



EPIFLORA

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June 2005



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President's Letter

Dear fellow epiphyte growers

With winter beginning we have the pleasure of schlumbergeras flowering profusely. It does seem to be a particularly good season for them with their range of reds, pinks, yellows and whites. I say white with tongue in cheek as we have never managed to get our White Christmas to remain white as we grow it in the shadehouse where night temperatures drop below 12 C at this time of year – the crucial lowest night time temperature for white schlumbergeras to remain white. The problem is such a temperature can be maintained by growing the plant indoors but then you have to be careful to ensure it gets a sufficiently long period of darkness each day. This sounds as though schlumbergeras are difficult to grow but that is far from the case – they are both easy and rewarding as witnessed by the number of large flowering plants one sees in people's homes.

Winter is possibly the only time that one does very little in the shadehouse or glasshouse unless like us you are still pruning and repotting epicacti. We have made excellent progress to date but still have the ambition of pruning and repotting our entire collection. This may be wishful thinking but we'll keep pottering along at it. Our hoyas are coping with minimum attention – the occasional drop of water in the morning if the day looks as though it is going to be fine and warm.

If you haven't already done so do put the 9th July into your diary so that you join us for our midwinter meeting. As usual we will have a pot luck lunch together and then enjoy a visiting speaker. We are just awaiting confirmation by the speaker so more detail at the June meeting.

Hope you keep yourself warm over the winter months and that your plants survive the colder weather.

Kind regards

Jane Griffith

31st May 2005

The Programme for 2005

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

Those on duty are responsible for preparing the room, assisting with tea and tidying the room at the end of the meeting and bringing a plant or other item for the raffle. If for any reason you are unable to do your allocated duty please arrange for someone else to do it.

June 11th	“From flower to fantasy” <i>On duty:</i> Anatoly and Helen Los, Marion Austin
July 9th	Mid Winter! (lunch and a visiting speaker from the Iris Society) <i>On duty:</i> Brian Read, Nola Roser, Robyn Gibson
August 13th	Rhipsalis <i>On duty:</i> Lois Bond, Isobel Barbery, Dianne O’Neill
September 10th	Bromeliads
October 8th	Hoya Programme
November 12th	Field trip - details to be confirmed
December 10th	AGM and Christmas Function

Digital Photography.

*This is a topic some of us have been wanting to hear about for quite some time - a number of our members now have digital cameras... so we are glad that **Neville Chun** agreed to give this talk..*

There could not be a better time to consider digital photography or digital video! Advances in computer technology has empowered us all with the opportunity to use and enjoy the digital era. Prices of digital cameras, digital video cameras and computers have come down to competitive consumer levels and if you are thinking of upgrading your old film camera – think seriously about a digital camera or even a digital video camera.

You can now have your digital photos printed at the Camera Shop, and you will not be able to see the difference between film and digital.

You can now purchase very good quality inkjet printers that will print your digital photos and you will not be able to see the difference between your film photos and the one that has just popped out of your printer.

The best thing about digital photography is you have the ability to take as many photos as you like, select just the good ones you want to keep and throw out the bad ones –it won't cost you anything and they will never degrade in quality.

It does pay to look at the digital camera reviews and a couple of the best web sites to visit for this is are;

<http://www.steves-digicams.com/>

<http://www.dcresource.com/>

Think about what you want to use the camera for mostly, the price level you can afford, then go to the digital camera review web sites and buy the best camera in that price bracket.

Considerations of a Digital nature

A Computer:

If you are thinking about getting a digital camera, you really should have a computer. Without a computer, you are limiting the use of a digital camera. If you haven't got a computer yet and want one, get an Apple Mac. You won't regret it (I am biased, I have a Mac).

A Photo Printer:

You should also consider a good inkjet printer that can print your photos. When shopping for such a printer, make sure you go for one that has the word “Photo” in the model description, as in “Epson **Photo** R210”. Epson and Canon “Photo” inkjet printers are very good.

The type of paper you print the photos on has a great effect on the final quality of the print. If you want your print to look like photos, then you have to use inkjet “Photo Quality” Paper. There are several grades of inkjet Photo Paper, and the premium quality grades really do give the best results (Epson Premium Photo Paper). It just depends on your intended use of the photo.

One thing you must do after printing a photo, is to lay the photo flat on a clean surface away from direct sunlight and let it dry for 24 hours. Handle the print as little as possible and do not try to trim cut it. The inks may be touch dry coming out of the printer but they have actually saturated the surface of the photo paper and the paper and inks need time to dry. Your prints will look better and have a longer life.

The Camera:

Think about what you want the camera for, in the same way you’d think about what you’d use a new film camera for ...

An everyday compact camera

A small travel camera

An enthusiast camera

A semi-pro camera.

Many Digital Photo cameras can now take live video and sound too. You might like to have a camera with this facility (the digital video is not as good as a dedicated digital video camera).

Really small digital cameras may be convenient and easy to carry around, but they are difficult to take photos with. Its their small size that makes them harder to hold and keep steady when taking a photo.

Lower end cameras will probably have shutter lag (press the shutter button and wait 1 – 2 - 3). This is something you should try and avoid in a digital camera, its frustrating.

There are different price levels for digital cameras, and the main difference between the camera price levels are:

The Amount of Pixels the Camera can take:

The more pixels, the higher quality the end result for printing large photos – but do you actually need to print the photos? More on this later.

These days, digital cameras start at around 2.5 to 3 to 4 million pixels (3-4 megapixels), and you cannot go wrong with choosing a camera around this level. It will produce sharp printed photos up to 8 x 10.

I have some printed photo examples to show you...

Digital cameras are now freely available with 6 megapixels, and are less than \$2,000.00. For those just starting in digital photography, that may sound really expensive, but just 3-4 years ago, a digital camera with 1.5 megapixels cost \$2,500.00.

Here are some examples of digital cameras...

An Olympus 1500

An Olympus 2500

A Konica Minolta Dimage Xt

A Panasonic NV-MX500 video and photo camera

Optical Zoom (forget about Digital Zoom):

Go for a camera that has a good range of Optical Zoom. They haven't quite got digital zoom right and it ends up being pretty useless.

The Optical Lens:

All of the well-known brand named cameras these days are pretty good. They have good lenses in them. That is the key factor in a good digital camera - the lens. A camera with a Zeiss or Leica lens will be very good. Olympus, Canon, Nikon lens are also superb.

The LCD Screen and the Viewfinder:

A large viewfinder is better than a large LCD screen. Try looking at a LCD screen on a bright sunny day. Its almost impossible to see the image. You'll see the "shot" better through a good viewfinder any day. I find the LCD screen good for reviewing the photo just taken but always use the viewfinder to take the photo.

Macro Close Up:

A great feature if you are going to be taking really close up photos of epiphyllums!

Red Eye Reduction Flash:

A must have feature. Stops the “red eye syndrome” when taking photos of possums and such eating your epiphyllum and rose buds.

Memory Storage Cards:

No need to go into this too much. There is a small “card” inside a digital camera. The photos get stored on these cards. When you want to “download” the photos to your computer you can either connect the camera up to the computer or remove the card from the camera and insert it into a “card reader” to download the photos.

Downloading from a card reader is faster. You can buy multi-format card readers for about \$50, they usually connect into your USB port on the computer. Try Dick Smiths. I recommend you get one of these if you are taking lots of photos regularly. It will save you a lot of time (staring at the screen while photos download to your computer).

Memory card capacity – It depends on your usage, but the more memory capacity the card has, the more photos you can take. This could be very convenient if you are travelling away and take lots of photos. My uncle has a 1 gigabyte card in his Canon 300D and he can take about 900 photos in low resolution mode.

The Batteries:

Digital cameras are very hungry on power. The best batteries to buy for your digital camera are rechargeable Nickel Metal Hydride batteries. All the other types of batteries are pretty useless. Nickel Metal Hydride batteries (NiMH) are easily available. Dick Smiths, electronic stores, supermarkets, and hardware stores all have them. You should buy a bundled pack that includes the charger and a set of batteries. Buy a spare set of batteries also, and keep them in your camera bag to swap over when the first set runs out. They always run out just when you don't want them to!.

Taking Photos with a Digital Camera:

All the golden rules that apply to taking photos with a film camera are the same with a digital camera. If you take bad photos with your film camera, that is likely to apply to your spanking new digital camera. It is easy to take good photos, you just have to be aware of some golden rules of photography. If your friend takes consistently good photos, ask them for some advice

...

Don't shoot with the sun facing you

Photos taken in bright sunlight don't turn out very good. They are too contrasty

Compose your photos, think of each one being like a painting

Look at the background of the photo, is it too cluttered?

Get in closer

An overcast day is a great day to take photos. The light is even, no shadows.

A digital camera is more flexible in lower light conditions because you will be able to adjust the light sensitivity from the cameras menu. In a film camera, you'd be pretty much stuck with the type of film you loaded in the camera (ASA speed).

Resolution Modes on a Digital Camera:

A digital camera will allow you to change the resolution modes (amount of pixels per photo). Usually they are expressed as...

Low resolution

Medium resolution

High resolution

Super high resolution (in the higher end cameras)

You use the resolution suited to the end use of the photo. For instance, if taking a photo for e-mailing, you'd probably use the lower of the resolutions. If you were going to print the photo on a single A4 page or even bigger, then you'd use the higher resolutions.

If your camera is a 4 megapixel camera, then the highest resolution the camera would allow is 4 megapixels.

Digital Photo Management:

This is a very important area of digital photography. Because you can now take as many

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photos as you like, without an associated developing cost, you will find you will take more photos, a lot more than you ever imagined. Managing these photo is a big issue.

How do you file them away on your computer in some order?

How do you retrieve specific photos taken 2 years ago?

How do you index a photo?

An analogy of this situation - looking for hours for that one photo in the box of photos in the cupboard. End up hitting your head on the shelf above, grabbing the box and chucking them out the window, watching your neighbours scramble with glee for the cash you forgot you hid under the photos.

The Computer wizards have solved this problem, and if you don't have a good digital management programme installed on your computer you will be in dire straits 6 months after purchasing your digital camera (see above).

Apple Macintosh

Apple Mac's come with iLife – this is a superb package of several digital applications – iPhoto for managing and adjusting digital photos, iMovie for making digital videos, iTunes for managing music and iDVD for making DVD's. They even have iGarageband for making your own music, unfortunately I am musically inept.

I will now demonstrate iPhoto to you all.

PC Computers

There is a digital photo management application for PC's called Picasa 2. It is free and you can download it from www.picasa.com. It looks to work in the same way iPhoto does. I have not tried it to compare.

The pictures overleaf were taken by Jane Griffith. They are H. multiflora, H. potsii, and H. potsii flowers in habitat in Far North Queensland.

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Digital Photo Applications:

There are some very clever things you can do on your computer to the digital images you take with a digital camera. You can correct bad lighting conditions, adjust colours, and make many other enhancements and alterations to your digital photo. I have shown you some photo adjustment you can make with iPhoto. Adobe Photoshop is an industry standard.

E-mailing Digital Photos;

Digital cameras enable you to send digital photos attached to your e-mails around the world in seconds! There is one thing new users need to be aware of when e-mailing digital photos to friends, relatives, etc – and that is to always reduce the file size of the photo for e-mailing. If you send a photo straight from your 4 megapixel camera, it will be 4 megabytes in size and that will take ages for the recipient to download. You really need to reduce the photo file size down to 100k or less. Digital Photo management software can do this for you and I have shown you how iPhoto reduces digital photos for emailing.

Why Print the Photo?

Believe it or not, the trend is not to print the digital photo these days. I rarely print photos. Printing the photo costs you – inkjet ink, photo paper. Inkjet ink is where the printer manufacturers make the gold. Photo paper is not cheap. There are new ways to show your photos. The digital format of your photo enables you to show/distribute your photos by ...

E-mail

Transferring the photos to a CD or DVD disc for viewing on a TV screen

From the computer monitor (slideshow)

From handheld devices such as an Apple iPod

I have an uncle who is a life long photo enthusiast. He laughed at the dawning of the digital photography age. Now he has a Canon 300D SLR 6 megapixel digital camera and will not let it out of his sight. He loves it, and he prints all his beautiful photos for his photo folder. It takes him ages to print them and the amount of photo paper and ink he goes through would fund a small city. I asked him why bother printing the photos when they look great viewing them on his monitor. He replied “because I just like holding them”.

Digital Video:

Digital Photography is not the only great thing you can now do digitally.

Digital Video is also here and available at consumer prices. Digital video cameras are similar in price to the higher end digital photo cameras.

Many digital video cameras now have a digital photo facility, so you can take digital video and digital photos with the one camera. Although, at this stage digital video cameras tend to have lower pixel resolutions than what you could buy in a higher end digital photo camera.

Following is a short digital video of the January 2005 Garden Walk we enjoyed in Waikanae. I made this digital movie on the Mac with iMovie and then made a DVD disc of the movie with iDVD.

A Walk on the Wild Side

In March a group of us went to visit the Karori Wildlife Sanctuary .. Merv Keighley writes about it

Saturday afternoon 9th April at 2pm a group of members met in the car park of the Karori Wildlife Sanctuary. We weren't seeking sanctuary but seeking The Sanctuary. Nor were we seeking a wild life.

We were met at the gate by Pam Fuller who was to be our guide. She started by giving some background into the vision and creation of the Trust from the vision of one man, James Lynch, and then the raising of funds and the building of the security fence.

"The Fence" - a world first in providing predator proof security is 5.6 Km long, encircling an area of some 252 hectares, was completed in 1999.

It is designed to prevent vermin entering the sanctuary. The top of the fence overhangs in such a way that the animals are unable to get traction to enable them to climb over. The mesh is fine enough that all but a tiny mouse cannot get through. The wire is buried ½ a metre in the

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ground to prevent diggers from going under it. Total Kiwi ingenuity.

Multi eradication of 14 species of mammals was completed in 2000. The Sanctuary has now the most pristine regenerating bush in mainland New Zealand.

The main water reservoir - the Lower Reservoir Dam construction was commenced in 1872 with an earth dam, the first of its kind in Wellington and possibly in New Zealand. A water control outlet control tower of Gothic style was completed in 1873. A second dam was started in 1906 - completed in 1908 and one of only 2 or 3 gravity arch dams in the country and an early example of the use of concrete in New Zealand.

In the early 1990s, James Lynch, the Chairman of the Wellington Branch of the Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society developed a vision -

"The Sanctuary Trust has a vision for the valley's restoration that spans 500 years - the time it will take to re-establish the forest emergents like rata, rimu and totara. When these giants reach maturity and the processes of death, decay and regeneration have restarted the restoration programme will be complete."

Many rare and endangered species have been released or re-introduced including -

Little spotted Kiwi - back on the mainland for the first time in 100 years.

Weka, brown teal.

Robin, whitehead, bellbird, tomtit, scaup, saddleback, kereu, kaka, hihi.

Also many plants that once grew in the Wellington area but had disappeared have been re-introduced.

Time caught up with us - as it always seems to do!!! We could have spent much more time being shown the many outstanding features that we didn't see, but ended the visit by thanking our guide, spending some money in the shop and then having afternoon tea back at the cars.

A wonderful experience.

Epicacti propagation from seed

At our May meeting a number of our members discussed their experiences of growing various varieties of epicacti from seed. Yvonne and Andrew Brunton spoke particularly about growing epicacti from seed - while Jane Griffith talked about growing ceropegias and hoyas from seed. And, of course, everyone else joined in.

The initial discussion centred on how the form of the fruit or seed-pod indicated the likely means of the seed's dispersal. Jane observed that some creature (a mouse maybe) had been eating the fruits on epicacti, so presumably somewhere in the garden some seedlings are trying to grow. Both hoyas and ceropegias favour wind - so produce seeds with down parachutes (not unlike dandelions).

The discussion moved on to the hybridising of epicacti. Andrew talked about the importance of deciding what you wanted to achieve by making the cross and checking through the parentage of the plants you propose to use using the ESA directory (check for three prior generations at least) to make sure that the traits you want are strongly present. One should place particular importance on the traits shown by the female line. Of course it is vital to ensure that the prospective parent plants are correctly named - otherwise all this effort is wasted. One should also ensure that the plants grow well in NZ. Andrew remarked that the whole exercise was not unlike the breeding of cattle - which they had done for many years.

The actual process of making the cross is straightforward. It is a good idea to cover the chosen flowers with plastic bags just before they open - to ensure they are not fertilised from other plants. Pollen can be harvested and kept in the fridge in tin-foil if the two flowers are not open at the same time. Pollen is transferred to the female parent using a paint-brush - and the flower is covered again.

When the fruit has ripened - the next stage begins. Many people have spent many hours separating the seeds from the pulp - and then setting them out on paper to dry. Andrew suggested an alternative approach - just slice the fruit thinly - and lay the slices on the surface of the soil in propagating boxes. Then mist them with a fungicide - and leave in a warm place to germinate. Andrew has found that seeds grown this way grow faster than those separated from the pulp.

When the plants have grown to a reasonable size - the strongest can be potted up and the weak ones discarded. The seedlings should be fertilised periodically and never allowed to dry out.

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Depending on your growing conditions you may have to wait until the plants are over five years old before they flower, though Andrew and Yvonne have had some flowers after two or three years. At that point the boring and the nondescript are thrown away - and the few interesting new flowers kept. (As another hybridiser has noted "to get quality new hybrids - you must be prepared to throw lots of plants away!")

While epicactus seed can be kept for many months before being sown - it is vital that ceropegia seed is planted fresh. It is very difficult to artificially hybridise ceropegias - so any seed pods you find on your plants are of unknown parentage! Jane also noted that field collected seed may be purchased through the International Asclepiad Society - if you are a member.

Again the seed is scattered on the surface of the mix - which is watered with a fungicide such as Benlate. Ceropegias, in habitat, grow in very poor soil so no fertiliser need be given. Merv often gets the new plants to flower in the second year.

The overwhelming conclusion was that growing these plants from seed is easy - so why not obtain some seed - and give it a try.

Further Reading

Our Society receives journals from a number of other societies with similar interests. These journals are all available from our library. In the last couple of months a number of interesting items have been published. Here are some snippets that you might find interesting. (Of course you really should go and read the articles for yourself!)

In the May 2005 issue of **SFES Journal** (Vol 12 No 4) there is an article showing how large quantities of mix can be made up with ease. The mixer is based on a fortyfour gallon plastic drum - but you will have to read the rest yourself.



Also in this edition there is a brief piece on some of the other plants that grow under the same conditions that epicacti like - just in case your shadehouse is empty.

The March 2005 issue of **Epi-Gram** (Epiphytic Cacti and Hoya Society of Australia) has a brief piece about plant problems - especially yellowing and black spot as well as a selection from “Mrs Murphy’s Laws of Gardening”.

And finally in the May 2005 issue of **SDES Epi News** (Vol 30 No 5) there is a brief piece entitled “tricks of the trade” which has some neat ideas on how to transport epi blooms so that they stay in peak condition on the journey - and the names don’t get mixed up on the way.

Now is the time

Well we had some really cold nights last week - just to remind us that winter is on its way. The electric heater in the plastic house is starting to switch itself on some nights - and the most tender plants have been brought into the house for the winter. But you can still work on your plants. What you should be doing right now depends not a little on exactly where you live. Here are some suggestions for the Wellington growers. If you live in Cambridge or Christchurch you may need to adjust things a little.

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Epicacti - *it is still work-time so you can prune and repot as necessary. Water with the greatest care - and do it early in the day.*

Hoyas - *it is best not to water at all unless the plants look really dry, and then only give a small amount of water on a fine day. Some days are still warm so keep checking for mealy bugs and other pests. Deal promptly with any you find - before they take over..*

Schlumbergeras - *enjoy the flowers and water sparingly. Keep varieties such as “Bridgeport” or “Gold Charm” warm at all times (watch night-time temperatures especially) or their flowers will have a pink tinge..*

Rhipsalis - *water very very sparingly. Otherwise leave well alone.*

Aporophyllums - *Water infrequently. If you have not done so - you may prune lightly and repot with great care.*

Ceropegias - *lay off the water unless the plant looks very dehydrated. Then give only a small amount of water in the morning on a fine day. The stems of some varieties die back entirely at this time of year. Keep checking for pests. (We gave all ours one last drenching with “Attack” about two weeks ago .. Ed)*

Odd Cuttings and Seeds

Rhipsalis information

Some of our members may remember - “Bradleya” the scientific publication of the British Cactus and Succulent Society published an article in Bradleya 13 in 1995. It was called “Notes towards a Monograph of Rhipsalideae (Cactaceae)” and the authors were Barthlott and Taylor. Copies may be available from Rainbow Gardens Bookshop.

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New Zealand Fauna on the Web...

A trio of new websites available on the internet will make the wealth of information on naming and identifying New Zealand Fauna and Flora much more accessible. Based on the traditional books called *Floras* and *Faunas* these are the definitive guides for identifying plants and animals, and are similar in purpose to Encyclopaedias. The one of most interest to us is probably Volume 1 of the Fauna series - which includes mealybugs, plant hoppers, scale insects and other common friends! The address is: <http://faunaserie.landcareresearch.co.nz>

More non-chemical warfare ...

“For red spider (which is the plague of aporophyllums especially) try putting a fan in the greenhouse possibly near the most vulnerable plants, the air circulation alone often will prevent red spider mites. Note.....this is not a complete 100% cure all but will often help prevent them.”

and another idea:

“Flowers of sulphur sprinkled lightly round as a top dressing for cacti is an excellent preventative for red spider. Sprinkle lightly over the plants if they are actually infected. It will kill off the pests, but the plants may look unsightly - there is no cure for the actual damage caused.”

Back numbers of “Epiflora”

The first edition of **Epiflora** appeared in March 1992. We have limited stocks of backnumbers for most issues from Volume 2 (March 1993) onwards. Ask the editor for details.

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 All material in Epiflora may be reprinted by non-profit organisations provided that proper credit is given to WEHS, Epiflora and the author.

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Subscriptions are due on 1st of January and are:

<i>Members -</i>	<i>\$12.00</i>
<i>(overseas members</i>	<i>\$NZ24.00 or \$US12.00)</i>
<i>Additional Associate Members -</i>	<i>\$4.00</i>
<i>(At same address as a member)</i>	

Society web address:

Find us on the web at : www.anwyl.com/epihoya

