E. H. S.

WELLINGTON

EPIFLORA

Volume 15 No. 4

Nov 2006

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The Programme for 2006/7

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 9th	AGM and Christmas function **On Duty:** Alice & Rex Hannam, Anne Goble.
January 13th	Kapiti Crawl - visits to three Kapiti Coast gardens - and a BBQ. **On Duty:** Jane & Roy Griffith, Robyn Gibson
February 10th	Programme on Hoyas **On Duty:** Virginia Stead, Jim Hayler, Penny Luckens
March 10th	to be confirmed **On Duty:** Isobel Barbery, Anne Goble, Lois Bond.
April 14th/15th	Cactus Display at Malvina Major Retirement Village (*we have been invited to participate as well*)

Do come to our December meeting and:

+ bring a plate for afternoon tea
+ bring a present for "the sack"(no more than $5)
+ bring a plant to show off and talk about
+ **bring your ideas for the society**

Letter from a member.

Dear Editor

The article in the August 2006 edition of Epiflora by Merv Keighley regarding "Crunch Time" has been going round in my mind ever since I received your excellent publication. It is true that numbers of people attending our meetings have declined over the past months and I think Merv is right when he says the society appears tired.

You, Mr. Editor, have told us at several meetings that the number of corresponding members has increased this year – isn't that great! But what should we do about our local monthly meetings?

I realised it would be of little value going to the December meeting of the society without having thought through alternatives. So I do hope you will crave my indulgence and allow me to list the options as I see them.

Options for the future of Wellington Epiphyllum & Hoya Society

1. Do nothing and let the society plod along the way it is going.
2. Close up the society.
3. Expand our base to include **all** epiphytes, renaming the society The Wellington Epiphytic Society.

It is my belief that No.1 is not a viable option and would be a sad, slow ending to what has been a helpful organisation. With decreasing membership our costs would soar, we would be unable to, with a clear conscience, invite outside speakers and the few would be doing more and more work.

No. 2 is of course an option but our society means so much to some of our local members. And what would happen to corresponding members – they would have no access to cuttings or information about plants that they love.

Therefore No. 3 seems to have some merit. Expanding the base of the society may bring in new members, provide existing members with more stimulation and enable us to invite speakers on other epiphytes. A new name might also jerk us all into action, bringing

rejuvenation.

I apologise for rabbiting on, Mr. Editor, but I am also wondering if we could provide a better service for our corresponding members. How about someone, either local or out of town, developing a data base of all the epiphytes members grow so that swapping of cuttings could take place? How else do we increase our collections?

Also how about corresponding members having access to our superb library?

May I make a plea to all our local members – to come to the December meeting so that their voice can be heard and also to think through the options that they want for the future of our society.

Concerned Member

Questions on the radio...

Our speaker in September was ***Richard Nansen*** *who has had a spot on the radio for the last ten years. He talked about some of the most common problems people ring in and ask about..*

Richard started off with some quotes:
"Gardening may ward off dementia"
"The best gardeners are observants"
"Happiness is the chief requisite for a gardener"

He commented that he has been working with Gary Ward and RNZ for about ten years now - and he still gets the occasional question that stumps him. He always says "I don't know" - and then looks up the answer for the following weeks programme.

The most common topic for questions is "lemons". Now growing lemons in Wellington is not easy. Meyer lemons are the hardiest - but they don't like wet feet. A lemon grown on their own root stock is not as good as one grown on trifoliate stock (but it is more economical to produce lemon trees this way than by budding).

Lawns are the subject for a lot of questions too. One of the biggest problems is that people cut them too low - there should be at least an inch of growth after cutting. Most lawns are in fact weed lawns. It is a lot of work to create good turf and you have to feed it regularly and deal

with any weeds. Moss will grow if there is a lack of nutrients as well as if it is damp. Richard suggested applying slow-release fertiliser in November and March and then spraying for weeds afterwards (when the grass has started to grow vigorously). Woody Weed Killer will deal with about 90% of the weeds - but spot spraying is useful.

Discussion then ranged freely over a wide range of topics including rhododendrons, potatoes, camellias and composting; ants and cats ; boronias and borer. There were many useful titbits of information on all these topics and more.

Altogether a most entertaining and instructive afternoon.

The October meeting.

This meeting focussed on herbs. There were a large number of plants on display. All of which have been grown successfully in Wellington. There was lengthy and fascinating discussion on the properties and uses (medicinal and culinary) of each. Again this was a meeting where those present would have learned much. It was a pity (and embarrassing) that the attendance was so poor..

Hybridising epicacti.

*In this article **Jane Griffith** talks about some of her experiences .*

Hybridising epicacti – in fact we are talking here about hybridising hybrids as epicacti themselves are hybrids of epiphyllum species plants. As you may well be aware there are in fact thousands of epicacti hybrids in existence, many of which will be the pride and joy of a person's collection but have not been officially registered with the Epiphyllum Society of America.

Like many other collectors we tried our hand at hybridising in our walk-through shade house in Wellington. Some of our hybrids have been registered with the Epiphyllum Society of America under the Waikanae label and we are contemplating registering one or two more this year.

For those who might be interested in this fascinating aspect of our hobby let me assure you it is a relatively simple operation which requires a degree of patience. Firstly two epicacti that are healthy growers, disease free and flowering at the same time can be used for hybridising. Making sure that there are no other pollinators around, the pollen of one plant is dusted over the style of the other plant. At this point it is essential to record the parentage, date of pollination and give the hybrid a number. This information came be attached to the host epicacti leaf using a bread tie and some string. When the flower dies back a seed pod will gradually form. Some months later, when the seed pod is ripened, this is taken off and the seeds taken out. If you do not wish to sow this seed immediately it can be stored on graph paper or absorbent kitchen paper. Once again remember to label the paper carefully.

Often hundreds of seeds are found in one seed pod and almost all of these may germinate when planted. The dilemma is do you keep all the seedlings and allow them to come to maturity and flower or do you select just a few to grow on? Fine - you decide to keep the lot knowing that each plant will produce a slightly different flower but in your burst of enthusiasm to try hybridising imagine you pollinated ten different flowers! Is it time to move house – looking for a lifestyle block to enable you to grow all your little seedlings on!

In the photographs shown opposite are two of the hybrids that we have produced and have yet to decide whether to register. The first one is a cross between Innisfree and Kami – Innisfree being the host plant. As you may observe the flower is similar in colour to Kami but a little larger and more open in its structure. As both its parents are basket type epicacti it is not surprising that this hybrid also has such characteristics. As it is free-flowering it is certainly a plant that we have decided to keep.

The second photograph is a cross between Petite Pink and Punch Bowl and although Petite Pink is the host plant the flower of this hybrid is much larger than that of the host. With Petite Pink classified as a small flower size and Punch Bowl as extra large the flower not surprisingly is classified as medium-large at 17 cm. in width and has the ruffled characteristics of Punch Bowl.

You will probably agree that both of these flowers are rather beautiful. The next decision is whether to officially register them. The criteria for this is whether the plants are strong growers and disease resistant – we can say "yes" to both of these. But are the flowers sufficiently different from other epicacti to make them worthy of registration? This is an

Pictures taken by Jane Griffith

Innisfree/Kami cross

Petite Pink/Punch Bowl cross

almost impossible question to answer as we only have a few hundred different epicacti hybrids in New Zealand so have seen only a minute proportion of all hybrids available worldwide. To those who might contemplate trying hybridisation of epicacti my comment would be "Why not?" You really have nothing to lose and heaps to gain as you watch the process from start to flowering. Be prepared to wait several years before your seeds grow from seedlings to flowering size plants and then if you decide you would like to register your beautiful new flowering hybrid with the Epiphyllum Society of America you will need to let it flower for three years and record all the information that they require. We do have copies of their forms.

Good luck and happy growing.

November visits....

Instead of our usual meeting at Johnsonville, this month we went tripping to the Hutt Valley.

This was a good weekend to visit the Hutt Valley as it was the weekend of the Hutt Valley Horticultural Society Show. Our car-load headed there (after a preliminary visit to one of the largest handyman/garden stores in the region). It was good to see the exhibits and the sales tables - as well as some old friends) and needless to say we did not come away empty handed. We visited the Orchid House and admired the Phalaenopsis and other orchids in their display cases. Then it was off to Alicetown to visit Lois and Philip Bond to see their garden and have afternoon tea. This is a small garden, packed with interesting things. No corner is left unfilled. The afternoon tea table was filled to overflowing and while members and friends tucked in animated discussion took place.

Thanks Lois and Philip for your hospitality and thanks to the committee for organising this outing for us.

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** (South Bay Epiphyllum Society) Dick Kohlschreiber writes about Schlumbergeras. He discusses growing new plants from seed, reminds us of some of the history of this genus and finally offers recommendations on some cultivars to try growing.

In the July-September issue of **Fraterna** (International Hoya Association) is a lengthy article (with some superb photos)about *H.macgillivrayi.* This species is native to monsoonal rainforests in far, far north Queensland. The article discusses the growing conditions of this habitat and how the plant can be cultivated in a collection.

There is also an article by Kim Yap on *Hoya latifolia* - and some of the places where this plant can be found growing in Singapore. For those who are interested in the conditions where hoyas grow naturally - this issue is to be recommended.

In the November issue of **Epi News** (San Diego Epiphyllum Society) are details of a fertiliser mix which gives "unbelievable results" for epis and other plants. The recipe given has an number of interesting ingredients - including beer. Curiously there is also an article about the same fertiliser in the September issue of The **Epiphyllon** (Epiphyllum and Hoya Society of Australia) and the writer there cannot see much merit in the mix at all (concluding, I suspect, that you would do better to drink the beer!). Read both - and see what you think. (If anyone tries the mix - we would be delighted to publish their findings - **Ed.**)

Most members will have heard of "Rainbow Gardens" - the nursery in Vista California owned by Chuck Everson and Jerry Williams. In the November issue of **SFES Journal** (San Francisco Epiphyllum Society) is an article on them, and the cover photo is of the George French hybrid "Chuck and Jerry"

Finally, in the Summer issue of **The Bulletin** (Epiphyllum Society of America) is a detailed article on installing a drip watering system in an epi collection. (The author was planning a six to eight week holiday - and there was no one to water the plants!)

Happy reading.!

Plants wanted (and for sale) .....

As more and more of our members live "out of the Wellington area" but are still interested in obtaining and exchanging plants this section may provide a means of putting those with the plants in contact with those who would like them. E-mail details only are given - but if you need further contact details - please contact the editor. If there are plants you would like to obtain - please contact the editor.

Wanted- Hoya "Shooting Star" (*H. Multiflora*) - contact Margaret Tait, (kirillystone@hotmail.com)

Wanted - *Epiphyllum phyllanthus* - contact Gordon Collingwood (gdcs@kol.co.nz)

Wanted - *Epiphyllum thomasianum* and *Epipyllum embukayuku* - contact Frances Hunter (franjron@xtra.co.nz)

Subscriptions 2007 .....

Our society's year runs from January to December so it is time to pay subs for the current year. The subscription remains at $12.00 for New Zealand members (and $4.00 for associate members at the same address). If you have not already paid - you will find a membership renewal slip included with this issue. Alice Hannam (our treasurer) would love to hear from you - or will be happy to receive your money at the December meeting.

Now is the time .....

We thought winter had passed - and then there was that short cold snap with severe frosts in some places. However summer is coming, both day and night-time temperatures are rising. It is probably still wise 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. 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 Coromandel or Cromwell 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 and 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 slow release fertiliser in the mix. Water when the plants seem 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 should be beginning to appear. Water when dry. You should start the daily task of unwinding runaway growth. Keep in a very warm environment for maximum flowering. Leave the dead looking plants just a little longer before you throw them out!

Epiphyllum baueri dorsch .....

Earlier this year we reprinted an article by Phil Peck on Epiphyllum laui . Epiphyllum baueri dorsch is another relatively recently discovered Epiphyllum species. This article is based substantially on one written by Rudi Dorsch and published in Hasseltonia in 2002.

In March 1999 Ralf Bauer visited the Choco area of Colombia and, near Nuqui, found pieces of *epiphyllum* stems in the branches of a shrub and hanging down from the fork of a tree. They

were wide and very thin, branching from long terete[1] primary shoots. The stems had obviously fallen from the tall trees overhead. No complete plants could be seen, and it was not possible to identify the material further because neither flowers nor fruits were found. Stems of most members of *epiphyllum* are very similar and can be differentiated only by an experienced person. In this case, however, they were not the same as any other known epiphyllum although there were some similarities to *E. cartagense* and *E. thomasianum* . They were also dissimilar to the other two taxa known in this area – two varieties of *E. phyllanthus*. The fragments therefore seemed to be those of a new species.

In August 2001 four more plants were found in the same region and a sterile herbarium specimen dating from 1979 was found at COL[2]. It had the same stems as the other plants and came from the southern border of the Choco.

In 1998, Alfred Lau had collected an epiphyllum near Portobelo, Colon, Panama. Being sterile it was not possible to identify the plant. Dick Kohlschreiber had received the material and passed it on to Rudi Dorsch who passed some of it on to Ralf Bauer in Germany. While the plants in the US failed to bloom, the one in Germany flowered in September 2001. The flower was similar to that of *E. phyllanthus* var. *rubrocoronatum* but with pink stamens and extremely small receptacle scales. The lower stamens curved upwards above the main axis of the tube, giving the flower a somewhat zygomorphic appearance. It had no fragrance. However the stems with their long and terete primary shoots, different lobing and the non-horny margins were not those of *E. phyllanthus*. In many ways they resembled the plants that Bauer had found in the Choco, although the flat stems of the Lau collection were slightly more succulent. Since the material had passed through so many hands it was decided to wait for more information before publishing.

In 2003 more samples of the plant flowered and the flowers were nearly identical to those of the Lau collection.

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[1] **Terete**: circular in cross-section

[2] National Herbarium of Colombia

Closer examination of the flowers and stems showed that the species is closely related to a group with long primary stems, among them *E. cartagense, E. thomasianum, E. pumilum* and *E. oxypetalum*, the closest relative probably being *E. cartagense*, with which it shares a single insertion zone of stamens.

There is now no doubt that this is a new distinct species and Rudi Dorsch named it after Dr. Ralf Bauer who had the good fortune to find this plant and whose expertise in cultivation led to its identification as a new species. Collecting these plants required several very difficult and strenuous hiking trips in the Choco, which is one of the wettest parts of the world with an annual rainfall of 7000-8000mm (about twice that of Amazonia). The forests in the area are still virgin and they reach from the deserted beaches of the Pacific coast to the westernmost cordillera of the Andes. Few people inhabit this region, and the dense rainforest can only be entered by walking along the beds of small cascading streams that flow down to the beach.

Geographical note:

The Choco is a a tropical rainforest larger than Costa Rica, extending from Panama to Ecuador

along the entire Pacific coast of Colombia, flanked between the western slopes of the Andes and the Pacific Ocean.

Until recently the region's thick forest, abrupt terrain and numerous rivers and streams stood in the way of progress, separating the bustling urban centres of modern Colombia from the Pacific Ocean. Only one major seaport, Buenaventura, was connected to the rest of the country by an important road. Small towns and villages survived in total or partial isolation.

This is an area where, as the Lonely Planet Guide puts it, "*Travellers should exercise vigilance at all times due to the level of violent crime. Kidnapping and homicide rates in Colombia remain high: about 45 kidnappings per month were reported in 2005. Outside the main tourist areas these dangers are greatly magnified. Areas to avoid include Chocó, Putumayo and anywhere east of the Andes.* ". This makes the achievements of people like Lau and Bauer even more remarkable.

Odd cuttings and seeds

On-line Library of Cactus and Succulent Books.

A project is now underway to set up an on-line Library of Cactus and Succulent books. Early significant books by early authors (including the four volumes of Britton & Rose) are available. Work continues to add other titles. The web-page address is: www.cactuspro.com/biblio/

Pictures on Opposite page:

Epiphyllum baueri dorsch

Epi hybrid "Wellington Sunshine", created by Jane Griffith

Plant Diseases and Pests

There is a very good reference site which has excellent pictures of the various afflictions. I have heard comments that it will close soon, but for the meanwhile it is still available. The address is: http://cactusclinic.telenet.be/

Growing Hoyas from leaf cuttings

It is possible to grow hoyas from leaf cuttings. If your plant has stems fourteen feet long this may not interest you - but if it is small and you wish to grow a second plant you might try this method. The cutting seems to have the best chance if the leaf is broken off together with the whole leaf stalk (petiole) and at least a trace of the original stem or bark. Keep the cutting warm and humid in bright shade - and be patient.

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.

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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Closing dates for contributions:

Autumn 2007 Edition - 10th February 2007

Winter 2007 Edition - 12th May 2007

Subscriptions:

Subscriptions are due on 1st of January and are:

Members -	*$12.00*
(overseas members)	*$NZ24.00 or $US12.00)*
Additional Associate Members -	*$4.00*
(At same address as a member)	

Society web address:

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

printed by: **RAPIDCOPY** Ltd; Wellington, NZ - ph: 04 4712537