



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

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Annual Membership : **\$17 single, \$20 family**

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Next Meeting : Mon 20th July 2026

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

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 and descriptors are in place. Give the set up team time to get things organized.

Our insurance requires that ALL SIGN the ATTENDANCE SHEETS at the front door on arrival. Please do

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.

There will also be the usual generous monthly raffle – drawn after the guest speaker.

The Culture Class begins at **7.30 pm**. This month will be Jean Fulcher leading a team to advise you all on preparing and grooming orchids in advance for the upcoming St Ives fair. Many thanks Jean.

The Main meeting commences 8pm – with the formalities of the general meeting, presentation of reports and news, all while judging of the benched orchids takes place (*all over in about 30 mins – leading to the 'supper break'*).

The Supper Break generally starts around 8.30-45, after the judging. This part of the meeting is not only the chance to have a refreshing 'cuppa' and a bite to eat, it is the free zone time for members to admire the orchids close up and to meet other members. We should all make the very most of it.

For the supper itself, the club supplies the tea/coffee/milk, sugar etc **but we ask members to bring their own cup or mug AND to bring in a contribution of edibles for the supper table. Just a small plate.** If you are a cook why not show off your skills, but shop bought stuff is also perfectly acceptable. **In all cases though,** please avoid things containing **nuts** due to potential allergies. **AND don't forget - bring your own mug or cup with you**

NOTE - Supper is not self-serve. Volunteers are assigned to serve the food for hygienic reasons.

Our Guest Speaker will be **John McAuley** will be telling us all about **The Orchids of Britain**. John is a regular traveller to the UK and has formed a great personal interest and connection to this fascination group. An amazing insight into orchids we don't understand nearly as well as we should.

Our June May supper volunteers are – **Mary Mathews plus 1** . Thank you so much Mary.

Cymbidium sigmoideum benched by **Adrian Zderic**

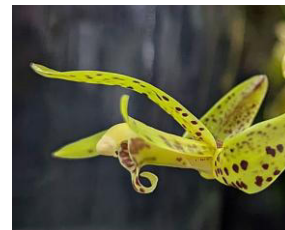


Adrian's benching of this species was the first time I had ever seen it. Apparently it occurs in Malaysia, Borneo, Java and Sumatra in cooler lower montane forests, in deep shade at elevations between 800 to 1700 M. Often in the moss cushion low on tree trunks near the forest floor. It has also more recently been found in the Philippines.

The name sigmoideum refers to the "S" shape at the end of the lip where the tip folds underneath.

The inflorescence varies. It can be relatively short but can also get up to 80cm. It carries up to a dozen flowers for 5 to 8cm wide. It can flower sporadically throughout the

year. All the online pictures I have seen are coloured like Adrian's or variations of the same a bit darker or lighter but Adrian tells me he has white one with the same red spotting. Kew says the albino form lacks anthocyanin (red) pigments so I don't know what you would call the 2nd one.



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

President Peter – After our holiday overseas it was great to be back with all of you at the June meeting. It was good to see and speak to so many members about what has been happening whilst we were away and to share some of our experiences.

Unfortunately, a few weeks before the meeting one of our longstanding members, Ian Tanner, passed away and our thoughts go out to his family at this difficult time. Ian was an active member of our society and he always enjoyed participating in our meetings and events. Over time, Ian built up quite a large orchid collection and he bequeathed his collection to be shared amongst a number of societies he was a member of, including Ku-ring-gai Orchid Society. Our share of Ian's collection was distributed at the meeting and everyone had an opportunity to take some plants home. I know that we all remember Ian and his generosity.

The June meeting was another success with our usual very good attendance. The meeting started with a cultural class with Lina sharing her experience with growing phalaenopsis on mounts. This was very informative and we all want to thank Lina.

After supper we had another one of our members, Matt Roberts, give a very informative & interesting presentation on Growing Stanhopeas and included many beautiful photographs of the impressive variety of gorgeous Stanhopeas he has in his collection. I think we all left wishing we had more of these orchids in our collection. Thank you Matt.

Every year our society helps host the St Ives Orchid Fair which is coming around in August. We should all be now getting our plants together and preparing them to put into our society display and offering to assist with volunteering our time at the show. Please consider this, as this is our society's biggest event of the year and we have to all work towards making it a success. This show is also one of the best opportunities to acquire orchids for your collection, so start saving your pennies now and I wish you good buying.

Before finishing, I want to thank Jim Brydie for producing our monthly newsletter for many years now. It has been a real joy reading his newsletter every month with its many in-depth articles and helpful hints. Jim has indicated he wishes to hand over the publication of the newsletter to someone else, and we are now searching for someone who is interested in publishing the newsletter to take over. Jim will help with the handover and all of us will continue to assist every month. Is anyone interested in taking on this role as it is a great opportunity to participate in the society and learn more about orchids with each edition.

All the best with growing your orchids, Peter

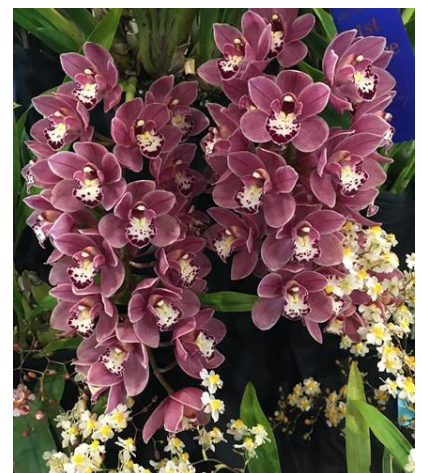
Other Society News

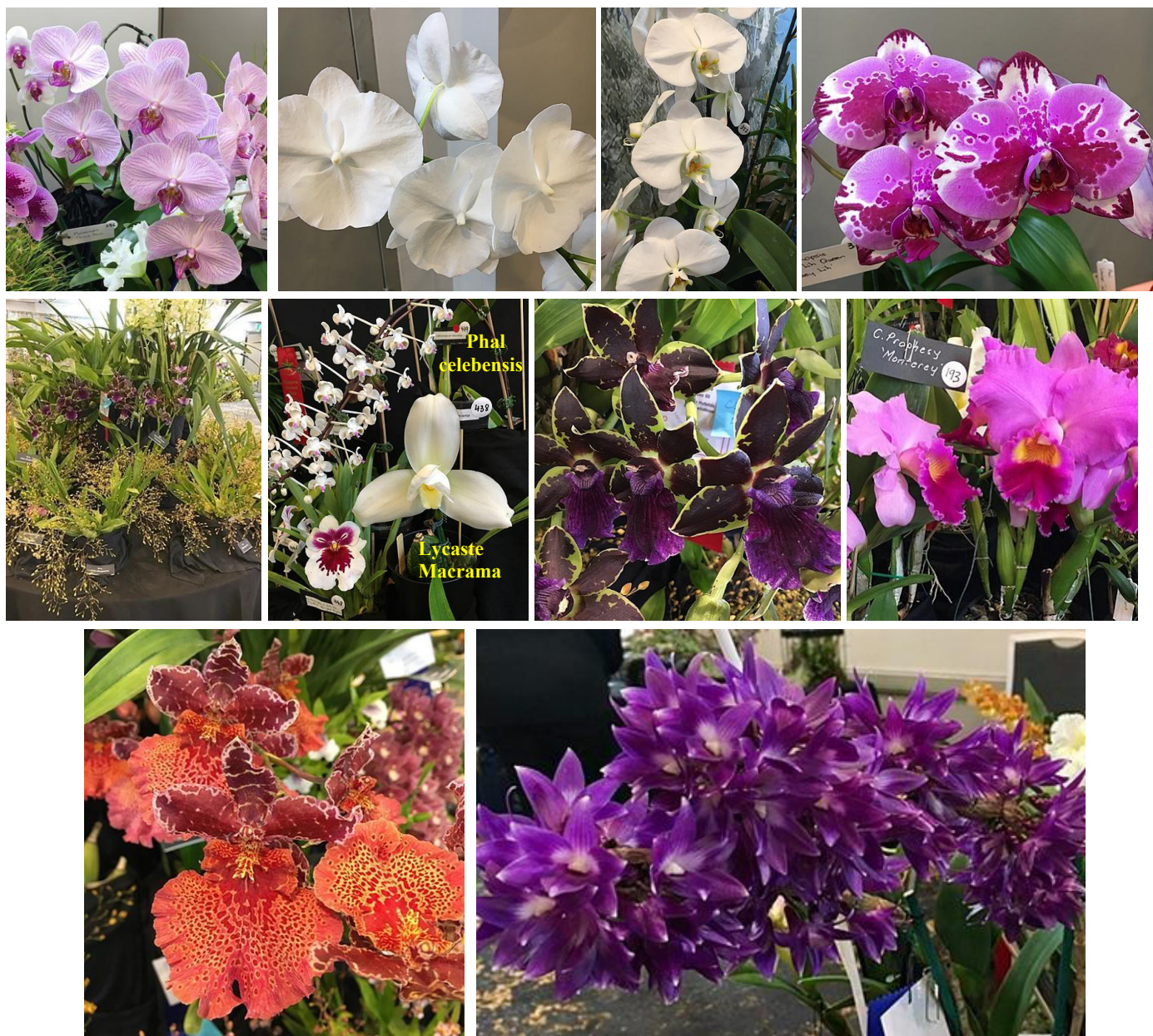
1. Anyone feeling a bit unwell?? – For the sake of your fellow members, **it is best you take a night at home.**

2. A Report on the Mingara Orchid Fair – I nearly didn't go. I had promised myself I wouldn't buy any more orchids but I wasn't sure I could trust me. But whatever, we did go north for a day got out and we had a lovely day.

My first shock on arriving though, was finding the massive outdoor carpark packed to the gills when we got there. There were spaces coming available here and there as people went home but in two tours around the whole carpark I was never in the right place at the right time. Lucky for me I had done talks up there a few times and knew there was another, smaller carpark right around the back so that was where we went. Wow there were a lot of people up there.

It didn't take much time to see a few familiar faces and were soon wandering around admiring plants and chatting to fellow orchid lovers. And after touring around the vendors hall (just looking and saying hello) we went to check out the displays. Wow again. The quality was really up there and not just in the orchids themselves, the displays showed real flare and inspiration. I didn't get all the orchid names but check out some of these gorgeous flowers :-





Gomiltidium Kulnura 'Sarah'

Den. Kunika 'Bella'

Congratulations Mingara, I am sure all your visitors and vendors will be back for more next year.

And don't forget about all the other events coming up, including St Ives. See the coming events list below.

3. And to KOS Members - Your St Ives info pack and other St Ives documents will be distributed with this newsletter. Get your names on the volunteers list please. Your efforts are what keeps the society afloat.

4. Time for a new Bulletin Editor – As Peter mentioned at our last meeting and above, I need to retire as editor by the end of the year. I have really enjoyed writing the KOS bulletin for the past 20 plus years but time marches inexorably onward and each era must end to be replaced by the next.

When I took over the bulletin all those years ago, I made some format changes such as no longer publishing the previous month benching results in the newsletter and instead doing a little deeper feature on each of the 3 Best of Evening categories. Trying to provide a bit deeper understanding of each kind of orchid and some insight into the way orchids grow in nature. But, I must admit that more and more these days we find the same orchid featured as BOE over and over. Perhaps it is time for a new editor to come up with some new ideas.

So what skills might a bulletin editor need? Well you would need to be rather familiar with using a computer and have internet connection. Some might think that sounds a silly thing to say as surely everyone has that? But would it surprise you to know that the very first time I did the job of bulletin editor it was typed in black and white on a typewriter - by a separate person with those skills. The editor and typist created a single master copy which was taken to a print shop to print about 100 copies in 2 page B4 booklet format. It had to be exactly 6 B4 pages (3 sheets of A4 paper) and the last half of the last page was blank to allow us to stick on a separately printed address label. The bulletin was folded and stapled, had a stamp added, and was posted from the local post office. Times have changed.

All processes and practices change over time – They always get better. YOU DON'T HAVE TO KEEP DOING WHAT I HAVE BEEN DOING. You will be responsible to the committee of course, and to publish news they ask to be published, but in general you can steer in your own direction.

But getting back to the skills needed. I have been producing the bulletin in Microsoft Word for 23 years. In that time I have experimented with a large number of the formatting styles and facilities provided by Word. I don't know an awful lot about photo editing but once we changed from black and white to colour, it was obvious that I had to learn some skills in photo sizing, adjusting pictures for colour, cropping etc. At first it was mostly needed to help manage the cost of laser toner when we bought our first printer, but not much later when we switched to email distribution, file size also became important to manage the files to be emailed.

You don't need a deep technical skill. I use a free software photo editor and you only need to know how to use a small portion of the facilities most such software provides. If you know how to use Word and you understand photo image files, I can easily pass on all the practical knowledge and experience I have gained if you want it. Or if you prefer, you can just do it your own way. New ways are better anyway.

Knowledge about orchids? Again you certainly don't need to be any kind of orchid guru. When you go to write about an orchid subject, the internet is a vast reservoir and is the source for a huge proportion of what I provide to you in the KOS bulletin. You get better over time at finding what you want and making it a story.

I do use an extensive personal orchid library and a subscription to Orchidwiz (orchid database program), but while I use them to teach myself, these are not mandatory but Orchidwiz have announced it will now continue to be available.

In addition I receive copies of the monthly newsletters from many different orchid societies in Australia and one in the USA. Seeing what others publish and are interested in is an amazing source of information and I may well be able to arrange that a new editor receive these same sources in exchange for our newsletter.

And finally, if you enjoy my penchant for using a little humour as page fillers, I am happy to pass on a copy of my rather large 'joke' file, and further in regard to saved 'files', I also have PDF and Word copies of every KOS bulletin produced over the past 20 years, and a folder of articles/article research I have accumulated over time. Some may already be published but if you haven't seen them all they could provide information you would find useful.

If you are just trying to decide, why not contact Peter or myself to explore the possibilities?

Farewell to our friend Ian Tanner – I didn't know Ian as a close friend, more as just as a fellow member of many different orchid clubs. In his early years with KOS, while he was still coming to terms with growing orchids, he would often talk to me about his involvement with the Colong Wilderness Foundation (now Wilderness Australia) and give me copies of their newsletter the Colong Bulletin. At the time Ian was a Director of that Foundation and I think assisted in production of their bulletin. He was a dedicated environmentalist and helped get many areas declared as wilderness and barred from development.

He was an educated and intelligent man who schooled at Knox Grammar and maintained a relationship with the school via the Old Knox Grammarians Association. (OKGA). The lovely picture at the right was borrowed from the obituary for Ian on their website.

He trained as an accountant but also filled a number of other roles in his working life.

I think Ian found orchids relatively late in life but regularly attended meetings and social outings at quite a few societies. But he wasn't afraid to put his hand up to help do the work when needed. He served on the Species OS committee for short time when needed and I believe he was also an active member of Chatswood West bowling club for many years, and was their secretary for a period.

He certainly applied himself to growing orchids and by the time he passed I am told his collection was in quite good condition so he was mastering the skills. I think he really enjoyed the orchids and all the people he met in the process. I imagine it provided the challenges, the friends and the enjoyment we all need.

Farewell Ian. I am sorry I didn't spend more time learning about your wilderness efforts. You did a fine job.

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Main Coming Events 2026

Fri-Sun 7,8,9 Aug - National Orchid Extravaganza incorporating the Paphiopedilum Society of NSW. The Arena Sports Club, 140 Rookwood Road, Yagoona

Fri-Sun 7,8,9 Aug - MWOS, Belrose home Co, Lv1, 1, 4-6 Niangala Close Belrose

Fri-Sun 14-16 August, St Ives Orchid Fair, St Ives Showground, St Ives – OUR BIG ONE

Fri-Sun 18,19,20 Sept. - ORCHIDS CENTRAL - Club Condell Park, 178 Eldridge Road, Bankstown,

Sat 10 Oct - Orchid Species Soc N.S.W - AUCTION & SHOW, W. Pennant Hills Community Church 41-43 Eaton Rd, West Pennant Hills.

Fri-Sun 4,5,6 Dec. - Summer Orchid Festival, Georges Hall Comm. Centre Hall, 188 Birdwood Rd Georges Hall



Best of the evening Novice : *Cymbidium Sarah Jean 'Ice Cascade'* -

grown by **Tim Dabbs**

Sarah Jean has been a hugely popular hybrid for over 50 years.

Registered by Valley Orchids, a specialist Cymbidium nursery from Adelaide in 1973. The parents are Cym floribundum and Cym Sleeping Beauty. Floribundum is a small flowered species from Asia that is renowned for prolific flower production and Sleeping Beauty was an Alvin Bryant creation from here in Sydney. Alvin focussed on stabilising albino genes in a lot of his breeding and although quite a few Sleeping Beauty cultivars were not albino, the majority did conform as albino with no red pigment in the flowers. Some of the albinos were pure white or white with yellow in the lip, while others were green with a yellow lip.

I am not sure when Ice Cascade showed up among the Sarah Jean's but my recollection is that it was some time after Sarah Jean itself became popular in other tones. As I recall, Ice Cascade (one of the albino types) gave Sarah Jean a second resurgence when it hit the market - but don't hold me to that.

But no matter when it first showed, it has had an amazing ongoing popularity for a very long time. It is usually grown as a hanging basket and when it flowers you can have cascading pendent, short inflorescences all around the basket. Each inflorescence carries up to 30 x 5cm ice green flowers with up to since then.

Congratulations Tim – well done. Let's see it again even bigger and better next year.

Best of The Evening Species : *Paphiopedilum insigne* grown by **Loretta and Paul Au**



Well how about that. I call it an under-rated orchid and it gets Best of Evening two months in a row. Not as many flowers on this pot but the quality is very high and I like the staking to make them present perfectly.

But what more can I say. My apologies to two of our best growers in Loretta and Paul but I don't think there is anything more to tell about Paph insigne unless it is some hot tips from hot growers like yourselves and Dora. I would love to hear from either side with some growing and culture tips for insigne. It doesn't have to be a long treatise but I would love be able to provide the rest of us some of the things you find important to focus on when creating such lovely pots of Paph insigne.

Could you put together even just a list of points on what to do to make sure you get it right, or even a full article write up if you can do that.

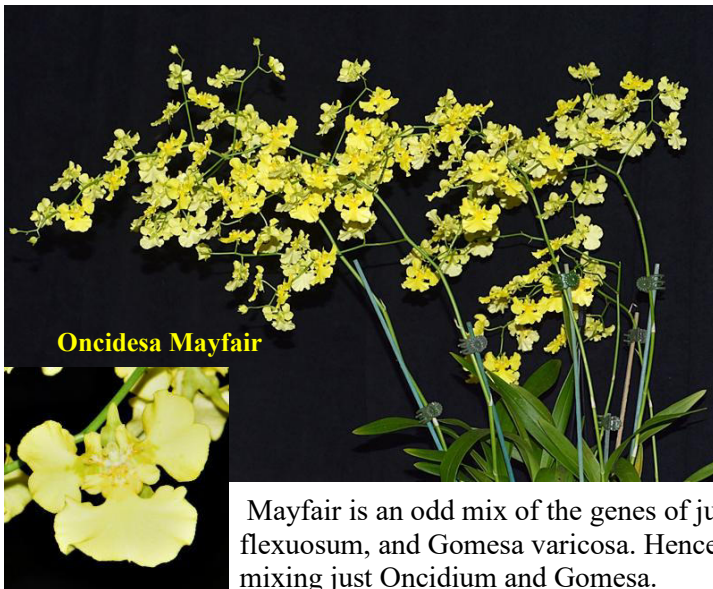
In all my years of growing orchids I have found the best insights come from those who do it well with all their orchid so regularly. I am sure you must have learned from others on your way to success. Is it time for you to now share your expertise with others? Please think about it

But in the meantime – congratulations. The orchids you and others bench each month is a real drawcard to interest new growers and attract them to our hobby.

3 simple rules of :Life

1. If you don't go after what you want, you'll never have it.
2. If you don't ask, the answer is always 'NO'
3. If you don't step forward, you'll always be in the same place

BOE Hybrid – *Oncidesa Mayfair* ‘Trinity’ - grown by L&G Bromley



This one has won a few Best of the Evenings and two in particular are regularly benched and are particularly well grown and flowered. This one from Garrie and Lesley, the other by Trevor and Pauline Onslow. We are so lucky to see so many amazing specimens on our benches.

But *Oncidesa Mayfair* is not exactly what it looks like. At first glance you might immediately assume it is a hybrid based on the species *Zelenkoa onusta* (►) because of its basically square overall flower shape. However, there is no *Zelenkoa* in the Mayfair background at all.



Mayfair is an odd mix of the genes of just three species in *Oncid sphacelatum*, *Gomesa flexuosum*, and *Gomesa varicosum*. Hence the genus name *Oncidesa* which represents hybrids mixing just *Oncidium* and *Gomesa*.

The breeding appears to have successfully blended the characteristics of each of its parent species because it looks nothing like any of the three individuals. *Gomesa flexuosum* has a distinctive climbing growth habit but does produce many simultaneous flower spikes with clouds of small, basically bright yellow flowers. *Oncidium sphacelatum* is a very large growing plant with large leaves and large pseudobulbs, that usually produces cascading pendent spikes. And *Oncidium varicosum* is the traditional Dancing Lady orchid whose flowers are dominated by their huge lip that looks like the swirling skirt of a Spanish dancer.

How those 3 produced Mayfair ‘Trinity’ is a question we will probably never answer.

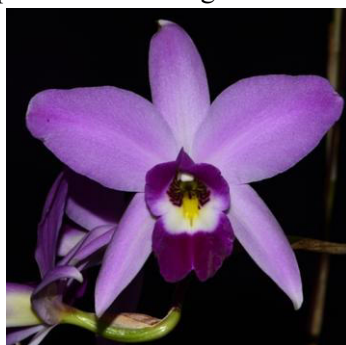
Congratulations Messrs Bromley. Just beautiful.



From Last Meeting – there were a whole swarm of beautiful *Laelia anceps* benched last meeting. Haven’t they come a long way since the old days when nearly every *anceps* had 2 or 3 big pink flowers on the end of a 4 foot (120 cm) spike. I didn’t take any pictures but Jane got these few nice cultivars below from our benches.



Grower Dora Law



grower G&L Bromley



grower P&J D’Olier



grower S. Ruthven



Both grower G McNeil – white one is *anceps* h.f. *veitchiana* ‘Fort Caroline’

The modern line bred forms of *anceps* seem to be slightly smaller, more compact and more highly coloured flowers with shorter spikes. I don’t have cultivar names for some of the above so they may be a few sisters and don’t give a proper idea of the range, but there must have been over 20 benched last month and the quality was outstanding.

I was admiring them on the bench last month when a member asked if they were all the same. I think the question was whether they were all *anceps*, or one cross, but I am afraid my explanation wasn’t

my best try. So in the following article I have tried to provide a more complete explanation of species/variety/form/cultivar etc. And following that again you are treated to a wonderful treatise by David Banks L. anceps on all the kinds we see. Dave is surely Australia's leading expert on this fabulous species and has a wonderful personal collection.

Laelia anceps is a wonderful, hardy, and easy to grow orchid. If you fancy obtaining one, don't just buy any old anceps, choose the type you like best and go looking for one of the right type. - Jim

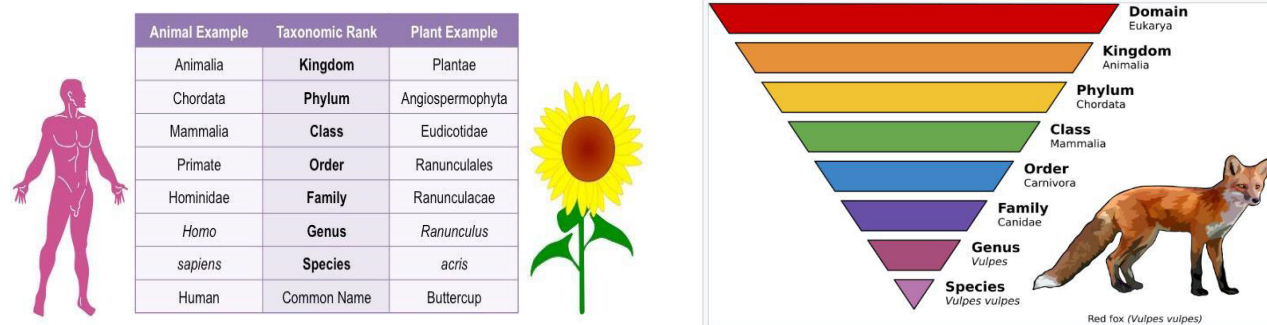
As Applies to Orchids - What is a Species? And in the same vein, what is the difference between a species, a subspecies, a variety, a form, and a cultivar

Jim Brydie

Part 1 – Introduction and definition of a 'species'

All these terms are used within a biological classification system that shows the relationship of all living things. The term 'Species' is one of the levels of classification in this biological classification system of life.

Wikipedia tells us : "In biological taxonomy, a **taxonomic rank** denotes the level that a group of organisms . . . occupies in a hierarchical system of classification." The diagrams below illustrate three examples. One for a mammal - a red fox, one for man, the other for a plant – the buttercup



As you can see, 'species' is the lowest rank of category in the system shown above.

Definition - The term species is usually defined as the largest group of organisms in which any two individuals of the appropriate sexes or mating types can produce fertile offspring by sexual reproduction.

But that isn't to say that we don't recognise certain variances with a species. After all, we human beings are all members of the 'species' Homo sapiens but you don't have to look far around you to notice that we can be rather different to one another. **And that is where, at least in orchids, we can use expressions like subspecies, variety, form, and cultivar** to identify special groups or individuals.

But for goodness sake don't start calling your slightly 'different' friend or neighbour anything like those names.

Part 2 - the difference between one species and another and how do they get their names?

From the point of view of a grower, the definition of 'Species' above doesn't help at all in deciding which orchids on the bench at a meeting is a species and which isn't – or which is a species and which is a hybrid.

So is there any simple test for that? -- The short answer is NO. To understand I need to describe the process for establishing a species name.

Do you know how a species name comes into being? Who decides it is a new species and not just a slight variance of an already existing species? It all starts when a species is discovered and published – with that publication proposing it as a new species. That process must describes how this "new discovery" is new and separate from related or similar species in the same genus. Google AI gives us this nice summary from "Oxford Academic".

FROM GOOGLE AI - When a new species is discovered, a botanist/taxonomist must publish a proposal for that species to be accepted via a formal scientific description in a peer-reviewed journal, conforming to strict nomenclatural codes. They must also deposit physical 'type specimens' in a recognized museum or repository, and formally register the new name in a database like ZooBank or MycoBank, and define how it differs from known species.

I won't go into the botanical technicalities of how they define one species from another because it is different for every species. But let us just accept that botanists look at a variety of angles. Morphological features such as the way the flower is structured and its physical features, especially those related to pollination, and then there are also the scientists examining the genetics of the plants DNA. Those scientists can also publish their

reasoning as to why existing names are wrong, or this one is different – or those two the same etc.

Other botanists respond to a proposal and agree or disagree. The process seeks eventual consensus. Personally, I don't quite understand how the process progresses from there. I don't think there is anything like a final vote of yea or nay, or how long the process goes before they draw a line but even when a consensus occurs the same issue or variances can be repropose as new information arises making any decision a flexible thing .

But those are just small technicalities in the scheme of things. I prefer to just say some publications of a new species get overwhelming acceptance and may become part of common usage very quickly. Other more controversial proposals may linger around as possibilities for many years. Eventually science and common sense generally prevail. New names come into the lexicon, others sit half in half out before fading to one way or the other. Messy but better perhaps than some overriding body decision that may be a little biased one way or the other.

So you can see that orchid names are scientifically based but not cast in stone and can be subject to challenge from time to time as fresh information becomes available. The distinctions between one species and another are often highly technical. Lip shapes, ridges and hairs on lips, scent glands, the nature of pollinia, the number of flowers and form of the inflorescence, and more.

Unfortunately, THERE is NO SIMPLE WAY to stand in front of an orchid and say this is species A, that is species B, and plant C is a hybrid. High levels of experience is the only reliable way I know. But every grower gradually builds that experience year by year as they indulge their hobby. Especially as applies to the group of orchids they prefer to grow.

Each species does vary in appearance (within limits) across its overall population but an experienced grower can generally tell you if your flowing orchid is a species or not – but that's only because they have seen a very large number of variants and know what that species looks like. If it is "kind of like" species 'A' but the experienced grower is unsure because it looks 'off', the expert may consider whether the orchid may be a hybrid with species 'A' forming a significant part of its genetic make-up.

Part 3 – the other lower level definitions.

In researching to write this article, I have read several different experts versions of the definitions for subspecies, variety, form and cultivar. There is clearly some disagreement.

In some cases this may be because the meanings of words change over time. In others it comes from disagreement of the meaning of words. To explain a little further, I think these words extracted from a 1941 article by Robert T Clausen give a good insight. Mr Clausen was an Emeritus Professor in Botany at Cornell University in the USA.

“Words are a means by which man expresses his ideas. In the development of a large vocabulary, the human species far surpasses all other members of the animal kingdom.

This vocabulary is not a static thing. Instead it is an ever evolving affair. New ideas, new discoveries, new thoughts – these all require either new words or redefinitions of the old. Likewise, other words, no longer necessary, drop out of usage and become obsolete.

The study of these word changes affords a fascinating field of investigation for the Philologist.

To express their precise ideas, scientists have had to choose between inventing new terms or redefining in a particular fashion old and familiar words.

The terms “subspecies” and “variety” both have different shades of meaning. “Subspecies” being a scientific term is unfamiliar in our language except among biologists. As might be expected, since it is not a popular term, it has undergone a less varied usage than has the term “variety”.

Persoon seems to have introduced “subspecies” in his Synopsis Plantarum in 1805. The literature since then demonstrates the conservative use of the term. Yet Fernald, who is the most recent and active exponent of the term variety, to the exclusion of the term subspecies, in 1936, stated that “the term subspecies is used in so many ways as to be vague.” Also he stated that the terms variety, “as used by such discriminating recent taxonomists as the late C.E. Moss, the late Otto Holmberg, and countless others of the past Linnaeus, Willdenow, Decandolle, is reasonably clear,” but in that same publication Fernald found it necessary to set matters right by reducing to the grade of ‘formae’ varieties defined by Linnaeus, Torrey and Gray, Nutall, Lange and Pursch. [JB ‘formae’ is a latinised expression for ‘form’]

Furthermore this reduction of Varietas to Forma has been going on through the years to the extent that in the single magazine Rhodora there are 166 example of varieties changed to forms. ---- he goes on to say “the discrepancies between taxonomists in applying the term ‘variety’ clearly indicate that there has not been uniformity in its use.”

[JB: - quite an understatement. It seems that each taxonomist/botanist claims to understand what every

previous taxonomist/botanist intended in the use of particular terminology and some think they got it wrong.]

Whilst Mr Clausen was more particularly talking about the terms subspecies variety, and form, I have no doubt that exactly the same situation applies to just about every taxonomic term.

The definitions offered here are mostly from Wikipedia and seem logical to me at least.

Subspecies - A subspecies is a taxonomic rank below species, used for populations that live in different areas and vary in size, shape, or other physical characteristics (morphology), but that can successfully interbreed. Not all species have subspecies. Subspecies is abbreviated as subsp. or ssp. and the singular and plural forms are the same.

Variety - In botanical nomenclature, **variety** (abbreviated **var.**; in Latin: *varietas*) is a taxonomic rank below that of species and subspecies, but above that of form. As such, it gets a three-part infraspecific name. It is sometimes recommended that the subspecies rank should be used to recognize geographic distinctiveness, whereas the variety rank is appropriate if the taxon is seen throughout the geographic range of the species.

A variety will have an appearance distinct from other varieties, but will hybridize freely with those other varieties. Populations and individuals with distinct characteristics found through the geographic range of a species or subspecies may be recognised as **varieties** (*varietas*) and **forms** (*forma*). These differ from subspecies as they occur throughout the natural range of the species and are seldom correlated with geographical distribution.

Form - In botanical nomenclature, a **form** (Latin: *forma*, plural: *formae*) is one of the "secondary" taxonomic ranks, below that of variety.

A form usually designates a group with a noticeable morphological deviation. The usual taxonomic practice is that the individuals classified within the form are not necessarily known to be closely related (they may not form a natural group from a common ancestor). For instance, white-flowered plants of species that usually have coloured flowers can be grouped and named (e.g., as "*f. alba*"). The abbreviation "*f.*" or the full Latin word "*forma*" should be put before the infraspecific epithet to indicate the rank.

Cultivar and Grex – All the seeds in an orchid seedpod have the same parents. One might call them brothers and sisters except that orchids have no gender. But similar to human brothers and sisters each of these are one sort of family. In orchid terminology the term **GREX** covers all progeny created by the same two parents even if they are crossed multiple times, and no matter which is pod or pollen parent in any individual crossing.

If one individual in a Grex is superior in one or more characteristics, it may be selected to give it an extra name to identify just that individual, especially if it is to receive an award. This is its "Cultivar" name. Cultivars can be divided or cloned to produce more identical copies of each other and each of these duplicates is also identified by that the same cultivar name. Theoretically they would all be identical but in practice variations can occur in cloning.

Comments on Subspecies, Variety, and Form

After reading the above descriptions I am hoping you are thinking – well I think I get that. It's not too complicated. But I must offer an example illustrating the complexity and disagreement over the application of some descriptives.

The species *Dendrobium speciosum* is distributed in virtually 9 separate populations along Australia's east coast from as far south as Victoria, right up to Cape York at the top of Queensland. I had always understood that these populations were effectively geographically separated and did not interbreed in nature due to that separation. Each also exhibits distinctively different morphological characteristics. From the definitions above that would have made them "subspecies". BUT – NOT SO. In an article in 2006 in the official ANOS magazine "The Orchadian", in an article on *speciosum* by Peter Adams, J.M. Burke and S.D. Lawson, they explain that the group presents some complex taxonomic issues due to wide morphological variation within and across populations.

They pointed out the taxonomic issues by summarising previous taxonomic decisions regarding this group by various other specialist over a lengthy period. Those were : Dockrill in 1969 – 5 varieties, Clemesha 1981 – 6 varieties, Jones 1988 – 5 species, Clements 1989 – 5 species, Banks and Clemesha 1991 - 6 subspecies, Adams 1991 – 6 intergrading varieties, Dockrill 1992 – 6 intergrading varieties. The authors go on to say that all these proposals were reviewed by Burke in 1998 and by Burke and Adams 2002. They also say that several other descriptions of other varieties were later shown to be hybrids of other species.

Thus, by 2006 the situation was that there is just the one species (*speciosum*) and there are no subspecies but there 6 definable 'varieties'. But I am sure that will change again as other specialists publish their opinions.

It seems to me that whatever your label calls it your species, concerning subspecies, variety or form, that is as good as any other description. I am so glad to have had the opportunity to help you all understand (I think?)

One liners

- Sleeping comes so naturally to me, I could do it with my eyes closed.
- I went to buy some camouflage trousers yesterday but although I looked everywhere I couldn't find any

Laelia anceps: The Jewel of Mexico

Text, plants and photos by David P. Banks ([Hills District Orchids](#), Sydney)

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Laelia anceps would be one of the most popular and rewarding orchid species to enter cultivation. It is a vigorous plant that is a reliable bloomer each year and is an ideal beginner's orchid, as well as an outstanding landscape plant in frost-free climates. By selecting a number of different forms and cultivars of the species, it's possible to have blooms of *Laelia anceps* from April through to August, an extended period of five months.

John Lindley first described this highly variable species in 1835 in the *Botanical Register*. Since that time, many "varieties" have been named in numerous books and journals throughout the world, to the point that over a century ago it seemed that every new colour variant that was found ended up with its own name. Many of these should in fact be simply referred to as cultivars. Today we have plants as cultivars, forms, varieties and subspecies. I won't go into the details of the taxonomy and classification of wild populations of *Laelia anceps*, as this was comprehensively covered in the excellent article by Gary Yong Gee, entitled "*Laelia anceps* – sorting out the confusion" published in the *AOR* 64 (3): 11-20 [June/July 1999].

Laelia anceps is primarily an epiphytic species of the open forests that occasionally will colonise suitable rockfaces in quite exposed positions. *Laelia anceps* is almost always found in areas that receive quite strong sunlight. It is distributed in the mountains on the Gulf side of Mexico in the states of Tamaulipas, San Luis Potosi, Hidalgo, Querétaro, Puebla, Veracruz, Oaxaca, Chiapas, and also into Guatemala (where it is uncommon).



◀ *Laelia anceps alba* 'Jannine'. Photo: David Banks

Lavender is the most common colour form; however populations of *Laelia anceps* subsp. *dawsonii* invariably have white petals and sepals. There are cultivars that appear white but have the faintest of pink flushes, through various stages of pink through lavender to purple. There are also pure white (albino) forms, as well as individuals with splash-petalled, peloric and feathered flowers.

The purpose of this article is to showcase some of the newer cultivars that have bloomed in cultivation, many the result of deliberate line-breeding of the species. Primarily the most outstanding work has been undertaken in the United States by nurseries such as Santa Barbara Orchid Estate, Carter & Holmes and Cal-Orchid. There has also been the bonus of "improved" clones through unexpected desirable mutations which occurred during the meristem process.

Typical examples of *Laelia anceps* produce quite narrow segmented flowers on inflorescences that generally only have a couple of flowers. Some of the more superior forms today

can have up to five large (120mm) blooms on spikes about a metre long.

Laelia anceps 'Chamberlainiana' (the real cultivar) ►

Photo: David Banks

There are many plants labelled in Australian collections as *Laelia anceps* 'Chamberlainiana'. Quite a number of these do not fit the original description of what was originally described as a variety and awarded a First Class Certificate from the Royal Horticultural Society way back in 1902. It was described as "a grand cultivar and the largest of all". Unfortunately, there are those that put the name 'Chamberlainiana' to any plant that has large flowers produced on a long inflorescence. The telltale sign is in the labellum, which is large and most colourful with flared sidelobes. After seeing the famous *Laelia anceps* 'Sanbar Gloriosa' FCC/AOS in bloom at the Santa Barbara Orchid Estate (California), and further discussions with "the orchid man" Paul Gripp, I am convinced they are the same cultivar.



Laelia anceps 'Irwins' AM/AOS is another of the famous American cultivars that has been around for more than 40

years, being awarded back in 1976. I have been unable to discover the history of this plant, and do not even know if this is a “wild” cultivar. It’s been in Australia for more than 30 years and I can remember buying a small division of it from Tamborine Mountain Orchids in the mid 1980s. It’s one of the first of the cultivars to bloom in mid- to late autumn and has darker, flatter flowers with broad segments and an outstanding and distinctive somewhat flared deep purple labellum. It’s also a very vigorous plant.

Laelia anceps ‘Mendenhall’ AM/AOS first bloomed in 1988 (awarded in 1991) and was the result of a spontaneous mutation found in a group of normal plants produced by the Carter & Holmes nursery. It has larger flowers, and slightly wider segments than ‘Irwins’ and is certainly a very desirable flower. A number of equally high-quality cultivars then sprang up in the 1990s but their origins are somewhat clouded. I have spoken to a number of “anceps enthusiasts” (plus seen printed tags on some of the original plants) and it appears there is a mix of plants that have been “improved” through the mericlone process, as well as seedlings derived from selfings of both ‘Irwins’ and ‘Mendenhall’. Some of these include the cultivars ‘Bravo’, ‘Cloudland’ HCC/NSW (2000), ‘Déjà Vu’ AM/AOS (1997), ‘La Reina’ HCC/AOS (1993), ‘Tierra del Fuego’ AM/AOS (1996) and ‘Ultimo’. The majority of these clones appear to have originated in the Santa Barbara region of California, many via James Rose of Cal Orchid. This style of the species has become one of the most popular with many enthusiasts, nurserymen and collectors devoting a lot of space for their expanding collections of this orchid. A shadehouse full of *Laelia anceps* in bloom is an impressive sight.

These improved cultivars of *Laelia anceps* led to a further increase in their popularity and a renewed interest in line-breeding the species further. Many sibling crosses were made using the sister clones ‘Irwins’ and ‘Mendenhall’ with other unrelated cultivars, as well as some of the already advanced progeny.



◀ ***Laelia anceps* ‘Lynette’ FCC/AOC. Photo: David Banks**

Being a big fan of *Laelia anceps*, I have always been on the lookout for different clones of the species, plus seedlings when they are available. When purchasing seedlings (and this goes for all types of orchids) if you really want a better chance of getting something a bit special, you need to buy multiples of a cross, not just the one seedling. Look at it like a lottery, the more tickets you have, the more chances of winning. Similarly, buying just one seedling of a cross (but buying one each of a number of crosses) is like buying one ticket in a number of different lotteries. I flowered quite a number of seedlings of the sibling cross between ‘Irwins’ and ‘Ultimo’, and most were very nice, but one of these was simply outstanding.

Laelia anceps ‘Lynette’ FCC/AOC (2021) is the finest of the deep-lavender types that I have seen. It produces up to three very large and flat blooms with a solid deep-purple labellum. Photographs I have shown of this plant, named after my mother, have impressed growers and breeders here and overseas. It was awarded a First Class Certificate in June 2021, through the Orchid Club of South Australia and the Australian Orchid Council.

***Laelia anceps* subsp. *dawsonii*, Photo: David Banks ▶**
(one of the parents of *Laelia anceps* ‘Louanne’, below.)

▼ ***Laelia anceps* ‘Louanne’. Photo: David Banks**



Another successful crossing was a combination between ‘Irwins’ (which now also has a fine reputation as a pod parent) crossed with a superior form of the white-flowered *Laelia anceps* subsp. *dawsonii*. This produced a race of plants that are quite different to those that occur naturally in the wild. They are also early flowering (starting mid-autumn) and have flat pale- to mid-lavender blooms highlighted by a labellum that has a distinctive white disc in the centre. A feature I find most attractive.



Laelia anceps ‘Louanne’ is the pick of these, followed by the very similar clone *Laelia anceps* ‘Rebekah’. Another seedling showing a lot of potential is the very pretty *Laelia anceps* ‘Lollypop’. There is obviously a lot of potential in using the different populations of plants to utilise the expanded gene pool.

For those who like novelty types, there are striped forms of *Laelia anceps*. The plants with striped petals have been called *lineata*, *striata* or *disciplinata* type. The most accepted term for these has been as forma *lineata*, which I follow here. I have been told that *Laelia anceps* forma *lineata* ‘Doris’ is a wild plant, and one of the first of this type to enter cultivation. When selfed a small percentage of the progeny (about 25%) maintain the stripes in the petals, while the others revert to more “normal” types. *Laelia anceps* forma *lineata* ‘Tinonee Splash’ is a result of the selfing of ‘Doris’ and on a larger plant may prove to be superior.



***Laelia anceps* forma *lineata* ‘Parramatta Splash’.** Photo: David Banks

However, the really choice striped types have come from the crossing of ‘Doris’ with ‘Ultimo’. I bloomed well over a dozen seedlings of this cross, and most were fine forms of the ‘Irwins’ type, however I have been lucky to bloom three excellent and similar plants with a combination of outstanding form, colour and the feathered striping and splashing on the petals. I believe that *Laelia anceps* forma *lineata* ‘Neon Splash’ is the pick of them with *Laelia anceps* forma *lineata* ‘Autumn Splash’ and *Laelia anceps* forma *lineata* ‘Parramatta Splash’ right on its tail. This style is very new in Australia and while maybe not one for the purists it certainly has a lot of horticultural appeal. These are fast-growing plants with increased vigour

over the original ‘Doris’.



***Laelia anceps* var. *barkeriana* ‘Royal Flush’.** Photo: David Banks

Laelia anceps var. *barkeriana* ‘Royal Flush’ is one of the darkest-coloured forms of the species I have seen. It has been used a bit in breeding and has produced some fine progeny when mated with the “Guerrero” types (forma *chilapensis*).

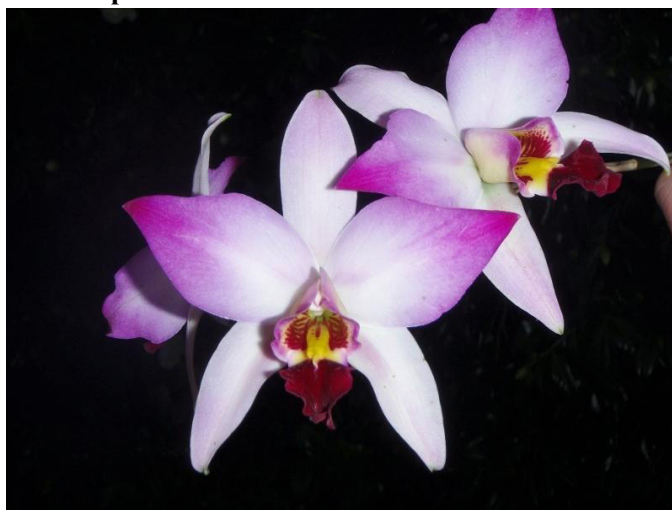
Laelia anceps ‘Compacta’ is a plant that was imported by my father Graeme Banks OAM from Mexico in 1981. The pseudobulbs are crowded and rarely taller than 50mm with the upright inflorescences seldom over 30cm long with one or two mauve-pink flowers. Its lip has a yellow disc with red-purple veining and a darker purple mid-lobe. This cultivar has a compact growth habit with fairly typical flowers but shows potential as a pot plant or line breeding to reduce the invariably long inflorescences of the better cultivars.

***Laelia anceps* forma *chilapensis* ‘Sanbar Guerrero’ AM/AOS. ▼**

Photo: David Banks

The “Guerrero” types (correctly

Laelia anceps forma *chilapensis*) are still fairly scarce in Australian collections. This type is generally characterised by having wide petals that attractively fade from white to lavender. *Laelia anceps* forma *chilapensis* ‘Mini Guerrero’ is a plant from the fine private collection of Norm Wieder of Santa Barbara. However, arguably the best clone in cultivation is the outstanding *Laelia anceps* forma *chilapensis* ‘Sanbar Guerrero’ AM/AOS (1985). This is a plant that Paul Gripp personally selected when in Mexico many years ago. It has pale-pink sepals and broad pale-pink petals that grade to a glowing rose-lavender towards the tips. The lip has a yellow throat with red-purple veining, the side-lobes are rose-lavender and the striking mid-lobe is solid velvet-red to black-purple. Interestingly, when awarded the AM the plant carried only two flowers, yet expert Santa Barbara grower Don Brown (who also has an outstanding and diverse *Laelia anceps* collection) last year bloomed it with five large flowers on one very long inflorescence. This clone has been used in a number of sibling crosses.



There is enormous potential for further line-breeding of *Laelia anceps* and some of the choice newer cultivars should be mericloned in the hope of more spontaneous and improved mutations. If the blooms are kept dry, they will last for about 6 weeks in pristine condition. In areas that experience wet winters, it is advisable to place the plants under cover to avoid spotting of the flowers and a reduced shelf life. If breeding using *Laelia anceps* as the pod parent, use fresh flowers (less than a week old). The apparent viability appears to drop off quite suddenly after this time. Pollen may be stored in the refrigerator for up to (at least) 3 years. I have no experience with frozen pollen but have heard of others' success with the pollen of complex *Cattleya* hybrids.

Cultivation

Laelia anceps is really an easily grown species that is ideal for the beginner, as well as the seasoned enthusiast. Our plants have experienced temperature ranges from -2°C in winter to 47°C in summer. Thankfully (for us and the plants) these extremes are for only a short period, but it does show how tough these plants are. The more "normal" range would be 5°C to 35°C. During the extreme times, ensure the plants are dry in winter, and during summer heatwaves try to keep the humidity level high around the plants to avoid severe desiccation.

We grow most of our plants in 150mm and 200mm squat pots. These sturdy and well-drained pots (designed essentially for *Dendrobium speciosum*) are ideal for this fast-growing species. We use a bark-based mix (combination of "medium" and "large" grades, washed beforehand) with about 80% bark with the addition of 10% jumbo perlite and 10% river gravel. It is vital that the medium retains some moisture between waterings, yet is free draining. Plants are grown on mesh benches under 50% shade cloth.



A group of *Laelia anceps* Irwins' AM/AOS in full bloom in the collection of David Banks. Photo: David Banks

I prefer to divide my larger plants of this species in late winter, after flowering, so to avoid damaging the brittle new roots that are invariably damaged if left till the weather warms up. Don't be in a rush to divide your plants though, as they look far more impressive when grown as specimens. Don't discard the older parts of the plant, as pairs of backbulbs readily strike in a fine bark mix or sphagnum moss.

If you prefer, plants may also be mounted on large sections of black treefern or virgin cork. Alternatively they may be tied on to suitable trees (those that do not exude gum or shed their bark) in the garden.

The plants enjoy a lot of water throughout their growing period, from late September to March, which replicates what they receive in the wild. They do not require much water in winter, as the plants are in a period of dormancy after flowering, just enough to keep the pseudobulbs from shrivelling. Fertilise as you would for other orchids in your collection.

In Gary Yong Gee's 1999 article he quoted the weather pattern and temperature range as follows: "In their natural habitat, plants are subject to a rainy season from late spring till early autumn where they are drenched by heavy rains often for up to 5 hours during the late afternoon and evenings. By the next morning fresh winds from the mountains soon dry the plants, which grow vigorously in the full sun until the following daily storm. At the end of winter new roots form from the base of the pseudobulb, which is the time of the short rainy season – a fine fog-like rain that is usually not sufficient to saturate the plants. Temperatures can rise to 28°C or more during the summer and drop to 5°C and even below freezing in winter."

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the following for discussions on and/or plants of *Laelia anceps* that assisted to my understanding of this species: the late Sid Batchelor, Don Brown, Ray Clement, Paul Gripp, the late Sandy Holmes, James Rose and Norm Wieder. I am also appreciative of Gary Yong Gee for further stimulating the interest in this species (and species orchids in general) by sharing his vast knowledge through his educational and informative articles. Special thanks to Parry Gripp (co-owner of the Santa Barbara Orchid Estate) for providing me with his thorough compilation (and colour photographs) of American Orchid Society (AOS) awards granted to clones of *Laelia anceps*.

A bit on trivia for 80s music buffs. The lead singer (Morton Harket) of Norway's most successful pop group, A-ha (who had a worldwide hit in 1984 with *Take On Me*) is an orchid enthusiast, whose group before A-ha was called *Laelia anceps*!

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