



WELLINGTON

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# EPIFLORA

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# **EPIFLORA**

Volume 7 No. 3

September 1998

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## **From the President**

Thanks to all who helped make our midwinter function such a success. It seemed to me that the food was better than it's ever been and it was good to have a number of visitors to share the afternoon with us and enjoy our speaker, Pamela McGeorge. I'm sure the committee would appreciate any suggestions you might have for next year. In fact we are always on the lookout for suitable speakers to fill our guest spots and for new ideas to make our meetings more interesting.

These last weeks have been more wintery than the earlier parts of the season but the plants seem a bit confused as to what is going on. I'm sure there are far more buds around than we usually have at this time of year with both epiphyllums and aporocactus showing well developed buds at present. It will be interesting to see how the flowering season turns out.

Plans for the Exotic Plant sale are progressing and you will be hearing more about it before long.

Looking forward to spring and the flowering season.

Alison Beeston.

## The Programme for 1998

*Meetings are at Johnsonville Union Church (Dr. Taylor Terrace) and start at 2.00 pm. Library books etc. are available at 1.30 pm.*

<b>September 12<sup>th</sup></b>	Revelations about Rhipsalis
<b>October 10<sup>th</sup></b>	Flower arrangement – with and without epiphytes
<b>November 14<sup>th</sup></b>	Visits to members collections
<b>December 12<sup>th</sup></b>	AGM and Christmas function

## News About People:

Our good wishes go to **Di** and **Ken Comber** as Ken recuperates from his recent operation.

Another member we have not seen recently is **Joyce Walter**. We have missed you at recent meetings Joyce – and look forward to seeing you back again as the weather improves

## Items for your Diary ..

**October 2<sup>nd</sup> / 3<sup>rd</sup>** Kapiti Show

**October 17<sup>th</sup> / 18<sup>th</sup>**      Wairarapa Orchid Show

**November 7<sup>th</sup>**              Exotic plant Sale – grow your plants  
to sell

## **Scope of the Society.**

*Jane Griffith reviews some of the options for the future of our society.*

In recent months some members have been discussing the future of our society. The subject was brought to the attention of the Committee who decided that the matter should be put on the agenda of the AGM in December. In order to facilitate discussion at the AGM the Committee agreed that an article should be prepared for *Epiflora* putting forward the issues. This is it!

It's a healthy society that reviews its status and viability from time to time. Our society was established 8 years ago and since its inception membership has grown to the point that we now have 42 paid members. Of this membership 31 live close enough to our venue to attend meetings, the remainder being "out of town" members. Our average attendance at meetings is 20 to 24, a figure that has remained fairly static over the past five years.

Ours is a specialist society covering epiphyllums, hoyas, schlumbergeras, rhipsalidopsis, rhipsalis and, interestingly, ceropegias (which are not true epiphytes). In other words the society specialises in the growing of epiphytes. Understandably only a limited number of people will be interested in joining a specialist society although we are all aware that large numbers of people do grow one or two of these plants in their homes.

A specialist society has many advantages in terms of the specialist knowledge accrued and the availability of plants not normally found in garden centres but understandably there are limitations - especially the likelihood of programmes becoming repetitive over the years and numbers of members remaining relatively small.

Therefore what are the options for us as a society?

A. To continue dealing with the plants we currently specialise in

B. To expand the scope of our organisation – possibilities might include:

- I. All epiphytes
- II. Other asclepiads (stapeliad genera and orchids)
- III. Bromeliads

There are many advantages and disadvantages of both options as you will be aware and I would encourage you to think these through. Maybe the main considerations do relate to:

1. The size of society each of us believes is desirable to function well
2. The variety and scope of the programme we wish to enjoy
3. How far broadening the base of our society will assist the two previous points or whether it might dilute it to the point where existing members become dissatisfied.

Please consider this matter fully so that our discussion at the AGM on 12<sup>th</sup> December will cover all aspects of this important issue and we will be able to make a decision about the future shape of our society.

## **Thoughts from Afar**

*Von Cross also reflects on the future of our society..*

I note with interest the suggestion that the range of plants covered by our society be widened.

The purist will say that an Epiphyllum and Hoya Society is just that. But do we want to be purists? We are led to believe that the plants we know as epiphyllums should not be so-called anyway. Already schlumbergeras, ceropegias and, to a lesser extent, tillandsias have “snuck in” and I, for one, thoroughly enjoy reading any articles about them. The other large group of Asclepiadaceae which does not as yet appear to have attracted much attention (so far as I am aware) is the succulent type, including hoodia, huernia and stapelia. Many of these are readily available in New Zealand and thrive in similar conditions to epi’s and hoyas.

There is also a growing interest in Bromeliaceae as these beautiful plants become readily available.

To keep the interest of the existing members and maybe attract new members I would like to suggest that our society extends its coverage to all epiphytic plants, including orchids. I know the latter genus is well catered for by specialist societies but the erudition displayed there is often downright daunting to a person who just wants to know how to care for a few plants.

## **An Editor's View**

*Reported by Phyllis Purdie*

After a very pleasant mid-winter lunch at our July meeting we listened to an enjoyable talk given by Pamela McGeorge, recently appointed editor of NZ Gardener. We were allowed to journey with her through her marriage, growing family and shifting house as her husband, affectionately called "The Gypsy" moved around the world.

Her first gardening attempt was in central Otago, but there even the leeks didn't thrive. Their first move was to the University of California, in Berkeley where they leased a plot from an elderly couple. The vegetables were much more acceptable from this, but her mini-skirt in summer was not!

After this it was off to France near Paris in a 250 year old farmhouse beside a forest. Encouraged by her neighbour, Pamela gardened a small plot successfully. She also pursued her writing interest and had an article accepted and published by the Otago Daily Times.

By now there were four children with the eldest nearing high school age. Because they believed NZ offered the best opportunities for their family they returned to Auckland and to another garden. Pamela was able to return to teaching French and English too. Next the family moved south to Alexandra where she found a part time teaching job and had more articles accepted by the Otago Daily Times.

In 1993 Pamela sent an article with photos on "Wild Flowers of Southland", to Julian Matthews. This was accepted and published. When the family settled in Wellington an enquiry by Pamela about further articles for NZ Gardener led to her first job with the magazine; progressing over the years to her present position. During this time, Pamela says, her association with Julian Matthews has taught her lots about horticulture.

The production of the magazine involves a computer link-up between Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch. In Auckland decisions about the cover and overall design, photo choices



and placements are made. The final printing is handled in Christchurch, while in Wellington the Editor is the hub between all of this. We discovered too that most of the articles were commissioned rather than submitted.

An interesting insight was given over the care taken in photography, one printed photograph may have taken a whole day to achieve.

Members were given an opportunity to share their hopes, likes and dislikes for future publications. I am sure we now have a much greater appreciative understanding of the job of editing the NZ Gardener.

## **Hoyas – Spring tasks**

*Von Cross reminds us of the work we should be doing now to ensure our hoyas are in peak condition.*

Spring is always a busy time in the garden and hoyas demand their fair share of attention.

If plants need repotting, now is the time to attend to it. Should you wish to keep to the same sized container some judicious root pruning will allow room for new mix. Plants which do not require repotting will benefit from a top-dressing of new mix or, if you have a supply of good leaf-mould, this is an excellent dressing. Increase water as temperatures rise. A weak solution of liquid fertiliser may be added to water, or used as a spray once a month. Cuttings are best taken at this time; new plants have a better chance to establish well before the following winter.

Check for any mealy bug or scale which may have survived the winter. The appearance of sooty mould or sticky patches on foliage is a sure indication of the presence of either of these pests. Small infestations on small plants can be dealt with by the trusty finger and thumb method; otherwise spray with “Attack” if you can get it, or “Target” plus spraying oil at summer strength.

## **Hoya Cinnamomifolia**

*Morris Tarr* writes about one of his plants that always arouses a great deal of interest at shows and displays.

Here we have an amazing species from the island of Java. The leaves are olive green, veined in silver and fairly large, 150mm long by 50mm wide. The new growth is a bronze toned colour.

The flowers are absolutely sensational consisting of 20 to 30 blooms on each umbel. The petals are waxy lime-green, turning pale yellow as they age, and are set off with a large centre crown, or corona, of purplish red.

This plant is very easy to grow. The growth is moderately vigorous. It comes under the intermediate category, which means it requires a little warmth and should not be grown outside in the cold.

I grow my own plant in a 150mm (6 inch) square pot, and it grows quite happily contained in a wire frame 6 inches round by 24 inches high. I keep it trimmed so that it does not grow rampant.

The plant flowers regularly for me every year, starting in October and continuing on and off right through to March the following year. Each flower umbel remains open for about 10 to 14 days.



**Hoya Cinnamomifolia**

## **Orchids as an Epiphytic Complement**

*Jenny Askwith reports on the talk given by Roy Walker of the Capital City Orchid Society at our August meeting.*

There are some 20-25,000 species of orchids in the world and so Roy decided to talk mainly about the ones that will succeed in the 0<sup>o</sup> to 40<sup>o</sup>C temperature range which are what most of us would be capable of growing. i.e. plants that will grow in the cold if you have a glasshouse such as cattleyas, laelias and dendrobiums.

These require being kept dry and cool in the winter months and can stand quite cold temperatures so long as they do not get frost on them. Most will flower in the late autumn, then after a resting period will come away in the spring - their growing period. In the summer time they must be kept quite warm and moist. - if in a glasshouse they must be watered at least once a day, if not twice.

Most of us of course, have the odd cymbidium orchid but Roy found these not to be too favourable as even though they have beautiful flowers, they take up a lot of room and are very heavy to move especially when coming to divide them.

There were several varieties that Roy then went through describing and showing us:

◆ **Sarcophilus** - which has beautiful fronds of tiny flowers - this grows in bark and will grow happily sitting on a windowsill with not too much sun. It can be grown in quite shady conditions and would require constant shade in a greenhouse - in summer, shade cloth should be used.

They are grown mainly in baskets and will flower for six months of the year from July to December.

Once the plant is established, use a general fertiliser like Peters Blossom Booster which has not much nitrogen .

◆ **Dendrobium** - 0<sup>o</sup> to 45<sup>o</sup>C. Possibly can be grown in a carport with novarroof, for light, as long as there are no frosts and they are kept not too wet over winter. They should be grown in reasonably coarse bark.

If necessary, repot in spring when the jewel tips start to form on the end of roots.

Some plants can be grown successfully hanging on a piece of cork, pine, punga etc, sometimes in sphagnum moss. During summer, lots of spraying with water is required. Mist

early in the morning and let the plant dry out during the day as it would in its natural habitat. Roy minces Blitzem to keep away the nasties and minces up sheep dags and hoof and horn together as its fertiliser. Nice job!

- ◆ **Sophronitis** - these have a temperature tolerance to cold but do not like it too hot. They can flower at different times of the year ie intermittent flowering.
- ◆ **Slipper Orchid** - cooler type of orchid with nice green leaves and can be grown with or without a greenhouse. They do not like to be dried out too much and like a bit of shade - but not too much. Do not put them on a sunny windowsill.
- ◆ **Masdevallias** - they like a lot of water and cooler temperatures. They are to be grown outside and not as a house plant. They can withstand the winter rain as long as there is no frost.

As far as potting mixes go, Roy uses medium to coarse pine bark. When he is about to pot up orchids, he soaks the bark in water for a couple of days to get rid of the tanin, and adds a handful of garden lime or dolomite to the water. Generally you should expect 2 - 3 years of life in the bark before it starts to break down. It will break down quicker when you use fertiliser. In essence, you should grow to your own conditions and know yourself, how often to water, as everybody has their own style of caring for their plants.

For those of us who do have the odd cymbidium, Roy volunteered a bit of advice: Use a coarse mix, and water all the time - every day in the summer, easing off in the winter. Do not put them under trees as they become prone to botrytis on the pseudobulbs. They need a minimum of 6 hours direct light during summer.

A very informative afternoon from which I'm sure we all came away with a little bit more knowledge of growing some varieties of orchids.

Thank You Roy.

## **Panel Discussion on "Difficult Plants"**

*These notes from the June meeting were written by Jane Griffith*

At the June meeting of the society a panel, consisting of Phyllis Purdie, Andrew Flower

and Morris Tarr, gave their views on cultivating and tending the “difficult plants” introduced by members. The meeting itself started in a unique way with the deputy chairperson for the panel (myself) reading an introduction from Mary Hardgrave who was supposed to be chairing the meeting. I still think it’s a bit extreme to go off to Australia rather than chair the meeting!! But thanks Mary for your excellent introduction, which set the meeting off to a good start.



**Kami - grown by Jane Griffith**

Plants that were discussed included *Schlumbergera opuntioides*, *Epiphyllum* "Sugar Plum Fairy" and epiphyllums and hoyas in general. For some *Schlumbergera opuntioides* is a difficult plant to grow with its roots often being poorly developed and a tendency to have root mealy bug. One panel member reported good success growing his specimen in his heated growing house.

The usual issue of mealy bugs was raised in relationship to hoyas. Morris Tarr spoke of soaking his plants in a weak solution of Maldison when he observes they are looking less healthy whereas Andrew Flower advocated using a systemic pesticide which eliminated mealy bug problems for him. Phyllis Purdie commented on how some of her hoyas are temperamental although she keeps them at a minimum temperature of 12° C. She was questioned as to whether some of the problem ones were in fact hoyas whose natural habitat is the tropics. Die back on hoyas tips was generally attributed to damaging these very tender growing shoots.

The question of when to plant epiphyllum seed was discussed with varying answers being given. Andrew Flower agreed to experiment with some seed he has – planting some straight after taking from the seed pod and leaving some for several months. The annual winter problem of snails, wetas and other insects munching at epiphyllum leaves led to the suggestion of using either a dust with a puffer spray or Orthene to control the little devils.

As usual there was a great deal of discussion amongst those in attendance and generally it was agreed that the knowledge of the panel and our collective knowledge meant that each person learned something from the programme.

## **Epiphyllum 'Kami'**

*Jane Griffith writes about an epiphyllum in flower this month*

A small flowered epiphyllum hybridised by Wressey Cocke in California. Kami flowers are orange, between 2-4 inches across and a distinct trumpet form. A profuse flowerer our plant is grown in our shadehouse and first started flowering in early August. It usually flowers twice in the year so we anticipate having flowers until the new year.

For those who like small flowered epiphyllums Kami is definitely to be recommended.

## **Charcoal, The Forgotten Ingredient**

*by Rex Hardy. Andrew Flower noticed this article and observes that whilst it was written by a cactus enthusiast, it applies equally well to potting mixes for bromeliads and other epiphytes.*

Introduction: When I was a young man, one of my memories of helping my late father, Stan Hardy, with his cacti in his large glasshouse, was the way he always included charcoal in his potting mixes. Up until quite recently, I always thought the idea of this was to help in the drainage of the potting mix, but finding a small article in one of his cactus books has told me otherwise.

In the days of wood fires, charcoal was plentiful, and the benefit to potting mixes was apparently well recognised. It appears as our wood fires have disappeared from the scene, so has the use of charcoal, yet its benefits are still there.

### **THE BENEFITS OF CHARCOAL IN POTTING MIXES:**

It should be noted firstly that charcoal has no food value in itself. However, it does have several important uses to plants and potting mixes. One of the most important uses is that it acts like a magnet and a sponge collecting and conserving ammonia. This remarkable function is one of the marvels of science and nobody has been able to explain it. If pieces of charcoal are in the soil, it will be found that roots will cling to them to absorb the collected ammonia.

When organic fertiliser begins to decompose, one of the first products given off by the bacteria is ammonia gas. This gas is extremely volatile and easily escapes, but if a grain of charcoal lies next to a grain of fertiliser, it will absorb 80 times its own bulk in ammonia and will hold it—for the use of the plant roots.

It is the ammonia forming capacity of bone meal, fish meal, natural manure, compost and such organic fertiliser that we pay for, and the gas should not be allowed to escape.



Charcoal has other equally valuable properties. It is the world's most perfect purifier. It acts as a continuous factory for the destruction of injurious acids. Whenever evil organic gases are given off, charcoal will absorb the odour. A sprinkling of charcoal over the compost heap will not only prevent odours but will conserve ammonia.

Further benefits that plants receive by incorporating some charcoal in your potting mixes:

- (1) It checks damping off of seedlings.
  - (2) When cuttings are started off in water it encourages root growth as well as keeping the water fresh.
  - (3) Charcoal in potting mixes also sweetens the soil and saves fertiliser.
  - (4) Lastly, but not least, it helps to open up the potting mix as well as helping in the drainage.
- If you are using Perlite in a potting mix why not substitute some of it with some small pieces of charcoal.

After purchasing the charcoal, break it into smaller pieces by placing it on a large piece of plastic and breaking it with a hammer. I have found the best size to use is around half inch size pieces.

*Reprinted from Epigram, Journal of the Epiphytic Cacti & Hoya Society of Australia Inc., Vol. 11 #1, July-September 1996.*

## **The Internet.**

*A number of society members recently attended an afternoon session run by the 20-20 Trust where they had the opportunity to learn a little about the Internet and how societies like ours can make use of it. Grant Bailey continues the theme..*

Yes the Internet - We're there! Where?<sup>1</sup>

<http://home.clear.net.nz/pages/grant.bayley/grant.html>

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<sup>1</sup> The Wellington Epiphyllum and Hoya Society has an entry in the Wellington City Council Community Directory.

(still requiring a little work but we're on the net - advertising the 1999 convention)

*Some interesting sites to visit (if you are on the internet) are.....*

**<http://surffax.com/epi/index.html>**

The San Diego Epiphyllum Society.... part of their information reads....  
WHAT IS AN EPIPHYLLUM ANYWAY?

One spring a visitor to a local Epiphyllum nursery in Southern California, after a tour of the lath houses that were filled with hybrid Epiphyllum in full bloom, remarked "truly, the Epiphyllum is the flower that other flowers try to be". This was a profound statement, worthy only of this magnificent flower.

*Then you can surf a bit more to.....*

**[http://www.cactus-mall.com/rainbow\\_gardens/index.html](http://www.cactus-mall.com/rainbow_gardens/index.html)**

The Rainbow NURSERY & BOOKSHOP

1444 E. Taylor Street, Vista, California 92084, U.S.A. - *an interesting site.... I ended up ordering some books (Epiphyllum and other books) over the net from here!! - And on we go....*

**<http://www.beachlist.com/epi.html>**

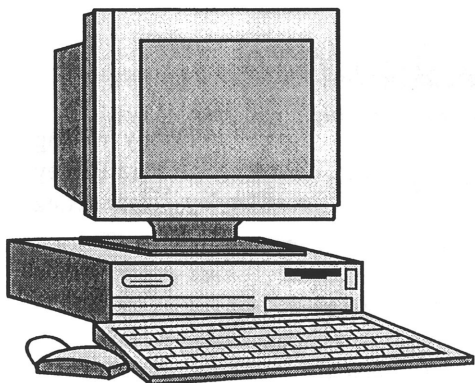
WELCOME TO THE SOUTH BAY EPIPHYLLUM SOCIETY

The South Bay Epiphyllum Society was organised in 1986. This Society is devoted to the study of all of the epiphytic cacti. Although most of our members collect the hybrid epiphytic cacti, we are also interested in the Aporocactus, Disocactus, Heliocereus, Epiphyllum, Hylocereus and Selenicereus. In addition, many of our members collect and are interested in the Rhipsalis, Schlumbergera (Christmas Cactus), Rhipsalidopsis (Easter Cactus) and all of the other genera of epiphytic cacti.

Then I thought of checking out the hoyas and that left me pondering.....

Document matches: 28360 when I searched under the word **Hoya**... whereas with Epiphyllum there were matches: 353 - What that meant was 28360 articles had HOYA in them..... A football club, glass and lenses manufacturer, and other companies..... insurance and more... but after a long search I did find some information on the plant..... hoyas.

<http://www.ag.usask.ca/cofa/departments/hort/hortinfo/plants/hoya.html>



The Hoya: Long-Lived and Trouble-Free

Few house plants are easier to grow than the hoyo. This tough tropical plant adapts readily to conditions in almost any home, forming a massive vine covered in dark green, leathery leaves. It thrives with little care, will expand to fill an entire window and will bloom each summer for many years.

About one hundred species of hoyo are native to Eastern Asia and Australia. The common house plant, *Hoya carnosa*, was named for Thomas Hoym, gardener to the Duke of Northumberland at the end of the

18th century. 'Carnosa' refers to the plants fleshy leaves. As is typical for members of the milkweed family, the hoyo exudes a sticky sap if cut or damaged.

Then.....

<http://pss.uvm.edu/pss123/suchoya.html>

*Hoya carnosa*

(hoy' yah car-no' sah)

**Common name:** Wax Plant, Wax Flower, Porcelain Flower

**Family:** Asclepiadaceae, Milkweed

**Height x width:** climbing or hanging to 20' or more outdoors, 3-4' hanging indoors

**Growth rate:** fast..... etc.....

<http://jove.gsb.georgetown.edu/gufb/bbs/messages/90.html>

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

Georgetown Gridiron BBS

Re: Hoya vs Saints -

*I think this is/was a football game.....*

<http://www.msue.msu.edu/msue/imp/mod03/01700487.html>

HOYA INSECTS Mealybugs look like white puffs of cotton. They suck plant juices and heavy infestations will coat the leaves with sticky honeydew. Use house plant insects sprays according to label directions.

*If you are on the Internet and do have time please check out Hoyas.... I'm sure it will give you a good laugh!*

*Oh, I also found something on ceropegias.....*

**<http://www.graylab.ac.uk/usr/hodgkiss/ceropp.html>** - had some good pictures of flowers here too!

Happy hunting  
Grant Bayley  
grant.bayley@clear.net.nz

## **Odd Cuttings and Seeds**

### **Epiphyllums do not have leaves**

Continuing the theme of trying to be botanically correct that Dick Kohlschreiber started for us . Leaves do not form in the genus Epiphyllum, nor in many (any?) of its relatives in genus Hylocereus. What are often called leaves are actually phylloclads - or stems. We will write this up in much greater detail for the next issue.

### **HSNO Act Underway for New Organisms**

The Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act 1996 came into effect for new organisms on 29 July 1998.

From now on, any one who wishes to introduce a new animal or plant species to New Zealand requires approval from the Environmental Risk Management Authority (ERMA New Zealand). Approval is also required for genetically modified organisms, new organisms in containment and low-risk species as defined by the HSNO regulations.

ERMA New Zealand has already received and notified four applications for GMOs including petunias, sugarbeet and potatoes. Information about the applications is available on their website at <http://www.ermanz.govt.nz>. The website also has information for potential applicants and submitters.

## **Checklist of Online Vegetation Maps**

This has been compiled by Claire Englander (University Herbarium, University of California, Berkeley) and Phil Hoehn (Branner Earth Sciences Library and Map Collections, Stanford University) and is available at:

<http://www-sul.stanford.edu/depts/branner/vegmaps.htm>

The list is arranged by area (world or continent, then subdivided by region or country name, and when necessary subdivided by smaller areas). The map (or atlas) titles are "hotlinked." All titles showing vegetation distribution (e.g., forested areas, vegetation types, maps of individual family, genus or species distribution) were included. The compilers quickly learned that few maps are easily found via Internet search engines using the term "maps". Rather, they are pages within a website, and oftentimes a page within a chapter of an electronic paper.

The compilers hope map users will find the checklist useful, and news of additional sites or about any URLs no longer working would be appreciated.

## **Future Publication Dates..**

*EPIFLORA is published quarterly by the Wellington Epiphyllum and Hoya Society.*

*Comments and contributions are most welcome.*

*The society aims to encourage discussion and debate; opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the society. It is the policy of the society to publish corrections of fact but not to comment on matters of opinion expressed in other publications.*

*Please address correspondence to:*

*82 Kinghorne Street,  
Strathmore Park,  
WELLINGTON 3. NZ.*

*Or: griffith@globe.co.nz*

*Closing dates for contributions:*

*Spring 1998 Edition - 8<sup>th</sup> August  
Summer 1998 Edition - 14<sup>th</sup> November*

## **Subscriptions:**

**Subscriptions are due on 1st of January and are:**

**Members - \$12.00  
(overseas members \$NZ16.00 or \$US12.00)**

**Additional Associate Members - \$4.00**

