



# EPIFLORA

Volume 17 No. 2

May 2008

the 1990s, the number of people in the world who are living in poverty has increased from 1.1 billion to 1.5 billion (World Bank 2000).

There are a number of reasons for this increase. One of the main reasons is the rapid population growth in the developing countries. The population of the world is expected to reach 8 billion by the year 2025 (United Nations 2000). This increase in population will put a tremendous pressure on the world's resources, particularly in the developing countries.

Another reason for the increase in poverty is the rapid technological change in the developed countries. The rapid technological change has led to the displacement of many workers in the developed countries, particularly in the manufacturing sector. This displacement has led to a significant increase in unemployment and poverty in the developed countries.

There are a number of policy options that can be used to reduce poverty. One of the most important policy options is to increase investment in education and health care. Education and health care are essential for the development of a country and for the reduction of poverty.

Another important policy option is to increase investment in infrastructure. Infrastructure is essential for the development of a country and for the reduction of poverty. Investment in infrastructure can lead to the creation of new jobs and the growth of the economy.

There are a number of other policy options that can be used to reduce poverty. These include increasing the minimum wage, providing social security, and increasing the tax on the rich. These policy options can be used in combination to reduce poverty.

The reduction of poverty is a complex task that requires the cooperation of all countries. The world's leaders must work together to find solutions to the problem of poverty. Only through international cooperation can the world's resources be used more effectively to reduce poverty.

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## ***From the President***

Dear fellow epiphyte growers

Firstly welcome to new members who are receiving *Epiflora* for the first time. I hope that you find the articles interesting and that you will feel free to contribute any thoughts that you have about growing the various epiphytes covered by our society. The Editor is always delighted to receive articles, letters or other material for *Epiflora*.

The long, hot summer we experienced produced an array of flowers in our collection and in particular hoyas seemed to enjoy the wonderful summer. In fact we still have one or two hoyas gallantly flowering even though the night time temperatures are dropping. I hope that you were also pleased with the performance of your plants this year.

It's the hard work time of the year when epicacti need pruning and repotting – a job that I do with little enthusiasm but realise that the effort is rewarded next season with new growth and beautiful flowers. Maybe you have already done the necessary work and can sit back patting yourself on the back.

As you will read later in *Epiflora* we had a fascinating talk on *Vireya* rhododendrons in April when we learned much more about the growing of these beautiful plants and picked up several handy hints. Some of our members went to the Manawatu Garden Festival in May and from all accounts a good time was had by those in attendance. For those living out of the Wellington region it is a Garden Festival that is to be recommended and is held annually on the second week-end of May.

I hope that the winter months treat you and your plants well. Take the opportunity to read books or articles from our extensive library as you snuggle down in front of the fire.

Happy growing and keep warm.

*Kind regards*

*Jane Griffith*

*May 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.*

<b>June 14<sup>th</sup></b>	<i>Endangered Species: Ghekos and Skinks <b>On Duty:</b> Kaye &amp; Merv Keighley, Isobel Barbery</i>
<b>July 12<sup>th</sup></b>	<i>Midwinter Meeting <b>On Duty:</b> Ruth Finlay, Dianne O'Neill, Lois Bond</i>
<b>August 9<sup>th</sup></b>	<i>To be finalised <b>On Duty:</b> Phyllis &amp; Bruce Purdie, Bev Parsons</i>
<b>September 13<sup>th</sup></b>	<i>Insights on the Internet</i>
<b>October 11<sup>th</sup></b>	<i>Plant Clinic</i>
<b>November 8<sup>th</sup></b>	<i>Epicactus topic</i>
<b>December 13<sup>th</sup></b>	<i>AGM and Christmas Meeting</i>

## **The Library.**

As has been said before **Bev Parsons** has agreed to take on the responsibility of looking after our society library. Bev has been working hard over the last few weeks to update the list of books and journals. A copy of the new library list is included with this issue of *Epiflora*.

Bev will bring the library to the next and future meetings of the society and you may browse and borrow as you wish. We are keen that out-of-town members should also be able to make use of our collection. Any out-of-town members who would like to borrow a book should, in the first instance, e-mail their request to Bev ([threecatsnz@yahoo.co.nz](mailto:threecatsnz@yahoo.co.nz)) and she will tell you the process and costs.

### ***Manawatu Garden Festival.***

*The May meeting took the form of a visit to the Manawatu Garden Festival - this is an annual event held at the Manfeild racecourse in Feilding. A number of car-loads of members went and although they all reported that they saw no other members the whole time they were there- they all seemed to enjoy the trip. **Robyn and Vicki Gibson** write about what they did and saw ....*

On Saturday 10th May we attended the Manawatu Garden Show at Feilding. It was a cold, wet and blustery day in Porirua, but the weather improved greatly as we drove north. Feilding greeted us with a warm sunny day, and the show was well organised with plenty of on-site parking. The show entrance was decorated with pots of miniature iris and daffodils which put on a lovely display, and while tempted, we confined our purchases to bagged bulbs.

Row upon row of stalls featured such diverse items as garden tools, kitchen gadgets, jams and sauces, alpaca clothing, ponga carvings, rustic furniture, lavender products, edible seeds and macadamia nuts. Of course there were also large displays of bagged and potted plants from nurseries in the region. I noted several hoyas, described on the labels but unnamed, except for H. Indian Rope. There were some tillandsias, and an epicactus in flower, also unnamed.

There was the usual 'food alley' with hotdogs and chips and we enjoyed a woodfired pizza for lunch while being entertained by the local high school band. We both remarked on how good they were.

During the early afternoon a very dark cloud loomed overhead but the Morris dancers launched into their performance and drove the cloud away before it could turn the grass into a sea of mud.

The Show also had a series of lectures and demonstrations throughout the day but we gave these a miss, preferring to watch a chainsaw artist working on large ponga stumps. He used

three different sized machines to skilfully sculpt bird and koru shapes into the stumps. The finished carvings were most impressive.

Vicky was keen to watch the advertised mower races. However she was disappointed to find they were ride-on mowers without the mower attachments, being hurled around a rough course by overgrown boys. The skill factor appeared to be in keeping them upright. She felt 'ripped off'!

We admired the art show displayed in the hall, particularly the lace making demonstration. The area was packed with people and it took some time to make a circuit of the art and crafts. In the five hours we were at the show we didn't encounter any other society members. Maybe we just missed them in the crowds.

We both had tired feet so we piled our purchases into the car and headed south for a delicious honey icecream from the Waireka honey shop. A perfect end to a most enjoyable day.

### ***Christmas Cactus (Schlumbergera).***

*Now is the time when you should be enjoying the flowers of these plants – so it seems timely to have a piece on them. This article is drawn from a number of sources – but written for the southern hemisphere.*

This family of plants, sometimes called holiday cactus, has undergone a number of name changes. Formerly known as *Zygocactus*, the official botanical name is now *Schlumbergera*. They are named after Frédéric Schlumberger, a Frenchman, who was the owner of a famous plant collection. This genus contains the popular *Schlumbergera truncata*, also known as Thanksgiving Cactus, and frequently mislabeled Christmas Cactus, which may flower in white, pink, red or purple. The Easter Cactus or Whitsun cactus (*Hatiora gaertneri*) which produces vivid scarlet flowers belongs to *Hatiora* genus.

The Christmas Cactus is a native of the mountainous rainforests of Brazil, where it grows on trees rather than in soil. Their natural home is in the states of Santa Catarina to Rio de Janeiro. When you are dealing with these plants think jungle, not desert. These cacti are not desert plants and do not like full sun or dry conditions. In Brazil these epiphytes grow high up in trees, in pockets of leaf mould and other organic matter. The species are:

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### ***Schlumbergera candidus***

Shrubby, pendant stems on this species are essentially cylindrical, club-like, and angular, the younger stems being more slender. The white flowers are very zygomorphic; the outer or lower petals are more strongly curved upwards. These blooms are about 3.5-centimetres (13/8-inches) long. After the blooms are finished, spherical, smooth red fruit develop. Its natural distribution is from the Itatiaya Mountains in subtropical Brazil. (Syn. *Epiphyllanthus candidus*.)

### ***Schlumbergera gaertneri***

Freely branching, this species forms a hanging, bushy plant. Its main stems become hard, and woody at the base. New shoots are reddish at first then becoming dark green, having shallow notches along the margins. In late winter, as these shoots mature, they produce scarlet flowers from the ends. Each bloom grows to 4-centimetres (15/8-inches) long. This plant is indigenous to the state of Santa Catarina, Brazil. Syns. *Epiphyllopsis gaertneri*, *Hattoria gaertneri* and *Rhipsalidopsis gaertneri*.

**Variety serrata** grows shoot tips that are a little more rounded, and darker green, with almost no hair.

**Variety tiburtii** is a much smaller plant. Also, the crimson flowers are much smaller. This variety is indigenous to the state of Parana, Brazil.

### ***Schlumbergera obtusangula***

The body of this species is shrubby, and partly upright, branching from the tips of older shoots mostly into twos or threes. Each branch segment is usually spherical or elongated, and partially angular. Also, from the tips of these shoots, appear zygomorphic flowers. Each bloom is purplish-pink, and about 4.5-centimetres (13/4-inches) long, and self-fertile, appearing in spring. As the blooms die, they are followed by almost pear-shaped fruit that are obtusely angled. This species does not appear to cross with any other *Schlumbergera* species. It is a drought tender plant that will stand light frosts. Keep the plants cool especially in winter. It is found on the Itatiaya Mountains of subtropical Brazil, from 2,000 to 2,800-metres (6,550 to 9,200-feet) above sea level. Syn. *Epiphyllanthus obtusangulus*.

### ***Schlumbergera opuntoides***

The pendulous stems on this shrubby plant are 40-centimetres (16-inches) long. Each branch is segmented, and tubular, consisting of sections that are 2 to 6-centimetres (3/4 to 23/8-inches) long. New segments are produced in groups of two, three or four from the ends of older segments. Each is flat, dark green, and dwarf opuntoid. The scarlet flowers are zygomorphic, and about 4.5-centimetres (13/4-inches) long, very similar to *Schlumbergera truncata*, and appearing in spring, these flowers are replaced by glossy, and reddish, top shaped fruit. It is a drought tender species, but hardy to light frosts in their habitat, so keep in a cool place especially in winter. Although indigenous on many mountains in the states



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of Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais, and São Paulo, Brazil, they can only be found from 2,000 to 2,800-metres (6,550 to 9,200-feet) above sea level. Syn. *Epiphyllanthus obovatus*.

### ***Schlumbergera orssichiana***

Typically, this plant has pendant stems made up of flattened segments or joints. These stem segments are 6-centimetres (23/8-inches) long, and 4-centimetres (19/16-inches) wide. Two to three prominent teeth are present on the margins. Areoles are set deep in the base of these teeth. Flowers develop from the tips of the terminal joints in late summer, and late winter. These blooms are zygomorphic, 9-centimetres (31/2-inches) long, and 8 to 9-centimetres (31/8 to 31/2-inches) across. Opening in the daytime, they show off their white petals with reddish margins. It was discovered in the mountainous area of Serra do Mar, in the south of Brazil.

### ***Schlumbergera russelliana***

A well-branched species that can hang down to 1-metre (40-inches) long, The main stem consists of light green, terete segments about 3.5-centimetres (13/8-inches) long. Flowers are actinomorphic, dark pink, and 5.5-centimetres (21/8 -inches) long. All members of this species are endemic to the Organ Mountains in the state of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Syns. *Epiphyllum russellianum* , and *Schlumbergera epiphylloides*.

### ***Schlumbergera truncata*** (also known as Crab Cactus or Christmas Cactus)

Christmas Cactus is the common name used, because of its early winter flowering period in the northern hemisphere. Although branching strongly, this shrubby plant has a weeping habit. It grows to 30-centimetres (12-inches) long. The branches consist of small stem segments; each 4 to 5-centimetres (19/16 to 2-inches) long, with prominently toothed margins. A terminal angle is produced at the apex, as though it has been snipped off, from this point the new shoots, and flowers appear. The flowers are from pink to deep red, and grow either singly, in pairs or occasionally in threes, growing about 7.5-centimetres (3-inches) long, and zygomorphic. Fruit is round, and smooth, red when ripe. Many hybrids have been created using this species as a parent. Colour range from white to red, and with yellow, orange, pink, and multicoloured forms. In the state of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, these plants can be found in mountainous regions. Syns. *Cactus truncatus*, *Epiphyllum truncatum*, *Cereus truncatus*, and *Zygocactus truncatus*.

**Variety *crenulatus*** has teeth that are more pronounced.

**Variety *delicatus*** carries flowers that are pink in strong light, and white when grown in the shade.

**Variety *kautskyi*** displays flowers that are smaller than the type, and self-fertile. The fruit is yellow-green with a touch of red at the edges, and four angled. It is usually found growing on rocks but occasionally on trees, growing on the cool, and protected sides of mountains, at an altitude of 1,000 to 1,300-metres (3,300 to 4,250-feet) above sea level.

**Habits/Blooming Period:**

Schlumbergeras are epiphytic cacti with tubular flowers with reflexed petals produced singly or in pairs at the end of protruding stems. The striking elongated flowers are unique in the family and adapted to pollination by hummingbirds. The spindle shaped buds are about one inch long . The flowers come in a wide range of translucent colours: white, yellow, orange, pink, red, magenta. Individual flowers last about one week; one plant's display may last three weeks. Some flowers of *Schlumbergera* are actinomorphic, that is, their floral parts radiate out from the centre of the bloom equally in all directions. Other species have flowers that are zygomorphic; these are irregular in shape, but with bilateral symmetry, one side being the mirror-image of the other side.

**Planting/Maintenance:**

**Soil:** Schlumbergera prefer an acidic soil high in organic matter and very good drainage. A potting mix of 1 part sterilised loam, 2 parts peat and 1 part perlite is good. Refresh the soil every three to four years.

**Light:** Give your plant bright, indirect light. You cannot count on a plant bought in flower at a nursery on June 15 to repeat bloom at the same time the next year. Growers manipulate light and temperature to push flowering forward or to hold it back.

**Temperature:** Ordinary house temperatures about 20 degrees C are fine, but cooler nights are beneficial. Blooms will last longer at lower temperatures. Ideal location after flowering is a cool room (above 6 degrees C) with bright, indirect light.

**Watering:** Water blooming plants to keep the soil evenly moist, but not saturated. After blooming, cut back on watering slightly but do not let the leaves begin to shrivel.

**Humidity:** A minimum of 30% humidity is best.

**Fertilising:** Withhold all fertiliser during blooming cycle. When new growth begins in spring, fertilise at each watering with a soluble fertiliser applied at one half to one third strength.

**Propagation:**

Cuttings root easily. Take stem cuttings in summer, breaking off a terminal "leaf" pad or stem tip. Allow the cutting to dry for a few days before inserting it in a peat-based compost.

**Diseases/Insects:**

Problems include mealy bugs and scale insects, as well as viruses that cause purple ring spots or line patterns on the leaves. Plants with mealy bugs should be isolated until free of insects. The insects can be removed by washing the plant with mild soapy water or by wiping the leaves with alcohol applied with a cue tip. Plants with scale insects should be isolated until free of these pests. The insects can be scraped off. If severe do not retain the plant. There is no way to control or eliminate viruses.

**Recommended Species:**

Christmas Cactus (*S. x buckleyii*), Thanksgiving Cactus (*S. truncata*), and Easter Cactus (*S. gaertneri*) are readily available. Other hybrids have been created by early breeders who crossed *Schlumbergera truncata* with *Schlumbergera russelliana*.



*Schlumbergera Truncatus Erin* - picture by Jane Griffith

**Tips/Special Considerations:**

**Positioning:** In November or December you can move the plants outdoors, into a shaded or semi-shaded position. Hanging in a tree is ideal. Keep away from slugs.

**Bringing on flowers:** The end of the summer is the time to start inducing flower buds for the coming winter. In early March stop fertilising until flowering is finished. Cool outdoor nights are beneficial, though not critical, for bud set. Bud set is influenced by hours of darkness. Once the longer nights arrive after the autumn equinox in the third week of March, the plants must have total darkness every night for at least three weeks (provide 12 hours of darkness). Outdoor street lights or porch lights can inhibit bud set.

**Bud drop:** Bud drop can occur for a variety of reasons. When you move plants indoors try not to shock them with drastic changes in light or temperature. Christmas cacti are infamous for dropping their buds when brought indoors. The cause is usually a change in temperature thanks to the proximity of a fireplace, or heater. Ethylene gas can also be a problem. Keep blooms away from ripening fruit. Try to keep the soil evenly moist, because sudden dryness of the soil may cause buds to drop. A change in orientation, once the buds are set, may also result in bud drop. Try not to move the plants at that time.

**Sources:**

The Toronto Botanical Garden, Wikipedia, Encyclopaedia Britannica

***Variety in Hoyas.***

*The speaker at our March meeting was Jane Griffith. Here are notes on what she said:*

Many members of our society are interested in, and grow, hoyas and over the years have accumulated a great deal of knowledge regarding their cultivation. Fascinating plants hoyas are found from Sri Lanka eastwards through parts of India, Myanmar (Burma), Thailand, Southern China, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, southern Japan, Taiwan, in Indonesia, especially Sumatra, Borneo, the Celebes, New Guinea and Malaysia and then south to northern Australia and some of the Pacific islands.

Just like us human beings with our individual uniqueness but with some cultural similarities, hoyas plants may look very different from one another in terms of leaf size, thickness and veining as well as different in terms of flower colour and shape but are all members of the Asclepiadaceae family.

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It is these differences that I want to highlight and demonstrate with examples from our collection.

### Firstly variety of leaf size, thickness and veining:

*Hoya loyceandrewsiana* – this hoya has by far the largest leaves of any in our collection – the largest leaf being 17 mm. in diameter. The leaves are thick and leathery and as Dale Kloppenburg notes in "*The World of Hoyas*" (1999) they are a deep green often with silver blotches on the upper surface. The origin of this hoya remains a mystery but its more recent history is fascinating and a reminder how individual people have played such an important part in growing and distributing hoyas around the world. This hoya was originally known as *hoya species Diversifolia B* when in the late 1960's Ted Green, grower and collector in Hawaii, received a cutting from Loyce Andrews a long-time collector from Texas. Loyce was unable to tell Ted where she obtained her plant from nor did she know the country of origin of it. From Ted's substantial research and knowledge he has suggested it may have originated from the monsoonal regions of northern Thailand. Writing in 1994 in *Fraterna* (the magazine of the International Hoya Association), he recommended that the plant be re-named *hoya loyceandrewsiana* after the Texan who gave Ted his first cutting of the plant. Although we keep our plant warm in winter it has not flowered for us – but maybe its summer location is a little too shady.

*Hoya meredithii* – named after York Meredith, an Australian, who discovered this plant in Sarawak on the island of Borneo. Growing at a low elevation it was found in calcareous soils in open forest. The fact that it was thriving in a limestone environment suggests that when we grow *h. meredithii* we should consider adding calcium carbonate to our soil mix. The leaves of this hoya are fascinatingly different with generally a pale green colouring, although new leaves are initially bronze in colour. The leaves themselves are very thin, large and twist and turn. It is probably the veining that makes these leaves most distinctive as the darker green veins stand out.

*Hoya bilobata* – one of the smaller leaved hoyas it comes from the Philippines and was first described by a German botanist in 1906.

*H. bilobata* has small oval to round leaves which are covered with soft hairs. The upper side of the leaf is a soft green with some leaves having a coppery colour on their edge and with paler green underside. For us the plant is quite a vigorous grower in a small pot.

*Hoya serpens* – a variety hoya grown by many of our members, this hoya originates from western India in the Himalayan region. Being a relatively cool area which is swept by monsoon winds it is understandable that it can be grown easily in our temperate climate. The leaves of *h. serpens* are round and very small and a deep green colour. On both sides of the

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*Hoya erythrina*

*Hoya shepherdii*

*pictures by Jane Griffith*

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leaves are very short hairs. This is a hoya that happily grows on a piece of ponga log or in a small pot and here in New Zealand flowers profusely.

*Hoya shepherdii* – another plant from the Himalayan region of India, it was first described in 1861. Its leaves have been likened to runner beans as they are long and narrow and have no veins showing. The leaves of this hoya are similar in appearance to those of *h. longifolia*. Both of these hoyas thrive in our New Zealand conditions.

*Hoya erythrina* – a hoya that comes from the Malaysian forests, growing in altitudes between 400-700 m., often along river banks. The leaves of this hoya are particularly unusual in their colouring and quite hard to describe. A deep green shade with bronze colouring on the upper side of the leaves, the undersides of the leaves are often a dull maroon to pink shade. The leaves may have splotches on their surface. The leaves are quite rigid in texture. *H. erythrina* is quite a slow growing plant initially and in our conditions took several years before it flowered. Dale Kloppenburg recommends that the plant is not over-potted or over-watered.

### Secondly variety of flower colour and shape:

*Hoya cinnamomifolia* – it is hard to go past this hoya for the beauty and originality of its colour. This is a hoya that grows so well in New Zealand although its native home is Java, a much warmer place than our temperate country.

*H. cinnamomifolia* flowers have lime green petals and a centre of deep cranberry. If you do not already know this hoya it is one that I would thoroughly recommend that you source from a member of the society.

*Hoya macgillivrayi* – you have already heard me speak about this beauty from northern Queensland as we flowered it for the first time in November 2007. The flowers are a dark red with 3-7 pendant flowers on long slender pedicels. The flowers are glossy and waxy looking and have a very distinctive centre.

Unfortunately this plant is not easy to grow and flower in New Zealand because of our cooler temperatures although those in warmer parts of the country might well like the challenge.

*Hoya bilobata* – mentioned previously because of its leaf shape and structure *h. bilobata* has a delightful very small flower in a pinky-salmon shade. Many clusters of these small flowers can be seen on this hanging plant.

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*Hoya cumingiana* – is another favourite of mine for its flowers. *H. cumingiana* comes from the Philippines but grows very happily in our conditions in the plastic house where it flowers well and grows profusely. The flowers are a yellowy-green colour with a distinctive corona of darkish red.

*Hoya acuta* – found in parts of India and in the offshore island of Penang, Malaysia this is a hoyo that is easy to grow and flowers profusely. We grow ours in the plastic house in a relatively shady position.

*Hoya multiflora* - when talking about unique flower shapes it is hard to go past *h. multiflora*. Often called “Shooting Star” this aptly describes the shape of the flower which has a yellow corolla and white pointed corona. Some members of our society find this a very easy hoyo to grow showing that although it is native to Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines over the many years since it was discovered in 1823 it has adapted to more temperate conditions.

### ***Vireya Rhododendrons.***

*At our April meeting our guest speaker was Murray Bridges. Merv Keighley reports..*

The much anticipated talk on these very popular epiphytic plants eventuated on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> April. Murray, the presenter, was known by a number of members present. 22 members in all enjoyed an informative talk.

Murray has been growing vireyas for 25 years. He also grew cymbidium orchids and wondered how he could utilise the spent orchid bark mix. Vireyas were his answer. He worked for Zeniths Nursery in the Hutt Valley at the time. His manager offered him plants at cost, which he obviously couldn't resist and accepted.

Vireyas come from New Guinea and Queensland and are often at an altitude of 2-3000 feet. They are generally epiphytic i.e. grow on trees etc. They have a very dense root ball, which indicates that they like to be root-bound. They will stand a frost of 3 – 4 degrees.

Murray grows all his vireyas in pots or plastic bags. He cuts holes in the bags to allow quick drainage and also cuts the plastic bag down to give a squat pot. Vireyas don't need a deep pot. Plastic pots with the holes around the sides at the base are preferred to those without these drainage holes. When a pot without these drainage holes is used, water is not able to drain away easily. Some large plants are grown in 45 litre carrybags. He has all his pots sitting on a bark mulch and grows cyclamen and hellebores underneath at ground level. Any sort of pot



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will do, but shallow pots are preferable as the roots are very shallow and dense.

Murray uses orchid mix plus commercial Watkins potting mix. Slow release fertiliser, Osmocote, is the preferred fertiliser. This should be applied early in the season – October/November. Blood and bone is good, but it is suggested that stones placed on top of the potting mix to discourage cats and birds is a good idea. Sheep pellets, too, are okay. Do not use a fertiliser that is high in nitrogen, NPK 6-5-5 or NPK 5-4-4 are satisfactory.

Vireyas flower over a long period – not all at once but one bunch will flower then another will follow at a later time and so on. Murray has flowers out all year around. They flower on the new growth. A number are perfumed and are very strong in the evenings.

Vireyas can be grown in the ground, They should be in raised beds in an open mix, They can be grown with other plants – they like their roots restricted. They do well in ponga pots. Smaller types can be grown in hanging baskets. Standards are also attractive and easily produced.

Although they are rhododendrons and as such are acid lovers, don't give them acid fertiliser.

They are prone to powdery mildew and thrips. Shield rose spray will kill thrips. Bravo will help with the powdery mildew. Some leaves have fine hairs on the lower side. These plants tend not to get thrips.

Plants can be pruned quite hard but don't prune too hard as to cut out the flowers. Take the dead flowers off carefully. This will prevent seed being set which uses up energy and this also allows new shoots to sprout from the flower base. If a plant is leggy, scrape a finger nail down the stem near the base of the plant. New shoots should sprout from here.

Should you wish to try growing from seed , place a paper bag over the seed pod or the whole flower head. The seed is very fine and will blow away with the wind. Prepare a pot of potting mix. Rub sphagnum moss through a sieve , spray this to wet it, then sow the seed on this. Cover with a sheet of glass or plastic. Remove this cover as soon as germination takes place. Prick out the seedlings when they reach handling size.

Propagation from cuttings is simple – Murray says! Break a cutting off, scratch a short line at the base of the cutting, cut back the leaves and place deep in the mother bag i.e. the same pot that the cutting was taken from. This makes identification easy.

Cuttings can also be placed in a pot of propagating sand. 20 -30 cuttings in a pot. Keep the cuttings moist. Bottom heat is not necessary. Murray doesn't use hormone powder or liquid.

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Rooting takes 2 – 6 months. Have patience! Don't be tempted to pull the cutting out to see if it has rooted. Wait for the new growth to show. Pot up the cuttings when ready. Start with small pots. Vireyas are epiphytes, In habitat they tend to grow in clefts of trees or other pockets of humus, thus their roots are confined.

Pot on as required, but plants can stay in their pots for 3 -5 years or longer before needing to be moved up. Vireyas don't need a lot of water. When the flowers or new growth slowly wilt, that's when they need water. The wilted growth will firm up in a short time. Murray just turns the hose on his plants. Over-watering kills more plants than under-watering. Vireyas like sun first thing in the morning and late at night.

There are various types of plants; compact small, medium and large.

Smaller leafed plants tend to have smaller flowers, larger leafed – larger flowers.

A number of flowers are scented.

The colour range is large; orange/yellow/white/multi/red.

Murray recommends the book:- *Vireyas for New Zealand Gardens* by John Kenyon and Jacqueline Walker.

The wait for this talk was well worth it. Thank you Murray.

### ***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!)

You do not see many articles on Aporocactus but the January 2008 issue of "**SFES Journal**" -published by the San Francisco Epiphyllum Society has reproduced a good one entitled "'Rattails" grow well alongside epies' from a 1995 issue of Epi-News. In the March edition of **Epi-Gram** (published by the South Bay Epiphyllum Society) Dick Kohlschreiber writes about a Seaweed Extract fertiliser and some of the benefits he has found of using it. He also gives a list of some plant symptoms



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that can be the result of micro nutrient deficiencies (all of which can be remedied by the use of the seaweed extract)

In the "Spring" issue of **The Bulletin** (Epiphyllum Society of America) Keith Ballard asks "if we can have blue roses - could we have blue epis? Whether or not you think that is a good idea anyway - the article is interesting!

In the May issue of **Epi-News** they announce that the 5<sup>th</sup> edition of the "ESA Directory of Species and Hybrids" is finally available. It not only includes all of the newest registrations from the last ten years, but a revised species section and paperwork to register new hybrids. If you are a member of the ESA the cost is US\$30 plus postage. (*read the article for full ordering details, or copy the order form that you will find in the May issue of the **Epigram** - Ed.*)

In the latest edition of **Fraterna** (produced by the International Hoya Association - January -March 2008), there is a reprinted piece on "Collecting Hoyas in the wild". In this article Mike van Buskirk talks about a trip he did in 1990 to Nepal. Reading about where the plants come from is always interesting - if only because it gives an idea of the conditions they have in habitat.

And finally -another very worthwhile journal (but not one we have in our library) is **Asklepios** (The journal of the International Asclepiad Society). In number 99, the October 2007 edition is an article entitled "Systematics of Hoya, challenges and rewards" in which the author discusses the distribution and the classification of the various species. The article is beautifully illustrated with photographs. In issue 100 (February 2008) is an article entitled "The distribution of the genus *Ceropegia* in Saudi Arabia". This too is beautifully illustrated with maps and photographs. If any members would like to subscribe to the International Asclepiad Society Jane Griffith will be able to provide the necessary information.

Happy reading.!

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

*Summer stopped continuing - and now winter is upon us. The sun rises later and sets earlier and the nights can be cold.. 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 very carefully (if at all) and enjoy any remaining flowers (We still have some on our*

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*hoyas*). If you live in the north or the south you may need to adjust things a little.

Epicacti - It is still work time - so you can prune and repot as necessary. Water with the greatest care - and do it early in the day.

Hoyas - it is probably best not to water at all unless the plants look really dry (or unless you keep your plants somewhere where it is warm at night). Some days are still very warm so keep checking for mealy bugs and other pests and deal with any you find..

Schlumbergeras - enjoy the flowers and water sparingly when the plants seem dry.

Rhipsalis - water very sparingly - otherwise leave well alone.

Aporophyllums - water infrequently. If you have not already done so and are feeling brave a plant can be lightly (and carefully!) pruned, you can even repot it if necessary.

Ceropegias - no more water now (unless a plant looks really dehydrated). If that is the case give only a small amount of water on a fine morning. The stems of some varieties will have died right back by now, these do not need water. Continue to check for pests and deal with any you find immediately.

**Orchids-** Phyllis Purdie writes:

Cymbidiums: Shelter should be provided from the worst of the wet weather and frosts especially when flower stalks are appearing. Move them into porches or shadehouses if possible or cover them at night with frost cloth. Reduce watering if not showing flowers stalks. Gradually bring them out of the shade especially when flower stalks appear and stake the stalks. Watch out for snails!

Most other orchids: give them less water.

Pests to be on the alert for are:- slugs and snails, mealy bugs, aphids, wetas and even mice.

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

*A Gallery for botanical art.*

In April Sir David Attenborough opened the Shirley Sherwood Gallery at the Royal Botanical Gardens in Kew. This state of the art gallery is the world's first purpose built space for botanical drawings. Kew Gardens has a collection of 200,000 botanical drawings and manuscripts, some dating back as far as the early 1300s; many of the drawings are extremely delicate watercolours on

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paper and vellum. Some of the works depict endangered plants, such as the American artist Carol Woodin's painting of the rare orchid *Phragmipedium kovachii*, which she travelled to Peru to capture.

*If you like reading articles on garden matters..*

..... but get fed up with recipes and adverts for cars and cosmetics you might be interested in "The Gardener's Journal". We have been loaned issue number 2 which was published this month. It is a journal of some 100 pages with a section containing fine colour photos. The authors in this edition include Jack Hobbs, Peter Arthur, Gordon Collier and Barbara Lea-Taylor. A subscription of \$49 will bring you four issues of this excellent publication. For further information contact the editor, Margaret Long, her e-mail address is [margaretlong@xtra.co.nz](mailto:margaretlong@xtra.co.nz)

*Keeping seeds free of fungi*

I have seen some discussion of this topic recently and thought I would share some of the points covered. Many years ago, when we were members of the Cactus and Succulent society, some of the older members swore by the use of Chinosol for keeping seeds fungus-free. Recent thinking suggests this is not a good idea. Chinosol does have mild antifungal properties and these are used medicinally, but it is potentially toxic to seedlings. One use of the chemical in the laboratory is specifically to stop cell-division. The general conclusion of the discussion was that better chemicals were available - these include Phyan and Benomyl/Benlate.

*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.**

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*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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