E. H. S.

WELLINGTON

EPIFLORA

Volume 15 No. 3

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The Programme for 2006

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.

September 9th	Visiting Speaker (Richard Nansen) **On Duty:** Phyllis and Bruce Purdie, Mary Hardgrave
October 14th	Visiting Speaker **On Duty:** Penny Luckens, Kaye and Merv Keighley
November 11th	Visits to Hutt Valley gardens and collections **On Duty:** Jane and Roy Griffith, Alison Beeston
December 9th	AGM and Christmas function **On Duty:** Nola Roser, Brian Read, Robyn Gibson.

Details of the programme for 2007 will be in the next edition of Epiflora

Nominations for the 2007 committee (including some office-bearers) should be passed to Kaye Keighley on or before 11th November.

In the following piece ***Merv Keighley*** *puts into words the views and opinions of a number of past and present committee members. We have had many enjoyable years as a society - but how do we carry on from here?*

It's Crunch Time ----!!!!!

No, not snails, although there are plenty around.

In 1992 a group of enthusiastic (mad) people met and agreed to start a new society to study and grow Epiphyllum and Hoya. The group became the Wellington Epiphyllum and Hoya Society.

Much knowledge has been gained and passed on and recycled.

Ceropegias crept in to the group and became an interesting species to expand and to enlarge the circle of plants.

After 14 years and fewer members and fewer still, new members, the Society appears tired. We have heard the basics of what to do with Epis and Hoyas ad infinitum, and there is little new knowledge being shared.

Agreed, many interesting speakers have given knowledgeable discourses on multiple subjects – that have been most interesting and informative.

However, we appear to be becoming a 'garden circle'.

Few members are willing to take on responsibilities as in President and Committee. Fewer still are prepared to give a talk or run a workshop and the running of the meetings etc is left to the few willing, but tired, members.

Here is the crunch- What do we do?

- Do we expand our plant base?
- Do we become just a garden circle?
- Do we wind up

If we don't wind up, who is going to take responsibility for running the Society?

A decision will need to be made at the Annual General Meeting in December.

The July meeting...

This was the occasion for our annual "mid-winter" lunch. Our visiting speaker was ***Claude Poulson*** *who talked about bulbs for the garden..*

With the right selection of bulbs in your garden you can have a flower every day of the year. Most bulbs are like an onion. One of the most common examples is the daffodil. A good bulb should be firm with a clean base. Daffodil bulbs should be planted 2 to 3 times their size below ground level. (In Petone Claude plants them a bit deeper because the ground is very sandy).

Ideally no bulbs should be left in one spot for more than four to five years but modern hybrids need to be lifted each year. The bulbs should be lifted when the leaves have died down, the bulbs can be hung to dry in an onion bag (or similar) in a cool dry place. Don't forget to label the bag! The time when the leaves are dying down is the time the bulbs are likely to be attacked by the small or large bulb flies - which lay their eggs in the top of the bulbs, and the maggots devour the bulbs. Top-dressing with compost as the leaves die down can help to defeat the intentions of the fly.

Daffodil bulbs should be replanted late in February. Dicalcium phosphate is a good slow release type of fertiliser - but do not use fresh organic manure and do not use fertilisers with a high nitrogen content..

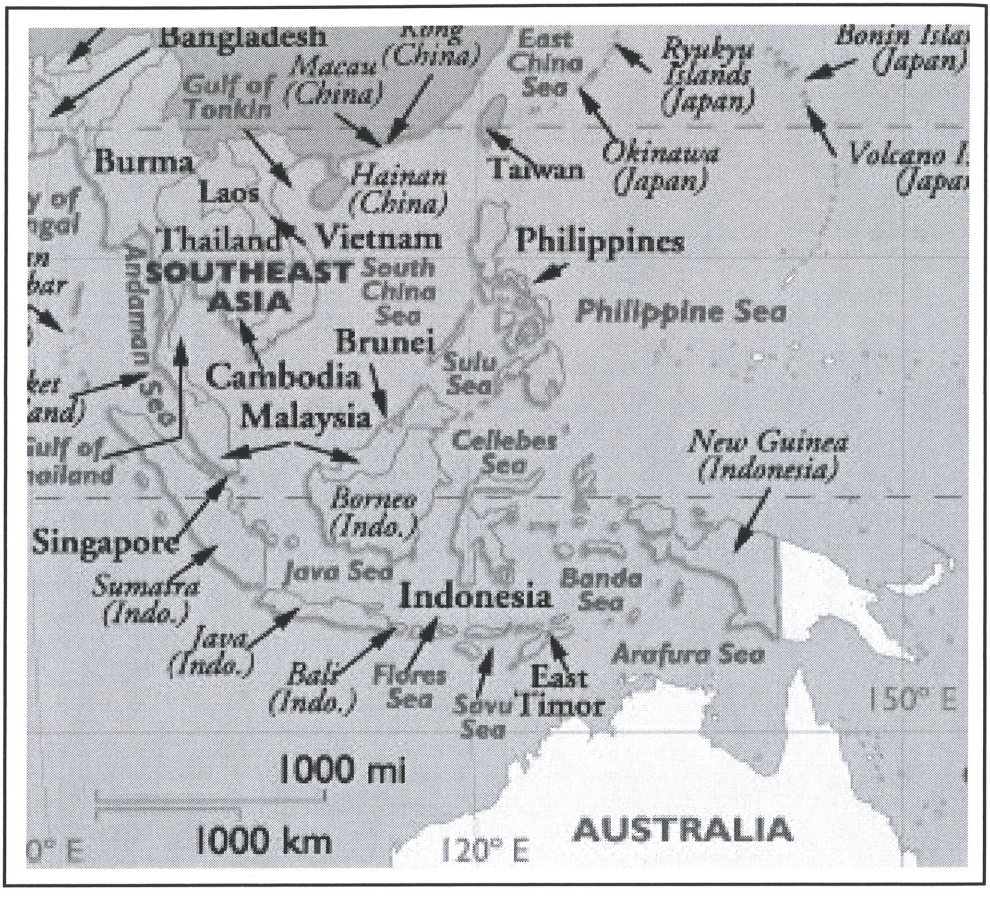
Hoya ischnopus

H. ischnopus is found in New Guinea. It was first collected by Dr Rudolph Schlechter in 1908. This picture was taken by **Jane Griffith** when she last visited David Liddle's hoya nursery in northern Queensland.

Epiphytes in South East Asia

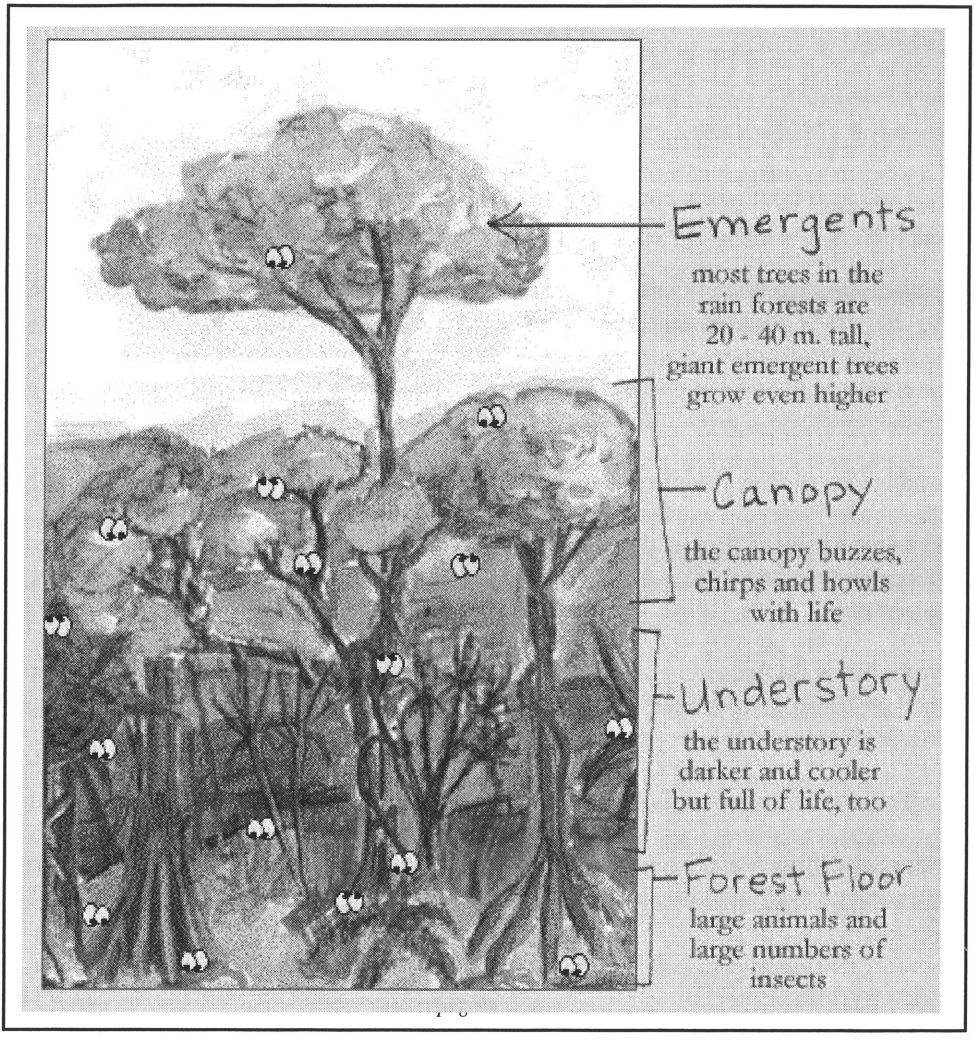
At our August meeting ***Phyllis Purdie*** *and* ***Jane Griffith*** *talked about the epiphytes that come from this area.*

When discussing the countries of South East Asia included are Vietnam, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar, Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia. Being close to, or on, the Equator these countries are described as tropical, having temperatures between 20 and 34 °C, 75-90% humidity and high rainfall.



Warm temperatures throughout the year, high rainfall and high humidity are the ideal conditions for the growth of rainforest and therefore it is not surprising that all these countries, except Singapore, are heavily forested. For instance 50% of Cambodia is forested, 47% of Malaysia and Myanmar has ½ the remaining forest in South East Asia. How long these statistics will hold true is uncertain as all countries of South East Asia are suffering massive deforestation as multinational timber companies devastate the natural habitat.

There is a wide variety of life in the strata (different layers) of a rain forest. The living conditions are different in each layer. Like tropical rainforests around the world the South East Asian forests have four distinct layers:



i. emergent trees which consist of dipterocarps 45-70m. in height. These trees have straight trunks, not branching until near their tops. Leaves are small and pointed. They have a shallow root system and to compensate have grown large buttresses which may spread for up to 15m.

ii. upper canopy which is between 30-45m. in height. These trees have "drip spouts" which keep the leaves dry and prevent mildew forming in the high humidity. Most of the animals live in this layer where there is plenty of food.

iii. lower canopy or understory of trees around 30m. in height. Trees here have larger leaves. This layer is the home of birds, snakes and lizards.

iv. forest floor which is completely shaded, has poor thin soils and an abundance of litter from decaying vegetation.

The rainforests have abundant epiphytes – orchids, bromeliads, ferns, lianas, vines, strangler figs, hoyas. Many of these grow high up on the emergent trees and then trail downwards.

Most species of orchids come from America, India and Africa. However a few species come from South East Asia. They all come from the forests where there is high humidity; they are:

Phalaenopsis (commonly known as "moth orchids"). These grow on trees epiphyitically but also on rocks or boulders near waterfalls where the humidity is high. They have no pseudobulb and so have no storage for nutrients. They have been hybridised extensively but their natural colours are white and a range of shades of pink. They make excellent houseplants. They do not produce offshoots and can only be propagated from seed.

Vandas like similar growing conditions to phalaenopsis. This is another species without a pseudobulb. Plants are available in New Zealand - but not from shops. They have long stems and thinner leaves. They will grow outside in Wellington in summer. They will root from cuttings and can be grown in baskets with no soil. They need to be kept warm in winter as do phalaenopsis.

Cymbidiums originate as epiphytic tree-dwelling plants. They have pseudobulbs and new shoots will emerge from old bulbs if they are taken off the plant. These plants hybridise easily and a wide range of colours is readily available.

Paphiopedilums (commonly known as "slipper orchids").There are not many species in this area - there are more in India. They are not epiphytic - growing in soil. As a species they are notoriously difficult to raise from seed but are not so difficult to grow provided they have the right conditions of humidity, light and warmth.

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Dendrobiums This is a large genus comprising over 1000 species ranging from India and Sri Lanka to Japan, Australia and New Zealand and almost all countries in between. These plants have a small pseudobulb. The flowers grow on long stems. They grow naturally as epiphytes on trees. Given their wide range different species require very different growing conditions; though for all of them the most important factors are good air movement and good light.

In general these orchids like humidity, but do not like to be kept wet. Almost any fertiliser will do - but they do like to be given some magnesium occasionally. They are subject to the usual pests - scale insect and mealy bugs - and the usual remedies will control this.

When researching for this talk there was abundant information on epiphytic ferns, bromeliads, lianas, strangler figs and orchids but absolutely nil on hoyas on the various websites. Thank goodness for Fraterna - the magazine of the International Hoya Association. The photographs in Fraterna are spectacular and information on the collection of hoyas in their natural habitat provides fascinating reading.

Hoya collectors around the world are greatly indebted to the pioneering work of Ted Green and Dale Kloppenburg. Both of these men have been involved in collecting hoyas for about 30 years and singularly and together have travelled to the majority of countries in South East Asia discovering and collecting new hoyas. Many of the hoyas in cultivation today have been named by either Ted Green or Dale Kloppenburg.

Of all the countries of South East Asia it is the Philippines that has produced the greatest number of hoya species. Photographs of a few of these were on display – *H. bordenii, H.mindorensis, H. paziae* (named in honour of Dale Kloppenburg's wife who comes from the Philippines), *H. siariae* (named in honour of a Philippine woman who is studying hoyas at the University of the Philippines), *H. imperialis* (a hoya that is found at sea level near mangrove swamps).

An article in Fraterna volume 14 #3 (July-September 2001) showed photographs of some of the natural habitat of the Indonesian island of Sulawesi in which hoyas were discovered. From this island comes *H. incurvula, H. imbricata,* (also found in the Philippines), *H. camphorifolia* and more recently discovered *H. tomataensis.*

The island of Borneo has been another rich area for the discovery of hoyas – both in Malaysian owned Sabah and Sarawak and in Borneo itself. A photograph of the beautiful, rare hoya *H. lasiantha* was much admired and the account of the collection of it in Fraterna volume 13 #1 (January-March 2000) makes interesting reading. From Sabah comes *H. nyhuusiae* (named in honour of Torill Nyhuus of Sweden who was a member of the party who collected this species on Mt. Kinabalu) and *H. campanulata,* (this hoya is also found in Peninsular Malaysia). Mention was made of the fact that *H. multiflora* – a species that grows especially well for

some of our members in their homes – comes from Peninsular Malaysia.

The unusual flower of *H. andalensis* from Sumatra was highlighted and the delightful little *H. weebella* which was collected on the northern Thailand border with Myanmar.

With so many examples of hoya species collected in South East Asia it certainly makes the area a tempting place to go and visit.

For further information on the hoyas mentioned read past copies of Fraterna. These are to be found in our society library.

Show and Tell in June....

Our June meeting provided an opportunity for us to hear a number of our members talking about plants that they were growing .... some brought "society" plants - and some did not. Each plant provoked quite a bit of discussion. Many thanks to all our contributors.

Merv had brought a plant of *Schlumbergera opuntioides* that was nicely in bud. He had grown the plant from seed taken from a plant owned by **Dianne.** It was an unusually large plant (It seems to be hard to get a large plant of *S. opuntioides*. He noted that just because a plant may appear dead - don't rush to throw it out - it may show new life as spring comes (Oh so true! .. **Ed**). He had also brought a number of interesting cacti.

Alice had brought a Schlumbergera plant - complete with fern - that she grows outside - hanging on the fence. This demonstrates that Schlumbergeras can be grown outside in most parts of Wellington.

Phyllis showed us a *Dracula*. This species is native to the mountain slopes of South America. There are about 90 species in this genus and their distribution stretches from the moist forests of southernmost Mexico to Peru. Most occur in Western Colombia and Ecuador. Plants of this genus are relatively easy to cultivate in moist, well-ventilated, shady, cool greenhouse conditions. The flowers are a little similar to those on some *Masdevallias*.

Jane had a plant of *H. tsangii*. (Though she wondered if it was actually *H.panchoi*). *H tsangii* comes from the Philippines as does *H. panchoi* . Dale Kloppenburg notes that *H. panchoi* is often confused with *H. bilobata* and *H. tsangii* is said by some to be a synonym for *H. augustifolia* - so a certain amount of confusion exists. Whatever the name - this is an attractive species which will flower best in bright light and likes to be fertilised often.

As well we looked at a variety of other plants including lachenalias, cyclamens, palms hippeastrums and tree dahlias. This goes to prove the general point that people who enjoy growing plants - usually end up with a wide and fascinating variety in their gardens.

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!)

This months issue of **Epi-Gram** (Epiphytic Cacti and Hoya Society of Australia) has a piece in which Bill Price reminisces about the twenty years the society has been in existence. They also give a brief description of the method Des Ellery[1] is using for epi seeds which has increased his success greatly. Finally they give notice of their upcoming AGM and add " It is hoped that members will make a special effort to attend in order to provide the necessary forum and to consider providing vital support by taking a more active part in .. activities as an office bearer or committee member".

In the latest issue of the other **Epi-Gram** (South Bay Epiphyllum Society) Dick Kohlschreiber writes about care of Rhipsalis plants. He also restates his views on "Problem Plants" "As I have mentioned many times, I have a very low tolerance for plants that spot badly and plants that don't bloom yearly. I just don't want to give up room for plants that don't do well".

The April-June issue of **Fraterna** (International Hoya Association) is another "must read". Ted Green is guest editor again - there is a piece entitled "The Doctor is in" .. with contributions from Ann Wayman, Ted Green, Carol Noel and others. All the age-old questions are answered by the experts. There is also an article on "Hoyas in Holland" which includes an account of a

[1]Des is also a member of WEHS.

visit to the collection of Paul Shirley who has over 500 different epiphyllums and some 180 varieties of hoyas and hoya clones as well as ceropegias, rhipsalis and dischidia..The photos are, as usual, excellent.

Finally, in the Spring issue of **The Bulletin** (Epiphyllum Society of America) is an article by Keith Ballard entitled "Epiphyllum Sports and Virus Variation" which is a topic we discussed a little while ago. This is well worth reading.

Now is the time .....

Well we have passed mid-winter (and some say spring is in two days) - so you might expect the coldest nights (with frosts if you are lucky) to be coming soon. Within the last couple of weeks we have also had some days when the temperature reached 17 or 18 degrees! Play it safe must be the motto - water in the mornings - before the sun gets too hot; and be careful about leaving water drops all over your plants. And as always - 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 Tauranga or Twizel you may need to adjust things a little.

Epicacti -*You really should have done the pruning and repotting by now - but if you have not - do not despair, it is not too late; just don't cut off too many buds. Start watering again (in the mornings) and fertilise lightly.*

Hoyas - *as the days warm up water a little - particularly if your plants are protected from the night time temperatures. Soon you may start taking cuttings (if you have a heated pad to put the pots of cuttings on - you can start quite soon). Start checking for mealy bugs and other pests (if you ever stopped that is). Deal promptly with any you find - or as the weather gets warmer they will take over..*

Schlumbergeras - *most flowers should be over so now is a good time to repot. Put slow release fertiliser into the mix. Water very, very carefully when the plants seem dry.*

Rhipsalis - *these will be coming into flower soon if they are not flowering already. Water regularly, but carefully, as this happens. A little fertiliser will assist the plants.*

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Aporophyllums - *Buds should be just appearing. Start watering a little and provide a little fertiliser. Increase the amount of water you give as the nights and days get warmer.*

Ceropegias - *Many of these plants may be looking quite dead. There is not a lot to do but you should probably begin watering your plants soon - if not now. When it gets warmer you can start to take cuttings. In a month or so you will be able to be sure that the dead looking plants are actually dead - and then you can throw them out!*

Odd Cuttings and Seeds

Craigmyle Epiphyllum Nursery ...

This has, for some years, been one of the best sources of epi plants and cuttings in New Zealand. Some of you may have caught up with the fact that it is to close this year. As Yvonne noted they are now involved in so many other things - and so many people are coming to visit their gardens - there just isn't time to do everything. The nursery will open for mail-order in October but stocks of plants and cuttings are limited. The nursery will close in December and revert to being the private collection of Yvonne and Andrew Brunton.

Many thanks to you both for the great contribution you have made to our hobby over the last many years!

Remedies among the Rhipsalis

Here is another one from the "did you know" file. It concerns uses for "Queen of the Night" (in this case the name refers to any of the species epis). The flowers are said to be a treatment for Bradycardia (slow heart beat) and in Japan the petals are coated in tempura batter and deep fried!.

Science in the backgarden

It has been demonstrated that barley seed germinates more efficiently under slightly higher air pressure. Some breweries have installed special equipment to achieve this effect - so they must be confident it works. What about other seeds? Would the technique provide benefits for them too?

Here is a simple experiment to try. You could try germinating seeds with the "bottled ship" method.

Put soil and seeds in a big clear bottle (after the wine has been drunk not before) and put the cap back on.

During the day the warming of the air inside will increase the air pressure. Observe the results.

To be really scientific - use two wine bottles and leave the second one uncapped - then compare the results.

Volunteers?

Back numbers of "Epiflora"

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

Hoya loyceandrewsiana

This hoya was described by Ted Green in 1994 however its origin is something of a mystery. It was named after Loyce Andrews from Texas, an early grower and distributor of hoya species. How it came into his collection is unclear but it is suspected that it comes originally from the monsoonal regions of northern Thailand as it is distinctly similar to others from that region.

This is a rugged, very large-leaved species. The leaves are thick and glossy deep green with silver blotches scattered on the upper surface. The flowers come in large globose clusters of up to 70 flowers; they give off a sweet musky fragrance, especially in late evening.

Photograph taken by **Jane Griffith** of a plant in David Liddle's collection.

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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Society web address:

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

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