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Next Meeting : Monday, 15th February, 2016

Venue : The Lindfield Community Centre, corner of Bradfield Rd and Moore Avenue, West Lindfield.

The **Culture Class** starts in the **front** room at **7.20pm**, and this month **Pauline Onslow** and **Bernie Britton** will discuss Phalaenopsis culture. These lovely orchids used to be regarded as a strictly hot house grower, but not any more. Come along and find out how you too might grow and flower them.

The main **meeting commences at 8pm**. Our **guest speaker** after the tea break will be Garrie Bromley who will give a presentation on the recent **20th Australian Orchid Council Show** that was held in **Mackay Qld in 2015**. These shows attract participation from all over Australia and are very popular. We should see some wonderful examples of the top orchids and displays.

Our **supper volunteers** for February are **Mary Mathews** and **Janet Snodgrass**. Your assistance is much appreciated.

Best of Evening Species – Stanhopea inodora - grown by Sebastian Torrisi



What a great species this is. Of all the Stanhopeas, this is my favourite. Its ice green flowers, with a hint of gold, are about 11cm across and come in a bunch of up to 10 flowers under the basket.

This month was the 5th time inodora has been given best of the evening, but it wasn't the same clone or the same grower each time. Seb Torrisi's lovely specimen has won 3 times (2004, 2011, and 2016), but the others were different plants by Margaret Barrett and Mike Hynes. All 3 members grew it beautifully and presented it to our meetings in prime condition.

In nature, *S. inodora* is found in fairly wet forests in Mexico, Belize, and Nicaragua. It occurs at altitudes between 800-1400 metres, mostly as an epiphyte, but occasionally as a terrestrial among grasses and mosses on rock faces or on steep hillsides where the spike can naturally work its way into the clear beneath the plant. The

name 'inodora' means 'without perfume', but is somewhat a misnomer because it does have a faint, sweet perfume. Perhaps whoever named it meant the name in comparison to some of the other, more powerfully perfumed species.

Inodora grows cool in Sydney but would likely need some protection in frosty areas. Like all Stanhopeas, it needs to be grown in a basket lined with paperbark, coconut fibre, or something similar that will allow the sharply pendent flower spikes to pierce through the lining as they develop. Just a warning with coconut fibre though, when I tried it in my backyard, the local birds began systematically stealing it all off the baskets for nesting material.

Media recommendations are variable. Most growers seem to use treated pine bark in various size combinations but many other materials are also used. My own concoction is about 60% medium bark, 30% commercial Cymbidium mix (which is much finer and wetter) plus 10% crumbled styrene foam. The mix needs to hold some moisture but not stay wet, and yes, I know, that's what we say for every orchid.

One experienced grower in Sydney also stresses the importance of air flow to growing Stanhopeas. He says his best growing plants are the ones growing swinging free under a Frangipani tree in the backyard.

Congratulations on the Best of Evening Seb. Its always a huge pleasure to see that gorgeous orchid of yours benched.

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Society News (if anyone has a news item, please phone Jim on 9476 3383, or email at jimbrydie@bigpond.com)

1. A Problem with Postage – I'm sure that by now you have all heard about Australia Post's announced new postal system. There are now 3 options for posting a letter. Each service has a different cost and a different speed rate for delivery. The fastest service is "Express" which is "guaranteed next business day delivery". Next is "Priority" which is "1 to 4 business days delivery", and finally, there is "Regular" which is "up to 2 days longer than Priority - 6 days". At the same time, the stamp for a simple letter (Regular Post), which is what we have been using for your monthly bulletin, has gone up from 70 cents to \$1. If we want it delivered more quickly, the next service up is "Priority". For this you use a Regular post stamp (\$1) plus a Priority sticker which costs 50 cents extra. To post a letter using the Express service, you must use a special Express Post envelope and the Australia Post website says the service costs, would you believe, - "from \$5.75". Holy Guacamole Batman – that's expensive.

As you can see, both the large cost increase and the huge increase in the potential time a letter takes to deliver, will present all societies like ours with serious problems. At present, we try to post the bulletins one week before the meeting, which gives me a couple of weeks or so to produce the bulletin. I would struggle to do it in less.

The time has come the Walrus said, to think of many things ...

2. The coming end of paper bulletins? – From today – if you have an email address, you must take your monthly bulletin by email, and you no longer have the option to take a paper copy as well. For the time being at least, we continue to offer a posted paper copy to the small number of members who have no other way to receive it. How long this continues will depend a lot on Australia Post.

We will continue to plan to post the bulletin a week before the meeting but it will go by regular post. It remains to be seen how long they will really take to deliver it. It might be pretty much as it is now but also it might not.

3. Welcome to a New Member – Kitt Reyes signed up to join our club at our last meeting. Welcome aboard Kitt, I hope you enjoy our meetings and other outings. Would all members take the opportunity to meet Kitt and say hello at the next few meetings. Its always hard for a new member to get to know people, please make an effort to help.

4. New Bulletin article competition – As mentioned last month, we are running the comp again this year. First prize is a \$20 sales table voucher, second place a \$10 sales table voucher (just the 2 prizes this time).

To reiterate the basics – articles can be on anything orchid related, and be a minimum of about a half page including any pictures, up to a max. length of about 2 pages. You don't need to be an expert – just give us your perspective.

Articles should be submitted to me at (jimbrydie@bigpond.com) in Microsoft Word format and will be subject to editing. As editor, I assure you that I will work with anyone who submits an article and will discuss any suggested modifications or tune ups. If anyone wants any help or to just talk about it, please call me on 9476 3383.

5. Membership Fees – It was good to see a healthy queue of members paying their fees last month. If you haven't paid yet, get your shoes on - we are the best deal in town - \$12 single, \$15 family. Great meetings, fantastic orchids on show every month, interesting speakers, and what a fantastic monthly bulletin (or so says the author anyway).

Make sure you send the form we sent last month with your payment, or bring it with you.

Orchid dates

20 March – MWOS Public orchid auction, starting 9.30am, Cromer Community Centre, Fisher Rd North

9–10 April – Collectors Plant Fair, Hawkesbury Racecourse, Clarendon (opposite RAAF Base)

15-16 April 2016 - Castle Hill Orchid Fair - Castle Hill Showground

13-15 May 2016 - Orchids Out West - Hawkesbury Racecourse, Clarendon (opposite RAAF Base)

25-26 June, Mingara Orchid Fair & Show, Mingara Sports Club

5-7 Aug, National Orchid Extravaganza (Cymbidiums), Dural

9-10 July 2016 - Tinonee Orchids Open Day and Show - 768 Tinonee Rd, Tinonee (near Taree)

19-21 August 2016 - St Ives Orchid Fair - St Ives Showground

It's Snow problem - On a bitterly cold winter morning a husband and wife in Dublin were listening to the radio during breakfast when the announcer said, "We are going to have 8-10 inches of snow today. You must park your car on the even-numbers side of the street, so the snowplough can get through." So the wife went out and moved her car.

A week later while they are eating breakfast again, radio announcer said, "We are expecting 10 to 12 inches of snow today. You must park your car on the odd-numbered side of the street, so the snow ploughs can get through.

The good wife went out and moved her car again.

The next week they are again having breakfast, when the radio announcer says, "We are expecting 12 to 14 inches of snow today. You must park...." Then the electric power went out. The good wife was very upset, and with a worried look on her face she said, "I don't know what to do. Which side of the street do I need to park on so the snow ploughs can get through?"

With love and understanding in his voice (as all men exhibit), the husband replied, "Why don't you just leave the car in the garage this time."

Best of the Evening Hybrid – RLC Island Charm x Snow Blind (*Allan & Gloria Cushway*)

Allan and Gloria have done it again. At our last meeting the judges gave this lovely thing it an AM award, but the cross hasn't even been registered yet so we must still use its parents names to define it.

Rlc Island Charm is a mix of 50% *Cattleya intermedia* (including a good dose of one of the Petaloid varieties by the look of it), and mix of 6 of the large flowered standard *Cattleya* species which make up 47% between them (eg *labiata*, *mossiae*, *gaskelliana*, *warscewiczii*, *trianae*). The remaining 3% is from *Rhyncholaelia digbyana* – whose key benefit is its amazing, huge flat frilly edged lip. The other parent of Allan and Gloria's orchid (*C. Snow Blind*) is *C. Angelwalker* x *C. walkeriana*, which makes it 75% *Cattleya walkeriana*. From the name *Snow Blind* one would have to assume that it is bred from the white *walkeriana* although there may be both white and pink forms. I have included pictures of some of these forebears so you can see where some of the characteristics come from.



an RLC Island Charm

a white C. Snow Blind

a petaloid C intermedia

C. warscewiczii

R. digbyana

The best of the evening orchid is a nice mix of its parents and displays its flowers very handsomely. I am not an orchid judge so I asked Garrie Bromley to give us the following insights into the aspects that make it award quality.

“In judging for an award, 70 of the 100 points are given for shape & colour/texture. With this orchid the shape is excellent. The petals are almost the same width as their length making them almost circular, the sepals are wide and the tips are rounded not pointed. If you look at the overall shape, the outline is very circular. The labellum is full and nicely frilled at the edge, again forming part of that overall circular outline. Also, if you look at the flower side on it is fairly flat. As to colour – they are very fresh and clean, the markings on the petals are appealing and the colours on the surface of the flowers look pristine and not faded.

Other considerations are the number, size, and arrangement of flowers. With mini & mid-sized Catts, for 2 flowers you get 3 points, for size it is only out of 5 points so you need to consider the parents.

Stem and arrangement. Here the flowers stood up well and were displayed well, not hidden down in the foliage.

Substance is the final consideration. Whether the segments of the flower are firm, not too delicate and prone to wilt. The more substance the better.”

As to culture - we published the basics of growing the *Cattleya* growing last month so there is no point in repeating them here. I have no idea in the world how Allan and Gloria (or Garrie and Lesley, or Trevor and Pauline, and others) grow their *Cattleyas* so well. If I did I would grow mine like that too, but alas for me, they are all champion *Cattleya* alliance growers and I am not. The subtle differences between sound basic culture and championship quality growing revolve around the skills and experience of the individual. Skills that enable the grower to see what is happening, to judge what to do, when to do it, and to match their growing conditions and culture more closely to the needs of the different plant types they grow. Not something that is simply passed on --- but I wonder if I might prevail on Gloria or Allan to write something up for us in a future bulletin ???

Congratulations on your Best of the Evening Allan and Gloria. Beautifully done and a lovely orchid.

Old Humour

89 years old Ron, was stopped by police around 2 am and was asked where he was going at that time of night.

Ron replied, “I'm on my way to a lecture about alcohol abuse and the effects it has on the human body, as well as smoking and staying out late.”

The officer asked, “Oh, really? And just who happens to be giving that lecture at this time of night?”

Ron replied, “That would be my wife.”

An older gentleman needed surgery and had insisted that his son, a renowned surgeon, perform the work. As he was about to get the anesthesia, he asked to speak to him. "Yes, Dad, what is it?"

"Don't be nervous, son; I really trust that you will do your best. But one thing I want you to know, that if it doesn't go well,.... if something happens to me, your mother is going to come and live with you and your wife...."

Best of the Evening Novice – Vanda coerulea? or V. Kultana Blue ?- grown by Jean Hocking



Aren't these blue Vandas just so delicious? I grow a few Vandas myself but my conditions don't really suit them.

Jean benched this one as V. coerulea in January but it also got a best of evening last year as V. Kultana Blue. I haven't managed to talk to Jean just yet to understand the name change but it isn't that strange. I assume she had advice from someone who would know.

The problem for all keen Vanda growers is that Vanda coerulea is such a popular and sought after orchid. The blue is entrancing, and as coerulea comes from higher elevations than most Vandas, it is also relatively cool growing – even more desirable. Orchid growers and nurseries have been breeding with V coerulea since 1894, and from at least the second half of the 20th century, nurseries have seriously line

bred coerulea to try and get better shape and colour. It is my opinion that in their zeal to meet market demands for better and better, there has been a bit of cheating going on. V. coerulea has a distinctive genetic fault from a judging point of view. Its petals are twisted so that they sit at almost 90 degrees to the plane of the sepals.

Modern nursery developed forms of coerulea have almost no trace of this trait. It may be that line breeding has removed it, but personally, I don't believe it. It is much more plausible that nurseries have used small percentages of hybrids with better form but, still the blue colour, to fix the problem. There are registered blue hybrid vandas with as little as 50% coerulea that look very much like a good coerulea. Like Kultana Blue for example (56% coerulea).

But who can really know. If there was cheating, the people who did it will never tell, and subsequent line breeding will have moved further and further on from where the lie began (if it did). And of course, I may be completely wrong. There are many experienced and eminent growers who disagree with my opinion on this matter.

Congratulations anyway Jean. A beautiful orchid by any measure or standard, and very well grown.

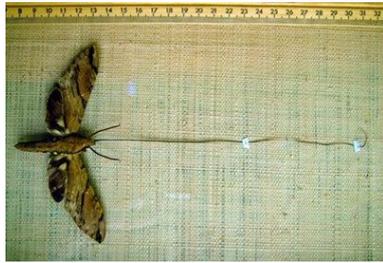
Angraecum Lemforde White Beauty – Jim Brydie

At our last meeting Trevor and Pauline Onslow benched this lovely orchid and it could easily have been given Best of the Evening. The huge white flowers are up to 15cm across and occur in 2's or 3's.

The genus Angraecum comes from Africa, Madagascar, and some of the nearby islands like the Comoros, Seychelles, and the Mascarenes. There are 200 species in the genus, some are tropical lowlands orchids, others are found in the mountains to about 2000 metres. However, just for the purpose of this little piece, we are only interested in two species - A. magdalenae and A. sesquipedale. The reason for our interest in just those two is that the lovely "Lemforde White Beauty" is the hybrid cross between them, and before I start to discuss the baby, I think it would be useful to tell you about the parents.



Angraecum sesquipedale is perhaps the most famous orchid in the world. It is the species made famous by Charles



Darwin when he predicted that there would be a pollinator discovered that could reach to the bottom of the extremely long (up to 35 cm) spur/nectary in the back of the flower. His prediction came true with the discovery of a long-tongued hawk moth which came to be known as Xanthopan morgani praedicta. The ruler in the picture is marked in centimetres. Due to picture cropping, the ruler starts at 7cm and ends at about 32.5cm. The moths tongue is normally held in a curled up spiral, but when it finds a flower it unfurls it and inserts it into the long nectary.



A. sesquipedale is a BIG orchid. The leafy, evergreen, stems can grow to nearly a metre tall and up to 60-80cm wide. The 30cm inflorescence can have up to 6 flowers but more usually 4. Each flower is around 20cm across. The species occurs in coastal areas of Malagasy Island (just off the west coast of Madagascar) and on Sainte Marie Island (just off the east coast).



It always grows as an epiphyte, on sloping tree trunks and crotches of trees, near the seashore and up to 100 metres elevation. It always occurs where there is good air flow. Its habitat is consistently hot and has abundant rainfall year round. The large, waxy, fragrant, long-lived flowers occur through the winter.

Few growers take on sesquipedale because of its size. In Sydney it needs a heated glasshouse but is otherwise quite amenable to cultivation. I grew one in my glasshouse for a number of years and it did quite well, even though it had

to tolerate down to 8 or 10°C from time to time. It was only a smallish plant when I got it and by the time I finally convinced myself I was kidding if I thought I could do it justice, it was about 40cm tall and about the same across. It still had a long way to go but it was off and running.

The other parent, *A. magdalenae*, is a really desirable orchid in its own right. It has a short (10cm) inflorescence that can have up to 5 large, white, fragrant flowers, but usually just 2 or 3. Each flower is about 10cm high x 8 to 9cm wide and lasts from 4 to 6 weeks if the plant is in good condition. *A. magdalenae* is much more compact than *sesquipedale*. A mature plant might reach only 30 to 35cm in height and they have a very useful habit of generating multiple stem growths from around the base. A large mature plant might comprise a dozen variously sized growths where the side stems tend to flower after the main stem. A very attractive and compact plant that can be in flower for a long time.

Angraecum magdalenae



In their wonderful book “An Introduction to the Cultivated Angraecoid Orchids of Madagascar”, Fred Hillerman and Arthur Holst tell us that *A. magdalenae* is (or was) relatively common through most of the primary mountain range along the east coast of Madagascar between 800-2000m. It grows in colonies on huge, flat boulders in pockets filled with several inches of rich humus and leaf litter. In its natural habitat, the plants are partly shaded by small trees, but are exposed to very bright light. The night chill at that altitude is tempered by the residual warmth of the boulders. They experience a distinct dry season during the Madagascan winter (May-September), when it receives almost full sun, early morning dew or mist, and occasionally even light frost. In Sydney this is a tough, cold growing orchid that wants plenty of light.



Angraecum magdalenae in natural habitat

Which now brings us back to the subject of this article - *A. Lemforde White Beauty*. Now why would a hybridist cross such different orchids? Well to get the best of both of them of course. What we want is an orchid as compact, tough, and cool(ish) growing as *magdalenae*, flowers as white and shapely as *magdalenae* but bigger if possible – and guess what – that is pretty much what *A. Lemforde White Beauty* is like. The cross was registered by Lemförder Orchideenzucht in Germany way back in 1984. Over the years it has received many awards including an FCC (first class certificate) and 6 AM’s (award of merit). In the FCC, the record says it had 4 flowers on two inflorescences, and the natural spread of each flower was 19.2cm wide x 18.7 tall. That is nearly 8 inches diameter all round – wow.

I have never grown it myself, but Trevor and Pauline tell me they grew their plant sitting on a bench for many years in what might be called a cool glasshouse. That is, there was no artificial heat, but it was protected from the outside by polycarbonate sheeting. It grew quite well there but only flowered sparsely. For the most part the plant had just a single central stem but eventually it ‘pupped’ all around the main stem the same way *Angraecum magdalenae* does. At the same time, the centre growth grew taller and put out side roots. To improve its appearance, they cut out the centre growth and repotted it separately. They also decided that the dark green of the leaves indicated that the plant wanted a lot more light, so they hung up both of them about 45-50cm under the poly roof sheets. Lo and behold, they both flowered beautifully this year. The one they brought to the meeting (the picture at the start of this article), is the top cut. The bottom half had more flowers, as you can see in the picture here, but sadly, the flowers on that piece started to fade just before our meeting. Such is life.



The Onlsow’s LWB (bottom section)

With hybrids however, we must be aware that in any hybrid cross there will be differences between individual plants. Some will exhibit characteristics closer to one parent, some will look like the other parent. When a cross is made multiple times using different parents, this is especially so, and in the case of Lemforde White Beauty (LWB from now on) this has certainly been observed. Some plants of LWB have flowers that look more like *sesquipedale*, some look more like *magdalenae*. I don’t have any personal experience growing it but I am sure that some will also be warmer growing than others. If you get a plant that doesn’t end up exactly the way you anticipated (in any hybrid cross) don’t immediately start cursing the nursery that sold it. It may just be fate.



two different clones of Lemforde White Beauty

Despite known differences however, most LWB’s are pretty much intermediate between the parents. Plants seem to grow to about 45 to 60cm tall. They do ‘pup’ around the base the same way *magdalenae* does, but not quite so readily or quickly. Most pictures I saw on the internet were of single growth plants that had become somewhat bare around

the base. This is more like sesquipedale so I am guessing, that they may need to grow to a certain height before the effect of apical dominance lessens and allows pups to form. (*apical dominance is the effect of hormones generated by the top growth of a plant which suppresses side growths. It is the reason that pine trees look triangular*)

I doubt that LWB is an orchid for the backyard shadehouse in Sydney but it will certainly tolerate fairly low temperatures. At Trevor and Pauline's home, winter temperatures probably get down around 3 to 4°C and this has been no problem. They might tolerate even lower for short periods but one parent (sesquipedale) is a distinct warm grower that grows all year round, the other (magdalenae) is from much higher elevations and has a 5 month, dryer, resting period. LWB should sit in the middle but there are probably some that would prefer a higher minimum temperature and year round culture.

You rarely see this orchid on sale as a seedling any more but there are many plants in culture out amongst growers. Keep your eye out at auction sales etc, this is an orchid worth waiting for.

References: Orchidwiz database, Angreacum blogspot at :
<http://angreacums.blogspot.com.au/search?q=lemforde+white+beauty&max-results=20&by-date=true>

The Secret of Fluffing up Sphagnum Moss - Jim Brydie

On a visit to Royale Orchids just before Christmas, owner Kevin Hipkins gave me a tip on using sphagnum moss that has proven absolutely amazing to me. But first, do you all know what sphagnum moss is?

Sphagnum is a genus of about 200 species of mosses found throughout the world. They grow in bogs, which are more or less shallow lakes or depressions which have a layer of the living sphagnum and other plants growing over the surface above a very wet mush of decaying material underneath. These lower layers become what is called peat moss.



I have been using Sphagnum moss as a medium for many years but in the early days I was always able to buy live 'sphag' which is supplied in a clear plastic bag, is wet but not dripping, and contains a mix of the green live moss and the yellowish brown moss from just underneath. The sphagnum moss we buy is harvested from certain bogs in various parts of the world (usually government controlled) so that they can continually regenerate, which can take between 8 to 30 years.

Live sphagnum is nearly impossible to buy anymore. Most growers now buy dried compressed sphagnum moss which is sold in various sizes. I buy a 'bale' which weighs 3kg, is 80 litres of compressed moss, and makes 240 litres of moss when wet, dampened, and fluffed up. On Garrie Bromley's suggestion, I bought one of those big see through plastic boxes with a clip on lid (at the reject shop) that is a perfect fit to store the dried bale. It fits under the benches in the shadehouse and keeps the bale dry while, over a period of time like a year or more, I harvest small quantities from it to use. I have a smaller see through box I keep in my potting area, to hold a quality of dampened, fluffed up sphag ready to use, and here is where we get down to the secret. How do you wet compressed dried sphag?



I had never asked anyone how to do it. It seemed rather obvious – put it in a bucket, fill it with water until it is saturated, drain it off, and then squeeze out the moss to remove the excess water. This was my process for at least several years but the resulting moist sphag wasn't anywhere near as good as the live stuff. At first I thought that it was because the sphag I was buying just wasn't good quality, but it was all that was going so I studiously picked out and discarded the worst and put up with it. More recently I wondered if there was something wrong with the way I was using it. About a year ago I was reading a Japanese website about growing *Sophranitis coccinea* in sphagnum moss and was surprised that the grower said to dampen an amount of dried sphagnum but whatever you do, don't soak it and wring it out. I knew this was an important clue, but how else do you dampen desiccated sphag? When it is as dry as it comes in the bale, it doesn't seem to wet very easily – or so I thought. I didn't follow it up.



And then there was that visit to Royale. During the visit, he was showing a few of us a deflasking method using sphag. His sphag looked so fresh and fluffy and the perfect amount of moisture. I asked how he got the sphag like that and he told me that it was dried sphag, and that prepared it a day in advance. He sort of fluffed it up dry, dampening it with just small quantities of water, bit by bit, fluffing and mixing the dampening sphag all the time to allow the moisture to spread. I listened carefully. I could hardly believe that this small change in the way you wet sphag could make that much difference but the proof was in front of me in Kevin's hands.

When I got home I tried it and it worked. When you first start dampening the dry sphag it looks like the small amount of water you are adding is hardly doing anything but sphag seems to have an amazing ability to absorb and spread the moisture among a volume of itself. As you fluff and mix, separating the strands, the moisture spreads, and as you keep adding small amounts, the whole volume you are mixing becomes uniformly damp and fluffed up. Magic.

I don't know what squeezing water out of sphag does to it but it seems to damage it in some way. I no longer do it.