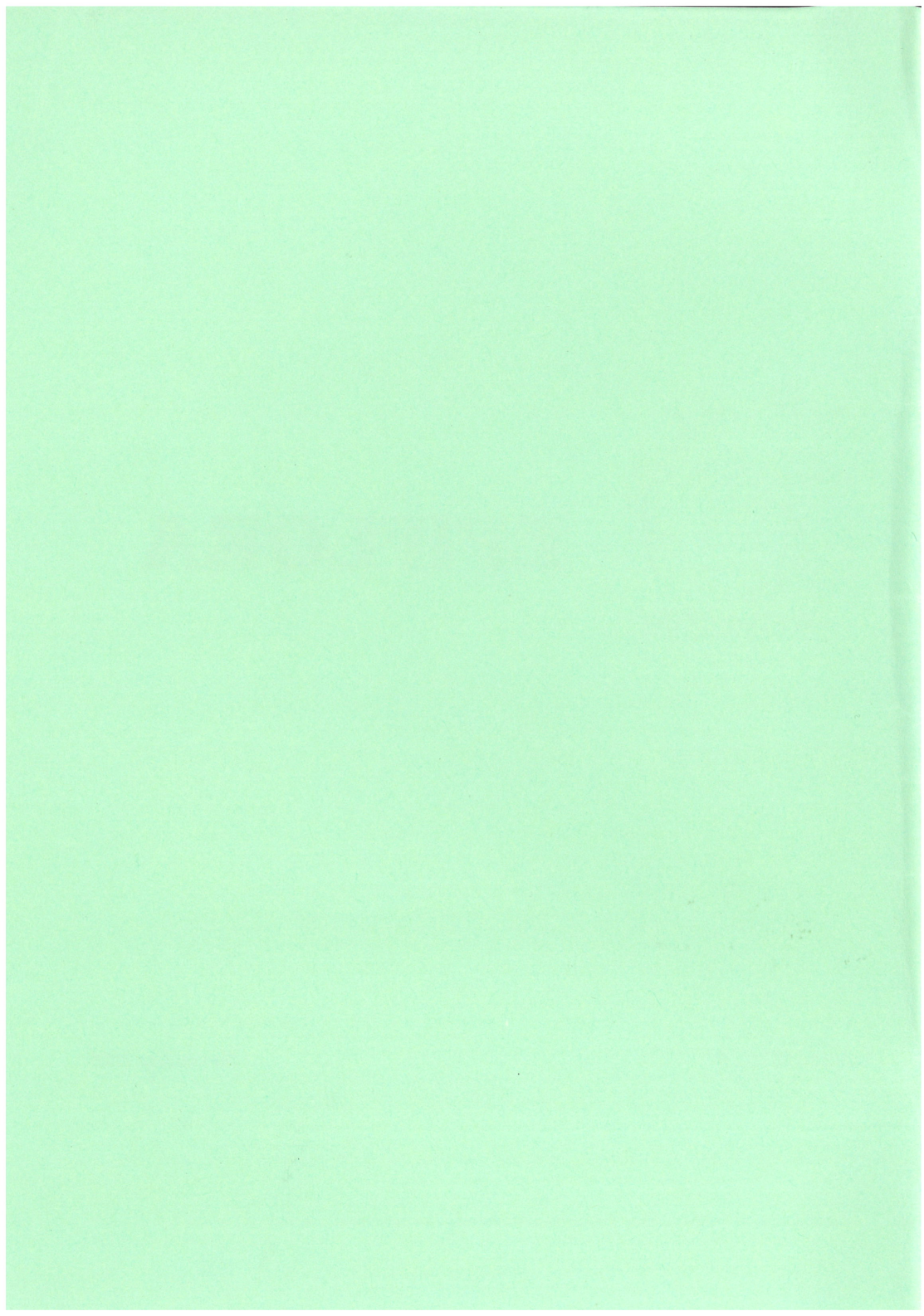




# EPIFLORA

Volume 18 No. 4

November 2009





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## **From the President**

Dear Fellow Epiphyte Growers,

I am writing this at the end of November and we have just been struck by a cold wet spell which makes us wonder if it is the beginning of winter when in fact it should be the beginning of summer.

On November 14th some of our members visited Wainuiomata and enjoyed the wonderful gardens we were privileged to see as well as once again meeting Dennis Keall, the lizard man, and viewing his great collection of skinks and geckos. I have added some pictures to our website which were taken at Dennis' place.

It is three years since we expanded our plant base but it seems we are still struggling in the society. It is necessary for members to take positions to run the society for the benefit of everyone. If we can't fill the positions vacant at our December AGM we might have to consider changing the format of the Society to being an online club with a hardcopy journal and no monthly meetings.

So think whether you could take on the position of President, Secretary, Treasurer, Editor or be one of the committee members.

I look forward to seeing you all at our December meeting.

Virginia Hayler

*November 2009*

## The Programme for 2009/2010

*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.

**December 12th**

AGM and Christmas meeting

**On Duty:**

*Dianne O'Neill, Lois Bond, Vicky Gibson*

**January 9<sup>th</sup>**

Waikanae garden visits and barbeque at  
Nga Manu

*Griffith's  
Alice & Rex 10-30am*

**February 13<sup>th</sup>**

Hoya Habitats

**On Duty:**

*Phyllis and Bruce Purdie, Ruth Finlay*

**March 13<sup>th</sup>**

to be confirmed

**On Duty:**

*Robyn Gibson, Penny Luckens, Vicky Gibson*  
*coffee meeting 11:30 Nolas*

**April 10<sup>th</sup>**

Workshop

**On Duty:**

*Brian Read, Nola Roser, Marion Austin*

**May 8<sup>th</sup>**

Hanging Schlumbergeras

**On Duty:**

*Alice & Rex Hannam, Alison Beeston*

*Epiflora*

**June 12<sup>th</sup>**

Orchidas

*On Duty:*

*Virginia & Jim Hayler, Vicky Ferns*

*David McConachie*

**Meeting Dates for rest of 2010**

**July 10<sup>th</sup>**

**August 7<sup>th</sup>**

**September 11<sup>th</sup>**

**October 9<sup>th</sup>**

**November 13<sup>th</sup>**

**December 11th**

# *Seasons Greetings*

*We send best wishes for a Happy Christmas and  
a fantastic New Year to all our readers.*

---

**Stapelia hirsuta** - photo by Merv Keighley

**Stapelia pulchellus** - photo by Winfried Bruenken



## **September meeting - Asclepiads**

*At our September meeting Merv Keighley talked about Asclepiads. He brought a tableful of plants to show off as well. Here are his notes..*

Asclepiads, especially the Stapeliads, have been known since the 1700's but were not named as such until many years later.

A number of the Stapeliads were and are used as edible and medicinal plants. They are found throughout the African continent and into the Middle East, continuing through to India and the islands around Africa i.e. Madagascar, the Canary Islands, Socotra<sup>1</sup>.

These plants often have very complex flowers. Some quite sweetly smelling, others very earthy, as in rotting flesh or excrement.

In New Zealand the plants are often difficult to grow. They are very prone to black spot and will rot in the blink of an eye. They should be kept fairly dry during the winter or cold spells, but do like a good watering in the heat.

The flowers are always five pointed, with variations of three, four, six or seven at times, which usually revert back to five next season.

There are many different species in collections in New Zealand but obtaining new varieties is nil due to MAF policy.

Merv had a slide show of flower photos of Stapeliads going on his lap top during the talk. These photos were obtained with the generosity of the late Chris Moore in the UK.

---

<sup>1</sup> Socotra is a small island off the Horn of Africa - which is home to four species of stapeliads.



## **October Meeting - Rhipsalis**

*At our October meeting Virginia Hayler talked about Rhipsalis. She had a tableful of plants and lots of pictures as well.*

Rhipsalis (sometimes called "segmented cacti") typically are hanging plants with round, thin stems or segments that are without spines (though sometimes with hairs). The flowers are more or less symmetrical and are small - no more than 2.2 cm long. The fruits that follow the flowers may be white or dark coloured. These hanging, epiphytic plants can have stems that are up to 1.8m in length.

Rhipsalis is a genus of over sixty species mostly found in South America although some species have been found in tropical Africa, Madagascar and Sri Lanka. There is still debate about how these species got there. The genus name is derived from the Greek word for "wicker" a reference to the flexible stems of some species.

In their natural habitat Rhipsalis grow in trees, rooting in the debris in tree crotches. This means they are shaded by the tree canopy, get frequent rain but the water drains away rapidly. In cultivation therefore it is good to use a free-draining mix which may include grit. Liberal use of perlite, horticultural charcoal and/or wood shavings in your normal cactus mix will give good results. They will grow well indoors in a bright (but not sun-drenched) spot.

The plants are frost tender so protection may need to be provided on the coldest nights (depending on where you live). The plants can be propagated from cuttings which will root in two to six weeks depending on the time of year. They can also be grown successfully from seed.

### **Odd Epiphytes.**

*Our society specialises in epiphytic plants. We have tended to focus on epiphyllums, hoyas and, more recently, orchids - however the range of plants is much greater. In this article - taken from the journal "Epiphytes" (now sadly, apparently defunct) Dolly Kolli talks about an epiphytic lily. (This article originally appeared in Vol 15 number 60).*

Whatever happened to the epiphytic lily ~ *arboricola*? Although now presumed "lost"~ is there just a chance that somewhere in England it still exists? Here is an unsolved mystery that should prove to be an exciting chase for some diligent botanical sleuth.

The aptly named *L. arboricola* (tree dweller)~ the only known epiphyte of the genus *Lilium*~ was discovered by the famous plant collector Frank Kingdon-Ward according to his own account on a bright April Day in 1953 in the temperate area of North Burma a day's march short of the Arahku peaks~ barely out of the sub-tropical evergreen forest in an area he described as "The Triangle". Exploring the forest area~ he found the lily at 5000 ft (1524 m) altitude high up on the trunk of a big tree covered with epiphytic ferns~ orchids and other plants. The fascinating details of the discovery are set out in chapters 18 and 19 of his book "Return to the Irrawaddy" published in 1956. Flowering in mid August~ the treetop lily proved to be a true Martagon. "The rather narrow petals having the texture of watered silk and the delicate Nile-green colour of a grape" curled back as in a turkscap lily. The elusive scent was of "clove or nutmeg".

A pressed specimen was made - the only pressed wild specimen in existence. Eventually a number of plants~ bulbs~ bulbils~ and seeds were secured and shipped by air to England where the lily was said to have flowered at Wisley "under glass" in 1954.

Kingdon-Ward gave a talk to the lily group of the RHS in 1954 describing six "peculiarities" which distinguished the lily and recommending orchid medium as probably the most suitable for growing it. The material sent back to England was grown at Wisley, The Liverpool Parks Department and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh - all with great care as greenhouse plants, both in cool and intermediate houses. Several flowered in 1954 according to Patrick Syngé (who saw it in bloom) in his book "Lilies" (Universal Books, 1980, p. 276 illustrated). A description was drawn up and published by Stern in Gard. Chron. p.127, 1954, giving it the name *arboricola*.

Accounts of the cultivation at Liverpool and Wisley can be found in the Royal Horticultural Society Lily Yearbook (RHSLYB) 1956. An illustration can be found in RHSLYB 1962, Pl.3. The bulbs that flowered at Wisley in 1954 rotted away the following spring. Bulbils and seed were said to be left in cultivation, but "unfortunately none survived to reach flowering size".

Other references to *L. arboricola* have turned up in the Yearbooks of the North American Lily Society (NALS) which can also be found in the library of the RHS. The NALS 1955

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Yearbook has an article by Charles Bullock "The 1954 Lily Year in England", p.103 mentioning a plant grown from a bulb and exhibited at the Chelsea show in 1954, and also successful germination of seeds at the John Innes Horticultural Institution with "strong growing seedlings". He also says that minute green bulbils of the species were sent to Col. Stern in the autumn the Martagon type flower, has placed it in the genus *Lilium*. No doubt the RHS would have a file and a copy of this slide and more references as to the history and culture could probably be found in RHS Lily Yearbooks and Newsletters.

Bullock, again writing in the NALS 1956 Yearbook "The Lily Year in England", p.63 mentions great interest in *L. arboricola* and the rotting of the bulbs, but says that "fortunately several people who shared the collected seeds have raised a fair number of plants, but I'm told that the progress is slow".

In his article "The Lily Year of England 1958" in the 1959 NALS Yearbook Bullock notes the passing of Captain Kingdon-Ward and mentions a Mr P. Conn, Supt. of Parks, Liverpool, has been made an Associate of Honour in the RHS. "He is best remembered as one of two or three people who successfully grew *L. arboricola* and brought two plants into flower and made a colour slide of it which he loaned to me so that copies of it could be taken".

The trail ends with these thirty year old references, but wherever a new and interesting rarity has been introduced, somehow a scrap manages to make its way here and there to be discovered again at some later time. It is tantalising to speculate that some of the collected seed might have produced a surviving seedling somewhere in England and that the green epiphytic lily might someday be seen again. Chances of the lily being re-collected at the original site are presently non-existent. It is said that "The Triangle" is now the stronghold of the drug trade and the government of Burma has refused to grant any travel visas since 1970.

## **Wainuiomata Ramble**

*Traditionally November is the month we go visiting gardens, collections and other places of interest. This year our trip was to Wainuiomata. **Robyn Gibson** writes about the places that were visited.*

Our Saturday visit turned out cloudy and very windy but we had no rain. We were only seven in number but those who didn't attend missed a real treat.

First stop was the home of Jane Wootton who runs a B & B and a cattery in the grounds of a very large property, planted with masses of beautiful rhododendrons in full flower. Jane is a plantoholic with the scope to indulge her passion. We didn't have time to see all her garden but one of the pools, complete with waterwheel, was a highlight. We stayed so long we were late to the next two gardens on our schedule.

Jill Summer showed us a beautiful garden with massed dark red gazanias lining her driveway. She had many rare and unusual native plants in her garden, including the native jasmine (*Parsonsia*) and several plants which are now frowned upon, such as the luscious banana passionfruit (courtesy of the wood pigeons). She has many little hideaways, each featuring intriguing plants, and scarecrows, and a tree with a "face" - for the grandchildren. We then walked through a gate into Jan Patterson's garden, featuring fuchsias, *geranium maderense*, aquilegias, mirrors and a lovely water feature, giving both sound and movement to the garden. Her begonia wall was just starting into growth but the fuchsias were looking very good already, many in hanging pots suspended from posts by brackets made from the legs of old garden furniture. Both these gardens suffered problems with frost, possums and wood pigeons but still displayed the skilled hand of dedicated gardeners.

From there we decided to visit Dennis Keall's lizards. Everyone was fascinated and the geckos put on a great display for us, basking in the sun at the front of their cages. They came in the most beautiful colours, bright yellow, deep green, pale green, grey and brown, and all with various markings which change as they age. Dennis pointed out some, listing the region they came from as various patterns are specific to their particular region. One cage had dozens of one year old geckos clustered together, each trying to get as much sunlight as possible, even if it meant lying on top of its cage mates.

With time running out we had to omit a garden on our itinerary and the visit to Moore's Valley nursery, - Next year!

**Further reading**

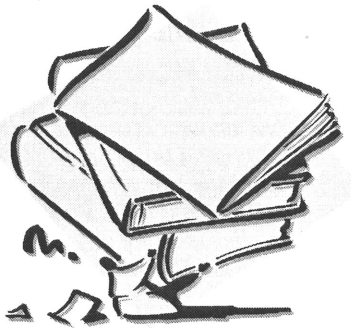
Our Society receives journals from a number of other societies with similar interests. These journals are all available from our library. In the last few months a number of interesting items have been published. Here are some snippets that you might find interesting. (Of course you really should go and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

In the September issue of "Epi-Gram" published by the Epiphytic Cacti and Hoya Society of Australia there are a couple of interesting articles. One is on the fruits produced by Epicacti - and includes a couple of recipes. The other is on the genus' Rhipsalis and Lepismium. The article discusses the differences between these two genera and then goes on to talk about how they can be grown and propagated.

In the October issue of "Epi News" published by the San Diego Epiphyllum Society is a comment from their librarian about the journal "Epiphytes". As she says the journal is no longer published but the back issues contain many interesting and informative articles. The articles were written by authors who were really knowledgeable and enthusiastic about their subject including A J S McMillan and J F Horobin. (authors of the book "Christmas Cacti"). Our society has a number of back issues in the library - and they are a valuable resource on plants such as Rhipsalis and Schlumbergeras..

In the November 2009 issue of "The Epiphyllon!" - published by the Epiphyllum and Hoya Society of Australia there is whole page of home remedies for pests that afflict our plants and try our patience. There are recipes for insecticides to deal with scale and mealy bugs as well as fungicides and pest deterrents. Finally - if you despair and want to give it all away there is a recipe for a herbicide!

In the October issue of the Epi-Gram (published by the South Bay Epiphyllum Society Dick Kohlschreiber reminisces about two of the outstanding hybridisers of our era - George French (who died earlier this year) and Wressey Cocke. Dick knew both of them quite well and asserts that he learnt a lot from both of them.



In the latest (July-September) issue of *Fraterna* - volume 22 number 3 (published by the International Hoya Association) there is an article by Ted Green on CITES (The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora). In this article he identifies a number of

problems with the operation of this convention and suggests that, as it pertains to plants, it is now unworkable.

Finally - in the September issue of the NZ Internet Orchid review there are two articles on care of orchids for beginners.. One is entitled "Spring Advice" the other "Repotting Orchids". There is also a lengthy article on ways of labelling plants - the overall conclusion from which is that "Fade-resistant pens fade". I think most of us knew that already.

Happy Reading.!

## **Dick Kohlschreiber**

Many of you will have heard much of Dick - even though you may never have met him. He is the Editor of "The Epi-Gram" the monthly newsletter produced the South Bay Epiphyllum Society. He is also an inexhaustible font of knowledge on plants of all kinds.

Dick had been complaining about feeling unwell for some time - but earlier this month he ended up in hospital and shortly after that was given two replacement heart valves. Friends tell us his doctors are pleased with his progress and expect him to recover well.

Get well soon Dick.

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

*Well summer has come at last. We can still expect some nights will be cold 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 further north further south you may need to adjust things a little.*

**Epicacti** - Start watering regularly - preferably early in the day. Enjoy the flowers as they come. After each plant has finished flowering you can repot and prune it.

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**Hoyas** - water when dry. Fertilise. Keep a wary eye out for mealy bugs and other pests - they love warm humid conditions. (You may choose to start a regular programme of pest-control measures). Start enjoying the flowers - it is not too late to take cuttings.

**Schlumbergeras** - it is still a good time to repot now that flowering has finished. Put slow-release fertiliser into the mix as you do so. Water sparingly when the plants seem dry.

**Rhipsalis** - water regularly as they come into flower. A little fertiliser is also a good idea.

**Aporophyllums** - water regularly and enjoy the flowers. After flowering take courage (and gloves) and prune and tidy up the plants. If you are really brave you could also repot some.

**Ceropegias** - flowers should be beginning to appear. Water when dry. You need to start the regular task of unwinding runaway growth that is invading other plants. Keep plants in a warm sunny space for maximum flowering. Give plants that still look dead just a little longer before you throw them out. Check for pests and deal with any that you find immediately.

**Orchids**- water all plants as they get dry; how often this happens will depend on the weather and where you grow your plants. Plants which have flowered can be given fertiliser which has a high nitrogen content to encourage growth. The others need to flower first - so low nitrogen fertiliser should be used. Make sure the plants do not get burnt with the increased sunshine.

**Bromeliads** - Now that the threat of frost has passed those tender bromeliads that were being sheltered indoors over winter can be put outside.. Give them a few weeks shaded from direct sun, to avoid burn marks on the leaves. Greenhouses will need shading (if it is not on already) and try to keep air circulation going and air temperatures under 35°C if possible.

**Subscriptions are due for the coming year.**

The society's year goes from January to December - so subscriptions for 2010 are now due. As members may remember - the subscriptions were increased during the year and now are:

New Zealand member .....\$15

associate member (at same address) .... \$5

Overseas member (*unchanged*) .....\$NZ24.00 (or \$US12.00)

If a renewal form is included with this copy of *Epiflora* please send it, with the necessary money, to our Treasurer whose address is on the form or bring it with you to the December meeting.

***Odd cuttings and seeds***

**Your friend - the snail**

As we all know - snails will feast happily on epis so as the summer approaches and you water more - don't forget to be liberal with the snail bait - preferably a variety that is non-toxic to wild-life (other than snails!). One of the journals we receive had another suggestion - "cover your shadehouse floor with sawdust or coarse sand - apparently the snails hate both!".

**"Cactus Culture for Amateurs".**

This e-book was written in 2004 by W Watson, assistant curator of the Royal Botanic Gardens in Kew. There is a section on Epiphyllums. It is intended for free distribution and a copy is now available on the web. If you are interested you can see it and download it from

<http://opuntiads.com/zpdf/cactus-culture-for-amateurs.pdf>

also to be found at the same site are copies of all four volumes of *The Cactaceae*, by Britton and Rose (from 1919 to 1923). These PDF books



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were provided by the Cactus and Succulent Digital Library (a wonderful resource). If you haven't checked them out online, I recommend that you do so. They have multiple (wonderful) older (and some not so old) books to download. Some are great just for the hand drawn images.

<http://www.cactuspro.com/biblio/>

The addresses for the Britton and Rose books are:

Volume 1: [http://opuntiads.com/zpdf/Britton\\_Rose\\_Cactaceae\\_v1.pdf](http://opuntiads.com/zpdf/Britton_Rose_Cactaceae_v1.pdf)

Volume 2: [http://opuntiads.com/zpdf/Britton\\_Rose\\_Cactaceae\\_v2.pdf](http://opuntiads.com/zpdf/Britton_Rose_Cactaceae_v2.pdf)

Volume 3: [http://opuntiads.com/zpdf/Britton\\_Rose\\_Cactaceae\\_v1.pdf](http://opuntiads.com/zpdf/Britton_Rose_Cactaceae_v1.pdf)

Volume 4: [http://opuntiads.com/zpdf/Britton\\_Rose\\_Cactaceae\\_v1.pdf](http://opuntiads.com/zpdf/Britton_Rose_Cactaceae_v1.pdf)

### **Let us learn from the misfortunes of others....**

A correspondent on one of the internet groups writes:

*I decided as it was late autumn to fumigate my greenhouses to deal with mealy bugs. I selected a fog candle which said it would kill pests and fungal spores and its active ingredient was sulphur and it would cause no damage to plants. I fumigated my three greenhouses of EPs and find many plants were very badly damaged and a few have died.*

Moral: don't fumigate epicacti with any product whose active ingredient is sulphur.

### **Be careful when you go near the tomatoes ..**

Not strictly epi related - but:

Potatoes and tomatoes make good eating but they may also have a vicious side that makes them deadly killers on a par with venus fly traps and pitcher plants.

They have been identified as among a host of plants thought to have been overlooked by botanists and explorers searching the world's remotest regions for carnivorous species.

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Researchers at the Royal Botanical Gardens Kew now believe there are hundreds more plants that catch and eat insects and other small animals than they previously realised. Among them are species of petunia, ornamental tobacco plants, potatoes and tomatoes and shepherd's purse, a relative of cabbages.

To read more - you can see the full article on the website of "The Independent" at

[www.independent.co.uk/news/science/attack-of-the-killer-tomatoes-1834638.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/science/attack-of-the-killer-tomatoes-1834638.html)

### **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.

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Two *Rhipsalis* plants that Virginia has in her collection:

***Rhipsalis grandiflora***

***Rhipsalis cereuscula***

**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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*Or: griffith@globe.co.nz*

*Closing dates for contributions:*

*Autumn 2010 Edition - 13<sup>th</sup> February 2010*

*Winter 2010 Edition - 8<sup>th</sup> May 2010*

*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>	

*Society web address:*

*Find us on the web at : [www.epihoya.freewebsitehosting.com/](http://www.epihoya.freewebsitehosting.com/)*





