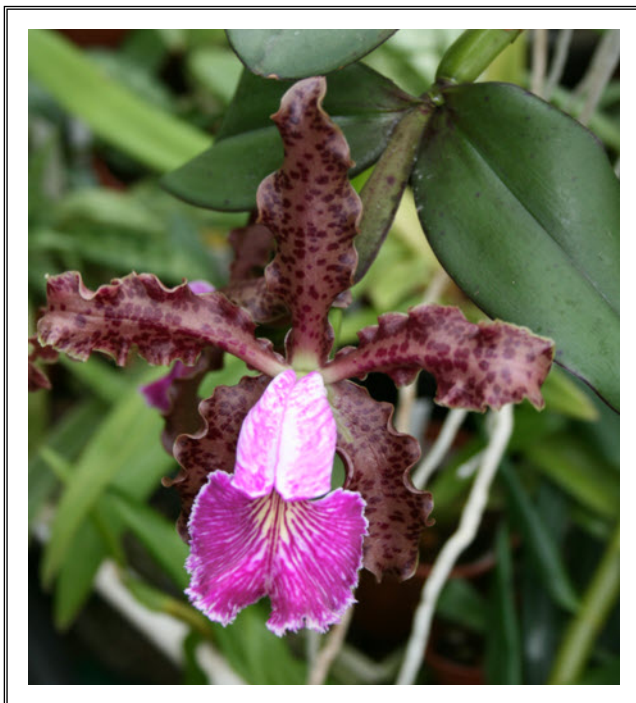


Top Orchid

Autumn 2010



BOURNEMOUTH ORCHID SOCIETY

Programme

2010

Sat 25 Sept **Autumn Show** Beaufort Community Centre, Southbourne

Fri 29 Oct Ian Parsons Phalaenopsis

Fri 26 Nov Maren Talbot *Pleiones & their Cultivation* (Heritage Orchids)

Sat 11 Dec * **Christmas Lunch** Marsham Court Hotel (1 pm)

2011

Fri 28 Jan * Carol Norman Arranging Orchid Flowers

Sat 26 Feb **Spring Show** Allendale Centre, Wimborne Minster BH21 1AS

Sat 19 Mar **Coach Outing** **RHS London Orchid Show**

Fri 25 Mar * Plant Clinic & Brains Trust

Fri 29 Apr * Ted Croot *Story of Orchids at Chatsworth*

Fri 27 May * **Annual General Meeting** *followed by Plant Auction*

Fri 24 June * Colin Carter *Setting Up Your Greenhouse*

Sun 17 July * **Garden Party** Hosted by Terry and Gerry Eve; 2.30 p.m.
16, Barton Way, Barton-on-Sea, BH25 7JN

Fri 26 Aug * David Ridgeway *Cypripediums of China*

Sat 24 Sept **Autumn Show** Barrington Theatre, Ferndown, BH22 9TH

* Members may sell plants only at these meetings

Front Cover: *Cattleya schilleriana v. regnellii*

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Editor's Page

For the first time as far as I can remember I was not able to attend one of our Members' Shows as I had to go to a wedding, thankfully not mine! As it turned out the wedding was an enjoyable affair with lots of sunshine to keep us warm but my thoughts often turned to the Show, wondering how it was going and hoping someone had remembered to take a few photos of winning plants for Top Orchid. Luckily Colin Carter had done just that and they are printed on page 8.

It was particularly pleasing to see one of our newer members winning awards off the "Big Boys", so congratulation to Christine Jarvis for her lovely *Phalaenopsis amabilis* which took two trophies. (See page 8)

Now the clocks have gone back it feels like winter is just around the corner and the signs are we are due for another hard one. This should be a warning to us all to be ready for heating failures and have alternative heaters available to deploy at a moments notice (usually at 2.00 o'clock in the morning!).

Thanks to all contributors of this edition.

If anyone is desperate to write something for the next issue of Top Orchid the deadline is March 11th 2011.

Allan Burdis

**BOURNEMOUTH ORCHID SOCIETY
AUTUMN SHOW
25th September 2010**

TROPHY WINNERS

ECHO CUP

Mr Geoff Hands *Vanda coerulea*

SPECIES TROPHY

Mr Geoff Hands *Vanda coerulea*

DORSET CUP

Dr Derek Copley *Odontoglossum bictoniense album*

DENDROBIUM CUP

Mr Geoff Hands *Dendrobium hercoglossum*

SOLENT SHIELD

Mr Geoff Hands 15 points

BOB WRIGHT CENTENARY CUP

Mr Alan Sapsard *Phragmipedium Eric Young*

NEW FOREST CUP

Mr Colin Carter *Holcoglossum kimballianum*
Coelogyne odorarti
Calanthe rosea

RINGWOOD CUP

Mr Alan Sapsard *Brassolaelia Yellow Bird*

PRIORY CUP

Mrs Christine Jarvis *Phalaenopsis amabilis*

SLIPPER CUP

Mr Alan Sapsard *Phragmipedium Eric Young*

HAMTUN TROPHY

Mr Alan Sapsard *Dracula cordobea*

DAVE CHERRY MEMORIAL CUP

Mrs Christine Jarvis *Phalaenopsis amabilis*

LEO PALMER MEMORIAL BOWL

Dr Derek Copley *Odontoglossum bictoniense album*

CLASS WINNERS

CLASS 1: CYMBIDIUM SPECIES AND HYBRIDS

No entries in this class

CLASS 2: PAPHIOPEDILUM AND PHRAGMIPEDIUM HYBRIDS

1. Mr Alan Sapsard *Phragmipedium Eric Young*
2. Mr Colin Carter *Paphiopedilum Harold Koopowitz*
3. Mr Mike Powell *Phragmipedium Andean Fire*

CLASS 3: PAPHIOPEDILUM AND PHRAGMIPEDIUM SPECIES

No entries in this class

CLASS 4: SPECIES AND HYBRID ONCIDINAE

1. Dr Derek Copley *Lemboglossum bictoniense album*
2. Mr Geoff Hands *Adaglossum Summit 'Frenchtown'*

CLASS 5: DENDROBIUM SPECIES AND HYBRIDS

1. Mr Geoff Hands *Dendrobium hercoglossum*

CLASS 6: CATTLEYA ALLIANCE SPECIES AND HYBRIDS

1. Mr Alan Sapsard *Brassolaelia Yellow Bird*
2. Mr John James *Cattleya White Cinderella*
3. Mr Geoff Hands *Cattleya Hawaiian Wedding Song 'Virgin'*

CLASS 7: PHALAEOPSIS SPECIES AND HYBRIDS

1. Mr Eric Groome *Phalaenopsis hybrid*
2. Mrs Christine Carter *Phalaenopsis Queen of Hearts*
3. Mrs Pat Marshall *Doritaenopsis Minho Princess*

CLASS 8: ANY OTHER HYBRID

1. Mr Geoff Hands *Vanda Robert Delight*
2. Mr John James *Miltonia Sunset x Xanthina*
3. Mr Nick Fry *Cirrhopetalum Elizabeth Ann*



CLASS 9: ANY OTHER SPECIES

1. Mr Geoff Hands *Vanda coerulea*
2. Mr Colin Carter *Holcoglossum kimbalianum*
3. Mr Alan Sapsard *Dracula cordobea*

CLASS 10: A GROUP OF THREE SPECIES

1. Mr Colin Carter *Holcoglossum kimbalianum*
Coelogyne odorarti
Calanthe rosea
2. Mrs Christine Carter *Phalaenopsis lindenii*
Phalaenopsis cornu-cervi
Phalaenopsis equestris alba
3. Mr Alan Sapsard *Aerangis species*
Gastrochilus japonicus
Podangis dactyloceras

CLASS 11: A GROUP OF THREE HYBRIDS

1. Mr Alan Sapsard *Doritaenopsis cultivar*
Cattleya Elizabeth Fulton
Phragmipedium Lacotte
2. Mr Geoff Hands *Brassolaeliocattleya Nuance 'Elegie'*
Vanda Cambria 'Plush'
Vanda Fuchs' Delight 'Pink'

CLASS 12: A GROUP OF THREE SPECIES AND HYBRIDS MIXED

- 1 Mr Colin Carter *Holcoglossum kimbalianum*
Paphiopedilum In Charm Handel
Phragmipedium Schroederae
2. Mrs Christine Carter *Phalaenopsis equestris alba*
Phalaenopsis Jane McHenry x Temple Cloud
Phalaenopsis amboinensis
3. Mr Geoff Hands *Gongora luteola*
x Miltocidium No-name
Laeliocattleya Miva Royal 'Chocolate Delice'

CLASS 13: NOVICE CLASS

1. Mrs Christine Jarvis *Phalaenopsis amabilis*
2. Mr Gerry Eve *Phalaenopsis hybrid*
3. Mr Chris Broomfield *Stenoglottis longifolia*

CLASS 14: ONE CUT ORCHID SPIKE

1. Mrs Pat Marshall
2. Dr Derek Copley

CLASS 15: ONE WINDOWSILL ORCHID

1. Mrs Jane Bygrave *Phalaenopsis Everspring x Doritaenopsis Taisuco Pixie*
2. Mrs Christine Carter *Phalaenopsis Black Diamond*
3. Mr Eric Groome *Phalaenopsis hybrid*

AWARDS FOR CULTURAL EXCELLENCE

Mr Colin Carter *Holcoglossum kimballianum*

Mr Colin Carter *Phragmipedium schroederiae*

Mrs Christine Carter *Phalaenopsis Black Diamond*

Mrs Christine Jarvis *Phalaenopsis amabilis*

Mr Alan Sapsard *Phragmipedium Eric Young*

Mr Geoff Hands *Vanda Robert Delight'Kultana's Dark Red*



Show Picture Gallery



PRIORY CUP &
DAVE CHERRY MEMORIAL CUP
Christine Jarvis
Phalaenopsis amabilis



ECHO CUP & SPECIES TROPHY
Geoff Hands
Vanda coerulea

Photos by Colin Carter

SHOW SECRETARY'S REPORT

This was another enjoyable show, with 15 members entering a total of 61 plants. Although the number of plants appears small, the quality of plants was very high and a number were quite large, so that the Show Table was a quality one. However the judges had a number of comments to make about sloppy staking. In a number of classes this led to plants losing place to better presented rivals. The rule about staking is 'less is more'. The aim of staking is to support and protect the flower spike and enhance the appearance of the plant. It should be as unobtrusive as possible, and the minimum necessary. Like corsetry, it should not make its presence unduly known! Stakes should be tied neatly to the spike with (ideally) raffia or plastic ties, not lashed to the stake like a heretic with garden twine or clamped with dragonflies. Perhaps we need to have an object lesson on presentation at our next Brain's Trust. Overall however the standard of staking was good, and didn't detract from the quality of the Table. There was one incident of mealy bug, fortunately found after the judging and swiftly dispatched. Please, when preparing for a show, check your plants for unwelcome guests. If such are found during judging, the plant will not be judged and may have to be removed from the show table.

The good weather brought a better attendance than the last Autumn Show with 179 paying members of the public, up 22 from last year. Attendance was steady throughout the duration of the show, so that the hall always looked to be full. This meant that visitors could examine and photograph the plants without being crowded and the trade stands were able to do steady business without being crowded out. This makes for a pleasanter and more relaxed show.

The event was overshadowed by news of the sad death of Brian Ritterhausen, of Burnham Nurseries. He had been ill for some time, and his death was not unexpected, but a sad event for all that. Our sympathy and thoughts are with his family. In the event it was very good of Arthur to stand in for Sara, pulling out of the East Midlands OS Autumn Show to do so. The relationship between our Society and Burnham Nurseries is a very close one, practically symbiotic, as Brian and Keith Andrew our President were lifelong friends. It would have been unthinkable that they should not attend our show and we are grateful for their consideration. In recognition of our special relationship with Burnham's our Society will be making a donation to 'Orchid' a charity dealing with male cancers. A sympathy card was signed by a number of members and given to Arthur at the show, to be given to the family.



A new trophy was unveiled at the show to commemorate one of our own who has passed on. The Leo Palmer Memorial Bowl will be awarded to the grower of the best New World Orchid- i.e. one from Australia, New Zealand and the Americas. It was won by our Chairman Derek Copley for his *Lemboglossum bictoniense album*, so well done Derek!

Among orchids of note were a very fine *Vanda coerulea*, shown by Geoff Hands, Derek Copley's *Lemboglossum*, Colin Carter's *Holcoglossum*, (hello, Glossums!) and Allan Sapsard's *Dracula cordobea*, which arrived and departed in a plastic bag to stop it drying out. Draculas are not easy to grow, but Alan has form in this respect and is a skilful grower of these difficult orchids. The novice section was again, pleasingly well contested but the runaway winner was Christine Jarvis with an enormous *Phalaenopsis amabilis*.

As I said earlier this was another enjoyable Show with an improved attendance, but many people helped to make it so. Thanks go to Colin and Christine Carter for setting up the non-competitive display, to Chris Broomfield for running the tombola together with my wife Rosemary, to Terry and Gerry Eve for running the Raffle, to Dave Walters for setting up the backdrop for the non-competitive display and for taking it down again, to Derek Copley for manning the potting demo single-handed, to Ken for helping to set up and manning the door and to anyone else I have forgotten to help to run the Show. And finally a thank you to all those members who entered plants, to make Your Show the success it was.

This will be our last show at the Beaufort Centre. Our next Show will be at the **Allendale Centre in Wimborne on Saturday 26th February 2011.**

Mike Powell

Spring Show

As you are all aware our next Spring Show on February 26th 2011 will be at the Allendale Centre, Wimborne Minster BH21 1AS

Please remember to tell your family and friends so they do not go to the wrong venue. It is most important we all do our bit to advertise our shows and make them a success.

CATTLEYAS

Mike Armstrong

20th August 2010

On Friday 20th August Bournemouth Orchid Society welcomed Mike Armstrong of Mikandra Orchids, and his wife Sandra. We have had a visit from Mike before, and are always honoured to receive him, as he is one of the finest amateur growers of Cattleyas in the country. By trade Mike was a marine engineer in the Merchant Navy, and took up orchid growing in the early 80s. In 1989 he founded Mikandra Orchids. He holds the National Collection of Guarianthe. He is an enthusiastic hybridiser of Cattleyas and an extremely skilled photographer.

Mike started with a little history. The genus was 'discovered' in 1818 when William Swainson sent some plants to the Glasgow Botanic Gardens who in turn sent some on to an enthusiastic plant collector called William Cattley. When they flowered in 1821 they were described by John Lindley who placed them in a new genus *Cattleya*, named after Cattley. Swainson incidentally omitted to tell anyone where he had found his plants and the species, *C. labiata*, was not rediscovered for another seventy years. It was a miracle that they flowered at all as the contemporary wisdom dictated that they be kept in stove house conditions. It was thirty years before people worked out how to grow Cattleyas successfully. By then in 1856 the first hybrid had been made by John Dominy of Veitches Nursery.

And so to culture. Mike made the point that every *Cattleya* species had its own needs and conditions, and that no two species were exactly alike. He was also enthusiastic about using the Internet to find out about the culture of individual species.

Cattleya habitats range from sea level to about 4000 ft. Those growing at sea level need warmth, high light levels to initiate flowers and much moisture at the roots. They would be constantly in growth. Maintain a minimum night temperature of 15 deg C rising by 5-6 deg C during the day. Plants should not be allowed to become completely dry in the pot and should be kept evenly moist. Humidity could vary from 30% up to 80- 90% after damping down. The use of Spanish moss to maintain humidity was recommended.

Montane species need an extended dry rest period, but always with high humidity to stop the plant desiccating. Mike's compost of choice was bark. He also advocated opening the pots up by cutting holes in the pot to allow light and air to reach the roots. A useful tip and one applicable to all orchids, not just Cattleyas, was to give a flush of clear water a couple of hours or so after feeding. This would stop the roots being burned by a build up of salts from unused fertiliser. Apparently the take-up period for orchid fertiliser is a short one and orchid roots stop taking up feed quite soon after it is made available to them.



With regard to feeding, Mike experiments with various combinations of feed but remembers that Orchids need very little phosphorus, nitrogen as necessary and as much potassium as available in the feed. Feed strength should be varied according to the season, with less being given in winter and more in summer. He adds humic and fulvic acid to his feed to help the take up of nutrients. He always uses rain water, aiming to achieve a PH of 6.

Mike then mentioned the dreaded 'V' word. However he was reassuring about this and stated that not every colour break or misshapen flower was due to a virus. Stress could also cause these things to happen. Consistent good culture, regular and accurate watering and strict adherence to anti cross-contamination procedures would eliminate problems. In particular always disinfecting implements between plants, preferably by heat, and the ruthless elimination of pests that vector viruses would largely solve the problem. Pests could be eliminated by using contact insecticides based on fish or vegetable oil. These work by smothering the pests and are equally effective on eggs, larvae and adults, and if correctly and thoroughly applied leave no survivors – but thorough application is essential. The use of sticky pads to collect the highly mobile larval stages of scale was also recommended as was the use of high pressure sprays to physically dislodge the unwelcome visitors. Scale, especially soft scale, was identified as the main *Cattleya* pest.

Mike then embarked on an enormously detailed and lengthy slide show, describing the *Cattleya* species and hybrids in his collection. The number of variants and colour forms was literally mind boggling and there is space for only a tiny fraction of what we were shown. The quality of slides was without exception superb, reflecting Mike's talents as a plant portrait artist, and the quality of plants was mouth-watering.

Of the dozens of plants shown a few stood out for me:

Cattleya mossiae a large classic *Cattleya* flowering in early to late summer has a gorgeous scent. It was one of the last species to survive in commercial production for corsages. It is purple with a large frilly lip.

Cattleya labiata another classic, flowers in the autumn. It comes in shades of rose pink, again with a darker, frilly lip.

Cattleya trianae has a superb shape and is widely used in breeding. It comes in paler shades with dark forms being unusual and highly sought after.

Mike deserves recognition for being able to grow such an enormous range of species. Us lesser mortals might be advised to find species or hybrids that suit our conditions and concentrate on growing them well.

The talk ended with a gracious and enthusiastically supported vote of thanks.

Mike Powell



C. gaskelliana



C. guttata



C. schroederiae



C. labiata



C. walkeriana



C. intermedia V. *aquinii*

Phalaenopsis

Ian Parsons

Friday 29th October 2010



Our Programme secretary, Roger Russell has a difficult task trying to find speakers for our monthly meetings and part of this task involves finding a balance between satisfying the beginner and experienced grower. On rare occasions speakers are able to satisfy both but there are times when this is not possible.

This was a talk for the more experienced orchid grower and some members might have found the introduction and explanation of the genus a bit boring but it was full of interesting data.

Ian has been growing orchids for 40 years and was introduced to the genus in 1970, growing some of the best Phalaenopsis in his office on top of the filing cabinet. He now grows approximately twenty Phalaenopsis species in his greenhouse.

Apparently they are not easy to find in the wild and even local people in those regions do not know the species and their locations. Many are very localised and rare.

There are approximately fifty species but this varies depending on opinion and new discoveries.

There distribution is S.E. Asia, Indonesia, Philippines and N. Australia (majority found north of the equator). Most inhabit lowland tropical rain forest.

Ian recommends Eric A. Christenson's book 'Phalaenopsis a Monograph', which is now the "bible" on this genus, if you have a spare £250!

Ian went through the genus in detail explaining sub-genus, section and the species, which was illustrated with lovely photos.

This was a very interesting talk, valuable to any BOC orchid judge and trainee, which the Bournemouth Orchid Society has several, but also to anyone interested in this most popular orchid.

P. lowii

See page 21-22 for more details
of this most interesting and
delightful species



A selection of species



Phragmipedium caudatum v. Warscewiczianum

An orchid not to be sniffed at!

Although my main interest is Paphiopedilums I also grow a few Phragmipediums, mainly species with a couple of choice hybrids thrown in for good measure. I would love to grow more but unfortunately they take up far too much space and I need as much room as possible for all the seedlings I deflask each year.

I regularly produce pods on any worthwhile species I have available and back in November 1999 I selfed a good cultivar I have of *P. caudatum* v. *warscewiczianum* (*P. Popowii?*). The seedlings were deflasked in June 2001 and grew on very slowly but eventually a batch of six decided to flower this summer within a few weeks of one another. It just so happens the mother plant also flowered with two spikes, each bearing two flowers and it was interesting to compare the seedlings to this plant. They all showed the same characteristics of this variety with the dark maroon coloured lip



P. caudatum 'Highcliffe Castle'

and darker petals. The flowers were slightly smaller but this would be expected on plants flowering for the first time. I like to grow this species in a water retaining compost, that still drains well, which I keep a little drier than most other Phrags. As the flowers open and the petals lengthen I try to raise the pots up to allow them to develop fully. The general opinion is that if the petals touch a hard surface they stop growing and therefore do not reach their maximum length.



P. caudatum close-up

Although I noticed when I overlook some flowers, where the petals had coiled up on the bench, did continued to grow when raised up again. Perhaps the petals would have reached a longer length if their development had not been interrupted. As these petals can reach lengths of up to a meter it is easier if plants are suspended from the greenhouse roof to help gravity do its job and allow the petals to grow clear of any obstructions.

One day this summer, as I was watering a bench of Paphs, I became aware of a pungent odour, best described as stale urine, which grew stronger as I progressed along the bench. Don't ask me how I know what stale urine smells like - that's another story!

As I watered, I looked around at the various pots to see if I could spot a plant which might be the culprit, ignoring slipper orchids as those with any perfume are few, such as *P. delenatii*, sweetly exquisite and *malipoense*, very fruity, like raspberries. I was expecting to come across a *Bulbophyllum* or perhaps a *Masdevallia* which are notorious for bearing fantastic flowers which stink of rotting meat, but there were no *Bulbophyllums* in flower and the *Masdevallias* are all housed in the cool section at the other end of the greenhouse and even some of the worse stinkers could not waft that far.

As I moved along, the odour grew stronger, until eventually I nudged against the flowering mother plant of *Phrag. caudatum* suspended from the roof and realised I had discovered the culprit. (Fig. 1)

Until now I had not realised this species had a scent, let alone one so strong and powerful and having made this discovery the task of watering was postponed and my attention was given to investigating the odour in more detail. The first thing I did was to raise my head and push my nose into the centre of the flower and sniff cautiously, expecting to get the full impact of the odour, but to my surprise it was not that strong. Thinking I had not positioned my nose correctly I sniffed several more times, moving over the centre of the flower in an effort to pinpoint its strongest location but without success. Confused, I moved back, lowering my head slightly to gaze at the long petals and was again aware of the familiar strong odour. I moved in once more, this time to sniff the twisted petals and was immediately "rewarded" with the full impact of the odour - It was the long petals that were giving off the strongest scent!

Further investigation revealed the scent was evident from the tips of the petals, getting stronger in the middle and fading gradually to the top. I found it easier to catch the odour if I held a cupped hand behind a petal as I moved up (see Fig. 2). By chance I also had in flower *Phragmipedium wallisii* which also had an odour but not as strong as *P. caudatum* and I found it difficult to confirm if it followed the same pattern as *P. caudatum*. Although I did confirm these findings on several of the flowering *P. caudatum* seedlings.



Assuming stale urine is an accurate impression of the odour then why should this be advantageous to the orchid?

Many insects are attracted to things such as animal dung, rotting meat and urine. Insects lay their eggs on dung and rotting meat to feed hatching maggots. Urine attracts insects due to the salts available, butterflies are often seen taking advantage of these areas.

Female insect species produce chemical attractants (pheromones) to lure males of the same species. Surprisingly, one of these chemicals employed by many insect species is identical to one secreted in the urine of female Asian elephants before ovulation. (Luckily there are no elephants roaming the wilds of Dorset!).

Urine is obviously a strong chemical attractant to animals and this would be a useful tool for plants to attract a pollinator.

For years people have speculated over the long petals of *P. caudatum*, suggesting they are devices to enable a specific pollinator to reach the reproductive parts of the flower. This pollinator has never been identified but perhaps the 'scented' petals are a lure to guide it to the centre of the flower. To my nose the strength of the scent seemed to decrease up towards the centre of the flower, but perhaps its formulae changed and my senses were not able to detect this.

This odour did not attract any British insect species and therefore it may not be a "urine" type attractant and probably more specific to a particular insect pollinator, as most orchid flowers are designed for. I cannot say if my observations have anything to do with the pollination of *P. caudatum* but I would be interested if anyone else has noted this phenomenon.



Fig 1

Hanging *P. caudatum* from the greenhouse roof enables the petals to extend without hindrance.



Fig 2

Cupping my hand around the petals enabled me to detect the odour more clearly.

Obituary

Brian Rittershausen 1936-2010

Brian Rittershausen who departed this world on the 23rd September 2010 was a founder member of Bournemouth Orchid Society. He and his father attended the inaugural meeting in 1959, I also attended with the then owner of Dorset Orchids in Plush.



This was not the first time I had met Brian as I had made a visit to Burnham Nurseries to collect my first Cymbidium seedlings back in 1949. Soon Brian and I got to know each other a lot more when we started to exhibit our nurseries stock at orchid shows around the country from the mid 50s.

Brian and I were at this point in time the only two young trade growers since the war, our friendship grew as the years went by to the extent that Brian was my best man in 1960 when Janis and I were Married. The date was the 19th of March around the time BOGA had its shows in London, this was the only time he and I did not attend.

By the time of the mid 60s we decided it was time we should visit some of our clients and shows abroad particularly with California in mind and also we had been invited to give talks to a number of societies.

Travelling so many miles together I soon realized what a very shrewd and hard working businessman Brian was, I for one learnt a great deal from him, he really did have so many qualities with a willingness to help anyone who sought his advice.

Personally I will miss him like he was a second brother and I know the orchid world has lost a great friend and orchid fellow.

[Keith Andrew](#)

Science for Orchid Growers

Green roots and transparent pots

The first in an occasional series

It is not essential to grow *Phalaenopsis* in transparent pots, although it is very convenient to do this, because of the ability to see when they need watering again by observing the green-ness or otherwise, of the roots.

Conversely, it is also possible, and useful too, to grow any other epiphytic orchid in a transparent pot. By the very nature of things, epiphytes tend to have their roots exposed to the light, so won't come to any harm this way. Whilst few orchids have roots so conveniently provided with only a thin layer of velamen so that root moisture shows up so well, it is still good with other genera to be able to see the root condition and activity without having to knock the plant out of the pot.

Transparent pots are not used to allow the roots to photosynthesise. Roots can't do this. Photosynthesis requires a continuous supply of carbon dioxide into the cells containing the active chlorophyll via the stomata in the leaves – tiny “holes” present at a rate of about 4-5000 per square centimetre of leaf - and roots don't have stomata. Moreover, the plant cannot transport carbon dioxide in its vascular system, or store it in any way – until the CO₂ has been processed in the leaves.



Paph. root action in a transparent pot. The outer conventional plastic pot removed for clarity.

Geoff Hands

Phalaenopsis lowii

After filling all the windowsills in the house with the larger growing *Phalaenopsis* I ran out of room, so to be able to continue expanding my collection I turned to the smaller growing *Phalaenopsis* species.

One of the very unusual species I have in flower at the present is *Phalaenopsis lowii*.

Thought to be extinct in the wild it was rediscovered in 1996 in Burma and later in Thailand.

This is a warm growing miniature epiphyte or sometimes lithophyte orchid from

Myanmar(Burma) & Thailand and is a small leafed plant with dark green foliage about 7 to 10 cm long and 2.5 cm wide.

Flowering in late Summer to Autumn, the flower stalk is very thin and lengthens to about 60 cm carrying the flowers at the end.

Flowers are fragrant about 5 cm across with very delicate pinkish texture and an extremely long beak - like rostellum (where its common name, Beak Orchid, originates).

Growing in its natural habitat it can produce many flowers on several inflorescence and is likely to experience a long drought period which can cause it to shed its leaves.

Best grown warm and in high humidity when it keeps its leaves.

I bought this plant at our Autumn show in 2007 from Ratcliffe Orchids when it was just showing signs of the start of a flower spike.

I placed this plant on the north facing kitchen windowsill where it grew well. The inflorescence extended and flowers started to form but duly aborted.

The same thing happened in 2008 so I came to the conclusion that high humidity was necessary to form the flowers.

The plant was repotted into a 8 cm pot in a mixture of medium and fine fir bark with a little added Perlite.

In 2009 as the inflorescence started to appear I placed it into a small hanging basket and secreted it into Colin's warm section of his greenhouse, hanging it high in the roof over his slipper orchids as I knew he would not see it there for ages.

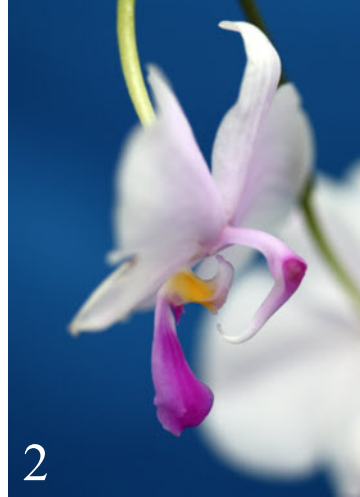
Because this area has a very high humidity I only needed to spray or water every couple of weeks and fed the same as all my other orchids.

The flowers formed perfectly and my secret was out, I have negotiated to keep it in this position where it has flowered successfully again this year and is even growing a new growth.

I understand that an all white variety has emerged from Thailand so I will be on the look out for that.



Phalaenopsis lowii



Photos 1 & 2 show the unusual lip and beak-like structure of the column.



Photos 3 & 4 give a good idea of the dimensions and form of the plant.



Photos by Colin Carter

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