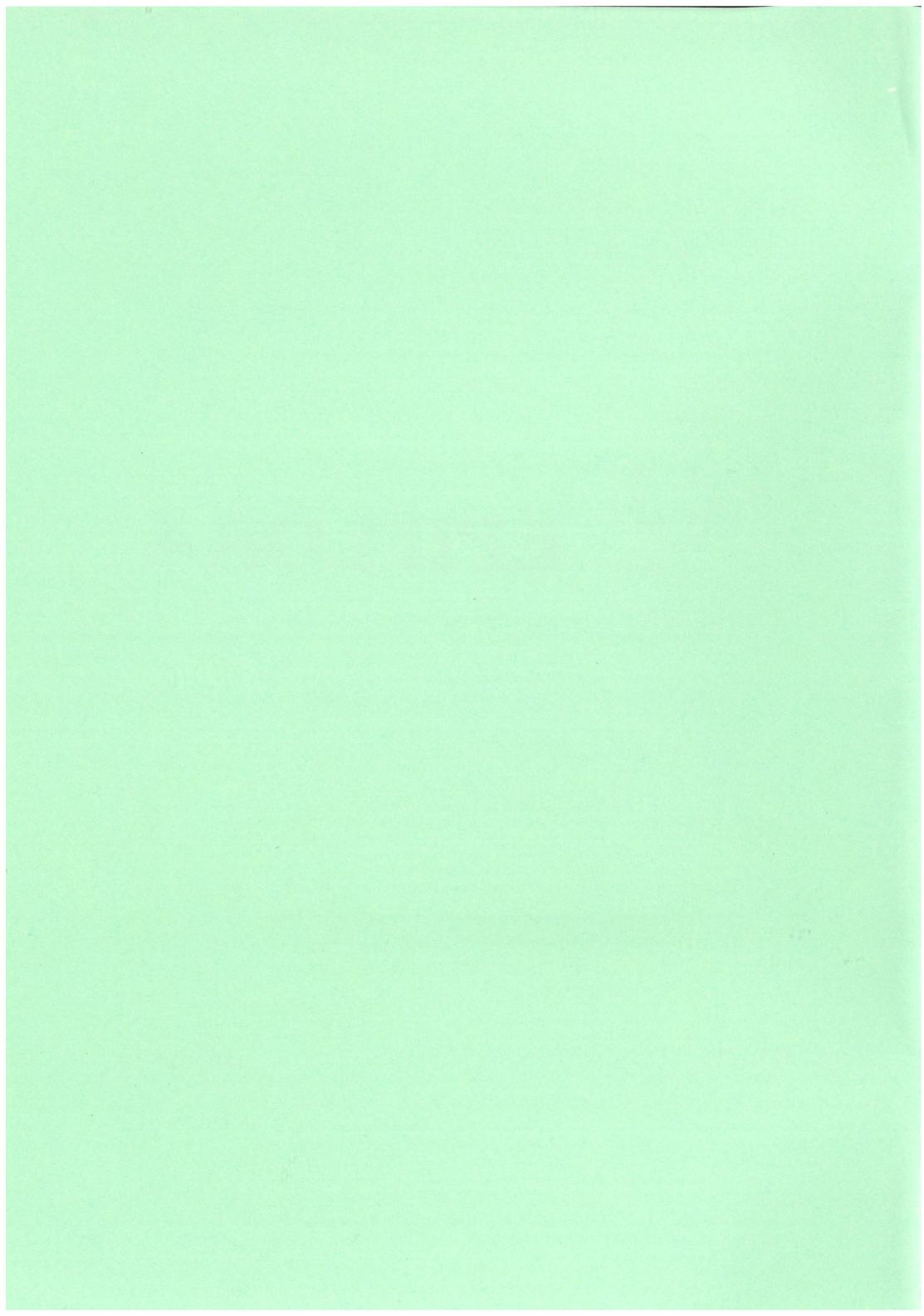


EPIFLORA

Volume 18 No. 2

Jun 2009





WELLINGTON

EPIFLORA

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From the President

Dear fellow epiphyte growers,

Having just come through a really mild autumn the first frost of the season was a real shock.

Today I had a visit from one of our northern members. It is really great to meet members who cannot usually make meetings. Pat and Barry Thrupp were visiting Feilding for the Manfeild Garden Show. They travelled from Auckland in their camperbus.

Pat was very interested to see how I grow my hoyas and told me that she had been told by Joy West that we should not twist our hoyas round frames. Evidently Joy believes that it stops the energy flow in the plant and reduces the amount of flowers that it produces. So Pat untwisted one of her plants and said that she found lots of long strands empty of leaves. It will be interesting to try just hanging the plants and compare the amount of flowers with plants that are twisted. I recall when I visited Joy (years ago) that she had lots of plants hanging from wires that stretched across the plastic house and the plants just hung towards the ground.

Remember that we are having our photograph competition in August and you can enter ..

One photograph of any one plant or flower .. and/or
One photograph of a garden or group of plants
(So that is one or two photographs each)

With winter fast approaching we should be doing any necessary garden maintenance and moving any plants under shelter that might need it.

We are having such strange weather these days that we have to watch that plants don't dry out too much even during winter. If you need to water it is best to do it early in the day.

Try and keep warm and enjoy your garden.

Kind regards,

Virginia Hayler.

May 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.

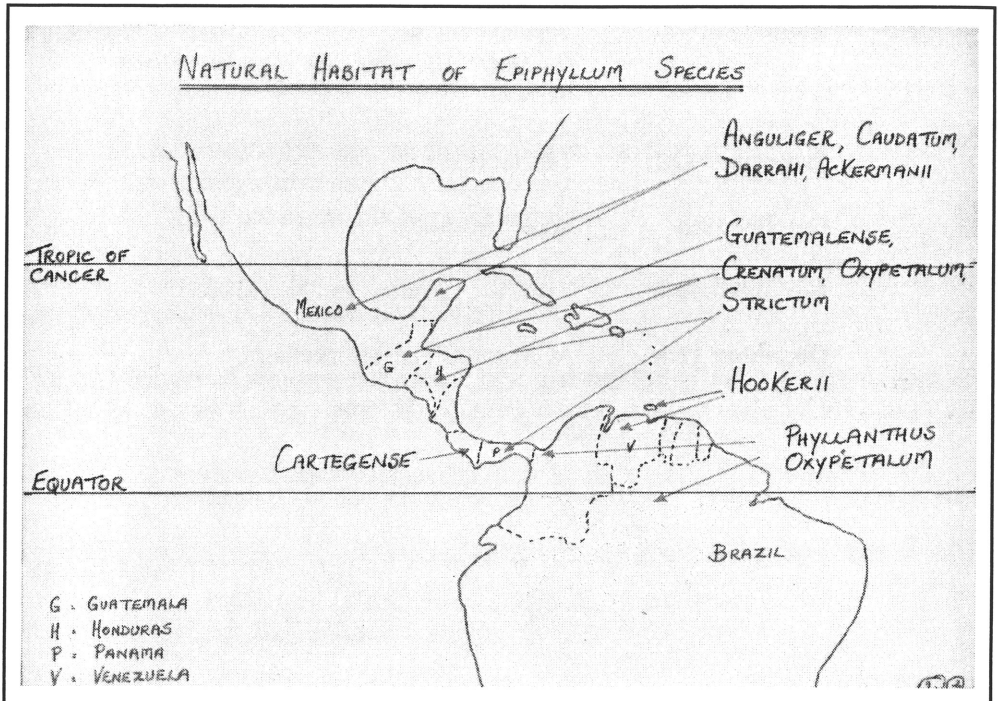
June 13th	Topic: Schlumbergeras <i>On Duty: Robyn Gibson, Vicky Gibson, Penny Luckens.</i>
July 11th	Midwinter function <i>On Duty: Brian Read, Nola Roser, Marion Austin.</i>
August 8th	Topic: Orchids <i>On Duty: Alice and Rex Hannam, Alison Beeston.</i>
September 12th	Talk on Ferns
October 10th	Topic : Rhipsalis
November 14th	Visits to collections and Nga Manu
December 12th	AGM and Christmas meeting

Species Epiphyllums

At our March meeting **Roy Griffith** talked about where epiphyllums come from and some of the story of their discovery and introduction to greenhouses and gardens

We always say “the secret of growing plants successfully is to understand where the plants come from originally - and the growing conditions that they have there” . Species epiphyllums are, in part, the parent plants of the epiphyllum plants we grow and enjoy today. Now the epiphyllums we grow today are far removed from their epiphyllum ancestors - as many other species have contributed to their parentage - but nevertheless understanding their original ancestors is still valuable.

We have looked at this topic before. In 2007 Alison Beeston spoke about “The discovery of Epiphyllum Species” (this was published in Epiflora volume 16 number 2) and in the previous year there was an article in Epiflora (15/4) on the discovery of the species *E. baueri dorsch*.



So to begin - where are species epiphyllums found in the wild? They come from the forests of Latin America; this includes Mexico, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Panama, Peru, Ecuador, Brazil and Bolivia. The climate in these forests is humid and warm - with very little seasonal variation. In Ecuador, for example, the average temperature is about 15°C but the range is only from 13 to 22°C. The rainfall in most months exceeds 100mm but the humidity is always greater than 70%. The plants grow in the forest canopy - so have almost continual air movement around them.

The plants started to become known to Europeans as a result of traders bringing specimens back with other merchandise. Later explorers and botanists went looking for new species of all kinds - and as well as making drawings, brought samples back with them. And over the years more and more epiphyllum species were discovered.. For those that like dates - here are some.

1753	<i>E. phyllanthus</i>
1828	<i>E. oxypetalum</i>
1844	<i>E. crenatum</i> (in Guatemala and Mexico)
1851	<i>E. anguliger</i> (in Mexico)
1902	<i>E. thomasianum</i>
1902	<i>E. cartagense</i> (in Costa Rica)
1990	<i>E. laui</i>

When the plants were brought back to Britain and Europe they were grown in major botanic gardens like Kew and by wealthy people - in their “stove-houses” that is large glasshouses warmed by hot water pipes - the water being heated by a furnace. Clearly this was a hobby only for the very wealthy! The conditions tended to be hot, dry and, in summer, sunny. As one might expect many of the few plants that managed to survive the journey did not last long in their new surroundings. There is a beautiful example of a Victorian “stove house” in the Botanic Gardens in Melbourne. If you have seen it you will remember the iron grills in the floor with huge hot-water pipes beneath them which provide the heat.



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As we have said, in their natural habitat the plants are all epiphytic; that is they grow on the forest trees on the branches and in the forks of branches. They nearly all have white or cream flowers which open at night and usually collapse by morning. The flowers are highly perfumed. Their pollinators are moths and bats. They are true epiphytes and so get no nutrients from the host tree - rather they obtain them from the rain water that trickles down the tree trunk past them. Most of the plants have long stems (sometimes several metres long) - with clusters of leaves (actually they are not technically leaves - just a different form of stem) intermittently along them. Just the sort of growth habit you would expect from a plant that is trying to grow and spread through a tree canopy. Their seeds are spread by birds, animals and insects that devour the fruits the plants produce.

What does this lead us to say about growing these plants in New Zealand? They can be grown quite successfully - though not all of the twenty odd species are available here. One suspects that, given the costs of importing new plants to New Zealand, no more will now be brought here. They prefer warmer temperatures than the hybrid epis we grow (and are unlikely to flower if they do not get them). Here we have a wider temperature range and lower average temperatures and humidity than in their forest homes and we need to take account of this. They have the same needs as the hybrids for air movement, a free-draining potting mix and light shade. They need fertiliser - but this is best provided sparingly and often. They flower later in the summer than the hybrids do - sometimes around or after Christmas and always at night (though some flowers will survive till morning) - so it is easy to miss them. They can be propagated successfully from seeds or by taking cuttings. They are rewarding and interesting plants to grow

The Two Pictures opposite show:

The dense rainforest in Ecuador

Mist rising over the Amazon rain forest (the picture was taken in Colombia)

Workshop on Plant Care

Our April meeting took the form of a workshop on the subject of plant care at this time of year. As is usual at our meetings free and frank discussion of the various "problems" took place. You just had to be there.... .

Ellerslie Flower Show.

*At our May meeting **Vicky Gibson** and **Robyn Gibson** told us about their visit to the Ellerslie Flower Show which was held this year in Christchurch..*

The 2009 Ellerslie Flower Show has migrated, not just from Ellerslie, Auckland, but to the South Island. It was held in North Hagley Park, Christchurch from 11th - 15th March.

Vicky and I had attended several previous shows at Manurewa, Auckland and were keen to see how Christchurch would fare. We flew down the morning the show opened to the public but the weather was not good enough to tempt us. However Thursday was bright and breezy so we chose it as our Show Day.

It took some time to park the car as there were long queues for the carparking area, but as soon as we'd entered the show our eyes were drawn to the exhibition gardens and the large marquees, each with its own queue - and this was less than 30 minutes after opening. We decided to leave the marquees till late afternoon in the hope that the wait to enter would be lessened, and headed for the retail stands. Not much to tempt us here. Very few plant stands, compared to previous years, and we managed to resist. I renewed my NZ Gardener subscription and was given a free copy of the magazine and a potted flower carpet rose in the latest colour, amber, all in a big green bag.

We admired the display gardens, especially the wedding garden, Hi Tea in the garden, and Terra Viva's kitchen garden but the standout garden for us was "I See Red" with flowers and foliage in all shades of bright and dark red. Many of these gardens had staff on hand to answer queries from the public which was very helpful.

At lunchtime we joined the inevitable queue for food and drink. This is one area which needs improvement for next year. There were not enough outlets for food or cold drinks and when we had purchased our lunch we discovered the other major problem - little or no seating. One café serving hot meals had some tables and chairs but only for those buying a full hot meal. We found a spot to sit under pine trees but saw people sitting on furniture which was being exhibited, much to the distress of the stand owners. While eating, we watched visitors admiring some of the sculptures on display. A hanging fish with hundreds of bottlecaps for scales was admired by all.

Eventually we joined the queues for the various marquees but the floral art tent and Jenny Gillies' Wearable Weeds show had waiting times of more than an hour each so we missed those. The most popular marquee was the Countdown/Woolworths tent as it contained food retailing, with stallholders offering tasty morsels to tempt us to purchase. Everyone left the tent with a smile as the last retailer specialised in chocolate. Yum! The Starlight marquee was very popular, in particular, the Singapore Garden featuring a city submerged under water.

Late afternoon there was an announcement advising the show hours would be extended by an hour but our feet were tired and we'd seen most of the show so left at about 5 pm.

Was it a success? We'd have to give it a qualified "yes". Our perceived problems were echoed by many others, both at the show and in letters to 'The Press'. I'm sure next year's show will try to address these problems. We intend to visit again, maybe in two years' time.

Robyn also notes that she did not see any of the plants we collect as a society - apart from a few orchids. ... Ed

Do you read Epiflora? - a Quiz.

Virginia Hayler obviously thinks some people don't because at our May meeting she gave us all a quiz. All the questions relate to things mentioned in the last issue of Epiflora. How many answers can you get right? Answers on page 14.

1. How many years has our Society been in operation?
2. What was the subject of the newest book to our library?
3. What hoyas photos were shown in the Mar 2009 Epiflora (there were three)?

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4. How often each year is Epiflora produced?
5. Name six types of plants that our Society covers
6. What part of the world do most hoyas originate from?
7. How many gardens did we visit in January?
8. Who is the current club President .. Secretary .. Treasurer .. Editor .. Committee?
9. What is the real name of the mistletoe cacti?
10. What are some of the countries where these plants come from?

Tillandsias.

Here is another brief note on another of the plant varieties our society studies.

The plant genus *Tillandsia*, a member of the Bromeliad family (*Bromeliaceae*), is found in the deserts, forests and mountains of Central and South America, and Mexico and the southern United States in North America. The thinner leafed varieties grow in rainy areas and the thick leafed varieties in areas more subject to drought. Moisture and nutrients are gathered from the air (dust, decaying leaves and insect matter) through structures on the leaves called trichomes. *Tillandsia* species are epiphytes, i.e. in nature they normally grow without soil, attached to other plants. Epiphytes are not parasitic, and depend on the host only for support. Common names for *Tillandsia* include air plant, Ball moss (*T. recurvata*) and Spanish moss, the latter referring to *T. usneoides* in particular.

The genus *Tillandsia* was named by Carolus Linnaeus after the Finnish physician and botanist Dr. Elias Tillandz (originally Tillander) (1640-1693).

Tillandsia are epiphytes and need no soil because water and nutrients are absorbed through the leaves. The roots are used as anchors only. Reproduction is by seeds or by offsets called "pups". A single plant could have up to a dozen pups. Although not normally cultivated for their flowers, some *Tillandsia* will bloom on a regular basis. In addition, it is quite common

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for some species to take on a different leaf colour (usually changing from green to red) when about to flower. This is an indication that the plant is monocarpic (flowers once before dying) but offsets around the flowering plant will continue to thrive.

Temperature is not critical, the range being from 32°C down to 10°C. They are sensitive to frost, except for the hardiest species, *T. usneoides*, which can tolerate night-time frosts down to about -10°C.

Tillandsia is a primary ingredient in Allerplex, a Standard Process herbal supplement to treat pollen allergies.

One of our members, Andrew Flower, is a noted expert and grower of these plants. He also sells them. Visit his website www.Anwyl.com to see superb pictures, notes on cultivation and the catalogue of what he has available.

Sources include:

Wikipedia - online free encyclopaedia

Further reading

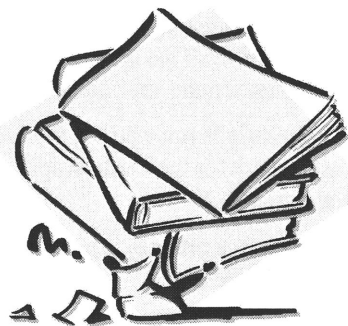
Our Society receives journals from a number of other societies with similar interests. These journals are all available from our library. In the last few months a number of interesting items have been published. Here are some snippets that you might find interesting. (Of course you really should go and read the articles for yourself!)

In the March issue of the New Zealand Internet Orchid Review there is an excellent article on fertilisers. The author mentions several Australian products by name (some of which may not be available in NZ) but he also provides a complete list of the various nutrients necessary for plant growth and gives the symptoms of deficiency for each.

In the March 2009 issue of "SFES Journal" - published by the San Francisco Epiphyllum Society there is an article by Grant Bayley on Epiphyllums and Phyllocacti. I understand that he has stirred up a certain amount of debate with the ideas he has advanced in this article - and it will be interesting to see whether any of this will actually appear in the SFES journal (or any other). Do read Grant's article and see what you think. (*Grant sent a copy of his article for publishing in Epiflora - but SFES journal printed it first - we get the journal - so you can read it there .. Ed*)

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In the March issue of the Epi-Gram (published by the South Bay Epiphyllum Society) Dick Kohlschreiber writes about what you should be doing with your epis in spring. He also mentions a few problems that (fortunately) we don't have here - like tree rats and squirrels and asks for suggestions on ways to combat them! (and if you think that's bad - at the epi houses in San Diego they had problems with deer going to eat the plants until they installed sliding gates). In the May issue of Epi-gram Dick quotes a short piece on "Plants that live a long time". The plant in question was a "Christmas Cactus" that is now over 52 years old having been handed down through the family. It is now 3 ½ feet tall and 3 ½ feet wide. The current custodian says she "throws water on it when I remember and add liquid fertiliser once a year". Now why do our plants all die early deaths?



In volume 64, number 3 of The Bulletin (published by the Epiphyllum Society of America) there is also an article on what you should be doing with your epis in spring. They also have a long article on fertilisers for epis. Read the articles now and then you will be well prepared when our spring arrives!

Finally in the January-March issue of Fraterna - volume 22 number 1 (published by the International Hoya Association) there is a nicely illustrated article by Ann Wayman on variegated hoyas with hints on how they should be looked after. As usual they also have a "photo gallery" with a page of six photographs that should make any of us drool with envy!

Happy reading.!

Now is the time

As Virginia noted earlier - cold nights have arrived for some of us. I looked back at the temperatures we were experiencing this time last year - and they looked a lot the same. We should expect more nights will be cold now so it is a good thing to play it very safe - if you must water do so 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.

Epiflora

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 are providing some heat at night). Some days are still quite warm so mealy bugs will thrive - keep checking for them (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 pruned. You can even repot it if it needs it.

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 now, these do not need water. Continue to check for pests and deal with any you find immediately.

Orchids- Phyllis Purdie tells us to:

“Provide protection for Cymbidiums from the worst of the wet weather and frosts - especially when flower stalks are appearing. You could move them into a porch or a shadehouse if possible, alternatively you could cover them at night with frostcloth. Reduce watering if there are no flower stalks. Gradually bring them out of the shade as flower stalks appear and stake the stalks, Watch out for snails!.

Most other orchids just need less water.

Pests to watch out for are slugs and snails, mealy bugs, aphids, wetas and even mice.”

Vireyas - Vireya rhododendrons originate from Papua New Guinea and Malaysia and although they will grow well for us here they prefer warmer temperatures and mild winters. They need protection from frost and direct sun - but most of all they require excellent drainage. At this time of year move them under cover and while you should not let them dry out - neither should they stay very wet..

Answers to the quiz questions.

How many did you get right? Don't cheat - some of those at the May meeting did not do so well either! Maybe Virginia was right in her suspicions!

1. 18 years
2. "The Genus Hoya - Species & Cultivation"
3. *h. carnosae variegata*, *h. shepherdii*, *h. serpens*
4. it is produced quarterly (four times per year)
5. Hoyas, Epiphyllums, Schlumbergeras, Rhipsalis, Apophyllums, Ceropegias, Orchids, Bromeliads, Tillandsias, Vireyas, Epiphyllums, Zygocacti
6. South East Asia
7. four - Alice and Rex Hannam's, Margaret Champion's, Louise Colgate's, Jane and Roy Griffith's
8. President - Virginia Hayler, Secretary - Bev Parsons, Treasurer - Alice Hannam, Editor - Roy Griffith
Committee - Brian Read, Vicky Gibson, Carol Rogerson
9. Rhipsalis
10. Central America, parts of the Caribbean, northern and central South America, Africa, Sri Lanka, India and Nepal

The pictures opposite are:

The restored Victorian stove house that the BBC helped to fund at Chilton Foliat (Wiltshire) for the series the *Victorian Kitchen Garden*.

H. nummularioides (photo taken by **Jane Griffith**)



Odd cuttings and seeds

Online magazine devoted to Hoyas

There are very few good journals devoted to the plants we grow but we have become aware of one devoted to hoyas. Stemma is a quarterly journal published on the internet that is devoted to hoyas and dischidias. It is now in its third year of publication. The journal (like the New Zealand Internet Orchid Review that we have mentioned before) is down-loadable in Acrobat form - for free. The journal is somewhat technical but is very interesting and well illustrated with colour photographs and other illustrations. One or two issues have been placed in our library . The journal website is:

www.stemmajournal.com

Also on their website they are developing a photo gallery and hope in time to have photographs of the flowers and leaves of every hoya in cultivation.

Keeping warm in winter

We are not talking about you here – but your plants. Remember most of the plants we grow come originally from tropical or temperate regions so a night-time temperature of 2°C or lower is not something they will appreciate. You have a couple of options. You can bring the tender plants into your house – or you can heat theirs.

The latest edition of the NZ Gardener (June 2009) has some thoughts on doing this economically (we assume you care about the size of your power bill). The simplest solutions may well be the best and cheapest.

- If your greenhouse/growing house has just a single layer of glass or plastic – then fix a sheet of plastic bubble-wrap on the inside to add extra insulation.
- You can also go in for some solar heating. Get a black plastic drum or bin (or two or three) and place them under the bench on the side where they will get most sun, then fill them with water and put the lid on. The sun will heat the water during the day – and the retained heat will help keep your growing house warm at night.
- Finally buy a thermometer. Maximum/minimum thermometers are not expensive (the mercury ones are better than those filled with alcohol) and if you look at the readings you will see what your plants have to endure. It may be a revelation but your plants will thank you for it.

But don't believe everything you read on the internet.

Most people eventually become aware that the material on the internet can be characterised as either excellent knowledge or plain rubbish and that they are in approximately equal proportions. A recent "revelation" on one of the internet discussion groups may prove the point. A correspondent said:

This may sound really strange...

Nutrasweet otherwise known as aspartame or Equal was originally developed by Monsanto (makers of many insecticides) as an ant neurotoxin poison. It became a sweetener when one of the scientists got a tiny bit in his mouth and discovered it was sweet. Just one packet may be enough to get rid of a small ant colony. They are more likely to pick it up and take it back to the nest if it is a little bit damp. It's probably safe to sprinkle in the pot, but if possible I would just sprinkle it around the pot on the surface it's sitting on, if it's not a hanging plant.

And of course there were tales of how successful it had been. A check on www.snopes.com one well known site for documenting and evaluating urban legends shows this to be completely false - along with a number of other wild claims. Moral - if it sounds odd or novel - check it!

Epiphyllum hybrids now listed in the NZ Plants Biosecurity Index

Grant Bayley recently wrote to tell us that he has received a letter from Biosecurity New Zealand confirming that the species "Epiphyllum hybrids" has been added to the index at the behest of ERMA. This means they have also determined standards for the importation of seed and the importation of nursery stock. (If you look at the entries you now find when you search the index for "epiphyllum" they have six very odd ones - which are certainly not complete). Anyone feel like helping them improve their list? Grant has found you need pretty basic evidence that a plant is in NZ to get it added to the list.

The index can be searched using this web address:
<http://www1.maf.govt.nz/cgi-bin/bioindex/bioindex.pl>

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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Summer 2009 Edition - 14th November 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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