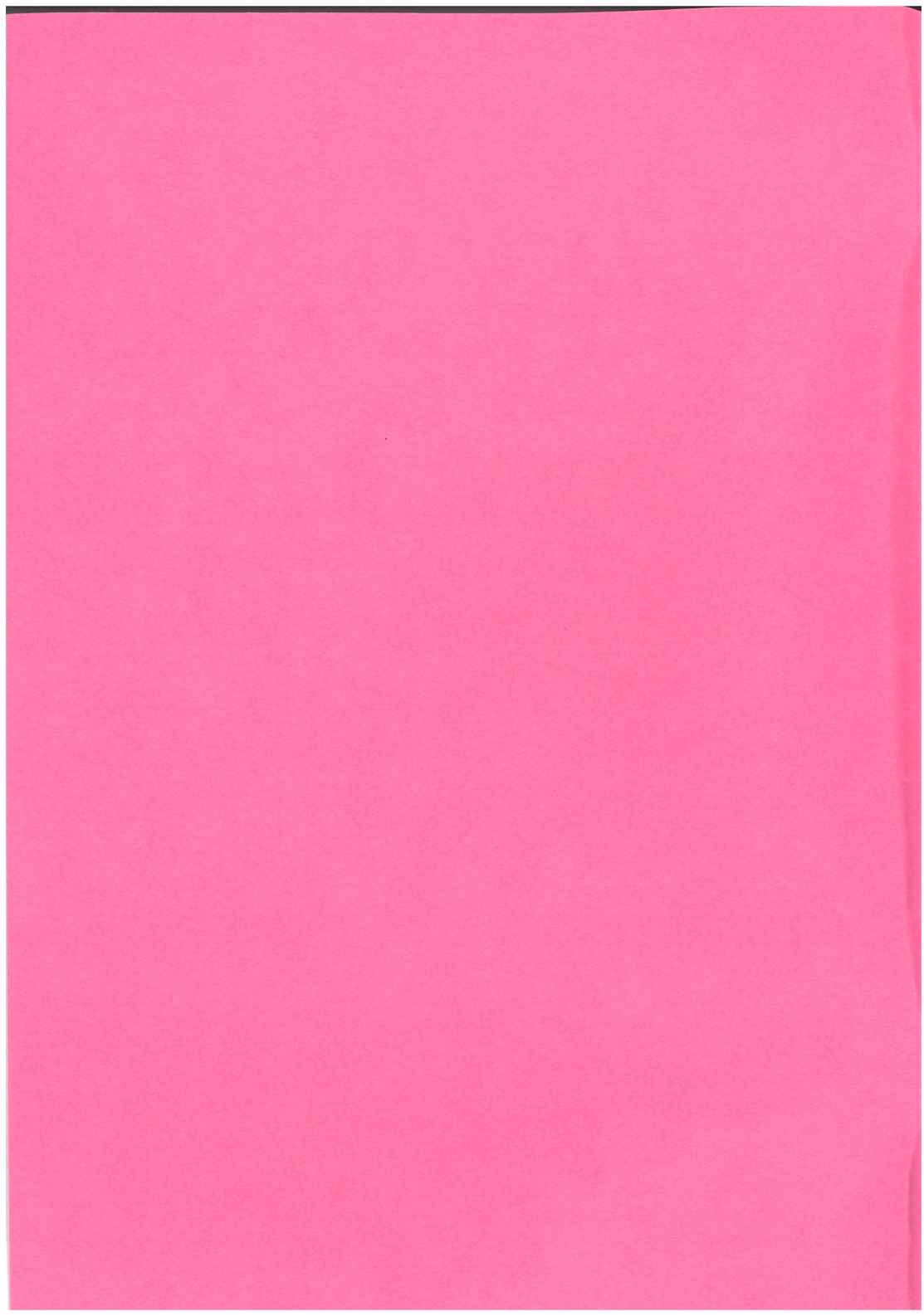




# EPIFLORA

Volume 16 No. 3

Aug 2007





**WELLINGTON**

# **EPIFLORA**

**Volume 16 No. 3**

**Aug/Sept 2007**

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## ***From the President***

Dear fellow epiphyte growers

By the time you receive *Epiflora* it will be spring and hopefully we will be beginning to enjoy warmer weather. The daffodils have been out in our front garden for the past month. Their beautiful clear yellow colour always provides a brightness to the garden at this time of year and heralds in all the other spring flowers.

Here in Waikanae we have had more frosts than in previous winters but overall the weather has been kind to the plants. One or two of our epiphytes turned up their toes and died during the winter but their demise cannot be attributed to cold or wet conditions rather because of neglect!! Other than these all our other epiphytes have withstood the colder temperatures and are now beginning to show signs of new growth. I hope that your plants have also come through winter well.

We continue with our varied programme for local members which includes a trip to the Wellington Botanical Gardens in November to see native orchids and other epiphytes. The committee had hoped to arrange a week-end in Taupo for later this year but this has been postponed to autumn 2008 – we hope that this will be an opportunity for members from various parts of the country to get together and enjoy each others company as well as learn more about some of the plants that we love. More details in next *Epiflora*.

In the meantime do enjoy the spring growth and then later the flowering of your plants

Happy growing

*Jane Griffith*

August 2007

**The Programme for 2007**

*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.*

- |                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| <b>September 8<sup>th</sup></b> | Philately Botanica<br><b>On Duty:</b> Kaye and Merv Keighley, Alison Beeston   |
| <b>October 13th</b>             | "Plant Clinic" ( <i>Bring your unhappy and ailing plants and we will all help you deal with them!</i> )<br><b>On Duty:</b> Isobel Barbery, Dianne O'Neill, Lois Bond |
| <b>November 10<sup>th</sup></b> | Visit to Wellington Botanic Gardens (more details later)<br><b>On Duty:</b> Phyllis & Bruce Purdie, Bev Parsons  |
| <b>December 8th</b>             | AGM and Christmas Meeting<br><b>On Duty:</b> Robyn Gibson, Vicky Gibson, Anne Goble  |

## **Rare NZ Native Orchids found..**

*The Nga Uruora group is based on the Kapiti coast and aims to conserve and enhance the native vegetation. Here is a note from one of their recent newsletters...*

"A rare native orchid has been found on a Nga Uruora estate, thanks to the eagle eyes of one of the Nga Uruora members.

The *Drymoanthus flavus* (it doesn't have a common name because it isn't that common) is a diminutive epiphytic orchid, found in trunks and branches relatively clean of other epiphytic plants.

The *Drymoanthus flavus* is distributed from scattered sites in the North Island, from Te Kopia Geothermal Reserve to Wellington and Palliser Bay. In the South Island it is sparsely distributed, only becoming more common in southern Otago, Southland and Stewart Island.

It is listed as in serious decline by DoC. Unfortunately, its exact location must remain a secret, lets just say it is towards the Pukerua Bay end of our estate. The Plant Conservation Network lists its main threat from 'indiscriminate plant collectors, with some well known locations stripped bare in recent years."

Nga Uruora - Kapiti Project  
[www.kapitibush.org.nz](http://www.kapitibush.org.nz)

## **And more on Orchids.**

Ancient orchid pollen found attached to a bee trapped in amber suggests that "the supermodels of the plant world" were blooming at the time of the dinosaurs. The discovery indicates that orchids arose between 76 and 84 million years ago, making them far older than experts had previously thought. Experts used the fossil pollen grains to estimate the ages of major branches of orchids living today.

Details of the research by a team in the US are published in the **Nature** journal. The authors of the **Nature** paper describe a mass of orchid pollen found stuck to the body of an extinct bee that lived 15-20 million years ago. The remains of the bee were trapped and preserved in amber and were found in the Dominican Republic.

## *Epiflora*

Dating the fossil allowed lead researcher Santiago Ramirez to calibrate a "molecular clock" which uses mutations, or changes, in the plant's DNA to estimate the time of divergence between living organisms. By building a "family tree" of orchids the scientists could move back in time to see when the species first appeared, as well as where and how it spread.

They found that the most recent common ancestor of all modern-day orchids lived in the twilight of the dinosaurs, during the Late Cretaceous period.

"It is the first identifiable fossil orchid ever found," Mr Ramirez said. "And it is the first case in which an insect-orchid interaction has been observed in the fossil record."

The new orchid species, identified from the morphology of the pollen has been dubbed *Meliorchis caribea*. It is related to one found today in the Amazon called *Ligeophila*.

The age of the first orchids has proven a controversial topic. Previous estimates have ranged from 26 to 110 million years ago. The Orchidaceae family is the largest in the plant kingdom, numbering at least 25,000 species.

### ***The July Meeting - a time to reminisce.***

*At our July meeting after our pot-luck lunch we listened to some of our older members who had been invited to reflect on how they became interested in plants - and on some of the things that had influenced them. We also had competitions for poems and photographs - a number of the entries are published in this issue of Epiflora and more will be in the next issue. Meanwhile - which do you think was the best? Answers next time....*

As we listened to the reminiscences of a number of our members two or three themes emerged. Almost without exception they had started to develop an interest in plants at an early age, and over the years they had been interested in quite a variety of plants.

Bruce thought he had always been interested in plants. He gained this from his parents who both were gardeners. His mother grew flowers and created floral arrangements for her church; his father grew vegetables for the family and the neighbours. When he married her and Phyllis went to live in Paekakariki and one of the neighbours had a cacti garden and was president of the local society - And the rest, as they say, is history!

## *Epiflora*

Rex recalled that his parents had a garden and at age nine he had his own patch and planted vegetables and trees. He started work at 15 and other interests predominated for a while, but when he finished his apprenticeship and went to Tokoroa there was no vegetable shop so he started gardening again to grow his own.

Later he moved to Putaruru and Alice introduced him to irises and dahlias and all manner of other flowers.

Nola, born in the depression and the family living in a bed-sit, did not start gardening until she got married. They moved into a new house on a bare section and started to create a garden with cuttings and plants from relatives, friends and neighbours. The first plants she ever bought were stocks. Since then each time she moved - she started another garden.

When each was asked where in the world they would most like to go to see plants (assuming someone else paid for the ticket!) They had very different answers. Bruce said he would like to go to the desert in Arizona to see cacti and to the tropics to see orchids. Nola wanted to go back to Kew Gardens to see the cactus garden again Rex wanted to travel to Yorkshire and to Ireland where his family originated.

### **Epiphytes Song**

It's crowded down there in the jungle  
And dark with no space and poor light  
So what if we sit on the branches  
And give ourselves views and some height

At times it may be rather windy  
Up there with the birds and the bees  
But that should mean good pollination  
And transport for seeds on the breeze

Few intrepid researchers get near us  
So some of us still don't have names



*Epiflora*

But why should that even concern us  
Let them play at their Latinised games

When our leaves become old and senescent  
They down to the forest floor fall  
But while we stay up in the treetops  
Believe us, we're having a ball

If you're wanting to grow us at your place  
Remember the places we've been  
Good light and air movement are needed,  
Good drainage is part of our scene

*Penny Luckens*

## ***Fuchsias - varied and fascinating plants.***

*At our August meeting Mila Juventin, a member of the Wellington Fuchsia Society, gave us a most informative talk about fuchsias. As most of us do have at least one fuchsia in our garden it was helpful to know what we really should be doing. Jane Griffith reports...*

Father Charles Plumier, a Catholic missionary in Santo Domingo, was the first to publish information about fuchsias. In 1703 he wrote about *Fuchsia triphylla*, having named the plant after his colleague, Leonhart Fuchs.

Fuchsias were first introduced into England in 1789 and during the Victorian period became extremely popular with many plants being hybridised. In Britain fuchsias suffered a decline during the First World War through to the end of the Second World War but since the 1950's have gained in popularity again.

They are natives of parts of South America, Mexico and Tahiti and of course we do have native fuchsias in New Zealand. About 100 species have been found throughout the world. Within the various species of fuchsia there are many cultivars and varieties.

## *Epiflora*

Like many garden plants hybridisation has taken place over the years with notable hybridisers coming from England, France, Germany, United States of America, Australia and New Zealand.

Fuchsias can be grown in the garden, in pots or in hanging baskets. If grown in pots it is advisable to re-pot each year into fresh potting mixture, especially if there is evidence that salts have come to the top of the pot. Mila recommended using a potting mixture such as "Just", obtained from The Warehouse and then adding nutrients. She uses Blood and Bone plus Galore and "Dynamic Lifter". The latter is a relatively new fertiliser on the market sold in pellet form.

When re-potting check the root system and if the plant appears root-bound put it into the next sized pot. Alternatively the roots can be trimmed and the plant put back into the same pot, once it has been cleaned. Fuchsias do not appreciate being put into too large a pot.

Pruning takes place in August and it is recommended that fuchsias grown in pots are given a hard prune. Those in the garden should not be pruned quite so hard. Prune to a shape, and like roses, prune to above a node. After pruning spray the plant with a mixture of Winter Oil and Copper Oxychloride. A further spray is recommended a few weeks later but if the plant is already beginning to show new growth use just Copper Oxychloride. The spraying helps to clean up the larvae of white fly, red spider mites and rust – the main pests found on fuchsias. If these pests become prevalent during the summer Mila uses a systemic spray such as Super Shield or Gild.

When new growth starts fuchsias should be fed with a high nitrogen fertiliser such as Blood and Bone or Galore. For Mila's pots she uses a weak solution of Urea, plus Blood and Bone, Thrive, Galore and Dynamic Lifter – fertilising each month. At the beginning of December change to a fertiliser with a high potash content such as Sulphate of Potash, sprinkling this around the pot and watering it well in. Thrive and Phosphogen can also be used on a regular basis until the end of February.

Fuchsias do not like to sit in water and therefore it is advisable to give plants a good soak once a week, watering in the mornings. Before adding fertiliser the plant should be watered.

In order to shape a fuchsia into a bush pinch out regularly. The rule of thumb is to have three sets of leaves and then pinch out the centre leaves. Wait until further growth of three more leaves and then pinch out the centre again. Turning pots 2-3 times a week ensures the growth is even. For optimum growth fuchsias prefer morning sun.

## *Epiflora*

Mila demonstrated how to propagate fuchsias by taking off the bottom leaves, halving any large leaves and taking off all buds and then cutting under a node on softwood. The cutting is then placed in propagating sand and sprayed with water. Cuttings placed on a hot bed will take root in a few days as long as the plants do not dry out. When there is a reasonable root ball the plant can be potted up into a small pot.

As with all propagation we were reminded to always label each cutting. The cuttings can also be grown hydroponically but the roots produced often take longer to establish in soil when potted up.

The photographs that Mila had brought with her reminded us how versatile fuchsias are – from large bushes, standards, baskets, espaliered plants and even bonsai.

### ***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!)

However the first article deserving a mention is actually not in any of the publications in our library! The March Edition of the **New Zealand Gardener** has an article on Vireyas – with pictures of the blooms of a large number of varieties.

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On the following pages are four of the photographs from our July Competition

“Bristol Queen”

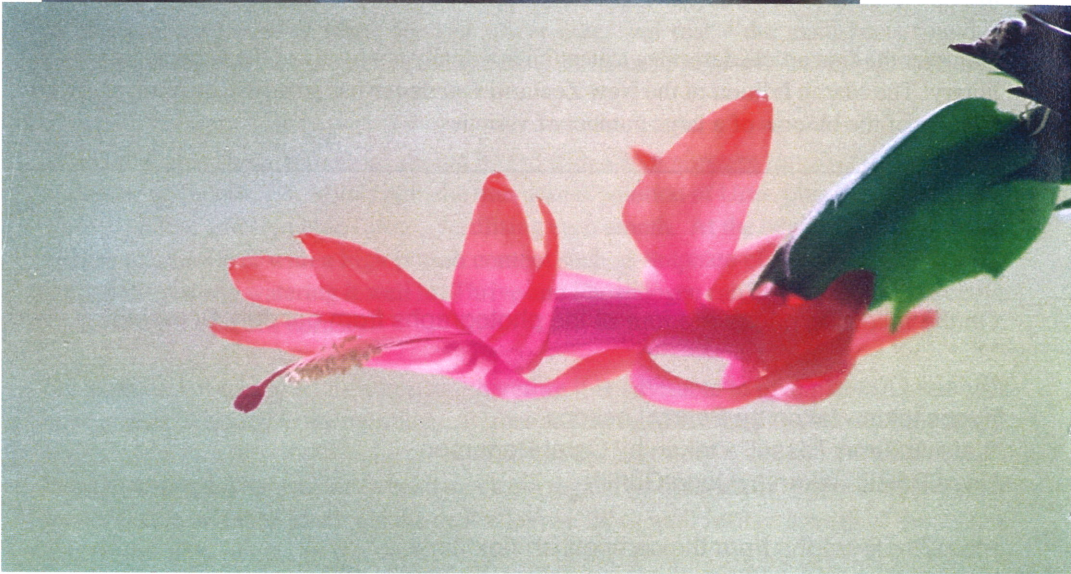
Zygocactus - taken by Penny Luckens

“Late Autumn Tassel” - taken by Carol Rogerson

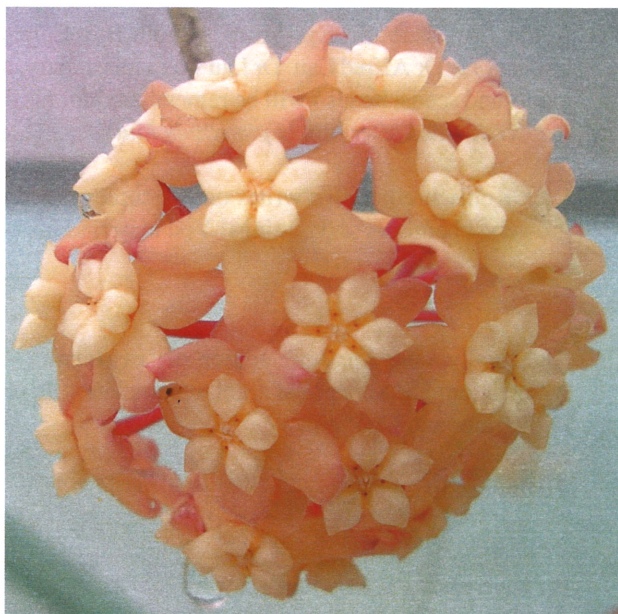
Hoya Pottsii - taken by Jane Griffith

More Photographs from the competition next time.....

*Epiflora*



*Epiflora*

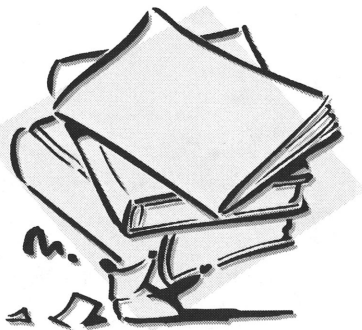


## *Epiflora*

Some of you may remember the talk we had some years ago from Marion Austin on flower arranging using epis. You may also remember the arrangements she did at one of the conventions we held in Wellington. The June edition of **Epi News** (San Diego Epiphyllum Society) has two pages of colour photos of the displays and arrangements that were done for their Mother's Day show – which had the theme "Asian Fantasy".

And while we are mentioning **Epi News** - the August edition has a brief piece on *Selenicereus grandiflorus* (together with a stunning photo taken by Phil Peck)

In the July issue of **Epi-Gram** (Epiphytic Cacti and Hoya Society of Australia) Rex Hardy comments on a recent visit to Kew Gardens and on the way they were growing Rhipsalis. He has also contributed a lengthy article titled "The Growing of Bromeliads".



In the "Winter" issue of **The Bulletin** (Epiphyllum Society of America) is an article entitled "Epi Blooms and Grow Lights" which discusses the characteristics of the kind of lights that can be used - and suggests ways in which they could be used.

In the July issue of "**Epi-gram**" (South Bay Epiphyllum Society) you will find a brief obituary for Dr Alfred Lau. Dr Lau was a missionary, author, explorer and collector of cactus plants and seeds; he also will be remembered for his discovery of a new Epiphyllum species that was named after him (*Epiphyllum laui*).

Dick Kohlschreiber also writes on two topics that dominate any conversation between epi growers: chemicals and cuttings! You may find his perspective interesting..

And finally - the Apr-June edition of "**Fraterna**" (the bulletin of the International Hoya Association) has a couple of articles, complete with photographs, on Hoyas in habitat - in the Philippines and Malaysia .

Happy reading.!

**Strange plants ... Strange growers**

## *Epiflora*

There's some folks around the country,  
Or so I've heard it tell,  
What grows the strangest looking plants  
(and grows 'em pretty well)

There's some in pots or things like that  
Just scattered on the ground,  
Or up in trees, or on the fence,  
In things the grower's found,

What th' lovely plant is sitting in  
I s 'pose it matters not,  
But what's the plant to think, poor thing,  
When stuffed in jerry pot!

There's plants what climb all round the place  
Up trellises or frames,  
But the owners seem to love 'em still  
And remember all their names.

But what's it matter in the end  
If name you can't remember  
You know full well that there will be  
A flower there next November.

There's some great big green leafy things  
That grow at quite a pace  
And if they're not trimmed back a bit  
They soon look a disgrace

But then a wee flower bud appears  
On end of stiff green leaf  
And soon bursts out a great big flower  
With beauty, beyond belief.

All colours of the spectrum  
Will brighten up your life,  
And the bright red fruit that follows,  
Can be eaten slice by slice!

## *Epiflora*

This one's a real true cactus,  
Though not in desert grown,  
'tis in the hot wet forest parts  
That it has made its home.

And its got a smaller cousin,  
That grows 'bit like a chain,  
With leaf on leaf and pretty flowers  
That seem to grow the same.

As well, there's real true spiny ones  
That hang down from on high,  
And flower and flower all summer through  
Their beauty makes one sigh!

And then there's the folk what grows 'em  
Now there's an odd wee lot  
I've plenty yarns to tell you .....  
    But I think I'd better stop!

*Bruce Purdie*

### **Now is the time .....**

*We are approaching spring, however some nights winter mounts a fine rearguard action so it pays to be cautious. In Waikanae we have had quite a few warm days and nights recently - but we have also had some cold nights 3 °C has been the lowest recently so we continue to play it very safe - water in the first part of the morning - 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. The overall theme is "start giving a little fertiliser". If you live in Auckland or Arrowtown 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 (in the mornings) and fertilise lightly.



## *Epiflora*

**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) Start checking seriously for mealy bugs and other pests (did you ever stop?) and deal with any you find promptly.

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

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

**Aporophyllums** - Buds should be just appearing . Start watering a little and provide a little fertiliser. Increase the amount of water you give as the days and nights get warmer (this will happen - trust me - Ed.)

**Ceropegias** - Many of these plants will 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. Do not throw out dead-looking plants just yet.

**Orchids**- Phyllis Purdie writes: *Cymbidiums* which have been outside will be coming into spike now. Watch for snail attack and bring them indoors when the flowers are nearly ready to open. Other orchids can be watered a little bit more increasing as the weather gets warmer. Watch out for frosts. Keep *Phalaeanopsis* and *Masdevallias* watered all the time.

**Bromeliads** - Andrew Flower writes: Growing outdoors, nothing to do except be careful with frost. We had one in Wellington this year that we didn't even see, but it burnt masses of *Neoregelias* outdoors at Morris Tarr's place, and killed an outdoor *Aechmea blanchetiana* at my place. If suspicious, throw frost cloth over them.

For plants indoors, once temperatures are getting over 20C light watering can start but be sure there is sufficient air movement and quite low humidity (<50%) to enable plants to dry out before nightfall. A number of tillandsias will be initiating flower buds, so full-strength phostrogen a couple of times a month will help them along.

## **Book Review .....**

*Didge Rowe wrote this review of "Australian Succulent Plants: An Introduction" by Attila Kapitany. It was originally published in the Cacti-etc. Discussion forum.*

This bold enterprise is the very first publication that provides concise information of a non-scientific nature about Australian Succulent Plants. It is written in a style that is easily readable by the layperson but it has much to interest its best-informed readers.

## *Epiflora*

Although Australia has a smaller succulent plant flora when compared to better-known regions such as the Americas or South Africa etc., what it does have is often unique or indeed bizarre.

Plant sizes range from miniscule *Portulaca* species to the enormous pachyform *Adansonia gregorii*, the Australian Boab or Baobab Tree. This beautiful book provides much information that is largely unknown even within the Australian Cactus and Succulent fraternity. Its scope is broad, including some orchids, a few geophytes, a number of weird inland succulent halophytes and some species that some may consider being more xerophytic than succulent. Every one of its 240 pages is lavishly illustrated with superb photography. Many of the eleven annual species portrayed from the again to be revised *Calandrinia* genus, have truly beautiful flowers of a standard that more than rival the well know garden annual *Portulaca grandiflora*. I expect some of these *Calandrinia* species to become world favourite garden plants in the near future due largely to the publication of this book. It provides a selection of the nation's *Aizoaceae* with hints of the exciting changes to expect when the revision of *Carpobrotus* and *Sarcozona* is finally completed. Non mesemb genera will not be widely known but of particular note are *Trianthema* two species, at least one of which - *T.turgidifolia* - has part-windowed leaves, *Gunnioopsis* five species, and the pretty pan-tropical littoral species *Sesuvium portulacastrum*. There are six interesting *Portulaca* species included with *P.cyclophylla*, being as cryptic as any lithops. Their rugose upper leaf surface closely resembles the shiny, reddish (Ironstone?) pebbled ground, in which it grows. The underside of its leaves are thickly translucent or "windowed" so I suspect that this is another very rare example of the use of reflected light as seen in the high altitude South American "upside-down" windowed-species *Pileaserpyllacea*. Certainly, the otherwise barren, red-brown, highly wind-polished pebbled-plains on which it grows must receive intense insolation. Perhaps the highly reflective qualities of this "soil" surface create a cooler microclimate somewhat similar to that of the southern African quartz fields. Another taxon shown from the *Portulacaceae* family is the tiny, tuberous rooted endemic *Anacampseros (Grahamia) australiana*. Thirteen species from seven genera of the remarkable down-under plants in the saltbush family *Chenopodiaceae* are represented with *Halosarcia bulbosa*, the windowed *Pachycornia triandra* and *Tecticornia verrucosa* being particularly excellent examples. All of Australia's peculiar caudiciform Ant Plants (Hydnophytum two species and Myrmecodia four taxa.) from the tropics of Cape York Peninsula are shown including *Dischidia major* a strange epiphytic Ant House species from the *Apocynaceae* (nee *Asclepiadaceae*.) family. Two other *Dischidia* are also depicted along with four of the island continent's *Hoya* species and two *Sarcostemma* taxa. Among the better-known genera are three Bulbine, one *Crassula*, three *Peperomia*, two *Plectranthus*, and three *Brachychiton* Bottle Trees. Other chapters are devoted to animal associations, bush tucker, naturalised succulents, cultivation, conservation, sourcing of plants, places of interest and a detailed bibliography.

## *Epiflora*

Producing a book about such an esoteric subject as this has been a huge challenge to its author in many ways. I therefore firmly believe it deserves our full support. Attila has informed me that it will never be reprinted and because it only has a small print run due to financial considerations, it will become a rare collector's item. Further details can be found on Attila's website. <http://www.australiansucculents.com/>

### ***Odd cuttings and seeds***

#### *Hoya Mix.*

Another perennial question is “what mix do you use for growing hoyas”. Well here is the mix Morris Tarr was using.

|                                 |                              |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Fine Granulated Bark            | 3 parts (five litre bucket)  |
| Graded Pumice (about 10mm size) | 1 part (five litre bucket)   |
| Dalton's Propagating sand       | 3/4 part (five litre bucket) |
| Slow release fertiliser         | 250 mls                      |
| Blood and Bone                  | 250 mls                      |

#### *And a couple of recipes for pests..*

**Aphids and Mites:** To make a spray, mix 20ml canola oil, 5ml eucalyptus oil, 2ml detergent and 1 litre of water. Do not store any left-over spray.

**General Insect Spray:** Mix 375gm of dishwashing liquid, 15 mls of citronella, 375 gm of washing soda (dissolved in boiling water), 125 gm ammonia, 5 litres of water. Use 5 tablespoons (two tablespoons if you are American) per litre of water.

#### *Watch this space*

A new mail-order nursery for epis (and maybe other plants) will be opening for business later this year in the Auckland region, their website is already being

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developed. Watch this space next issue for more details.

*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 Hoya and Epiphytic Plant 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 WHEPS, Epiflora and the author.*

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**Closing dates for contributions:**

**Summer 2007 Edition - 10<sup>th</sup> November 2007**

**Autumn 2008 Edition - 9<sup>th</sup> February 2008**

**Subscriptions:**

*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>  |                               |

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