in excess so next year we will save some money by not ordering quite as many salads. That said, the extra salad was not wasted. Nothing was wasted and members were able to assist by taking home all the food and drinks that were left.

Our raffle tables were overflowing with so many plants on offer as well as wrapped gifts. **Ann's** hamper went quickly and had it in mind if I had my ticket pulled out first then I would go for it. Even the **D'Olier's** managed to get a raffle prize this year.

We had to rearrange the tables this year since we did not have access to the annex. It seemed to go ok but we had to put aside the benching competition which will start in January. That said I was pleased that **Bob, Loretta, Paul** and **Adrian** benched some plants to add some extra flowering-flair to the evening.

**Janine** and I arrived at 6.05 pm to start the setup but was surprised to find the hall open and the tables set up and the chairs on the way. There were a lot of folks at the hall already there, busy as bees. It was so good to see so many folk pitching in to help and I thank everyone who helped. Setting up the party is a lot of fun for me. Our pull-down was also well attended by members, and we managed to get away by 10.30pm.

**Jim** and I managed to trick **Ann Byron** as I asked her down the front to present the *Oxley Achievement Award* and **Jim** snuck around the back and presented the award to **Ann**. She was very surprised and was a little overcome which was quite ok since she has worked so hard for all of us over a long period, especially in 2024 with lots of handling of goods and rearrangement of operations to make life easier.

The food service was coordinated by a busy **Janine** assisted by busy **Di** with many people helping with the service. **Anthony** was always working in the background, all night. **Jessie's** PAV was well received as was **Lina's** little green pocket 'thingys' and noodles with bread rolls and butter supplied by **Adrian**. I hope our vegetarian folk managed ok. The bar was managed by **Herb, Stuart** and **Chris** and ran smoothly.

After our main course we had our award presentations. Our patrons **Pauline** and **Trevor** presented the awards to our Novice and Open benching competition winners. The Novice award was presented by **Pauline** and won by **Liz, Ethan** and **Celeste** and produced such surprise and a lot of fun with photos which were taken by **Jane**. **Nancy** came second by only 2 points with **Di** coming third. We had a total of 8 novice members bench in 2024 which was a good sign.



The Open benching award was presented to **Lesley** and **Garrie Bromley** by **Trevor**. **Garrie** announced that after 13 continuous years of success he and **Lesley** will not be competing in the benching competition any longer but will still be bringing in plants. This announcement produced surprise and a loud applause. The second place in Open went to **Adrian** and third to **Jane** and **Peter**. A total of 33 open members benched in 2024.

The benching competition plants used for award prizes were obtained by **Lina** when an opportunity arose with one of the suppliers. The plants were well advanced and a special thanks go to **Lina** for her effort.

After dessert the Christmas Raffle got underway with lots of happy, cheeky noise, especially from **Garrie** and **Peter**. Thank you, **Mary**, for selling the tickets and helping to make the raffle a success. Thank you, **Trevor**, for the raffle plants and I thank all those members who brought in such a wonderful display of gifts. Finally, I thank all our committee members, **Jenny, Lina, Jessie, Herb, Jim, Stuart, Adrian** and **Julie** for making the party work so well.



## The Christmas party mood was infectious across all ages





## Other Society News

**1. Pointscore results -** The 2024 results and prizes were announced at the party but I know many members like to see at least the top scorers published each year so here they are.

### Pointscore Results table from 2024

Open Section	Point Score	Open (continued)	score	Novice Section	Score
Bromley, G & L	424	Huang, Lina	207	The Pyne family	34
Zderic, Adrian	332	Ng, Betty	192	Yao, Nancy	32
D'Olier, Peter & Jane	298	Miller, Trevor	165	Flinders, Di	24
Au, Loretta & Paul	271	Koh, Jessie	160	Ruthven, Stuart	15
Law, Dora	252			Blackwell, Carol	12
Fulcher, Jean	221			Stewart, Robin	10

## 2. Novice Class Standings

I want to first explain that being graded as a Novice grower isn't an assessment of a growers abilities. It is a privilege we give to new growers to allow them to compete in a slightly less competitive part of our point score competition. We hope to give the newer grower more self confidence to bring their orchids to meetings and to get used to benching and to coping with orchid genus designations and the type class divisions we apply to benching.

Regardless of any of all this, 'Novice' growers are not limited to only benching in the novice section. Any time a Novice grower feels they are ready, they can bench in the Open classes or may bench some orchids in novice and some in Open.

There are just 6 broadly defined classes in our Novice section. The structure aims to introduce the way different orchids are separated by genus and family groups of genera, and the way our pointscore classes apply that botanical naming structure. We hope that our Novice system helps newer growers gradually gain enough self-confidence to bring orchids to meetings and to begin using the benching card system.

However, there is a process to gradually move each 'Novice' grower out of the Novice section and into Open.

Each year, one of the Novice growers wins the annual pointscore for each of the Novice benching classes. For example Native Orchids, or Cymbidiums, or the Cattleya/Laelia family class. Once a Novice grower wins one of those classes for the whole year, that grower loses their Novice classification just for that class and becomes "Open" for that kind of orchid. Once a Novice has won three annual point scores for 3 different novice classes, they become fully Open class growers and may no longer bench in Novice at all.

I know all this sounds terribly complicated and bureaucratic but we need a system applied consistently to be fair to all members. Sometimes a Novice will very quickly win classes and become Open in just a year. Other growers may take many years to lose Novice status or may never lose that status but they should always remember that the system is just there to help them grow. When they no longer need that help they should just drop it and move to Open.

The table below documents the annually updated novice status of presently active novice growers.

### THESE ARE THE NOVICE CLASSES IN WHICH growers listed ARE **NO LONGER ELIGIBLE TO BENCH**

names are in alphabetic order	
John and Jean Hocking	Previously won class 34 – Australian Native Species & Hybrids ( <b>They are now Open in this class</b> )
Anthony Mobbs	Previously won both <i>Class 34 Australian native species and hybrids</i> , and <i>Class 37 Oncidium species and hybrids</i> . ( <b>Anthony is now Open</b> in those classes).
Liz Pyne	This year Liz won class 35 - Laeliinae so must now bench those plants in Open.
Janet Snodgrass	Previously won class 35 – Laeliinae species and hybrids ( <b>Janet is now Open in this class</b> )
Nancy Yao	This year won novice <b>class 38 - Miscellaneous Species</b> and so must now bench those plants in Open.

Members no longer actively benching have been removed from the list. If you are unsure of your status, ask the committee.

## 3. Novice Championship and a new member



What a delight it was to see the excitement of Ethan and Celeste with their mum as they were presented with the 2024 Novice championship trophy.



And it is also exciting for me to tell you that Ethan has begun to acquire a few orchids of his own and in the future will be benching as a separate member in his own name.

An individual membership has been established for him and in the coming year we may see his first 'own' orchids appearing on the novice benches.

I hope Eathan gets a lot of fun out of growing orchids and that all members will get behind our newest member as he begins his orchid journey.

**4. Annual membership fees** – Jessie will be at the meeting and can take your payment if you want to do it that way, but you can also pay by bank transfer. That is:

**Westpac Bank, BSB No 032 188, account name - Ku-ring-gai Orchid Society Inc. and account number 103568.**

If you use this method, **please** use **your full name as the payment description** or your **phone number** if your financial institution does not allow you to enter a name. If you wish, you can email to the address below :

[kuringgaiorchidsociety@gmail.com](mailto:kuringgaiorchidsociety@gmail.com) to confirm your payment.

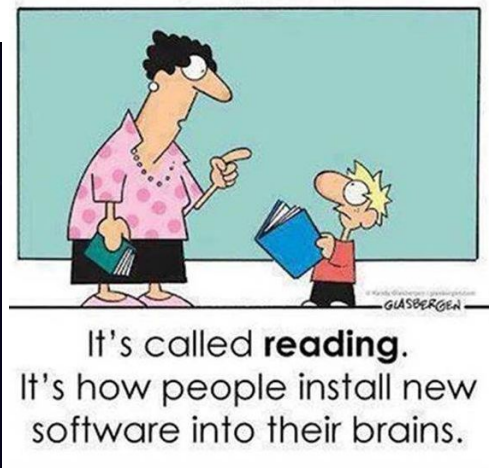
## 5. What a wonderful Party

On a personal level this was the first Christmas for some time where Cynthia and I had actually managed to make it to a society party and it was wonderful to be back among friends and orchid lovers.

This was also the first Ku-Ring-Gai party we had attended since we switched to a sit down style party and I thought the night was a great success. Although I have now rejoined the committee, all the organisation for this one was done by the old team with Dennys, Janine, Lina, Jenny, and Herb and Jessie doing most of the arrangement work. Boy do these trojans put in the hard yards, but there was also a big variety of other volunteer members helping out. The affair ran like clockwork and there were smiles on the faces of members all night except for the one or two at the end who had no luck in the monster raffle.

And talking about the raffle – WOW, thank you to the generosity of all the members with their donations of prizes. There can't have been many who went home empty handed but then that is the way raffles work isn't it. If you missed out, I hope you were rewarded for your patience at other party venues.

Thank you so much to everyone who pitched in on the night and helped wherever there was a need. You all made it work so well and you took a lot of pressure off the main workaholics. And to Dennys and Janine – thank you personally for the work you do and for making our meetings so pleasurable.



## Lemon Fruit Picker

"Lemon Pickers Needed" – read the ad in the Shepparton Times Newspaper. Ms. Sally Mulligan read it and decided to apply for one of the jobs that most Victorians are not willing to do. She submitted her application for a job as a Lemon Fruit Picker but seemed far too qualified for the job.

She has a Arts Degree and a Masters from Melbourne University. For a number of years, she had worked as a social worker and also as a school teacher.

The farm owner studied her application, frowned, and said, "I see that you are well educated and have an impressive resume. However, I have to ask you, have you had any actual experience in picking lemons?"

"Well, as a matter of fact, I have," she said... "I've been divorced three times, owned two Fords, voted twice for Daniel Andrews and once for Anthony Albanese."

She started work yesterday.....

One day on a busy street corner in New York, a huge man walks up to a police officer and asks, "Ethcuthe me offither, can you tell me where thirdee third, and thacramento ith?"

The police officer didn't reply at all. The large man then asked again, but still no reply. Finally the frustrated man walked away.

An onlooking pedestrian then walked up to the officer and asked, "Officer, why didn't you tell that man where thirty third and Sacramento was?"

The police officer replied, "Thure and get the thit ticked out of me?"



## A follow up on Cary's talk on Waterwell Culture

Jim Brydie

At our November meeting Cary Polis gave us a fascinating and practical introduction to adjusting to using waterwell pots in growing orchids. These previously overlooked implements might not be the right pick for every orchid but as more and more growers adopt them, probably starting with the orchids that have now proven to prefer them, it is just natural that they will also experiment with more and more orchid types. And guess what? They are finding an even wider range of orchids reacting positively to this style of culture. We now also know that Lycaste, Dendrochilum, Maxillaria, and Coelogyne grow really well in them, and a few months back we had Geoff LeMarne telling us that Cymbidiums are now commonly grown in waterwell pots or, at least in warmer months, standing in saucers of water.

After that meeting, Cary kindly sent me some pictures of another overgrown orchid he finally tackled for a repot after his talk. I think he mentioned on the night that he had toyed with using this one as his repotting demonstration but had decided it would take too long. He has now sent me some pictures of that repotting and break up job. The sequence of pictures below tell the story.

First though, this is what a nice specimen plant of a flowering Coelogyne multiflora looks like. The picture at the right is by Ron Parsons but slightly resized from his original. With apologies to Ron for any loss of quality.

On the left is a shot of Cary's subject plant which as you can see is slightly outsizeing its present pot.



The next 3 pictures show that plant knocked whole out of its

pot and laid on its side. And how interesting is that. The roots have completely filled the actual waterwell in the pot and made the pot's waterwell spout leave a perfect whole up into the root ball. Next 4 of the divisions cleaned up and ready to pot, and finally, five divisions from the original plant all neatly potted up.



There are a few of these 'orchid' waterwell style pots that are suitable for orchids and available. The preferred ones are those with a well built into the base of the pot. The pot can never be waterfilled deeper than the top of the well spout inside the pot, which allows the orchid grower to water as much as they want and flush out the standing water and any salts that may be accumulating. The top of the well spout also becomes the air exchange to the orchid and for the medium the orchid is growing in.

As Cary explained, his preferred process is to fill the water well area with clay balls and to use a layer of the most flexible gutter guard mesh to separate the clay balls and the well area from the orchid medium above it. The flexibility of the gutter guard is needed to assist in the wicking process between the medium above and the water in the well. Mesh like the roll at the right can be obtained at many hardware shops.



Orchid roots can and do grow down into the water and clay balls but even immediately after watering, the medium



area above has an air exchange opening via the spout.

One of these type pots is one made by Anova as mentioned in Geoff's article on Cymbidium culture. The internet shows them available at Epping Hydroponics but almost certainly from many other suppliers. The other, pictured above left, is the one we have been stocking on our sales table but I am not aware of our current supplies.

The other kind of self-watering pots with a clip on well at the bottom, are not suitable. They have no open air exchange for the medium and are designed for soil based plants.

### **And finally, we get to "CLAY BALLS". Just what are Clay Balls?**

There are any number of brands and types of Clay Balls, also known as 'Leca Balls'. There are very likely small variations in the formula and manufacture of each brand but they are all basically LECA balls.

LECA stands for 'lightweight expanded clay aggregate,' and is made from clay, brick dust, and waste from the processing of albite (a sodium-aluminium rich mineral derived from feldspar). The primary use of the clay balls is as a substrate is in hydroponic growing but as we know now orchid growers are also starting to use it.



### **Using Leca balls**

I have little personal experience with Leca balls. I won a few bags in a garden club raffle some years back and have used them to experiment a little but until I decided to do a little research for this article, I wasn't aware that like most orchid mediums Leca balls may need some preparation before using them.

An interesting article on the Leca Addict website at <https://www.lecaaddict.com/leca-information/leca-preparation> provides some interesting insights.

From the 4 pictures above which show at least 3 different brands, I can see that some types seem less surface sealed than others. The packets of Leca that I acquired look almost semi-glazed and quite unlike the paler coloured balls in the second from the left picture above. However, in articles I have seen about pre-preparation of the Leca, it does seem that the appearance can change after soaking and rinsing properly, and balancing the internal salts content.

I am only guessing, but I suspect that some commercially available Leca balls have already been pre-treated. Perhaps the manufacturers labelling will tell you.

There are two aspects to the preparation. First is the removal of extraneous dust and easily removable surface trash that will come off during use anyway. This stops the rubbish component becoming a problem in your culture process but if used the way Cary uses Leca, the rubbish might be flushed out during the first few full watering cycles anyway.

The second aspect is the parts per million level of soluble minerals in unprepared Leca. In the 'science' part of the explanation, the Leca Addict tells us that the ppm (part per million proportion of soluble salts) of his local water supply is 150 but after soaking a fresh batch of Leca balls, the soak water rises to 800 ppm. That is an awful lot of unidentified soluble minerals that have entered the water from the new Leca. Levels of soluble minerals inside the Leca and in the water always try to equalise but you may have to soak an awfully long time in a lot of water for the level inside the Leca to reduce sufficiently. Re-soaking in fresh water provides a lower ppm in the fresh water compared to the Leca and will speed up the demineralisation of the Leca.

Now whether all that wonderful information is of any use to you is for you to determine but I am going to soak and rinse Leca before I use it in future. If you water regularly and heavily as Cary told us he does, there is very likely less of an issue.

**THERE ARE TWO TYPES OF  
'FLU' IN THE WORLD: -  
THE HARMLESS ONE THAT  
WOMEN AND CHILDREN GET,  
AND THE 'NEAR DEATH' TYPE  
THAT MEN GET.**

**THE MOST POWERFUL  
GOVERNMENTS  
IN THE WORLD CAN'T  
SOLVE HOMELESSNESS.  
BUT THEY CAN CHANGE  
THE EARTH'S  
TEMPERATURE IF YOU  
PAY MORE TAXES....**



## Sobralia

by Jim Brydie

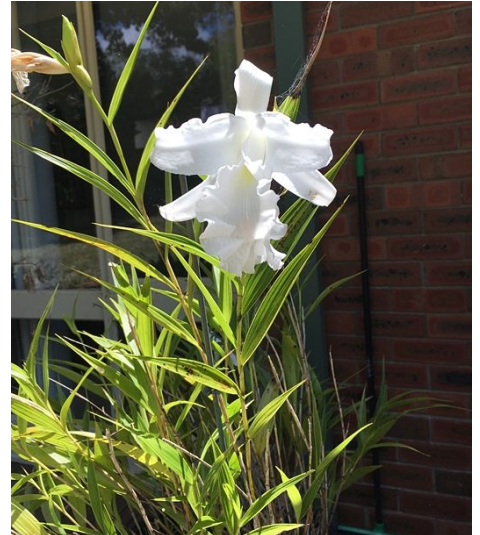
A week or so back, my lovely *Sobralia macrantha* var, *alba* flowered on the wall just outside my backdoor. *Sobralia* have such beautiful and showy flowers that they should be grown more widely.

Yes, it is a pity that their flowers are relatively short lived compared to many other orchids, but these are very easily grown and hardy orchids and once established they don't require constant attention to keep them going.

There are between 100 and 200 species of *Sobralia*, depending on your source of expert. The older references used to say around 100 but it does seem clear that many more species are being discovered in recent times and as the plant populations of different countries are being documented more closely.

Its geographic distribution is mostly tropical, with the range given as Mexico to the upper end of South America to at least Peru. In nature they can be found from low elevations (essentially sea level) – right up to 3000 metres.

These are terrestrial growers, often on hillsides, and given time can form large colonies. In an article by Jay Vannini, he quotes a 20<sup>th</sup> century botanist – Julien Steyermark - who wrote on a herbarium sheet for *Sobralia macrantha* that the orchid was found covering the slopes of a barranco (ie a cliff, ravine, or gully) and growing by the thousands over several acres. Perhaps something like the picture on the left below from Jay's article, and the second picture from another site. Jay observed that in some areas *Sobralia macrantha* and *Sobralia leucoxantha* existed near the edge of colonies and other plants in the colony appeared to be natural hybrids.



*Sobralia* and *leucoxantha* are two *Sobralia* species we see available around Sydney. I know several growers who have them and they often occur as lots in public orchid auctions here. Both are from reasonably high elevations and thus tolerate out mildly cold winter conditions with care. I grow both the white and the pink form of *macrantha* and both flower regularly. I also have several small plants of *leucoxantha* that I raised from flask some years back but I haven't grown them well enough to flower them just yet. I fear this is due more to my lack of attention than anything else.

**Which Sobralia should I try? - Sizes and cold tolerance?** - There are many beautiful and exotic species among *Sobralia* and more recently the experts, especially in the USA, have been creating hybrids to improve the flowers, the hardiness, and the flowering characteristics to produce some wonderful improvements. We don't seem to have picked up on that interest in Australia just yet but I am sure it will come.



But, if you decide to give a *Sobralia* a try then there are things you need to know.

***Sobralia macrantha* (pink)**

There are *Sobralia* species from lower elevations that are strictly tropical growers and not for our Sydney conditions without special protections. There are also some species whose flowers are more ephemeral than others (lasting only a day or less). These are also not for the average grower. There is also a very large variation in plant size among *Sobralia*. You need to read a bit about the ones you have in mind before you rush off to buy a plant to try.

Here are a few web links to very good articles that may help you understand the genus and its requirements.

\* Jay Vannini's full article can be viewed at [Orchid Addiction? Tips to get Sobralia — Exotica Esoterica](http://OrchidAddiction.com/Tips%20to%20get%20Sobralia%20-%20Exotica%20Esoterica)

\* Got *Sobralia*?, unknown author can be read at : [https://southcoastorchidsociety.com/orchidnotes\\_2019\\_07.html](https://southcoastorchidsociety.com/orchidnotes_2019_07.html)

\* Growing *Sobralias* by Bruce Rogers : <https://secure.aos.org/media/Content-Images/PDFs/sobralias.pdf>.

My first *Sobralia* was *macrantha* because that was the one that was sitting on the society sales table when I decided to



give it a go. This was rather fortuitous for me because I didn't have a clue about *Sobralia* or what to do with one, and it is one of the shorter, hardier species with canes usually between 45 and 60 cm tall. The flowers come from the top of the stem so it makes a very attractive but also manageable display when it flowers, and *macrantha* is particularly tolerant of our winter temperatures. Like most *Sobralias* however, it does need very good light to flower. **Sobralias are not shade loving plants.**

As suitable as *macrantha* may seem, many *Sobralia* species are much taller.

When I travelled to South America with a group of fellow orchid lover addicts about 30 years ago, I was particularly taken by a lovely *Sobralia* I saw growing among the ruins at Machu Pichu. I was told it was *Sobralia dichotoma*. I suspect it was planted there by park managers but just the same, it was there and flowering when we walked those first step into that magically historic site. From recollection, that plant among the ruins was about 5 or 6 feet tall but in my mind I filed away the thought that I could probably put up with that 'tallness' for such a beautiful flower. It wasn't long however before I also found *Sobralia dichotoma* growing in various other places along the famous 'Inca trail' that ends at Machu Pichu. And, in those other locations it was considerably larger. One plant had canes at least 15-18 feet long. Not rigidly upright, but rather with stems starting upward from the ground and then wending their way upward and outward between trees and shrubs to where the end of the stem could reach clear air and light along the walking trail. I assume so that the flower was accessible to pollinators. From a human point of view that gave us delightful large flowers just above head height from an orchid with its base buried amongst the trees over 3 metres away. I removed all thoughts of trying to grow *Sobralia dichotoma* no matter what lovely memories it could evoke upon every flowering.

Interestingly, *dichotoma* isn't even the tallest *Sobralia* either. That privilege goes to *Sobralia altissima* which is reported to have stems up to 44 foot long (more than 13 metres). Now that is a big plant. Although, as I described about *dichotoma*, these sorts of plants are sometimes more sprawly than upright, especially if they are growing in a little shade which may make the canes grow outwards in all directions looking for more light. Perhaps something like the *leucoxantha* at the left. I am sure not all *leucoxanthas* look like that as all my seedlings are bolt upright. And by the way, the *leucoxantha* flower at the left is an outstanding yellow variety of the species. Most are much paler and many are combinations of yellow and white but like *Sobralia macrantha*, it is also a species fairly tolerant of our Sydney conditions and not "too" much taller.

***Some other delicious samples to tempt your appetite for a Sobralia***



***Sobralia atrorubescens***



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***Sobralia Mirabilis***  
(*micrantha* x *micrantha* x *leucoxantha*)



***Sobralia Terry Root***  
(*callosa* x *fenzliana*)



***Sobralia La Folie***



***Sobralia sanderae***



***Sobralia calosa***