



EPIFLORA

Volume 19 No. 1

February 2010



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From the President

Actually from your New President

The times they are a' changing, I'm your new president (? the first male) - taking over while our long-time office-holders are having a well-deserved rest.

Now that I have moved into an apartment, and no longer have a garden, the residue of my cactus and succulent collection are kept on my two fairly sheltered balconies. Despite Wellington's cold and wet early summer and some neglect most have survived. The balconies get early sun and constant air-movement - almost perfect! But I have just noticed a few mealy bugs - the first in many years!

Your committee needs your help. We need new members with new ideas. We need new speakers with new topics to address our very friendly meetings. Any suggestions would be gratefully received.

As we have nothing lined up for March we are asking all members to bring along their favourite plant (or plants), flower (or flowers) etc. and say a few words about it (or them).

Good Growing

Brian Read.

February 2010

The Programme for 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.

- March 13th** My favourite plant (or the one I hate most) bring it or its picture or its flower and say why you love it/hate it
On Duty: Kaye & Merv Keighley, Ruth Finlay.
- April 10th** Problem Plants - bring one of yours and we will talk about it ..
On Duty: Brian Read, Dianne O'Neill.
- May 8th** Schlumbergeras
On Duty: Phyllis and Bruce Purdie
- June 12th** Orchids - slides and a talk on native orchids by David McConachie
On Duty: Robyn Gibson, Vicky Gibson, Penny Luckens.
- July 10th** Midwinter function

December Meeting and AGM

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

President's Report

I have the pleasure of presenting the President's Report in the nineteenth year of our Society.

Our programme this year has covered some of the epiphytes that our Society includes, with interesting talks given by members of the Society; a fun meeting at Easter with lots of chocolates to eat and take home; followed by our mid-winter Christmas dinner in July. Then last month we had a visit to Wainuiomata where we saw some wonderful gardens and visited Dennis and his reptiles.

We have continued to keep our website updated and this has brought at least one new member, as well as positive feedback from out-of-town and overseas members and friends... We have even managed to get a couple of our club meetings advertised on the television Living Channel 'Events Diary'.

We are very grateful to Roy Griffith for the years he has given as Editor of our Epiflora. This informative magazine has proved to be the backbone of the club.

Thanks also to Alice Hannam for her tireless work as Treasurer.

I would especially like to thank Robyn Gibson and Isobel Barbery for the help they have given me and the Society. I have found it very difficult to organise speakers and meetings etc because of living so far away and even though neither were on the committee they have stepped up and helped whenever needed.

I wish you all a Merry Christmas and look forward to a New Year full of our Epiphyte plants.

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The New Committee

The committee for 2010 is:

Brian Read - President
Alice Hannam - Treasurer
Robyn Gibson - Social Secretary
Penny Luckens - Minute Secretary
Ruth Finlay
Vicky Gibson
Carol Rogerson

The Accounts.

WELLINGTON HOYA & EPIPHYTIC PLANT SOCIETY

Income and Expenditure for the year ended 31 December 2009

INCOME

Bank	1875.55
Subscriptions	675.35
Donation	48.00
Calendar	10.00
Commission	15.20
Sales Table	136.70
Raffle	189.70
B.B.Q.	45.00
Sale of B.B.Q. Meat	21.00
Society Sales	53.50
Sale of Epi Cuttings	40.00
Commission from purchase of bulbs by members	18.80

3128.80

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EXPENDITURE

Epiflora & Post	840.71
Receipt Book	30.00
Flowers	20.00
B.B.Q. Meat	45.84
Rent	406.00
Petrol Voucher	20.00
Bank	1766.25

3128.80

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Deficit for year 109.30

Talk by Rudolf Schulz

Virginia Hayler had arranged for Rudolf Schulz to talk about some of the books he has written and how he goes about writing them

Rudolf gave a delightful and entertaining talk on the business of creating a book and he had brought examples of many he has written. His advice on how to start writing a book was delightfully simple:

- ▶ first read a book
- ▶ then think how you could do it better

His books are all self-published which means the author can decide what is to be included and how it is to be laid out. If you can take the pictures - so much the better! He suggests starting with the "Table of Contents" and then deciding how much space is to be devoted to each topic and what pictures will help the narrative. Finally - never underestimate "flick value" (ie the first impression of a buyer who just flicks through all the pages).

Then you too can find yourself creating a book each year. Thank you Rudolf - our library will soon need a whole room to house them!

How do you prepare your seed-raising mix?.

To sterilise or not to sterilise ..

This is an argument that rages regularly (and usually inconclusively) on internet chat forums. Most of us have heard the advice to sterilise the mix before planting seeds, though not all of us do so. Those that do have a variety of techniques for doing it.

The discussion flared up again recently in the forum cacti_etc and I thought it might be interesting to pick out arguments from three of the participants..

"In general, bacteria that may be present in soils are not harmful to plants. In fact, many bacteria in soils are beneficial by fixing nitrogen and breaking down organic matter into usable nutrients. The reason that some people sterilise potting mix is to kill fungi, which can

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be very harmful to cacti. This is especially true for seedlings, which often need humid environments to germinate providing an optimum environment for fungi.

The alternatives to sterilisation are to use a potting mix that does not promote fungal growth or to add a fungicide to the mix. Some fungicides have been shown to inhibit germination, so this method may or may not work depending on the fungicide used and species of plant. Using an all mineral or low organic matter soil (eschew peat!) is the method of choice for many growers. For many species, all you have to do is throw some sand and seeds in a container and add water. Then keep the soil wet until seeds germinate."

"The reason I sterilise my potting mix is

1. to kill off any bugs or eggs that may be present,
2. to kill off any unfriendly bacteria or fungus spores that may be present.

How? I fill a good sized glass bowl with mix and lightly firm, I then add a good sized mug full of water and cover the whole thing with cling film. This then goes into an old microwave for fifteen minutes and is allowed to cool down completely before use. Yes it takes time but the results are worth it. I get very little problem with pests or diseases, which in turn means I use less chemical sprays etc."

"The simplest way to insure clean, healthy soil for your plants is to pasteurise it (often mistakenly called sterilising the soil). You do not want to kill off all the life in the soil, only the harmful organisms. Fortunately, the important and beneficial nitrate-producing bacteria can survive the heat of pasteurisation, but almost all weed seeds, disease organisms and insects are killed off by it. Pasteurisation is particularly important when starting seeds and cuttings because they are at a vulnerable stage. Heating the soil to 180° F for thirty minutes is the best and most common form of pasteurisation. To pasteurise a small amount, place three or four inches of moist soil in a baking pan. Cover it with tinfoil and heat slowly in the oven until a thermometer inserted through the foil reads 180° F. Then turn off the oven and leave for thirty minutes before removing the pan and taking off the cover. The problem is making sure that all the soil is evenly heated. Since even a small number of harmful organisms can quickly re-infest the soil. Be careful not to overheat it in your oven. If you do at least two things will happen. One, you will kill off all life in the soil and, two, the kitchen will stink to high heaven. To heat the soil over 180° F and/or heat it longer than 30 minutes would be sterilising the soil-and you don't want to do that. When I first started in this hobby some 20 years ago someone told me to sterilise the soil and, not knowing any better, I heated the soil in the oven to over 350° F. After about 20 minutes it stunk up the house so bad, I had to take the pan outdoors. At the time I didn't know the difference between pasteurising and sterilising the soil. Yes! I learned the hard way."

January visits to gardens and collections.

Again this year our January meeting took the form of visits to two Kapiti gardens finishing with a barbeque lunch.

It is always good to see what others grow and how they grow it! Visiting Alice and Rex Hannam's burgeoning garden is always a joy. Vegetables and plants grow in happy profusion. We saw dahlias and beans, calla lilies and fruit trees and, of course, schlumbergeras, hoyas and epis.

Then we went to Jane and Roy Griffith's garden, where we saw hoyas in flower, some carnivorous plants and some orchids, however a very few epi flowers (the season being well over). Then we cooked our lunchtime barbeque. (*And the stragglers left at 4.00pm - so we presume everyone enjoyed themselves ... Ed.*)

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

February meeting on hoyas.

*At our February meeting **Jane Griffith** gave a presentation that she had prepared on hoyas..*

In her presentation Jane talked about where hoyas come from and the conditions that they grow in. She showed pictures of the flowers and foliage of a large number of the hoyas available in New Zealand and commented on the sorts of conditions one would have to provide to grow them successfully.

She finished by discussing how best to propagate hoyas and on the pests and diseases a grower may have to contend with.

one of the hoyas mentioned in the presentation - *H vitiensis* which comes from Fiji.

Masdevallia "Bella Donna" - from Jane and Roy Griffith's collection

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Masdevallias and Draculas.

This is another of the plant varieties our society studies. A number of us grow them - maybe more of us should - they are quite easy to grow, quite compact and have beautiful flowers.

Masdevallia is a large genus of flowering plants of the *Pleurothallidinae*, a subtribe of the orchid family (*Orchidaceae*). There are over 500 species, grouped into several subgenera. The genus is named for Jose Masdeval, a physician and botanist in the court of Charles III of Spain. *Masdevallias* and *Draculas* grow throughout Central and South America and can be found as far north as southern Mexico and southward to Peru. They may be epiphytes, terrestrials or growing as lithophytes on damp rocks. They are, for the most part, cool growers and can be found at high elevations in the mountainous cloud forests where they thrive on the high humidity. Some grow right at the snowline; it is not uncommon to see them become lightly dusted with fast melting snow. Still others grow in warmer and somewhat drier conditions where the plants do get some drying between rains. The plant grows from a short, creeping rhizome from which appear minute pseudobulbs; some are hemicryptophytes. Each pseudobulb carries one fleshy, smooth leaf held in tufts. The green leaves are ovate or lanceolate. They bloom usually during summer. The triangular flowers grow on short pedicels and are about 6 cm wide. On each pedicel there is ordinarily just one flower, but sometimes there may be several (e.g. in *Masdevallia polysticta*). The petals and the tongue-shaped or shell-shaped lip are small and are partly hidden deep inside the flower. The three large sepals are fused along their edges and commonly have long tails. The sepals are often very brightly coloured and/or boldly marked, large and showy, while the rest of the flower is inconspicuous. The colours and flower shapes are mind-boggling. Some of the hybrids have been found to have more vigour, making them easier to grow and bloom while retaining the intriguing colours and shapes.

- **Light and Shade** - In nature, these plants grow in areas that are very shady, around 1200 foot-candles (*phalaenopsis* light) and also in areas with fairly high light, in excess of 3500 foot-candles. Plants with heavier, thicker leaves generally need more light (*cattleya* light). Those with softer, thinner leaves prefer shadier conditions. Be careful in the summer not to overexpose the plants to light.
- **Temperature** - There are a few *Masdevallias* that do well in warmer areas where summer night temperatures infrequently fall below 68-70 degrees Fahrenheit (20-21 degrees centigrade). They are *Masdevallia floribunda*, *striatella*, *kuhniorum*, *bicolor infracta*, *rima rima alba*, *bangii*, *minuta*, *attenuata*, and *echo*. Other *Masdevallias*, including *Draculas*, prefer night temperatures from 40-60 ° (4-16°C). and day temperatures not reaching much above 75-80 ° (24-27°C). Remember, the colder you grow them, the sturdier the plants will be. Also, flowers will develop over a slower

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period giving you a larger size bloom as well as better colour and shape. During summer it is almost inevitable that there will be some hot spells, sometimes lasting several weeks. When this occurs the plants will be stressed. Keep the plants shaded, reducing leaf temperatures.

- **Watering** - Like all orchids, *Masdevallias* and *Draculas* like clean water. Only distilled, rain water or reverse osmosis water should be used. If you examine their roots you will discover many fine hairs similar to root structures on *Paphiopedilums*. It is best to water these plants as they approach dryness. Thick, heavy-leafed plants prefer a little dryness at the roots. Thin soft-leafed varieties do not, unless there is heat stress as mentioned earlier.
- **Humidity** - Keep the humidity high, at least 70%, and provide plenty of air movement. We have found that if you keep the plants drier at the roots during hot spells you will avoid stem rot, which can occur very quickly and devastate newer growth and sometimes the entire plant. Misting the leaves lightly will keep them from shrivelling. Once temperatures begin to cool off, resume regular watering. Very often during stressful heat waves you will notice, especially with *Draculas*, some leaf tips turning brown or becoming lightly spotted. This is generally stress-related and will stop once normal conditions resume. In greenhouses, grow the plants as close to the evaporative coolers as you can. If you don't have a greenhouse, grow your plants in an air-conditioned room or in a basement under lights.
- **Fertilising** - For tap or well water, fertilise lightly at ¼ to ½ strength Grow More 20-10-20 every two to three weeks. Another highly recommended fertiliser is Green Jungle Orchid Food, especially formulated to work with rain, distilled, reverse osmosis water or water low in alkalinity. Fertilise with Green Jungle every time you water, all year round.
- **Potting** - The best medium for these plants to our knowledge is New Zealand sphagnum moss. When using sphagnum it is important to check for mix decomposition after 9 months to a year and repot if necessary. Bark mixes also work, but they tend to dry out very quickly, especially in the summer. Sphagnum holds an incredible amount of water, yet remains springy allowing air to pass through the medium. It is very easy to check your root systems in sphagnum because you can pull out the root mass that is holding the moss together.

Sources:

www.orchidplantcare.info

www.wikipedia.org

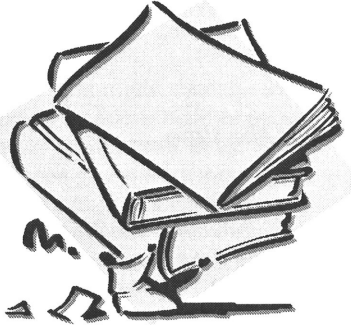
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Further reading

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!)

The February issue of the **Epi-Gram** (published by the South Bay Epiphyllum Society) is again written by Dick Kohlschreiber (the December issue was written by two other members as he was in hospital). In this issue he publishes a lengthy and interesting piece on "Easter Cacti" - otherwise known as *Hatiora* although it was previously described as *Rhipsalis*..



In the January issue of **Epi-News** (San Deigo Epiphyllum Society) there is the first of two articles (The second is in the February issue) by "Mrs Cactus Pete" on Epiphyllum Species. These articles are worth reading. They were originally written a while ago - but were edited in November 2009 to update the old botanical names to their current synonyms).

In volume 65, number 1 of **The Bulletin** (published by the Epiphyllum Society of America) there is a tribute to George French (one of the noted hybridisers of epis). They also have two pages devoted to pictures of George French and his wife Madeline, the epi garden and flowers of some of the hybrids he created.

Cattleya "Chocolate Drop" from Jane and Roy Griffith's collection

Epicactus "Waikanae Belle" from Jane and Roy Griffith's collection

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Finally in the October-December issue of **Fraterna** (published by the International Hoya Association) they continue their fourth-quarter tradition of publishing articles on a number of newly discovered hoyas species - complete with some wonderful photographs and photomicrographs. There is also a piece entitled "Ted Green's Eight Favourite Hoyas". No text - just pictures and they are stunning

Happy reading.!

Now is the time

We may be reluctant to admit it - but soon summer will be leaving us and autumn will come. Although the days are hot some nights are becoming cool and we should expect this 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..

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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 (past) the time to pay this year's subscription

The society's year runs from January to December so subscriptions for 2010 are now overdue. If you have not yet paid or talked to the Treasurer you will find a final reminder renewal form in this issue of *Epiflora* . Please bring it with the cash to our March meeting - or send it to our Treasurer.

Change is always a good thing

"So its goodbye from me....

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... and its goodbye from him.."

I have been editor of *Epiflora* for about fourteen years or so which seems a while. I followed the path started by Merv Keighley and Alison and Peter Beeston and now it is time to pass the role on. The society is very fortunate that Virginia Hayler has agreed to take on the role. I look forward to reading the issues she produces.

An editor does not do everything - so I could not sign off without expressing thanks firstly to those who have written articles either voluntarily or when I asked them.

but most of all to Jane - who has been my most exacting proof-reader (without her dilligence it would have been a very error-ridden effort).

I have enjoyed my time as editor and I hope you have all enjoyed the result. I extend sincere good wishes to Virginia.

sincerely

Roy Griffith

Odd cuttings and seeds

Another e-book

J Shaw writes on cacti_etc "sometimes English information translates well to other countries, and sometimes it does not. I put a copy of Watson's ebook, "Cactus Culture for Amateurs" online. It is publicly available and free for all to download. Written for England, or not, the 90-100 pages are an interesting read. And who knows, perhaps you live in England.

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

Handy Hints

Here are two that were mentioned at our last meeting:

- ▶ Remember when talking about plants that require shade or partial shade that New Zealand does not have the haze or high cloud that many other countries

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do (those that have travelled to UK or Los Angeles will appreciate the point). So remember to give more shade than overseas publications suggest.

- ▶ Brian Read had brought along a pack of pastry brushes from the \$2 shop which, he pointed out, were stiff - but not overly so - and so were ideal for cleaning dust, cobwebs and even mealy bugs off plants without harming either plants or fingers.

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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FEILDING.

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Spring 2010 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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