



EPIFLORA

Volume 14 No. 4

December 2005



EPIFLORA

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President's Letter

Dear fellow epiphyte growers

What a wonderful season it has been for epicacti flowers! Their beautiful array of colours, flower shape and size make them a rewarding plant to grow even though their flowering season is so short. Whenever friends come to our home in November and look around our garden they are drawn to the shadehouse and exclaim at the beauty of the epicacti. With the mild Spring we experienced hoyas are flowering a lot earlier this year and putting on a very fine display. We are waiting with baited breath as two of our hoyas are going to flower for the first time this year. Both of them are warm growing hoyas which benefited from being brought into the house over the winter months.

As the year comes to a close and you look back over it I hope there have been some highlights for you and not too many things you had promised yourself would be achieved this year but are still in the "pending" basket.

Our December meeting is our Christmas afternoon tea and prior to that our AGM. Lets celebrate our achievements over the past year and bring together our ideas for making the Society even more enjoyable for each of us in 2006.

For those members overseas, from out of the Wellington region and those who are unable to attend on 10th December Roy joins with me in wishing you seasons greetings and happy holidays.

Kind regards

Jane Griffith

28th November 2005

The Programme for 2005/6

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.

| | | |
|------|---------------------------------|---|
| | December 10th | AGM and Christmas Function On Duty: Nola Roser, Brian Read, Robyn Gibson. |
| 2006 | January 14th | BBQ at Waikanae after garden visits On Duty: Isobel Barbery, Dianne O'Neill, Lois Bond. |
| | February 11th | Hoyas On Duty: Alice and Rex Hannam, Marion Austin. |
| | March 11th | Pruning Plants (<i>BYO plant for this workshop</i>) |
| | April 8th | Ceropegias |
| | May 13th | Visiting speaker |
| | June 10th | Schlumbergeras |
| | July 8th | Midwinter celebration (and visiting speaker) |
| | August 12th | <i>details to be confirmed</i> |
| | September 9th | <i>details to be confirmed</i> |
| | October 7th | <i>details to be confirmed</i> |
| | November 11th | Visits to gardens and collections |
| | December 9th | AGM and Christmas function |

Next Meeting

Don't forget that our December meeting is our Christmas meeting so you need to bring:

1. something for afternoon tea
2. something (a plant for instance) to brag about
3. a wrapped gift for someone (value less than \$5.00)

Visit to Cross Hills Gardens

A group of some twenty members and friends travelled to Cross Hills rhododendron nursery on Saturday 29th October.

A small fleet of cars made their separate ways north on Saturday morning - and made a stop in Feilding. They say an army marches on its stomach. Well so does our society - and the morning tea that Virginia and Jim had waiting for us would have satisfied a small army. It was good to see how their plants have been housed and are growing in Feilding and every corner of their garden was studied (in between return visits to the table!).

Then the car-train set off for Cross Hills. The weather was fine. The gardens were a picture and everyone disappeared in different directions. There was a little bit of crossing of paths near the café around lunch time - but for the rest we wandered at will. Those of us with questions or needing information loitered behind bushes - waiting to accost one of the more knowledgeable members of our party. They were patient and generous with their information.

As the afternoon wore on the car groups reformed and set off on the journey south. For some there were stops on the way home at honey shops, plant nurseries and other such abodes of temptation.

Many thanks to Virginia and Jim for providing such a splendid start to our day, and many thanks to all the drivers.

Daffodil Delights.

...And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

William Wordsworth

Alice Hannam was our September speaker and she talked about daffodils. Here are some of the things she told us...

Daffodils – Narcissi – where did the name come from? They have been in cultivation for centuries. One legend says they were named after a Greek youth, Narcissus, who was led to believe that a long and happy life would be his provided he never gazed upon his own features. In a moment of vanity he glanced at his reflection in the quiet water of a pool, falling in love with his own image he pined away. From the earth where he died sprang a beautiful flower which thereafter was called Narcissus.

Another story says the name came from the Greek word "narce", from whence also comes the word "narcotic", in reference to the alleged perfume of the flower. These plants were used by the "furies" (whoever they were) who are said to have used the narcissus to stupefy those they wished to punish. Others claimed that the scent of the flowers led to hallucinations. Or from the Greek word "narkau" to grow stiff because of the narcotic properties. Believe whichever story you prefer.

Most spring bulbs grown today are narcissi of one form or another and are reported to have originated mainly in Spain and Portugal, with a few coming from as far east as Turkey. You will all be familiar with Erli Cheer. There is another flower grown which is very similar in form, except a lighter colour, having orange in the corona petals. It is known as "double Roman" or "Romanus", is very scented and is registered as pre-1576. It also has twelve other names, three with a reference to Italy, which makes me think it might have originated there. One name for it is "Constantinopalitanus" so is that Turkish? Going back to Erli Cheer, it is pre-1934 and is New Zealand bred. It was first called "Cheerfulness", then "Gaiety" but when it was found that these two names were already in use it came to be called Erli Cheer. Even then there were problems with EARLICHEER and EARLYCHERE but now it is listed as ERLI CHEER and although it is multiheaded it is classed as a double. Its parentage is unsure but it is widely believed to be a double version of "poly anthos" (which means many flowers) called "White Pearl" and which has single flowers. If this is so it would be classed as a sport. Some double flowers have reverted to single, with one grower having a stem with three double and three single flowers on it (neither Arthur nor Martha!). "White Pearl" the original is pre

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1861 and classed as W-Y meaning white perianth and yellow cup.

In narcissi there are thirteen divisions.

Division 1 is trumpet where the trumpet is as long as, or longer than, the perianth and in any combination of colours; W-Y, Y-W all yellow or all white. Pink is coming into it too now.

Division 2 is large cup, where the corona or cup is more than one third, but less than the perianth length. Again in any combination of colours as in trumpets.

Division 3 is small cups the corona being less than one third the perianth length. I have seen some in shows where the corona was very narrow but more than the one third ratio in length and the exhibitor has entered them as a small cup, and again where the cup was very flared and flat but shorter than the one third and the judge, not knowing the measurement rule, has missed the anomaly.

Division 4 is doubles – and that can be a single bloom per stem or multiple as in the previously mentioned Erli Cheer.

Division 5 is trianthus, which is multiple headed, rather slender and pendant with up to six simple form flowers per stem. The perianth can be slightly reflexed and one article I read about them mentioned having three stamens per flower. I have not noticed it but will look when they flower, perhaps this accounts for the "Tri" in their name (Tri means three; Anthus means anthers). They make good rock garden bulbs.

Division 6 are cyclaminus, their name describes their form, with the perianth being reflexed as in cyclamens. They are usually miniature and are little sweeties. They come from moist alpine meadows in Spain and Portugal.

Division 7 are jonquils, multiple headed and scented. The name comes from *Juncus* or rush or *Junqui folius* which means rush like foliage. The leaves more round rather than flat, the bulbs are dark shiny brown and with a shorter neck. They will often grow where it is difficult to grow daffodils. They do well in damp grassy spots in Spain though prefer sunny spots in Britain. There are reported to be two varieties which have a single flower rather than being multiheaded.

The Pictures opposite show **Waikanae Candy** and **Waikanae Extravagance** (both are new Jane Griffith Hybrids - which have been submitted for registration this year)

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Division 8 is tazetta or poetaz, again multiheaded and scented. Paper whites (or papyraceus) come into this class as do Soleil D'Or, Y-Y or Y-O and are pre 1731 the lovely bright early season flower. There are eight paper-whites in the register one being pre 1887. They grow mainly in the Mediterranean area, with a few as far away as China. They seem to prefer lower altitudes and stony ground.

Division 9 is poeticus or poet's narcissus. They have one flower per stem, a white perianth with a small coloured cup usually edged red. They are usually referred to as Pheasant's eye and come from damp mountain meadows in southern Europe. There is one hybrid called Geranium a cross between poeticus and a tazetta which has the white perianth and orange cups. Being multiheaded it is in the tazetta division.

Division 10 is bulbicodiums or hoop petticoats and are suitable for rockeries.

Division 11 is split coronas, which were first registered in 1950. They can be in the usual colours, including pink, with the corona being very flat, lying back against the perianth and split for at least one third of its length. You either like them or you don't.

Division 12 is miscellaneous – for any not in the above classes, although I wouldn't know what they are.

And last (but not least) is Division 13 for species.

Planting – Plant bulbs so that the top of the bulb is twice the depth of the bulb itself. The top of a 5cm (2 inch) bulb would be 10cm (4 inches) below the ground. You can plant a little deeper in sandy soil or a little shallower in heavy soil. Top dress at planting with an N-P-K of 5-10-10 and again with the same mix at leaf emergence, when they come into flower they could have a mix of 0-10-10. Or as an alternative use 8-9 month slow release fertiliser specifically for bulbs at leaf emergence. Has anyone seen this fertiliser? I haven't, but then I haven't looked – it could be an English product. After flowering they could have blood and bone or complete fertiliser to build up next year's flowers. Another recipe – just to confuse you – a big grower uses a mix of four parts sulphate of potash, two parts blood and bone, two parts basic slag, and one part dolomite three weeks before planting and again three weeks after. Alternatively, because bone flour and basic slag are hard to come by a mix of equal parts of sulphate of potash, super phosphate, dolomite and bone char is a good substitute. A little sulphate of magnesium (Epsom salts) and sulphate of iron also helps to give good colour. Keep the beds well watered after planting though the drainage must be good. Specialists say daffodils need one inch of rain per week from planting until they start to dry off. Whatever you do don't be tempted to cut off the leaves after flowering, don't bend them over or tie them in a knot. All the good in those leaves goes back into the bulbs for next year's flowers. If the

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dying leaves worry you try growing annuals in between or round the bulbs to help hide the untidy mess. If the bulbs are in the lawn or grass they seem to be protected from the narcissi fly which leads us to the subject of problems.

The main one is the narcissi fly, both large and small. The large fly is the more common and is rather like a small bumblebee. It appears round about October and lays an egg at the base of the dying leaf. The larva hatches and goes down round the bulb and enters through the base, then proceeds to eat out that bulb. If you have occasion to lift a bulb and it feels soft and spongy you are sure to find this giant sized maggot quite at home thank you. There is also the small fly, it is half the size of the large one and could be mistaken for a house fly. It lays many eggs at the foliage base and the grubs attack the bulb from the neck down, reducing the bulb to a rotting mess full of larvae. Mounding earth around the dying leaves or filling the hole with sand helps to deter the fly. If you do lift the bulbs and they have that soft feeling they can be soaked in insecticide solution or in hot water (at least 45 °C) for one hour minimum. The insecticide sounds a better solution to me because if the water gets too hot you would cook the bulb as well as the grub. I personally sprinkle diazanon in the hole when planting or on the ground round the dying back leaves when flies are around. This would also help against mites. If the leaves are malformed, twisted or streaked eelworm, which is only visible under a microscope, or smoulder fungus, should be suspected. Burning is really the best option here. For the organically minded, marigolds may provide an alternative. It is known that the Aztecs used marigolds (*Tagetes minuta*, or commonly known as "Stinking Roger") to sterilise their soil prior to planting their potatoes. According to Botanica "Stinking Roger" is purported to exude substances fatal to soil borne pests, which has led to its use as a companion plant. Recently Jan Pennings drew attention to the widespread use of marigolds in commercial plantings in the Netherlands. The practice is to plant marigolds in the area where it is planned to plant daffodils and till the marigolds into the soil. Pennings argues that this produces beautifully prepared soil and also kills some nematodes. He suggests planting *Tagetes patula* (a low growing form) from three weeks before to three weeks after the longest day. He warns that if the problem is stem and eel worm 100% control should not be expected. (refer Daffodil Annual page 17 paragraphs 3 and 4).

Propagating. This is usually by bulb division for the home gardener. Specialists have their tissue culture, then you can plant the seed if you have time to wait for the results. This can take up to five or six years – and even then they may not be any good. Only one in perhaps hundreds would be worth saving. Or you might be game enough to try splitting the bulb. Cut it into eighths or even sixteenths with a tiny piece of base plate attached. Soak for twenty minutes in a mix of one part of janola to twenty parts of water. Put in soaked perlite – and keep in the hot water cupboard. I haven't tried this idea yet so I can't speak from experience. This sliced piece should develop into a bulb.

Daffodils can be successfully grown in pots though it is better for mini bulbs rather than larger ones. Plant bulbs about one third of the way down the pot, one to a four litre pot and three or four in an eight to ten litre pot or bucket. One exhibiting grower I know uses a mix of four parts top soil, two parts peat and one part river sand, with a little wood ash, lime, sulphate of potash and super phosphate well mixed in. This is put into the pots on top of broken crocks or stones with straw over that. Presumably the straw prevents the soil disappearing through the stones. Watering started in April and continued till November if it did not rain to soak the pots. A teaspoon of sulphate of potash was dissolved in ten litres of water for an occasional watering. After all that work he deserved to be a successful exhibitor. Also his answer to the narcissi fly problem is to spray two or three times in November with "Ripcord". This is another alternative for you to try to beat the dreaded fly. It is expensive though.

Miniatures are more difficult to grow than standard daffodils, but growing them in containers is more successful than growing them in the garden as they are easier to keep track of and to keep weed-free. A potting mix can be made up of one part each of peat, sand, and pumice or fine bark. Perlite can replace pumice but it is expensive. Bulb potting mix can be used, but good drainage is essential. Three quarters fill the container, add a layer of river sand, plant the bulbs in the sand and top with pumice or fine bark. The sand has two uses, drainage – and the bulbs come out easier and cleaner at lifting time. After one year in a container the bulbs need to be planted in the ground to recover some of the strength they would have lost in the pots. If you have time and room (and I don't) it is preferable to lift every second year to keep up the quality especially for showing. Good blooms have their flowers at right angles to the stem (except triandrus) and a short neck. Long goose necks are too weak and the flower droops. The perianth must be vertical. If you decide to lift your bulbs, after cleaning and thoroughly drying store them in open mesh bags hanging in a dry airy place.

After all this useless information do you think you could be hooked on narcissi and develop "yellow fever"? If you like jonquils and tazettas for their wonderful scent – how about this? They are much in demand by the French perfume industry. Apparently 100 to 150 tons of flowers are harvested in France each year. The flowers come from wild populations and mainly from areas west of the Rhone river.

Multiple headed doubles such as Erli Cheer, Bridal Crown Double Roman previously listed in class four which is single headed double may be changed to Division 8 B which will be double flowered tazetta/jonquil type. This is yet to be confirmed.

What's in a name...?

Epiphyllums, Epicacti, Peacock Cacti whatever! Grant Bayley shares some random reflections on names and nomenclature ... and cabbages and kings....

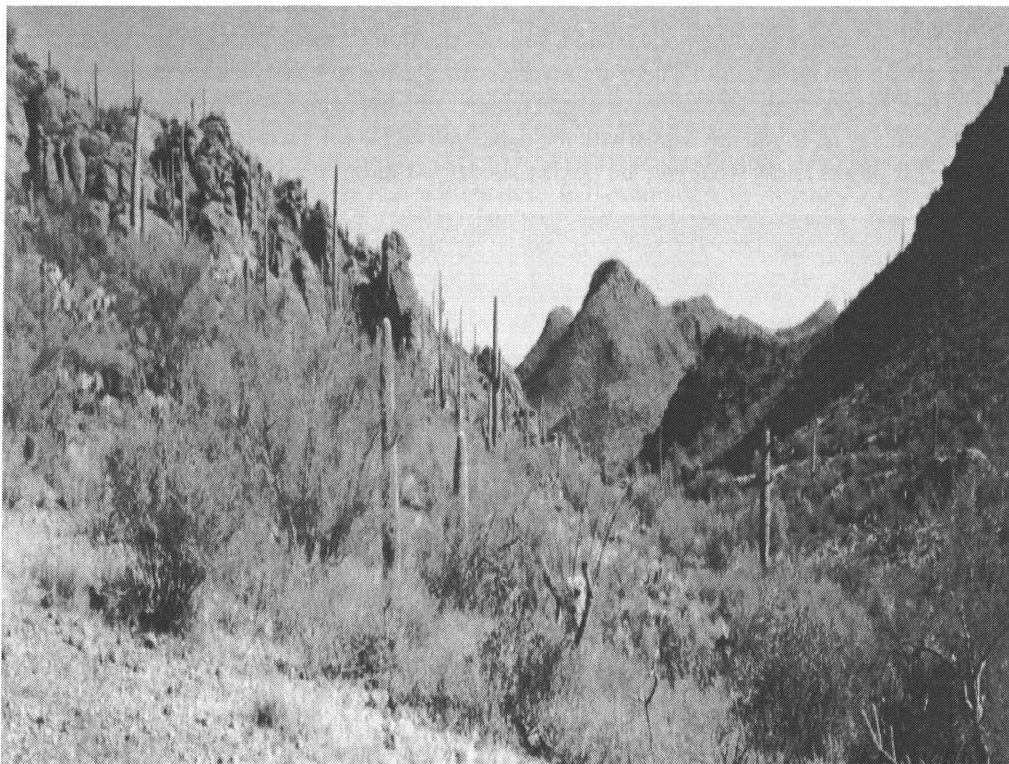
Really having trouble finding good, sound, full information on these plants. Can you help? Firstly what is the right name? There are several names given to these plants – but they (the plants) don't know them! Do they have a right name ... or a left name ...? A number of names... So, all I can say is, if you are happy with the name you call them, then be happy. Who am I to judge? If others know what you are talking about, you must be using a name they know.



Me? I like to think of them as "dry land seaweed". Yes a bit strange BUT look at them. They sort of look like some seaweeds don't they? Lettuce seaweed. How about calling them Cacti In Seaweed Styles or Cacti In Seaweed Shapes (CISS). I ask, how's your CISS? I really think it would work don't you?

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Another question. Did you know the original CISS species come from 'in America' somewhere? Seems all cacti come from 'in America'. Me? I'm from 'in New Zealand' –



Augh!!!! You are right I am not cactus, but I might make a good CISS anyway. I've been told that if I came from where CISS comes from I'd probably have web feet – internet or flippers – who knows. Croak! What type of climate do plants grow in? What a dumb question! They are cacti. Cacti like dry conditions. The photos we see of deserts with cacti, this tells you and I where cacti grow! Dry! Everyone knows cacti like it dry. They rot if they get too much water!

Because you are so knowledgeable about these plants, can you help explain this? A third sort of "how come" question. A cutting off a CISS plant I wanted to kill, so shoved it in a jar of water so it would rot down. Well!!!!!! It developed large white worm things out of the cacti stem.



They didn't move or anything. They just, slowly, got longer so I tipped the water out to dry them out! They shrivelled up. So I put water in the jar and they carried on growing. This had me confused. What was going on? A wet CISS, a dry CISS. Either way they are resilient. The worms turned out to be roots. Drying these roots didn't seem to kill them when they were re-hydrated. Back to life! Not like other cuttings I've grown in water. So I begin to wonder what are the water "boundaries" of these plants? How much water can they take? Then I wonder how much plant food can they take too? Light? And what about cold? Another predicament...?!

Cold, They can't survive the cold. I know that! A few winters ago some of my plants were "subject to frost". Pulp. Mush! Death! My plants grow outside all year round, so I know. I know they can't take it below freezing ... but should we tell the people who kept their plants dry in the winter? Someone had some plants where it snows. Surely that would kill them! Think

that's *below* freezing... After the thaw, they continued to grow happily in the spring with little or no damage. I take a breath... what is going on? I ask you, how much are you and I, really, going to learn about our CISS plants? if we don't experiment! ... sounds like the Cole Porter song "Experiment". Water ... how much? Cold .. how much? Fertiliser? How much? The final - sort of "do you know???".

How much fertiliser your CISS can take? I gave a plant more than four times the amount I normally, give them, and I gave them more water than normal. BUT wait I put an ice cream pottle with no holes under the plant. The CISS was a wet soggy one, with "a tonne of fertiliser" and the result... Try it you may be surprised! Go on. I bet you don't try it! What have you got to lose? A piece of plant?

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I leave you with these thoughts ... rename your plants to CISS. Subject them to hot and cold



temperatures to get sun burn and frost damage – Does your fridge have enough room? Grow three identical plants in dry, ‘normal’ and bog conditions ... Can you cope with the boom in mosquito population? If you use sheep pellets as fertiliser how much smell can you tolerate? Is it worth doing all this experimenting, if your plants are growing and have flowers now? Why did you read this article anyway? Did you think you might learn something? Nah! We really only learn by doing. So go for it!

The pictures opposite are *Hoya eitypensis* and *Hoya ischnopus* (pictures taken by Jane Griffith at David Liddle’s nursery in Queensland)

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!)

The November issue of **Epi News** (San Diego Epiphyllum Society) celebrates their 35th anniversary. As well as their usual helpful comments on growing epis - there are a couple of articles recalling their early history .. some of the names may be familiar ...

Talking of notable people - the Summer edition of **EPIG** has an article entitled "A visit to Californian friends of Epiphytic Cacti". If you ever wanted to see what some of the names we read look like in reality this may help. Unfortunately (apart from good English abstracts) the articles are in German. The pictures are not though! If anyone would like to translate an article... there are two or three other pieces in that same issue that would repay study.

This must be the month for talking about people - Dick Kohlschreiber in the September issue of **Epi-Gram** (South Bay Epiphyllum Society) joins in with an article on two notable German hybridisers - Helmut Paezold and Rudolf Hessing.



Now is the time

This section would usually start "By the time you read this summer will be here". Well summer came and seemed to take a brief look at us - and ran off quickly. The nights and days were getting warmer - the night time temperatures being about 15 °C and the day time ones twice that; but be careful - the night time temperature here went down to 7 °C this week! So continue to play it safe - water in the mornings - before the sun gets too hot; and be careful about leaving water drops all over your plants. As we always say - 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.

Epicacti - *Start watering regularly (preferably early in the day). Enjoy the flowers as they come. After a plant has finished flowering - you can repot or prune it.*

Hoyas - *water when dry. Fertilise. Keep a wary eye out for mealy bugs and other pests. Start enjoying the flowers. It is not too late to take cuttings..*

Schlumbergeras - *still a good time to repot using a slow release fertiliser into the mix. Water when dry.*

Rhipsalis - *water regularly as rhipsalis come into flower. A little fertiliser will assist the plants.*

Aporophyllums - *Water regularly. Enjoy the flowers. After flowering a plant can be lightly pruned.*

Ceropegias - *Flowers may be beginning to appear (some of ours have been flowering for ages .. Ed) Water when dry. You should start the daily task of unwinding runaway growth. Keep in a very warm environment for maximum flowering.*

Odd Cuttings and Seeds

Schlumbergeras

Dick Kohlschreiber notes that many plants - especially Schlumbergeras - need trace elements and it is magnesium that they particularly need. Many Schlumbergeras are both epiphytic and lithophytic - they often hang from rock faces in Brazil. The rock is granite which contains a lot of magnesium. When grown in other media, Schlumbergera can become chlorotic if deprived of magnesium and develop the yellow margin (among other problems). You can supply them with magnesium by watering in Epsom salts (magnesium sulphate) periodically.

Thanks ...

In the last issue of *Epiflora* we published a picture of “an unnamed rhipsalis” We got a number of e-mails suggesting what it was. In truth it was not the best photo we have ever used anyway so identification is made more difficult. However the plant is about to flower again - so thanks for the suggestions - we will take the books and identify it (and maybe take a better picture). Then we can publish a correction. Of course the point we made still stands “make sure you don’t lose the labels!”. Meanwhile - very many thanks to all who wrote to us.

Shower with a friend

There has been a lot of discussion recently in some discussion groups about how to deal with spider mites. Various types of chemical warfare have been suggested. Others prefer to eschew noxious potions and use water - but do you just try to have a high humidity (which will probably be ineffective), mist the plants (which may encourage fungus infections) or use lots of water (which may cause rot.)? One of the final contributions said - "I used to have really bad infestations until I started spraying the leaves with water. Now I just set the plants in the bathtub and turn the shower on...".(I wonder what brand of shampoo they prefer - Ed)

Pictures

If you are not taking pictures of your flowers and plants now - you probably never will. Now that most of you are into digital photography (and so is *Epiflora*) it is so easy for you to e-mail a picture for publication. So get snapping - and send in pictures of the flowers and plants you most enjoy. (I might even persuade the committee to sanction a small prize .. Ed).

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.

Please address correspondence to:

249 Te Moana Road,

WAIKANAE.

Or: griffith@globe.co.nz

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Subscriptions:

Subscriptions are due on 1st of January and are:

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|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
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| <i>(overseas members</i> | <i>\$NZ24.00 or \$US12.00)</i> |
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| <i>(At same address as a member)</i> | |

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