



EPIFLORA

Volume 17 No. 1

Feb 2008

Epiflora



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From the President

Dear fellow epiphyte growers

With weeks and weeks of glorious warm weather I do hope that your epiphytes have been performing well and that you are progressing well with pruning and repotting of plants. It certainly is a busy time of year for our plants but we know that any work done now will give us good rewards later in the year when new flowers develop.

Our Society is well and truly back into action after the Christmas break and many of us have enjoyed the meetings in January and February. As you will see the programme for the rest of the year is interesting, hopefully stimulating and educational as well as giving us an opportunity to show off our plants.

Do remember if you want to exchange or obtain particular epiphytes contact Carol Rogerson as she holds all our plant lists on her computer. We will also need to remember to contact Carol from time to time to update our lists – either because we have obtained new plants or culled some of our collection. Carol will act as liaison and then it will be up to you to contact the person who has the particular plant that you have your eye on. Of course if you have yet to let Carol have your list it is not too late – the more plants listed on Carol's computer the more likely ones that you covet might be available. (For new members of the Society we encourage you to send Carol Rogerson a list of all named epiphytes that you have in your collection) Carol's e-mail address is: doug.carol@actrix.co.nz

A little challenge to those who live outside the Wellington region – how about sending us a short article about what you grow, your conditions, etc? It would be lovely to hear from you and I know that the Editor would much appreciate extra contributions.

To everyone happy autumn cleaning up and I look forward to seeing people at our monthly meetings if you are able to make it.

Kind regards

Jane Griffith

February 2008

The Programme for 2008

Meetings are at Johnsonville Union Church (Dr. Taylor Terrace) and start at 2.00 pm. Sales, 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.

March 8th	<i>Variety in Hoyas On Duty: Virginia and Jim Hayler, Alison Beeston</i>
April 12th	<i>Vireya Rhododendrons On Duty: Jane and Roy Griffith</i>
May 10th	<i>Visit to Manfeild Garden Festival (More details later)</i>
June 14th	<i>Endangered Species: Ghekos and Skinks</i>
July 12th	<i>Midwinter Meeting</i>
August 9th	<i>To be finalised</i>
September 13th	<i>Insights on the Internet</i>
October 11th	<i>Plant Clinic</i>
November 8th	<i>Epicactus topic</i>
December 13th	<i>AGM and Christmas Meeting</i>

Society AGM.

The December meeting was our society's AGM. At that meeting we received the annual report from our president, a statement of our financial situation from our treasurer and elected officers for the coming year. We also had a quiz before afternoon tea was provided.

Presidents Report for 2007

*This was presented by our president - **Jane Griffith***

It gives me great pleasure to present this report for the seventeenth year of our Society – or should I say the first year of our Society in its new form?

Having expanded on the range of epiphytic plants that we are now including under the umbrella of our Society this has meant that we have been able to call on a wider range of topics for our monthly meetings. We heard, and learned more about hoyas, epiphytic bromeliads and epiphyllum species as well as seeing the vast range of floral stamps that Brian Read had gathered for us. Our knowledge of New Zealand native orchids was expanded with an excellent talk by Phil Tomlinson which was followed up later in the year by a visit to the Botanic Gardens where we observed epiphytes growing. I hope that you will agree with me that overall we covered an interesting range of subjects this year and with the usual openness of members' questions the knowledge gained was as extensive as you wished.

Over the past year we have seen an increase in our membership as we have welcomed one or two new members to monthly meetings and more new members from around the country. Thanks goes to Virginia Hayler for developing our web site for us and keeping it up to date – this is such an important means of telling people about our Society these days. Thanks also to Isobel Barberly who has worked hard to promote the Society in national magazines and locally.

Epiflora continues to be the main means of keeping all our members informed of what is happening and a source for new information about the plants we grow. We are most grateful to Roy Griffith for continuing to act as Editor of the magazine, for researching new web sites for us to follow up and for encouraging and cajoling you, as members, to write articles for Epiflora.

A small society such as ours is dependent on each and every one of us doing a little – and therefore thanks to you for the part you have played this year. I would like to especially

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thank the Committee who have worked extremely hard to ensure the smooth running of the Society and to ensure that there was an interesting programme for each month. To Alice Hannam as Treasurer, thank you for keeping our finances in order, to Isobel Barbery for doing the secretarial tasks and keeping the President in order, to Roy for Epiflora, to Alison Beeston for minding the library and for the many tasks that Anne Goble undertook. Alison and Anne are not continuing on the Committee, providing an opportunity for others to take their turn.

Committee for 2008

President: Jane Griffith

Secretary: Isobel Barbery

Treasurer: Alice Hannam

Committee: Roy Griffith, Bev Parsons and Brian Read

January on the Kapiti Coast.

*Our January meeting took the form of a trip to the Kapiti Coast - to visit the collections of some of our members. As usual we also went to another attraction on the coast - this year we went to Nga Manu reserve - we had the opportunity to walk around parts of the reserve and see some of the birds and plants there; then M. and Mme. Hannam were our chefs for a fine barbeque "on the island". **Bev Parsons** wrote some brief notes about the trip for us.*

We first gathered at Rex and Alice Hannam's and had a look around their garden. They had several different dahlias in bloom that made a good show. In their glasshouse there were a couple of hoyas in bloom. Walking around to the side porch area we came across some hoya crosses that Alice had. There were three plants, all in flower, they were all crosses from the same parents but the flowers of each of them were.

Next we went on to Roy & Jane Griffith's garden where we had afternoon tea and walked around their garden. They had a couple of epis in flower in their shadehouse. In their hoya plastic house we also saw some hoyas and ceropegias in flower.

We then went on to the Nga Manu sanctuary and, as we walked around, saw several different animals and birds. These creatures are all rescued and would not be able to live in the wild anymore. There were too many to name but I took a liking to one of the little geckos with no tail. He was a bright green. We ended the day with a lovely barbeque. I think all had a good time.

Ceropegias.

Merv Keighley talked at our February meeting - here are the notes of his talk..

Ceropegia was coined in 1753 by Carl Linnaeus to name the first described *Ceropegia candelabrum* which is the Type specie for ceropegia which was described in Vol. 1 of his Species plantarium.

The name ceropegia is derived from the Greek 'keros' – wax, wax candle, and 'pegynai' – assemble, unite: perhaps for the chandelier-like inflorescences of some species.

They have many common names (which I can't stand) like – lantern flower, parasol flower, parachute flower, bushman's pipe, string of hearts, snake creeper, rosary vine, condom flower.

The Type plant has also been named

Niota (Adanson) (1763)

Apegia (Necker) (1790)

Systrepha (Burchell) (1822) T: Systrepha filiforme (Burchell)

Cinclia (Hoffmannsegg) (1833)

Ceropegias are found in Southern Africa, Arabia, Asia, Northern Australia, Canary Islands, Madagascar.

Ceropegia are in the family

Apocynaceae

Asclepiadaceae

Ceropegia

Ceropegia are perennial herbs – they come up year after year.

They are Geophytes

and/or stem succulents.

Ceropegia Africanus - picture by R Griffith

Ceropegia Distincta var Haygarthii - picture by R Griffith

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With fibrous fleshy lateral
tuberous roots.

There are about 250 species, subspecies & natural hybrids. More are being discovered and described but others are being transferred to other families or identified as variants of other species. You may imagine that taxonomists are having a field day.

There are climbers, twining species, upright shrubs, creeping ground covering plants, succulent or not succulent. The only commonality they all share are the very special flowers – but from time to time these differ also from the typical lantern form.

The sap of ceropegias, although part of the milkweed family, is clear, not white/milky. They are in fact insect-catching flowers, but only to be pollinated, after pollination the flower wilts and the insects are released.

A typical ceropegia flower is tube-shaped and can be separated into three parts:

- the five petals which are mostly united at the top and form the typical lantern shape
- the slender flower-tube, there is finest hair inside which is aligned downwards to make it impossible for the pollinators to fly out.
- The mostly swollen , balloon-shaped lower part of the flower, here are the sexual organs of the flower.

There are usually some translucent areas in the lowest part of the flower which pretend another exit for the insects that have entered the flower.

Pollination of ceropegias, as with any other asclepiad, is not a simple matter of using a paint brush and spreading pollen from one flower to another.

Ceropegias (and all other asclepiad) do not have pollen as is usually seen and recognised on other flowers. A lily has large anthers that as they ripen, open out with large quantities of pollen (you know about it if you brush against the flower). The stigma is also large and usually sticky when it is receptive to pollination. Pollen just needs to be brushed against the stigma and voila!

Not so the ceropegia.

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Asclepiad pollen is like a paste and is held in a pollinaria. To facilitate pollination an insect enters the flower through the small openings at the top of the flower. Obviously the insect is not a bumble bee but only a very small type. When it gets to the engine room the insect is attracted to the nectar at the base of the pollinaria. As it obtains nectar it also pollinates the flower.

After pollination usually two seed horns grow, often to about 3 to 4 inches long. When ripe they appear dry and start to split open. The seeds are packed tightly into the space. Each seed is attached to a parachute – similar to a dandelion. If seed is to be saved the horns should either have a bag put over them that is tied around the base or a rubberband around the point of the horn, This is to prevent the seed from blowing in the wind.

Ceropegia seed should be sown as soon as possible. Seed sown as soon as it can be obtained from a seed horn will germinate within 36 hours and 90%- 100% take will occur. As the seed ages, germination takes longer and may not happen.

Depending on how many seed are sown in a pot or container, the seedlings will require potting on.

I sow my seed (when I can obtain it) in a 2 inch square pot. I use Daltons seed raising mix. If I have only very few seed, I place each seed individually, sharp end down in the mix. I then cover lightly with more mix and gently firm the top. I then soak the pot in water, allow it to drain lightly and then place the pot in a small self-seal plastic bag. This is self-watering and also maintains a humid environment.

When the seeds germinate and push through the soil, I open the bag but leave the pot inside it for a few weeks.

Once the seedlings are 1 ½ inch to 2inches tall, I re-pot into individual pots. The same size pot as used for sowing can be used. I use a normal potting mix.

My mix is 5 parts Daltons potting mix, 2 parts compost, 2 or 3 parts grit/sand. (I use builders' gravel from Placemakers.) and 5 or 6 parts pumice – 7mm. This is a fairly open mix allowing good drainage. As the plants grow larger I pot on into a 3 inch square RX pot that is reasonably deep. I place a plastic or metal frame in the pot to give the plant a growing frame.

A number of ceropegia may be propagated from cuttings. At the joints where leaves may be seen occasionally, root nodes can be seen. These will root when placed in a mix, ordinary potting mix, gravel or pumice, vermiculite. As new growth appears, the cutting can be

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knocked out of the mix and potted up as another plant. Even some of the finer plants will root this way.

Layering is another way. Some plants e.g. *ampliata*, *sandersonii*, and *stapeliiformis*, will root wherever they touch the soil, even in another plant pot. They are not fussy.

Some species produce bulbils or tubers along their fine stems e.g. *linearis ssp woodii*. These may be cut off and rooted in normal potting mix.

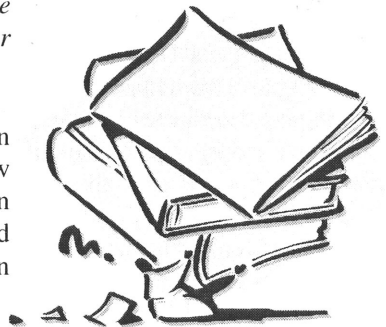
Ceropegia are different. They are straggly plants generally but because of their difference they are worth giving a try – and you may be hooked.

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!)

Epi-flora -published by EPRIC has an interesting piece in their latest issue entitled "Investigation into the quality of epiphytic cacti at nurseries". They say this study has been underway since 1997 and it has sought to find if plants for sale are correctly named and are free of disease and pests (among other things). Their findings are not very encouraging. Since this article is sub-titled "part 1" one might suspect there will be another part shortly. Some discussion I have recently seen in an epi internet chat group suggests that the problem is not confined to European suppliers (*and in the past we have known of NZ suppliers whose naming of plants left much to be desired - happily those suppliers are no longer in business - and were never members of our society.* **Ed**)

The entire December issue of **EPIG** is devoted to an article by Ralf Bauer in which he discusses a new subspecies of *Disocactus speciosus*. The text is in German - but the English abstract is lengthy and interesting and the copious photographs are the same in either language.



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In the February issue of **Epi-News** (San Diego Epiphyllum Society) Jill Peck writes about a small heated greenhouse that they have fixed to the wall of their house and where they can look after their most tender plants in winter (as a better alternative to bringing them into the house). *This might be an idea quite a few people would like to copy - Ed.*

In the January issue of **Epi-News** is another piece of epi history - an article on the construction of the Epi Houses in the local park. The San Diego society members have been deeply involved with these since the beginning. *(Maybe some of the NZ specialist plant societies could copy the idea Ed)*

Our library has not received all the copies of **Fraterna** (International Hoya Association) over the last year or so (so those of you that have gone looking for articles I have mentioned might have been confused. Now - thanks to the efforts of Ann Wayman we have received all the missing issues. Many thanks Ann for your help in this.

And, talking of **Fraterna**, in the latest edition (Oct-Dec 2007), the one for the last quarter of the year - which is the time of year when they publish details of new hoyas species. In this issue they have details of four of the newest species. One of these plants comes from Malaysia and the others from the Philippines. The photographs of the details of the flowers are stunning.

And finally - in the December issue of "The Internet Orchid Review" is an article on "Orchid roots" in this Jim James is suggesting that in cultivation we have everything inside out. In the wild the roots of an orchid would be wrapped around the outside of a tree branch or a rock - when we put the plant in a pot - the roots end up on the inside - not surprisingly we find it easy to kill off the roots of the plant and then wonder why the plant dies.

Happy reading.!

Now is the time

Summer continues and seems set to go on for a while. As the sun rises earlier and is hotter it also pays to 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 water regularly and enjoy the flowers. If you live in the north or the south you may need to adjust things a little.

Epicacti - It is time for work! The flowers are just about over for the year (though

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some species epis may still have buds) so you can prune and repot as necessary. Take cuttings if you wish (writing the name on each one as you do - they all look pretty similar at the end of an hour). Cut away old growth as well as any damaged or diseased stems and encourage new growth from the base of the plant. Keep an eye out for pests and deal with any you find. Water regularly - preferably early in the day.

Hoyas - enjoy the flowers - water when dry. Keep a wary eye out for mealy bugs and other pests - they love warm humid conditions. It is probably now too late to take cuttings (unless you can provide artificial heat).

Schlumbergeras - fertilise and water carefully when the plants seem dry.

Rhipsalis - reduce watering. Prune and/or repot if you wish.

Aporophyllums - water less (or at least more carefully). Now flowering is over a plant can be lightly (and carefully!) pruned, the brave can even repot if necessary.

Ceropegias - Enjoy the flowers. Water when dry. You should continue with the regular task of unwinding runaway growth. Keep in a very warm environment for maximum flowering. Check for pests very frequently and deal with any you find immediately.

Orchids- Phyllis Purdie writes: "Cymbidiums: Don't do any repotting now until autumn or you might damage the flower shoots which should be forming.. Grow outdoors or open shadehouses, not in glasshouses. Grow them under the outer branches of trees; the leaves should be yellow/green in colour. Leave to dry out then give them a thorough soaking. Give a low nitrogen high potash fertiliser and Epsom salts using 1 teaspoon to 5 litres of water. Stake new flower shoots as they appear. Mist spray on hot days.

Most other orchids you can water them when they are drying out - with this hot weather they can take a lot of water."

Bromeliads and Tillandsias - Andrew Flower writes: As long as the hot weather continues, you should be watering frequently but not fertilising. Many of the tillandsias, in particular, do most of their active growing during the autumn and early spring where our temperatures are getting down to the 10-14 C range, and daytime temperatures where they are growing are in the mid twenties. If you want to fertilise, I'd suggest you wait until March at the earliest. At this time of the year, try and give bromeliads as much air circulation as possible.

Now is also the time.....

To pay subscriptions for this year..

The society's year runs from January to December so subscriptions for 2008 are now overdue. If you have not already paid you will find a second reminder notice enclosed - please forward your subscription to our treasurer. If you have already paid you will not find one

Odd cuttings and seeds

Fertilising plants.

There has been a conversation going on in one of the epi internet discussion groups about the use of fertiliser. It all started with the observation from one member that, because they lived in an upstairs apartment, they could not water on fertiliser with a hose (the landlord and those below might object). Their solution was to use fertiliser sticks in the pots of their schlumbergeras. The discussion moved on to debate whether providing a continuous supply of fertiliser in this way would result in weak unwanted growth at some times in the year (the sticks do last for a while). At the time of writing this no definitive conclusion had been reached - it was more one of those "it all depends" endings. Do any of our readers use fertiliser sticks - and what results do they get?

And more on fertiliser..

Andrew Flower commented on the notes on our Plant Clinic in October. In the Epiflora notes there was a comment on the use of "Nitrophosca". Andrew points out that the comment was made by a visitor at the meeting who was the recently-retired Curator of Pukekura Park in New Plymouth

Andrew says "The point being made by the ex-Curator was that many commercial fertilisers use potassium chloride as the source of potassium, and these should be avoided since he had found over his 30 years experience that

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most pot-grown epiphytes do not like chlorine, and respond much better to chlorine-free fertilisers. "Nitrophoska" is NOT necessarily chlorine-free: the only one in their NZ range that has no chloride in the formulation is "Nitrophoska Perfekt". (note that many second-level distributors who sell retail packs to garden centres claim that Nitrophoska Blue Special is chloride-free - I spoke with Ravensdown who are the top-level distributors in NZ, and was told that Nitrophoska Blue Special does have potassium chloride as well as potassium sulphate.) So the message from New Plymouth was: avoid osmocote, nutricote and all nitrophoska formulations except Perfekt - because they contain chlorine" .

He also notes "Another slightly misleading comment was in the last paragraph of the article, where it read "...If the fertiliser is in the bottom of the pot when you first water you will lose about 85% of the fertiliser..." What was actually said was to the effect that we should be wary of buying potting mixes with slow release fertiliser included from Garden Centres because if they stack the bags outside, the temperature of the mix inside the bags will exceed 14C and cause the fertiliser to start releasing - then when you put the mix into a pot and water it you immediately wash out all the released fertiliser. Buying fertiliser-included potting mix in bags that have not been heated, or putting slow-release fertiliser into your potting mix yourself when potting your plants, is perfectly OK (that's a pun, not a sic!)

Sources of Information

The Cactus and Succulent Society of America journals are known for the quality of their articles. They have had articles on epiphyllums from time to time (some of which we have quoted or referred to). Now some of the old issues of the Cactus and Succulent Journal are available in the form of DVDs. The DVD for the first 20 years, 1929-1948, was issued in 2005, and the following 15 years was issued last summer. Together, these comprise over 320 issues and 7000 pages.

Hoya globulosa - photo by Jane Griffith

Hoya eitypensis - photo by Jane Griffith

Each Journal issue is in the form of a PDF, which makes it possible to search for text.. Also, the entire text of each DVD set is in a single file, which allows

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more global searching. Two example issues are available on the CSSA web site.

Michel Combernoux has a rather nice web-site, it is in French - but there is an English version available. He has recently published a page on the discovery of *Schlumbergera orssichiana* (with photos). The address is <http://perso.orange.fr/cactusepiphytes>

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.

Please address correspondence to:

249 Te Moana Road,
WAIKANAÉ.

Or: griffith@globe.co.nz

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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.epihoya.freewebsitehosting.com/

