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# EPIFLORA

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Wellington Epiphyllum & Hoya Society





## Notes for Epiflora as a result of Committee Meeting

### CHANGE OF PROGRAMME

It has been necessary to make the following changes to the programme. The Committee hopes that these changes do not inconvenience anyone.

11 June Rhipsalis

9 July Propagating Epiphytes from Seeds and Schlumbergera and Rhipsalidopsis from Cuttings

Midwinter Dinner - now Saturday 16 July at 7 p.m. at St. Johns Church Hall. (Underground parking available)

### MEMBERSHIP LIST

This month in Epiflora we had hoped to publish a list of current members with addresses and telephone numbers but we have been advised that, under the Privacy Act, we need each members' permission before this can happen. The list will only be circulated to members in New Zealand.

Please let the Secretary know whether you are happy for your name, address and telephone number to be published.

### TALKS TO OTHER SOCIETIES

During the past month talks about Epiphyllums, Hoyas and other Epiphytes have been given to the Mount Victoria Garden Club and the Johnsonville Horticultural Society. It is good to have the opportunity to talk to other societies and in so doing let more people know about our own Society.

### NZ PLANT COLLECTIONS SCHEME

At the request of the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture our Society is providing a comprehensive list of all genera, species and cultivars held by members of the Society. In order for us to keep an up-to-date list on the computer it is essential that we have the names of all the epiphytes that you have. Please let the Secretary have your list as soon as possible. This computer-based list will be made available to the MZ Plant Collections Scheme and when a person is interested in tracking down a particular genera they will work through our Society. In this way individual members' privacy is ensured.

In March we paid our annual visit to the Cactus & Succulent show put on by the Palmerston North Branch of the C & S Society. It's always worth a visit with entries from as far afield as Napier-Hastings and Hamilton. This year was the first time it had run over two days and from all accounts the experiment worked although I suspect the fact that it began on the Saturday morning and we didn't get there until Sunday afternoon had something to do with the fact that this was the first year we'd come away without buying any plants.

From an Epiphyllum & Hoya Society viewpoint there wasn't very much to see though as usual there was a splendid selection of the "other succulents" including some fine caudiciforms. We didn't wait for the presentation of trophies but there was little doubt that Mike Capenerhurst, (well known to many Epiflora readers) would win the overall points prize. One plant that did take my eye was a small *Ceropegia rendalli* in full flower. It's one *Ceropegia* I wasn't familiar with but it's now gone on my wants list. According to Allen Dyer it is named after a Doctor Rendall, who in 1894 sent tubers to the Royal Botanic Gardens in Kew. It's found in Transvaal, Swaziland, Zululand, Natal and Maputo. He says "It's dainty flower with a small canopy supported by five slender struts never fail to attract attention". I go along with that. *Ceropegia* flowers are always fascinating but this was one of the most interesting - a bit like *C. sandersonii* but smaller and incredibly dainty with its fluted canopy. It was on his year's "Asklepios" seed list so at least a couple of seeds came to Wellington this year. It may be more common in other parts of the country but I haven't seen it in Wellington and would certainly be grateful if anyone can tell me where to get it. My small collection of *Ceropegias* flowered well this year, but now they're back to their winter state I do wonder why I bother with them. I've always claimed to prefer plants that look good all year round, hence my love for *Euphorbias* and *Haworthias*, in spite of their often uninteresting flowers but the *Ceropegias* and *Stapelias* are the exceptions. Much as I like *Epiphyllum* and *Hoya* flowers I still find it difficult to get excited about them as plants which may well be a heretical statement to make in *Epiflora* and may make you feel you need a change of editors but I was taught to be honest whatever the cost.

Alison Beeston

PROBLEM PAGE

Ever since we joined I have wondered about the connection between Epiphyllums and Hoyas or if there is one. Some countries have Epiphyllum Societies, some Hoya Societies and some combine the two. This Branch seems to have decided that Ceropegias can be included and again I wonder about the reasoning behind this. If Ceropegias why not Stapelias? Who draws the line and why?



If we were giving a prize for the most entertaining reply to the questions on the problem page it would have to go to the following letter received from Mary Frankland.

Dear Ellie Epiphyte,

It was me wot done it - it's a fair cop - I put the plant that was labelled both E. Cooperi and E. crenatum on the sales table! I'd changed the label but not realised the old name was still written on a leaf. Sorry! Anyway Morris Tarr tells me the two species have been lumped together, they are now both to be known as E. crenatum. Makes me feel better. Seems the only person to come out of it badly is poor old Cooper, whoever he was!

This business of nomenclature can be a trap. Look how Nopalxochia recently turned into Deutsche Kaeserin, after being commonly known for years around Lower Hutt as Pinkie. Some reader may be interested to know that there is a story - appropriately entitled "The Cactus" - about this particular plant, which seems to have a habit of changing its name, written by the old American writer O. Henry.

The hero of the tale is no end of a big-head, and skites to his admiring lady friend how he can speak Spanish. She's terribly impressed. When he proposes to her she agrees with maidenly blushes to send him her answer next day. But the following day he hears nothing from her. although a large cactus appears by courier. He hasn't a clue who's sent it but it's quite nice so he sticks it on his table. By the end of the day when no message has arrived from his beloved he assumes sadly that she's decided to give him the elbow and he settles down to a life of bachelorhood.

Months later, when he has seen her married to another he has a Mexican visitor who comments on the beautiful cactus plant. "Yes," says our hero, "there's a mystery attached to it. It was sent to me the day after I asked Conchita to marry me. I don't know who sent it but there's a Spanish - sounding name on the label - Ventomarme or something like that".

"That's the plant's name. You don't speak Spanish?" his Mexican acquaintance asks.

"Have to admit I don't.

"Too bad. Ventomare is Spanish for Come and get me!"

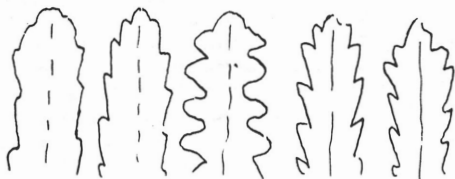
Further replies regarding *E. Crenatum/Cooperi* came from Von Cross who sent a description from the Epi Society of America and from Dick Kohlschrieber in a letter from U.S.A. to Roy and Jane.

First from Von

"*E. Crenatum* Lemaire 1845 Habitat Mexico and Guatemala. The branches are strong, fleshy, rather stiff with a thick mid rib. It makes a fine trellised plant. It has 3-angled scales in the aeroles. The flower has greenish yellow outer petals, inner ones are white and spatulate shaped. It has been used extensively for hybridising for many of its fine qualities: robust growth, agreeable fragrance and it is day blooming with flowers staying open for several days."

crenate -notched, indented

Examples



*E. cooperi* is not listed as a species. I believe it to be a common early epiphyllum hybrid, not easily confused with *crenatum*.

And from Dick

"There is no such plant as *Epiphyllum cooperi*. "*Cooperi*" is thought by many to be a cross of *Selinicereus grandiflorus* and *Epiphyllum crenatum* and should be written *xSeleniphyllum cooperi*. However an almost identical plant was found in the wild by Kimnach and was named *E. crenatum v kimnachii*."

The same two writers also had their comments to make about *Rhipsalidopsis* dropping segments. Dick says its a natural thing for them to do. However it will be worse if the plant is too wet or too dry and the weather is hot and the humidity low. Von believes it's usually a sign of root problems. Inspect for mealy bug or root rot caused by overwatering or insufficient drainage. Use an open potting mix containing pumic or fine gravel and do not over fertilize.

Von also has something to say on the mealy bug question - another in last issue's problem page.

Root mealy is a common problem with container-grown plants and, in fact, with open ground plants as well, especially those growing in dry conditions such as under eaves. As

epiphytes such as hoyas, epiphyllums, etc have to be kept fairly dry for long periods, they are particularly vulnerable.

To minimize attack either incorporate diazinon prills in the potting mix or sprinkle a little on the bottom layer of mix in each pot. Diazinon is sold under various trade names such as Soil Insect Killer, Lawn Guard, and is used extensively to combat grass grubs, carrot fly etc. It is a soil fumigant and thus gives best results when it is placed under the plants allowing the gas to rise through the soil.

When repotting infested plants, where practicable wash roots under hose first. Epiphyllums, Schlumbergeras etc. are fairly simple. Hoyas, on the other hand, with their masses of roots, cannot be dealt with so easily. Diazinon should kill a mild infestation but a badly affected plant may need harsher treatment, especially if the root system fills the container tightly. I would then prepare a bucket of Target spray and immerse the root ball until saturated. Allow to drain, prune off a little of the roots if necessary to make room for new mix and repot. If it is not desirable to saturate plant, as, for instance, at the beginning of a cold spell, try slipping a knife or similar between soil and container and dribble some diazinon prills in the cavity.

Ellie Epiphyte is grateful to those who have supplied so much information. Further comments on mealy bug and some non-toxic sprays will be found elsewhere in this issue.



Some of us get the thrill of the hunt for mealybugs and stab them with pins or use meths but after a time this gets boring.

Mealybug are related to greenfly and whitefly, all of which feed on our prize glasshouse possessions, inserting their mouthparts like slender needles into the leaf or stem and sucking up the plant sap while at the same time excreting a watery fluid over the surface of the plant which forms a base for the growth for sooty mould. The mealy bug we see is only the female as the male is a small insignificant winged insect which does not do any harm to our plants. As we know the bug is a pink coloured insect with a waxy covering and growth takes place in a series of moults. When mature the female has the eggs develop within the body until she dies which leaves her skin with its waxy threads as a protection for the eggs until they hatch. Mealy bugs keep in close contact with their host plant throughout their lives and are only really mobile in the early stages just after hatching from eggs attached to the plant. For a short period the young insects are active, moving around the plant or passing to another close plant in search of a sheltered place to settle down. A glasshouse only becomes infested with mealy bug when they are transferred from infested plants or pots and once established they are very hard to control

One way to keep mealybug infestations at bay is to inspect your plants after flowering and remove all dead material so the little greeblies do not get a hold. Overcrowding can result in the multiplication of these pests as can having too many plants that one cannot look after and although getting rid of plants could cause heartaches a smaller clean collection is better than having to spend most of ones time chasing these soft bodied, waxy covered pains in the neck.

My main control agent for these pests is having good soapy water near at hand, one that is environmentally friendly to humans as well as pets and have found a good dog shampoo well worth a try. We have a dog which likes taking baths in MASTERPET shampoo so have a ready supply at hand and all our plants except the Bromeliads, Tillandsias and Echeverias which have bloom on the leaves get the dog's bath water tipped over them. So not only do I drench the mealy on the surface I also get at the root mealy which in my situation with most plants ground planted could be a pain in the neck.

Hope that adding my sixpenneth could help our cause in fighting these monsters.

Penelope Pit Stop.

## Organic Sprays

Recipes and notes sent in by Maureen Irving

For severe beetle or caterpillar infestations use a Derris spray but be aware that this will also destroy ladybird larvae, lacewings and bees so should only be used as a last resort. Commercial derris dust may be mixed with chemicals, so check the label before purchasing

### Derris spray

30 gms chemical free Derris powder  
60 grams pure soap, coarsely grated  
10 litres water.

Dissolve the soap and derris in a little water, mixing well, gradually add remaining water and spray on infested plants. Spray has a residual effect of 48 hours so don't eat sprayed vegetable during this period.

To protect young seedlings sprinkle hot chilli powder on their foliage. Mix with pure grated soap and water, dilute well and use against ants and caterpillars.

Garlic spray can be used on a wide range of insects and especially caterpillars.

1 large head of garlic (i.e. about 30 cloves) peeled and crushed. 2 teasp. liquid paraffin, 30 grams pure, grated soap, 500 ml. water. Soak all ingredients for 2-3 days and strain. Dilute at ratio of 100-1 with water and spray.

### Pyrethrum spray

Pyrethrum comes from a small daisy-like plant of the Chrysanthemum family. Commercial sprays are sold at nurseries or you can prepare your own.

2 tablespoons pyrethrum flowers, 1 litre hot water, 1 tablespoon pure grated soap. Soak all the ingredients for half an hour then strain and use as a general pesticide.

White oil spray smothers scale as well as the eggs and larvae of many insects.

250 ml white oil, 200 gms washing soda, 4 litres water. Mix all ingredients well, making sure all the washing soda is dissolved. Dilute 20-1 and spray as necessary.

There are many more natural insecticides to be made but before you look into cures, it is far better to look at prevention for despite all our efforts to get rid of insects it looks as if they are here to stay - so we may as well learn to live with them. It is worthwhile remembering here that although thousands of animal species have become extinct in the last few hundred years there is not one recorded case of an insect species dying out.

So, keep your soil healthy. You may even learn to recognise the beauty of the earthworm, the courage of the spider, and the tenacity of that other garden friend, the native cockroach.

Editor's note - Fine, so long as we're not asked to love the mealybug.

Schlumbergera cuttings - A lesson learnt Von Cross

Usually I have no trouble propagating Schlumbergeras. I like to take 3 segments (but 2 will do), insert in pumice sand and leave alone to keep moist. However last September I particularly wanted some nice cuttings and decided to use a rooting hormone gel which had been recommended to use for other soft wood and semi-hardwood cuttings - active ingredient beta-indolybutric acid.

By January there was still no sign of active growth - in fact some of the cuttings had collapsed completely. Inspection revealed not one cutting even looked like rooting. I rescued what I could, recut them and replanted. I'm pleased to say most of them responded immediately.

Never again will I be tempted to use rooting hormones on epiphytic cacti.

#### HOYA MIX

Morris Tarr's latest, and hopefully the final, potting mix recipe.

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Fine granulated bark	3 parts	5 litre bucket.
Graded pumice about 10mm size	1 part	5 litre bucket.
Sierrablend slow release fertilizer	250 mls.	
Blood and bone	250 mls.	

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The fruits of thy labour  
by Herman A.Kortink

To most Epi-collectors who dabble a bit in hybridising the resulting fruit may look very much the same and only the astute observer will notice the surprisingly striking shapes and colours of the developing fruits on a number of different plants. Flowers pollinated in about November-December (the main flowering period) will now at the end of April have formed nearly ripe fruit.

Looking at the four different species I have crossed this year one has to wonder why there is such a large difference in shape and colour on what are basically the same plants, but then of course we forget we are dealing with complicated hybrids each one with a complex set of chromosomes.

Epi Wedding Bells x Nopalxochia phyllanthoides - the resulting fruit is nearly 40mm and perfectly round and has a light red to purple striped appearance, the second fruit on this plant is only 25mm round and a deep purple colour. This has to be a chance pollination as it carries no label. The third fruit on this plant is oval in shape and is a light red purplish almost transparent colour. It is very soft already and could be nearly ready to be removed. It is a cross with Aporophyllum cascade. It should be noted that A. Cascade has one of the largest flowers I have seen on Aporos, really beautiful and long lasting.

The sole fruit on Epi Punch bowl x E. maiden's prayer is completely different. It's a very large fruit about 65mm long x 35mm wide, finishing in a blunt point. In addition it has 6 distinct ribs and about 6 or 7 furry spots that could be rudimentary aroles. The colour is a very darkish reddish brown green, quite different from the others described. The crossback E. Maiden's prayer x E. Punch bowl (the reverse crossing of the previous one) carries a totally different fruit again. One would have expected close similarities as basically the same mixture of genes is involved and they were crossed on the same day but this fruit is almost a perfect round 45mm x 45mm -the colour is a dark bronze green on the half exposed to the light while the other half nearest the bench and away from the light is a surprising bronze purple. In addition it carries 15 to 16 very tiny leaves in rudimentary aroles which also carry 3 to 6 bristle-like white spines.

The sole fruit on Epi Flirtation x Aporo Cascade is a very large 60mm x 40mm. It is very firm and apparently still has a while to go before it's ready to harvest. It has four vague but distinct ribs. The colour is a solid purple red. The cross of Epi Duke of Windsor and Aporo Meriell has produced a firm green fruit about 35mm x 15mm and carries about 5 ribs, It develops very slowly and these often turn

out to be nothing more than a stimulation excited by foreign pollen and usually carry no seeds. Nopalxochia phyllanthoides carries a small bright red fruit, probably the result of insects or a bumble bee or even pollen from elsewhere blown around by the wind as the door is always open when I'm home. Normally honey bees have too many brains to fly into a hot glasshouse during the day but bumblebees and wasps will. Nop. Phyll still has the dried up buds from its second flowering on the stems and now (17 April) while I was doing a spraying round I discover that it is developing dozens of new buds again. I'm not quite sure why but we have had a beautiful summer and it seems that we may get a good autumn as well. As plant react to warmth and light I wouldn't be surprised if this is not stimulated by the fine spell we have had the last ten days and as this seems likely to continue it may well be that before long this spotty plant may carry 1 ripe seedpod, 2 green ones and about two dozen flowers. There's also a good chance that if the weather changes the buds will just stop growing and abort in spring when normal growth commences. It's remarkable how these plants will pass on their good and bad genes. I have used this plant for hybridising for the last 3 or 4 years and some of the resulting plants carry the same ugly spotting this plant is infamous for.

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