



EPIFLORA

Volume 18 No. 1

Mar 2009



WELLINGTON

EPIFLORA

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From the President

Dear fellow epiphyte growers,

I think this is my favourite time of year; everything is growing at a rapid rate and there are enough not too hot days to get outside in the garden and pull those weeds.

Of course I have a good excuse for leaving my garden with the 'au naturale' look.. I need the grass seeds and dandelions for my canaries.

On a more serious note .. one of the problems we as a club have in common with other similar clubs is how to attract younger members. I read in a journal of another group I belong to that they had heard of research that had been done on this very problem.

There were a couple of good points that I think we could take on board.. ..

- : we could contact local secondary schools where horticulture is probably being taught and tell the students about our group.. and
- : we could ask young people that we know (maybe our grandchildren) their opinions on how best we could attract their peers.

I look forward to seeing you all at our monthly meetings. If any of our 'out of town' members are in the region when we have a meeting that would be a bonus.

Kind regards,

Virginia Hayler.

February 2009

The Programme for 2009

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 14th	Epiphyllum Species <i>On Duty: Kaye & Merv Keighley, Ruth Finlay.</i>
April 11th	Bromeliads <i>On Duty: Brian Read, Dianne O'Neill, Lois Bond.</i>
May 9th	Workshop on Plant Care <i>On Duty: Phyllis and Bruce Purdie, Bev Parsons.</i>
June 13th	Topic: Schlumbergeras <i>On Duty: Robyn Gibson, Vicky Gibson, Penny Luckens.</i>
July 11th	Midwinter function
August 8th	Topic: Orchids
September 12th	Talk on Ferns
October 10th	Topic : Rhipsalis
November 14th	Visits to collections and Nga Manu
December 12th	AGM and Christmas meeting

December Meeting and AGM

At this meeting Jane Griffith presented the president's report for the year, Alice Hannam presented the accounts for the year to date and Virginia Hayler was elected president for the coming year.

President's Report

It gives me great pleasure to present this report for the eighteenth year of our Society.

Once again we have had a varied programme throughout the year covering many aspects of the epiphytes that we grow – hoyas, vireyas, epicacti, orchids and a plant clinic that provided discussion on the problems that we face growing many of these epiphytes. We very much appreciate the work Virginia Hayler does for us keeping our website up to date and to hear her talk about epiphytes on the internet hopefully encouraged more of us to search around in cyberspace for information. A visit to Manfeild Garden Festival and a talk on endangered ghekos and skinks widened our knowledge and experiences.

Yet again we have had a small increase in our membership as we have welcomed one or two new members to monthly meetings and more new members from around the country. There is no doubt that our website is one of the main sources of new members these days. Isobel Barbery in her role of Secretary has continued to work hard promoting 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 others 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 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

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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 Bev Parsons for minding the library and for the numerous ways Brian Read has helped. We also thank Vicky Gibson who joined the committee in the latter part of the year. Isobel, Roy and I are stepping down from the committee and so allowing new blood to guide our society over the forthcoming year.

I wish you all happy holidays and look forward to seeing many of you in the new year.

The New Committee

The committee for 2009 is:

Virginia Hayler - President
Alice Hannam - Treasurer
Bev Parsons - Secretary
Brian Read
Vicky Gibson
Carol Rogerson

At the meeting it was agreed that membership subscriptions should increase. The increase will be effective from 1st April 2009. The new rates are:

<i>Members -</i>	<i>\$15.00</i>
<i>(overseas members)</i>	<i>\$NZ24.00 or \$US12.00)</i>
<i>Additional Associate Members -</i>	<i>\$5.00</i>
<i>(At same address as a member)</i>	

Book Review.

Penny Luckens reviews "The Genus Hoya - Species and Cultivation" by Anders Wenstrom and Katarina Stenman which is a recent addition to our library.

The two authors, one of whom has been the curator of the Botanical Garden of Umea University, have since 1989 run a small nursery selling hoyas and other plants. They have a collection of over three hundred *hoya* taxa and in this book they have dealt with 118 species

and hybrids. All these have been grown and flowered by the authors, with descriptions and measurements taken of cultivated plants in sunny conditions. Each plant is illustrated with good, clear, close-up colour photographs of flowers and leaves.

A small section on *hoya* taxonomy mentions genera such as *dischidia*, *absolmsia* and *madangia*, but fails to mention that they are asclepiads and related to *asclepias*, *ceropegia* or *stapelia*. Certainly *asclepias* flowers look more like many *hoya* flowers than do those of *dischidia* even though *dischidias* are found in the same habitats as *hoya* – sometimes on the same tree.

There are short sections on *hoya* in nature, morphology of flowers and leaves and pollination; which latter section includes close-up photographs of housefly legs with attached pollinia. Sections on cultivation and propagation include information on soil mixes- porous but water-retaining – and watering or misting.

Most of the book consists of notes on the individual species (or hybrids) one to a page. Many of the species are recommended as good plants for beginners, with comments on flowering ability and requirements and propagating ease. Nowhere did I find mention of the temperatures or conditions under which the plants were grown; except for a need for bright sun or shade and humidity in some species. In only about half a dozen species was bottom heat mentioned as a requirement for cutting propagation.

Umea is near the Gulf of Bothnia on the east coast of Sweden at more than 63° North (The Shetland Islands well to the north of Scotland are at 60° North and London at about 51° 30" North; Wellington is 41° South). Presumably hoyas are grown or at least wintered in heated greenhouses in Sweden where there are now two *hoya* societies. The authors have written books in Swedish on the genus *hoya* and perhaps there is mention of the temperature requirements for growing the plants there.

The book seems to be aimed at popularising the growing of hoyas, and certainly there is a wide range of flower shapes and colours pictured to whet the appetite for a much wider range than just *h.carnosa*, *h. bella* (which is "not recommended for the beginner as it is difficult to grow") or *h. multiflora* ("a perfect pot plant as it is easy to grow and flowers freely throughout the year").

This book illustrates the wide range of flower shapes and colours found within the genus. A comparison with species in other books will show some discrepancies particularly in regard

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to leaf textures. Many of the species will not be known to New Zealand growers and the stated ease of flowering and growth may not reflect local New Zealand conditions.

Although there are problems with hoya taxonomy which are mentioned briefly there is no indication of any source of information to take an enquiring reader further, except for a reference to their website inside the cover. Perhaps some member with access to the internet could comment further.

Altogether I found the book beautiful, but somewhat frustrating for a local who will probably never be able to see or grow many of the plants without a heated greenhouse.

The Society has a copy of "The Genus Hoya – Species and Cultivation" in its library – please contact the librarian if you wish to borrow it. ... Ed

Thoughts on Hoyas.

At our February Meeting. Virginia Hayler talked about her hoyas and how she cares for them. Bev Parsons was there and reports.....

Virginia started her talk by showing us some of her plants. She explained that the most common is *hoya carnosa*. *H. carnosa* and *h. serpens* are the two most common ones that garden centres sell. This means that most people do not know that there are more species available.

It is also not commonly known that the sweet nectar that drips from the flowers can be eaten.

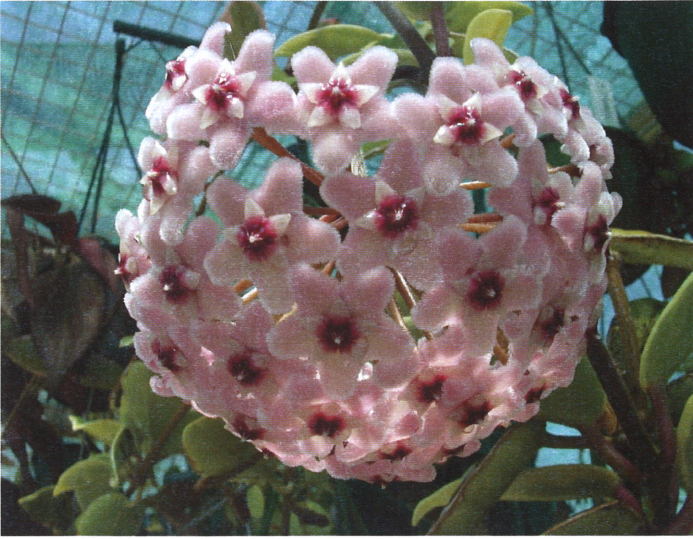
Pictures overleaf

Hoya carnosa has a number of variants - this is *h.carnosa varigata*

and this is *h shepherdii*

photographs by Jane Griffith

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You should be careful if you have a broken or cut piece of the plant that you don't get the white milky liquid in your eye, as it is poisonous. The sap is similar to that produced by ceropegias.

Most of the hoyas originate from south east Asia. They are adaptable to different climatic conditions. Hoyas range in several sizes of leaves and flowers with *h. serpens* being one of the smallest of the plants. *H. shepherdii* is very strongly scented and others vary in their amount of scent. *H. compacta* is a slow growing hoya.

When cultivating the plants you should not cut off the umbel as that is where it will flower the next year. Virginia has her plants in regular potting soil with some orchid mix at the bottom of the pot. They like to be crowded in the pot and do not like bright sunlight. The only pests she has to contend with are aphids, mealy bug and scale. To treat aphids "bug oil" or washing up liquid are good. For mealy bug methylated spirits put on a paper towel under the pot lets the fumes rise and does very well.

Virginia uses the slow release fertiliser from the club on her hoyas. Grow Tabs available via the internet are also good as a fertiliser for hoyas.

To propagate plants and keep the different hoyas going is now up to the members of the club, as Joy West is no longer importing and selling plants. If you collect the seeds from your plants they should come up within a month.

Without hybridisers work, we wouldn't have new plants to enjoy.

January visits to gardens and collections.

As we have done for a number of years our January meeting took the form of visits to a number of Kapiti gardens finishing with a barbeque.

Seeing what others grow and how they grow it is one of the most enjoyable and instructive things we can do. This year the weather was not as kind as is usual and fewer members came than often do but those of us that visited the four gardens the committee had arranged for us to see had a most enjoyable time.

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We started at Alice and Rex Hannam's garden and admired the vegetables and hoyas, the dahlias and the fruit trees and also had a cup of tea. Then armed with maps and addresses we travelled on in convoy.

We went to Margaret Champion's garden which was small but abundantly filled. Margaret did have an epi or two and a few schlumbergeras - but she had a magnificent display of fuchsias in hanging baskets. We noticed that all the hanging baskets were enveloped in pantyhose - this, we were told, stops birds pulling out the moss or the fibre for their nests. The back garden was a riot of colour; the beds chock-full of interesting plants and vegetables and the paths well covered with pots with yet more plants..

We then went on to see Louise Colgate's garden. Some of us admired the hydroponic setup which provides them with lettuces and other salad materials while others of us were impressed at the complete absence of whitefly on the tomato plants growing in a greenhouse (the answer was that there were feverfew plants also growing in there!). Louise also had a fine collection of succulents and cacti some growing in the open while others were under cover..

Finally we went to Jane and Roy Griffith's garden, where we saw hoyas in flower, a few epi flowers (the season being well over) and cooked our barbeque.

As always on these occasions we are very grateful to our members and the friends they cajole for opening their gardens and collections to us.

Rhipsalis.

This is another of the plant varieties our society studies. We are hoping to have a talk on this fascinating range of plants later in the year - but meanwhile, to remind us,

Rhipsalis is a genus of epiphytic, mostly spineless , cacti. They are typically known as mistletoe cacti. The scientific name derives from the ancient Greek term for wickerwork and refers to the plant's growth patterns.

Often several of the species are segregated and referred to as *hatoria*; this may well be warranted.

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The genus is found widely in Central America, parts of the Caribbean and a great part of northern and central South America. One particular species, *R. baccifera*, is also found throughout the New World but also in Africa, Sri Lanka, India and Nepal. Several theories have been advanced to explain the dispersion of *R. baccifera*. One of them suggests that migratory birds brought the species to the New World. The late Phil Maxwell (a member of the Wellington branch of the Cactus and Succulent Society of NZ) in a lengthy paper advanced this theory in reverse. Yet another theory suggests it was carried to the Old World as a substitute for mistletoe during Christmas.

These cacti are popular ornamental plants. With some exceptions, they are not grown for their flowers (which are small in most species), but for their unusual growth and in some cases for their showy, colourful fruit.

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 few 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!)

H. Serpens

R. mesembryanthemoides

photographs by Jane Griffith

In the latest issue (December 2008, no 103) of "**Asklepios**" - published by the International Asclepiad Society there is an article describing how *ceuropegia foliosa* has been rediscovered in the wild. The plant was first discovered and described in 1988. The plant is apparently quite rare in habitat - and none are known to be growing in cultivation. This article re-emphasises the point that there is still much to be learned and we should be grateful to those who are prepared to travel to out-of-the-way places and search.

In the February issue of the **Epi-Gram** (published by the South Bay Epiphyllum Society) Dick Kohlschreiber turns to a topic we have written about before: the travels of those intrepid souls who go looking for undiscovered plants. In this issue he is quoting from the CSSA journal who, last year, started publishing parts of Myron Kymnach's memoirs. In this extract he talks about his visit to Honduras - where he was interested in locating an epi plant that had first been collected in 1936. While Myron did not have to travel with an armed escort as others have done - he was alone and, as he now says, "ill-equipped". I will let you read the rest of the piece for yourselves. We owe all the enthusiastic travellers a great debt of gratitude for risking much to bring us new plants to enjoy.



And speaking of the **Epi-Gram** (but this time the February edition of the newsletter from the Epiphytic Cacti and Hoya Society of Australia) there is an article worth reading by Rex Hardy on Summer Care for Epiphyllums and Other Epiphytic Cacti where he talks particularly about appropriate shade and ensuring there are adequate humidity levels.

In volume 64, number 2 of **The Bulletin** (published by the Epiphyllum Society of America) there is an article that, at first sight - given that the Society is based in Los Angeles, is surprising "Winterizing your collection". In it they talk about how to manage when there are freezing conditions (*and of course while on the California Coast things may be temperate - inland things can be very different - Ed*). They have some interesting thoughts that some of us could find helpful - including hanging a string of Christmas lights - to provide a little heat and some air-movement!.

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Finally in the October-December issue of **Fraterna** (published by the International Hoya Association) there are articles on a number of newly discovered hoyas species - complete with some wonderful photographs and photomicrographs.

Happy reading.!

Now is the time

We are reluctant to admit it - but summer is leaving us and autumn is coming.. We should expect some nights will be cold now so it is a good thing to play it very safe - water in the first part of the morning before the sun gets too hot and early enough that the plants will absorb the water even if it does not appear!.As always pay great attention to what the weather is doing at your place. Here are some suggestions for Wellington growers - 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 some species epis may still have buds and flowers) so you should prune and repot as necessary. Cut away old growth as well as any damaged or diseased stems and aim to encourage new growth from the base of the plant. Take cuttings if you wish - others might like to extend their collections 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. Fertilise. Keep a wary eye out for mealy bugs and other pests - they love warm humid conditions. It is probably too late now to take cuttings unless you can provide artificial heat.

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

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

Aporophyllums - Water less - or at least more carefully. Now that flowering has finished for the year you can prune and tidy up the plants. Repot if they need it and you are brave.

Ceropegias - Enjoy the flowers. Water when dry. You should continue the regular task of unwinding runaway growth that is invading other plants. Keep in a warm sunny place for maximum flowering. Any plant that still looks dead probably is - so deal with it appropriately. Check for pests and deal with any you find immediately.

Orchids- Phyllis Purdie tells us to:

“Not to do any repotting of Cymbidiums now until autumn or you might damage the flower shoots which should be forming. Grow them outdoors or in open shade-houses but not in glasshouses; they can also be grown under the outer branches of trees. The leaves should be yellow/green in colour. Let them dry out and then give them a thorough soaking. You can mist spray on hot days. Give them a low nitrogen/high potash fertiliser to promote flower growth. Stake new flower shoots as they appear. Most other orchids should be watered when they are drying out - in hot weather they can take a lot of water.”

Bromeliads - Andrew Flower advises - "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 autumn and early spring when our temperatures are getting down to the the range 10-14°C and daytime temperatures where they are growing are in the mid twenties. If you want to fertilise - wait until March at the earliest. At this time of year try to give the plants as much air circulation as possible"

Now is also the time to pay this year's subscription

The society's year runs from January to December so subscriptions for 2009 are now due. If you have not yet paid you will find a reminder renewal form in this issue of *Epiflora* . Please bring it with the cash to our March meeting - or send it to our treasurer.

Odd cuttings and seeds

Obtaining New Plants

Virginia, in her February talk, noted that nobody is now importing and selling new varieties of hoyas in New Zealand. This is not entirely surprising. The controls and quarantine conditions imposed on newly imported plant material are really quite onerous - and also expensive for the importer. At first sight the importation of seed could provide a solution.

Hoyas may be propagated relatively easily from seed. If you fancy trying - remember that the seed pods can take months to ripen. Once they have ripened, the seed pods split and the seeds are dispersed by the air. To prevent this if you wish to collect seeds, cover the seed pod with gauze or old nylon stocking material. Once the pod splits down its length when gently twisted, the seed floss can be removed from the seeds. This seems to prevent "damping off" of the seeds and seedlings. Use only freshly harvested seeds, these seem to germinate better. Seeds may be started in pots or flats. The seedlings seem to grow faster in large batches. Use a good quality soilless potting mix enriched with 30% perlite or pumice and water only from below. Cover the newly planted seeds with a thin layer of dry potting mix. Once the seedlings start to develop true leaves, repot and plant out separately. Of course you need to be sure what the parent plants are!!

There are problems with this idea. Of course seeds coming into the country are subject to MAF inspection - and if they are seeds of a species new to New Zealand clearance must be (expensively) sought. Also, as noted above, freshly harvested seeds germinate better. This is hard to achieve when seeds are harvested somewhere overseas and then sent in by post. A search of the Internet turned up very few sites offering to supply hoyas seeds..

Societies like ours can play a role. We need to ensure good supplies of plants are available - so the less common varieties remain in circulation to be purchased and enjoyed by enthusiasts .

Breeding geckos and skinks

We had a delightful talk last year from Dennis Keall who is a member of the DOC captive breeding programme for endangered geckos and skinks. In the latest issue of the Forest and Bird magazine (no 331) there is an article about

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another member of the programme. Jolene Anthony is 13 and has been involved since she was 7. She is currently breeding two species of gecko - including Duvaucel's gecko and she hopes to start breeding Otago skinks soon.

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,
WAIKANAE.

Or: griffith@globe.co.nz

Closing dates for contributions:

Winter 2009 Edition - 9th May 2009

Spring 2009 Edition - 8th August 2009

Subscriptions:

Subscriptions are due on 1st of January and are:

<i>Members -</i>	<i>\$15.00</i>
<i>(overseas members)</i>	<i>\$NZ24.00 or \$US12.00</i>
<i>Additional Associate Members -</i>	<i>\$5.00</i>
<i>(At same address as a member)</i>	

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