



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

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## Next Meeting : Mon 17<sup>th</sup> November 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 on the ATTENDANCE SHEETS at the front hall on arrival. – Insurance requires it. Please do it.**

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

**The Culture Class for November** – starting at 7.30 pm the class will be run by **Lina Huang** and will cover the **structure of the 4 Oncidiinae benching classes** and how flowers are measured to determine which class.

Because the Oncidiinae benching is situated in the left of the stage, Lina will set up her class on that side as opposed to the usual right side. When the class begins, please take up a seat on that side.

**Guest Speaker** – After the supper break our Guest Speaker – **James Indsto** will give a presentation called **the World of Species Orchids**. James is a wonderful grower, very knowledgeable and a fantastic photographer. When I asked about a promo for his talk, he mentioned how fascinating it is that when man first discovered orchids, the species orchids were all we had, and that despite a long subsequent period of focus on manmade hybrids, interest seems to be swinging back to the beauty and endless diversity of the species orchids. I think James will be very entertaining.

**The society sales table** will also be open as usual with pots, sticks and fertiliser etc. and hopefully also spare divisions of members plants. Please respect the **“Sales Table Open / Sales Table Closed” signs** and give our sales table managers time to set up and get themselves ready before you start grabbing stock and offering money.

**The Supper Break** – **Supper is not self-serve**. Volunteers are assigned to serve the food for hygienic reasons. And remember, we still need volunteers for September and October. Supplies are all organised in advance.

**Supper Food** – **We do ask members to bring in a contribution of edibles for the supper table. Just a small plate.** If you are a cook, show off your skills with something special but if you are like me, shop bought stuff is perfectly acceptable. **BUT please avoid things containing nuts due to allergies. And bring your own mug or cup with you.**

**October volunteers are** – **Bob Taffel and John Hocking. Thank you for your help, guys.**

**Best of the Evening Hybrid** – **Rlc Rose Whisper ‘Suisei’** - grown by **Allan and Gloria Cushway**



Don't Allan and Gloria bring in some fabulous Cattleya family orchids every month. Do you think it's about time we got the Guru's in to do another Culture Class on the subject? If you agree, make sure you let them know next month. They are both great growers.

Just look at the size of these flowers and their perfect shape with flat overall depth and wide overlapping petals and sepals, and Rose Whisper isn't exactly the latest in hybridisation either, as it was registered way back in 1986 with its parents being Catt. Drumbeat (registered in 1967), and RLC Llano (from 1979). It just goes to show how good many of those oldies were.

The AM award records for Rose Whisper 'Arai-B' (*not the Cushways*) gives the flower size as 17 cm which is pretty impressive.

Congratulations Allan and Gloria. Thank you for sharing your skill and your lovely flowers with us.

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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))

**Jim's Report** – Our guest speaker this month, James Indsto, is a real coup. He is an excellent grower, very knowledgeable, and a keen student of orchids. He has been involved with the committee of the Orchid Species (NSW) society for as long as I can recall and produced their monthly bulletin for many years. His presentation title 'the World of Species Orchids' leaves him a wide scope, but you can be assured he will weave it into a very entertaining tale. There is much to learn from experts like James.

It was a busy night last month, with good attendance including more visitors. Unfortunately for us, many of our experienced members were just back from the Australian Orchid Conference at Woolgoolga, only to be faced with 5 days on duty at the Orchids Central Fair at Bankstown before our meeting. I know Peter and Jane were just about exhausted by the end of the October meeting, but we have to take on the challenges as they come up.

However, I was a little disappointed that so many members went home after the supper break last month. That was one of the most disappointing auction nights I have experienced at our club and at times it was rather hard to get auction bids, and not because the sales lot were down in quality either. But even so, we managed to sell most lots and buyers went home with some lovely orchids at fair prices. The committee will have to look at what happened and see if any changes need to be made or whether it was just one of those oddball coincidental date mixes that didn't work.

The October meeting was also our AGM and election night. There were no real surprises with Peter D'Olier re-elected as President unopposed, and so were Lina Huang as Treasurer and Jenny as Secretary. Jane, Dennys, Jessie, Herb, Adrian and Jim were re-elected to Committee, but Stuart Ruthven had to withdraw from Committee for personal reasons. I hope he can find a path back to rejoin us sometime in the future.

If any of you were wavering on offering your services, be assured there is always room for another to join committee. If willingness ever strikes you, please put your hand up and speak to an existing committee member. Small clubs like ours MUST rotate the experience of serving on committee among a wide range of members or we will not survive in the long term. Your life expertise and effort is needed for the long-term operation of the club as a team. Come on in.

November is our last standard meeting for the calendar year and the end of the benching point score competition. December is our Christmas party meeting with its dinner and monster raffle and is held a week early in the month. Special arrangements apply for benching, the raffle and the rest of the meeting but more detail on that in our December bulletin. This is just your early reminder.

### Other Society News

**1. New members** – No new members signed this month, but we are attracting quite a few visitors these days so please make sure you each put in the effort to say hello and welcome any new face who comes along on the night. Our purpose is always to learn about orchids, to enjoy trying to grow them better, and to share what we learn while doing it. Don't ignore the human connection side of the equation. We are all students in the process.

**2. New Books** – In the recent months there have been two amazing new orchid books published, and, on the market, both produced by amazingly knowledgeable Sydney growers. One by David Banks, the other by Phil Spence. These books have been quite a while in the making and are gemstones for orchid growers.

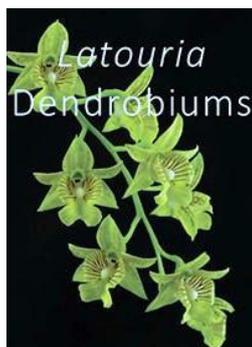
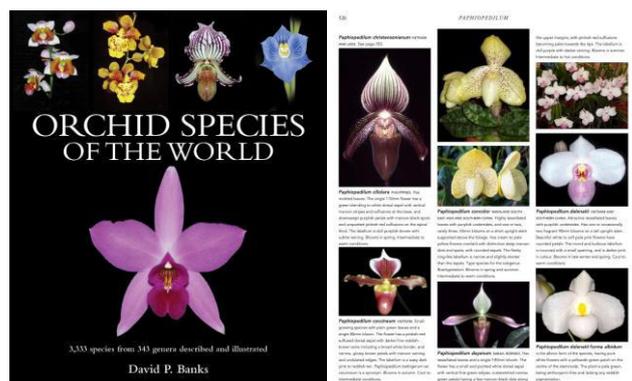
(A) - The first I will describe is the book by David Banks called **ORCHID SPECIES OF THE WORLD**. (RRP \$249.99)

This is an epic illustrated encyclopedia of global wild native orchids from the Old and New Worlds, both hemispheres, and most climate zones.

It is an amazingly comprehensive illustrated guide presented in a single colourful volume covering some 3,333 individually described and illustrated species entries. An example of the format is shown in the picture at the far right.

The Publishers website where it can be ordered online is:

<https://au.newhollandpublishers.com/9781760796396.html>



(B) The second wonderful publication, **Latouria Dendrobiums**, represents Phil Spence's life work in analysing, sorting and categorising the species of Dendrobium section Latourea. This book will become **THE** reference and identification work for botanists and orchid growers alike. Not only has the author covered all 86 species and varieties, but he has also included notes that are stories in themselves.

Each species is covered in full. Most have photographs and/or scale drawings, an anglicised Latin description with metric and imperial measurements, maps to where the species was found, notes, and all references in full. The book - **Latouria Dendrobiums** is hardcover, 308 Pages. It can be ordered from the Australian Orchid Foundation website for \$125.00

<https://australianorchidfoundation.org.au/latouria-dendrobiums/>

**3. Membership Fees** - November is the restart of our membership year after our AGM so now is the time to make payment for your next year's annual membership to Sydney's best value orchid club.

Fees are \$17 single, \$20 family. You can pay by bank transfer to **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 [kuringgaiorchidsociety@gmail.com](mailto:kuringgaiorchidsociety@gmail.com) to confirm your payment.

Alternatively, you can pay directly to membership secretary Jessie Koh at a meeting.

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**Coming events** (from OSNSW website – 'Shows')

9 Nov – MWOS Auction, Cromer Community Centre, 150 Fisher Road, Cromer – catalog available at <http://www.orchidsociety.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Auction-Catalogue-9th-November-2025.pdf>

13-14 Dec – OSNSW Summer Show, Ermington Main Hall- featuring *Laelia purpurata* and multifloral Paphs. (sales but no commercial vendors)

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**Best of Evening Species – Paph hirsutissimum variety esquirolei** - grown by *Dora Law*

*Hirsutissimum* is a really strange species. It is one of those orchids that looks stunning but kind of ugly, all at the same time. When you see it at a meeting you are drawn to it and want to check it out more closely but while you are checking it out you wonder why you were drawn to it because it really isn't that pretty.

The colours are sharp for a Paph. Maybe that is why you went to look? But if you stand back, it's mostly browns and greens. Surely it isn't just the purple wings on the petals that made you look. The petals are half twisted and you can't even see them properly without getting up close to give you a 3-dimensional view. --- And yet, it still attracts you.



Well, there must be something because it is the primary parent of one of the most popular Maudiae type Paph hybrids of the past 100 years which is *Paph Invincible* (1911). Even today *Paph Invincible* (left) is snapped up every time a piece comes up for sale.

*Invincible* is the cross between *hirsutissimum* and an ancient insignificant hybrid called *Monsieur de Curte* (1893 - *boxallii* x *insigne*).



I can find a validated picture of *Monsieur de Curte* but I did find the one at the left here that is exactly what I would expect to get from a cross of the two close relatives - *insigne* and *boxallii*. It looks a bit like a more upright *insigne* and is really nothing to look at. This sort of cross is made just because the hybridist had access to two Paphs in flower at the same time. Perhaps that is even the same reason for making *Paph Invincible*, which clearly had a rather more serendipitous outcome.

Now finally, what the heck is the difference between *hirsutissimum* and its variety *esquirolei*?

Well, the answer is just basically – hairs, although the two species or varieties also happen to come from slightly different geographic regions.

For a long time, *Paph esquirolei* was regarded as separate from *hirsutissimum* and as a species in its own right but apart from geography, the only defining differences between them is the length of hairs on the flower stem and ovary. *P. hirsutissimum* having long, dense hairs and *P. esquirolei* having much shorter hairs. As this is no longer regarded as sufficient to separate them as species, *esquirolei* is now named as a variety of *P. hirsutissimum*.

Geographically, distribution also separates them, with *P. hirsutissimum* found mainly in India and Myanmar, and *P. esquirolei* from Thailand, Vietnam, and Southern China. Perhaps in time evolution will separate them further.

As for habitat, the Bakers provide some interesting detail:

*Northeast India and Burma. Plants are found in the Mizoram (formerly Assam), Nagaland, and Manipur regions, growing near the Burmese border in the Naga and Lushai Hills at 700–1200 m, Paph hirsutissimum may be found growing in thick humus at the base of trees, on moss covered rocks, and along cliff faces; but the preferred habitat is in the crotches of tree branches where thick moss and leaf litter collect. Plants known as Paphiopedilum esquirolei are reported from northern Thailand and Guizhou Province of southwest China.*



In addition, although these could never be regarded as Winter dormant, they do experience significantly reduced rainfall for the coolest 4 months of the year (April to August in our southern hemisphere seasonal system), so I would assume the plan should be to grow them all year but with a slower period through winter.

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\*\* Note from Jim – following the wonderfully humorous item by Mick Korsenowski last month, I thought this next item from tonight’s speaker was a perfect follow on – enjoy, and get a few ideas.

### ***Laelia anceps* as a Garden plant on my *Jacaranda* tree** - By James Indsto

I have been growing orchids for a long time, ever since I was about 20 years old. Little by little my collection has grown. Anyway, that is a familiar story. I guess the interesting part is that some of my plants go back a long way, right back to the 1980s. In the early 1980s I used to visit Deane’s Orchid Nursery in Dural before it shut down around 1987. In those days, pre-CITES it was common to import large numbers of wild-collected plants and that was the main business of this nursery. Among other things I purchased a plant of *Laelia anceps*, which I still grow.

When I moved to my current address in Pennant Hills in 2003 I attached this plant to a large *Camellia sasanqua* tree in my back garden. It did well for a number of years, but as the tree grew larger it wasn’t getting enough light, so it was broken up and relocated to my *Jacaranda* tree. They plants get a lot of light there, with about 6 hours+ full sun all year



The massed display of *Laelia anceps* in my *Jacaranda* tree

and more in winter, especially after the tree drops its leaves. In all 8 pieces were attached, of 4-5 growths each, with 6 forming a group. Now, about 12 years later these have thrived and formed large clumps, which are coalescing to make a big display at flowering time. This year the 6 grouped clumps have put out around 40 sprays, with a total of about 150 blooms. They don’t all synchronise, so I have about 100 flowers open at present.

These plants receive basic care. I water them every couple of days with a hose in summer and occasionally shoot some liquid fertilizer over them. I find this a satisfying way to grow orchids. I have also attached several other species, including *Gomesa flexuosa*, *Dendrobium monophyllum* and *Dendrobium linguiforme*. I probably should also grow *Dendrobium jenkinsii* this way too. Perhaps in spring.

The flowers are quite a nice form, but wouldn’t likely win any prizes nowadays. I should trim the dead flower remains from previous years.



### **Male Humour**

Q? - Why don’t more men cook at home? ..... (because no one has invented a steak that will fit in a toaster)

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Nigel: “The two things I cook best are meatloaf, and apple pie.” ..... Sally : “Which one is this?”

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The pessimist complains about the wind. The optimist expects it to change. The realist adjusts his sails.

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When your child says “Daddy, I want mommy” that’s the kid version of “I’d like to speak to your supervisor”.

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My new car has buttons for just about everything. One even says ‘rear wiper’, but I havent tried that one yet.

**Best of the Evening Novice – Cattleya (now Guarianthe) skinneri - grown by *Stuart Ruthven***



I have written several times in the past few years about a group of 4 Cattleya species (including skinneri) that have been taxonomically removed from Cattleya and placed in a new genus Guarianthe. The Guarianthe also got a strong mention in an article in February this year in regard to the natural hybrid Guarianthe x guatemalensis, and regarding species-to-species gene transfer through a process called “Introgression”.

Anyway, whatever genus name you use, Guarianthe skinneri has always been a highly sought after, and delightfully lovely orchid.

Skinneri occurs right from SE Mexico at the northern end of its range, all the way down to Panama at its southern end. In Costa Rica it is one of the most commonly found orchids and has been made that Territory’s national flower where it is called ‘Guaria Morade’, or purple country girl, and finding it is said to bring good luck and the promise of fulfilled dreams.

As the local name implies, the flower colour is much more usually pinkish purple although there are many variations, especially in the nature of the lip colour and patterning. And, as we can see from Stuart’s nice specimen, it also comes in whites.

However, most of the whites are not true albas because they have a purple spot or splash at the base of the lip, deep in the funnel like section. When bred with other colours, these ‘almost albas’ produce coloured offspring so instead these white flowers are referred to as ‘var. oculata’ or ‘oculata alba’. For whatever it is worth or whatever it means, as far as I can see from the photos, Stuart’s orchid is a true alba.

The habitat information provided in the Orchidwiz database, from Charles and Margaret Baker’s data, tells us that skinneri is a lowland tropical orchid found from near sea level, right up to about 1250 M, but is also found higher, growing on rocks at higher elevations where rainfall is greater and evaporation is less.

Guarianthe skinneri plants have pseudobulbs around 30 cm tall, with two 20cm long typical Cattleya like leaves at the top. The inflorescence can be up to 12cm long and carries from 4 to a dozen delicious 9cm wide flowers.

A well grown and good-sized plant can be real beauty to behold.



**Gura. skinneri 'Juan Jose Zuniga'**



**Gura. skinneri 'Heidi Jacobs'**



**Gura. skinneri 'Alejandro Rodriguez'**

Congratulations Stuart, you alba was very well grown and it’s clear to see we have another ‘Catt’ specialist on the rise.

**Cattleya delights from Oct meeting**



**Cattleya intermedia alba (H. Wong)**



**Guarianthe aurantiaca 'Yellow' (G. Bromley)**



**Rth Roy's Magic (A. Mobbs)**

## Do you know about “ploidy” in Orchids? - Jim Brydie (with lots borrowed from more knowledgeable writers)

At the risk of turning you off before you even start to read, ‘ploidy’ is all about the number of sets of chromosomes in plants. It is about genetics, but only a very specific aspect of genetics.

In orchids, Cymbidiums were the first genus in which this issue came to the attention of growers and Cymbidiums are the orchids where man has most experimented and worked to understand what we were seeing.

When manmade hybrids began to be made and we gradually worked out how to raise baby orchids from seed, orchid hybridists noticed the occasional individual plant among seedling populations that appeared to be different, and in fact superior, and it was suspected that these individuals were genetic freaks in some way.

One of the first to come to attention was an individual from the cross Cymbidium Alexanderi (eburneolowinanum x insigne) which was made in 1911. One seedling from the cross was quite superior and was given the name ‘Westonbirt’. The



reason for its superiority wasn’t understood at the time but we now know that Westonbirt was a **tetraploid (4N)** with four complete single sets of the normal number of chromosomes in its cells.

Pictures from 1911 are rather hard to come by but I present two examples of Alexanderi above to illustrate the superior size, texture, and form that would likely have been what was displayed to growers of the time.

In more modern times man worked out the science of genetics in much greater detail. We are now able to measure ploidy and we can now even chemically (artificially) create orchids with multiple ploidies - also called polyploidy. We know now that the vast majority of Cymbidium species (and their hybrids) have a diploid chromosome number of 2N which equals 40 chromosomes made up of 20 pairs in each cell as the standard. The Chromosomes are the mechanisms that contain all the DNA and Genes each living organism to tells its body how to do whatever that body does.

The clevelandclinic.org give a useful metaphor to explain the relation of DNA, chromosomes and genes. It says :

*“All your DNA together is called your genome. Your genome is organized into:*

***Chromosomes** : These are threadlike structures that separate your DNA into manageable chunks, like individual books of instructions in your DNA library.*

***Genes** : These are individual sections of your chromosomes that give instructions for specific traits. Think of these like chapters in a book.”*

So, in review, getting back to Cymbidiums, for the vast majority, 40 chromosomes is the standard number, and this is called “**diploid**” or 2N because the 40 chromosomes come packaged in matching pairs, with one side of each pair supplied by each of the parents. The 2N refers to the number of full sets of chromosomes.

Cymbidiums with double the usual number of chromosomes are called **Tetraploids or 4N** (eg **80 chromosomes or 2 paired sets of 20 – the second full set of 20 is usually an identical duplication of the first set**) . In tetraploid plants each plant cell is much larger than a diploid (to fit in the additional content) and that tends to make their plant tissues (like leaves, stems, and flowers) larger and more heavily textured, making them physically superior, and for the flowers to last longer.

As a result of many experiments carried out, **tetraploids crossed readily with diploids**, but the seedlings produced had had 3 sets of chromosomes – one paired set and one non-paired set. These are **Triploids** which had better flowering and growing characteristics than diploids but proved to be sterile when used as parents. When a triploid plant tries to make a breeding cell (sperm or egg) which should have just one single set of chromosomes (haploid 1N), the process fails. The basic process usually unpairs the paired sets and puts one set in each breeding cell.

It has subsequently been shown that this is true for all odd number polyploid Cymbidiums. The odd set number of chromosome sets leads to a problem during sexual reproduction. So, Triploids are very useful as commercial plants for growers or for cut flowers but other than a few oddball exceptions they can’t be used as parents.

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If all this just applied only to the odd chance tetraploid and the way it has been used in hybridising with diploids or other chance tetraploids, there would not be much of an issue. However, clever mankind has figured out how to chemically double the number of chromosomes in any orchid. We can make tetraploids from diploids, and I assume we can make octoploids from tetraploids. There are several ways to do it but the most common method is to interfere with the plants normal cell multiplication process. The way a plant grows is to make more cells by a process called Mitosis.

There are several phases to this but essentially, the cell first duplicates the chromosomes in its cell, sends one set to each side of the cell and then grows a cell wall down the middle.

For many years we have known how mericlones are produced by multiplication of meristematic cells in a test tube and then dividing the undifferentiated cell mass, growing more cells and then dividing again, and so on, before finally allowing the cell masses to differentiate into plants.

Well, if we apply chemicals like colchicine or oryzaline during the cell multiplication process it can stop the new cell wall forming and results in at least a proportion of tetraploid cells. Treatments like this are not perfect and generally result in only a percentage of the cells being converted. The percentage can be anywhere between 10% and up to 80% so some plantlets remain diploid or whatever the doner cell was in the first place. But whatever the %, man is now deliberately producing polyploid plants.

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Which leads me to reveal why I decided to write about ploidy this month. On our the Paph bench last month there were two Paph. Saint Swithins benched side by side. One was mine; the other was Dora Law's beauty. There was a rather stark difference between them despite the fact that Dora is growing her's far better than I am growing mine.

It doesn't show nearly so much in Jane's fantastic pictures below but side by side at the meeting it was obvious that my Paph had far skinnier and thinner textured flowers and leaves. Mine, while not growing particularly well anyway, had longer, skinnier and thinner leaves (measured later the leaves were 48 cm long x 4.4 cm wide). Dora's Paph had amazing leaves - twice the thickness, and from memory around 30 cm long x 5.5 cm wide (so shorter fatter wider).

Looking at the two side by side, I was convinced that Dora's Paph may be a tetraploid even though I have never seen Tetraploid Paphs discussed before. Which brings me to ask the obvious question.

Does ploidy work the same in Paphs and other orchids as it does in Cymbidiums?

Well the answer is I don't know.

I have read that polyploidy in many orchids doesn't work as simply as it does in Cymbidiums, and I also understand that polyploidy certainly does not work like that in animals. You cannot simply improve the characteristics of animals (including humans) by creating tetraploid versions.

However, it is also easy to see that polyploidism is being used to create new daylilies and many other plants. I also came across the fact that the wheat used to make our bread in 6N and that several other crop plants are polyploid.

Are we about to see all the orchids we grow swing toward artificially created tetraploids? We accepted the practice in Cymbidiums readily enough, and there are many other one-off examples like *Miltonia moreliana*, but if that concept were now to be extended to all orchids, it would mean that superior polyploid versions will be the only ones growers want to grow. After all, orchid growing is most definitely a competitive venture.

Diploid versions would completely die out of fashion among home growers as they would be seen to be inferior. One positive would be that it would reduce demand for wild orchids and help preserve them. After all, they would be so inferior so who would want them?

But is this where orchid growing should go? Should a manmade tetraploid be regarded as a hybrid? Or perhaps some third category such as genetically altered? Gene splicing is also being experimented with to produce things like a blue *Phalaenopsis*? Again "genetically altered" -- Thoughts to consider.

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**And to finish, may I share some thoughts on AI, and its relationship to Orchids** -- Jim Brydie

Artificial Intelligence as a concept concerns me greatly. Have you ever tried to communicate with a company that deploys AI as a customer service facility?

I recently tried to renew my internet security software licence via the link provided in the constant reminder emails they stream at you as your renewal date approaches. I have contracted to one particular software company for quite a long time and I trust this organisations anti-viral security product. So, a click on the renew button in the latest email seemed to be the simplest way to renew for another 3 years. Up comes their website, and the first thing I see is an offer to update to the their latest upgraded version with whatever new bells and whistles claimed whether I really wanted them or not. My assessment was "... well why not go to the latest and greatest...". I clicked the upgrade and renew button and went through the goodness knows how many steps in the process and used my credit card to pay. All went well, I got a notice email saying payment received and a got a receipt for the payment. The only problem was that it didn't update and I never got the promised email with the new licence key needed to relog in and re-register.



For the next two weeks I kept getting streams of emails imploring me to renew and stay with their company as my supplier. I tried every customer service option I could find. I logged into their system using my account no. and password and tried all the support provisions. EVERY SINGLE avenue took me to the same robot that cycled me around a never-ending circle of questions and options always ending back where I started from. THERE IS NO LONGER ANY HUMAN DEPT you can talk to explaining that you paid and have the receipt but got no new licence number. The robot won't let you.

I ended up going back to the original renew emails and doing a stock standard renew with no upgrade and paid a second time. This time it did the renewal all online with no new licence key required and my software page tells me my expiry date is now two years into the future. IT WORKED.

But still, I get daily emails requesting me to please not leave them and to renew urgently. AI ROBOTS are scary.

***Which brings me to the real reason I decided to write this article.*** In the Sunday Telegraph on 12 October, Daily Penberthy wrote an excellent opinion piece on AI that I feel sums up the scary danger of AI in today's environment. David, a previous editor of the Daily Telegraph, often writes very thoughtful items, and on this occasion, he contrasted the way the internet crackpots treated Lindy Chamberlain over the disappearance of her daughter Azaria back in 1980, and the more recent disappearance of a 4 year old boy in remote SA.

He points out the way AI now sweeps up all internet content, mixes it together as facts, and publishes what it purports to be valid "News" as to progress in the search for the boy and as to "what really happened". I believe the latter included one report of the boy being found alive and with only minor injuries, and another with invented and doctored pictures of the boy being loaded into a truck and carted off by a stranger.

The issue is that computers, no matter how clever, cannot tell the difference between true and b---sh-t, but they present their aggregations to the world as hard fact which is then repeated and republished, sometimes with further embellishments.

Can we allow computers to sweep up every published 'fact' or 'opinion' and add them to their pool of 'stuff' to draw on further to the next internet question search? And how is all this 'stuff' allowed to be published by whatever news service who buys the rights to access the pool of gurgling rubbish that some AI tool accumulates as its data pool.

And now I must return to the second aspect in the title – What has all that got to do with Orchids?

Well, the problem is the same but perhaps not as humanly nasty. I have been editor of the Ku-ring-gai OS newsletter for over 20 years and for the information content I depend heavily on books, the internet, and acquired personal knowledge and experience. In recent times, even in the little cloistered world of orchid growing, I have noticed the differences in the way the internet is being commercialised and in the effects AI is beginning to display.

To target the online information I want, I have become rather adept at wording a search but a large portion of what I get back are sites these days are sites that are more to do with being advertising platforms than supplying orchid information, and what orchid information they do supply looks like dips from the AI data pond rather than personal knowledge and experience. I have been doing this long enough to see quickly what is good and what is bad, and what is suspicious, but many other users would not be in that position. How does the next generation of growers know good info from rubbish?

And as to the AI Summary that always comes up at the top of every search, I must admit that sometimes it is quite useful, especially if it happens to derive from a 'Wiki' site or some other reputable source I trust and where I can check what is actually said. However, on too many other occasions AI give the answer to what it thought I was looking for or, is even just plain wrong.

I am afraid I am becoming more and more distrustful of 'information' or even opinions supplied by robots. Is there any way back from this seemingly inevitable and tainted future?

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**Phally pics from October Meeting** (well done to all who benched and sorry I couldn't show all the pictures)



2 Phal unknowns (C. Rethers)



Phal. Chia E Yenlin (A Mobbs)



Phal. Hsinying Sesame (A Zderic)