



# THE MONTHLY BULLETIN OF THE KU-RING-GAI ORCHID SOCIETY INC.

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## **Next Meeting : Monday, 16<sup>th</sup> September, 2019**

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

The hall is open from 6.30pm. Please try and get there early to help set up tables, chairs and lighting. **Benching** is available shortly after 7pm but please be patient and **wait until tables and class dividers are in place.**

**The Culture Class** starts at **7.15pm** and the set up is still at the back of the main hall. This month **Dora Law** will take the class and talk about **Dendrobium species and softcanes**. Dendrobium is huge genus with a massive range of diversity but it certainly contains some of the most showy and hardy orchids grown by hobbyists. Dora is a grower after my own heart in that she grows a very wide range of types and kinds of orchids and has learned much by taking on such variety. Her experience and knowledge will make this a valuable learning session. Don't miss it.

**The main meeting commences at 8pm.** After the formalities of the general meeting, the judging, and the tea break, our **Guest Speaker** will be ..... **"me"**. Rather than using a Powerpoint this time I thought that I might do something practical. So the subject is **"Growing a Phalaenopsis in the Home"**. I pot in sphagnum moss so I will show you how to rehydrate desiccated sphagnum properly, de-pot and clean up a Phally, and then repot it into firmly packed sphag. I am hoping we might be able to rearrange the seating to get more seats closer to the action.

Our **super volunteers** this month are **Rhonda Omodei** and **Heather Sullivan**. Thank you for helping us Ladies.

## **Best of the Evening Species – Den. amethystoglossum - grown by Dora Law**

This Dendrobium is one of about 90 species in Section Calcarifera of the genus. There are also a number of other very well know and quite beautiful species in the group, including the lovely blue Den. victoria-reginae, but amethystoglossum is right up there amongst the most sought after. (see <http://orchidspecies.com/calcarifera.htm> )

Den. amethystoglossum comes from the island of Luzon in the Philippines, and is mostly found growing on mossy, limestone cliffs at around 1400 meters elevation. It has stiff vertical canes that can be up to 90cm tall but are generally much less. The piece I grow is only about 45cm tall and Dora's seems to be a bit under 60cm, so these are not huge unmanageable plants like some other members of Section Calcarifera.

In my own experience I have found it reasonably easy to grow but it does seem to prefer winter temperatures above 5°C. For a time I grew it in my covered shade house exposed to lower winter temperatures. It didn't die or go backwards, but it sure looked happier when I put it back in the glasshouse. I grow it in a terracotta pot in a bark mix but I feel sure it isn't all that fussy.

Dora is growing her specimen wonderfully. It had about 8 separate inflorescences with lovely crowded heads of the typical 3cm white flowers. The lip is the colourful part and in what I think is the typical form, the colour is amethyst as per the species name. That is, a sort of mauve pink, like the example at the right, but bluish purple lips like Dora's are also available. Sometimes there are amethyst or blue tips on the petals and sepals as well but this is much more rare. All are very attractive.

Congratulations on your Best of the Evening Dora. It was a delight to behold.



**mauve pink form**

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

**1. President Dennys' Desk** – I thank all KOS members who helped Cynthia Brydie design, provide flowers and foliage, build and prepare and then, clear our SIOS display. It was great to see such colour and be part of this great event. I also thank all our members who volunteered for the many functions that needed to be fulfilled right up until the doors were shut. At our last Society meeting, which was the first night after the St. Ives Orchid Show, we had 61 people, including 4 new visitors, which was wonderful. It seemed at first we were going to have a light meeting and then tired faces trickled in with many orchids and the final benching was beautifully packed. The culture class conducted by Chris Wilson went well and beautifully complemented Craig Miles' talk on Miltoniopsis which was well received and the supper was delightful.

**New Members** – It was a great pleasure to see two people sign up on the night as new members at our last meeting. I welcome Helen Williams and Anthony Mobbs to our Society. Please make them welcome and if you run into Grace Tang or Sandra Lee please let them know that I have their name tags and membership packages ready.

**Club Hosts:** Our society has a new Club Host, which now makes 4. Pauline Onslow was appointed as a Club Host at our last committee meeting. Congratulations Pauline, who now joins Dora Law, Lina Huang and Chris Wilson. New members please note that Club Hosts wear a yellow badge denoting their role, so if you need to know how the society works or need advice while at the supper table please engage with them.

**AGM is pending** – Our AGM will be held at our October meeting. I have offered to stand again for President. If you would like to nominate for any of the executive positions, including the President or, as a committee member please contact Jenny Richardson via the KOS email address soon. Committee positions can be fun and are certainly productive, so please have a serious think about applying.

**Novice Corner:** The term “benching” refers to the physical process of placing one or more orchids that you have grown for at least 6 months on the “bench” at one of our society meetings. However, the class placement of the orchid depends upon what type of orchid it is. If you don't know the name of the plant, call it “unknown”. The KOS benching rules can help to classify the orchid or simply ask the advice of an experienced member who will help you complete a benching card that sits on the table near your orchid. It is also important that the orchid be free of disease. If unsure, just bring the orchid in and get the advice you need.

**2. St Ives Orchid Fair 2019** – another very successful event, and all due to the fantastic work ethic from all our members who assisted. As Garrie Bromley mentioned last meeting in his thank you to members, all the displays were of outstanding quality. You could wander around the display hall from one to the other continually finding new things you missed on the previous rounds. The vendor's hall was also as fascinating as usual. I don't know how the vendors do it but the stalls seem to find new and interesting stock every year. I told myself I wouldn't buy anything this year but fell to my addiction yet again. Now where in heaven am I going to put them. Oh well, I'll find somewhere I guess. Thank you so much to everyone who participated with plants, the set up, and the duty roster. Fantastic work.

**3. Westfield Shopping Centre Show – Thurs 27<sup>th</sup>, Fri 28<sup>th</sup> Sept** – With St Ives over, we plunge almost immediately into our next event. Our combined show with the Berowra Orchid Society at Westfield Shopping Centre Hornsby. Set up is the day before the show on Wed. 26<sup>th</sup>. Exhibitors are requested to bench between 12.30pm and 3.00pm so that all exhibits are in position by 3.00pm. **Sorry, but we can't accept late exhibits since it is too disruptive.**

You are requested to take them to the show area outside David Jones on level 3. Just after that, the set up team will begin to build a display with all your lovely orchids. If you can't get your orchids there, but wish to enter an orchid, please contact one of our committee, but please allow enough time to make arrangements.

The show is open to the public from 9.00 am to 5.00 pm on both Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> Sept, and Friday 27<sup>th</sup>. Pull down is from 5 pm on Friday. If you have plants entered, please make sure you are there to pick them up. We must be all finished, plants gone, and cleaned up and out by 6.00 pm.

**Now don't rest on your laurels.** We need your plants and your physical help all over again for this one. Those entering plants, must complete a “nomination form” but don't be put off. It is just a formality to help us manage what we have and what should be judged in which class. **The show schedule and a nomination form will be accompany this bulletin.** If possible, email your form by 5 pm Tues (25<sup>th</sup>), to Dennys Angove on [angove@optushome.com.au](mailto:angove@optushome.com.au).

**Show Sales Table** - During the show there will be a members' sales table operating opposite the display. There is a 15% commission on all sales (distributed equally between the two clubs), but this is an opportunity for you to move on some of those spare divisions, and to make way for a few new orchids. Make sure your sales orchids are clean, disease free, and well established. We want your plants, but we reserve the right to reject any plants that are not up to the required standard. You don't need to provide a written list of sales plants, just put a **removable yellow price tag in/on each orchid, clearly marked with a sales price AND your name or initials.** But special rules apply to sales of natives.

**Native Orchid Sales** – The same procedure for native orchid sales, as we explained last month for St Ives, will be used. Any native orchids to be sold at Westfield, or any KOS Show, must be pre-listed with the club. To arrange listing and license tags, please contact Chris Wilson at [chriswilson1233@hotmail.com](mailto:chriswilson1233@hotmail.com).

**And finally, we need your help to run the show.** Rosters will again be circulated at the Sept meeting (which is just a

few days before the show). Roster shifts have been defined in 3 hour periods but please don't feel that means we only want you for 3 hours. If you can possibly offer to help us for more than one shift we will love you to come for as long as you can offer. We beg you to be generous with your time. If you can't be at the meeting, but can volunteer, contact Trevor Onslow as soon as able.

**4. The Library (from Chris)** – The Aug-Sept 2019 issue for the Australian Orchid Review is just into the library. It has different styles of cymbidium featured on the front and back covers and articles on cymbidiums featuring lots of illustrations by Peter Rochfort, a member from our sister club 'Berowra'. There are also articles on some of the less commonly seen species of Dockrillia, the hybrid Dockrillia Tweetie, Neobenthamia, and native orchids.

### Advance Diary Dates 2019

14-15 Sept (Sat-Sun) Wyong Spring Orchid Show, 4 clubs combined, Wyong Racecourse, Wyong

14-15 Sept (Sat-Sun) ANOS Sydney Native Orchid Spring Show, Kellyville Village, 90 Wrights Rd, Kellyville

26<sup>th</sup>- 27<sup>th</sup> (Thurs, Fri) Sept: **The Combined Berowra OS/ Ku-Ring-Gai OS - Hornsby Westfield Orchid Show, Level 3 near David Jones entrance. See item 3. above.**

29 Sep Sun, Hills District Orchids Open Day, 183 Windsor Rd, Northmead

### Best of the Evening Hybrid – Cymbidium Kimberley Valley 'Green Sensation' grown by Geoff Le Marne

Where does he keep getting these Fabulous Cymbidiums from? I used to buy Cymbid seedlings all the time and although I raised some nice florist flowers, there were no winners in there. Come on Geoff, have you got psychic abilities?

Kimberley Valley was registered in 2001 by Kimberley Orchids nursery in Victoria. Only two different cultivars have been awarded so far, one HCC, one AM. Neither was 'Green Sensation' but surely it should have one by now.

The parents of Kimberley Valley are Valley Zenith (circa 1982), and Allumination (circa 1994). Both parents are high quality green Cymbidiums with awarded cultivars but I must say I think Kimberley Valley is an improvement.

Surprisingly, Kimberley Valley breeding is dominated by just 3 species, although many others feature in much smaller amounts. The dominant 3 are the 2 green flowered species lowianum and hookerianum, and the pink to white flowered Cym insigne. In Kimberley Valley, both its parents, and much of the fore-breeding leading up to them, these 3 species are consistently dominant at over 70% between them. A very unusual breeding characteristic. I suppose that for long lines of green breeding it is to be expected that the green lowianum and hookerianum would feature strongly, but for the same 3 species to feature so consistently in almost the same proportions throughout has to more than a coincidence.

Both hookerianum and lowianum have green sepals and petals with a lip in white and red, which you could also say for Kimberley Valley, but the narrow segments of the species have come a long way to get to Kimberley Valley. Which brings us to the question as to why Cymbidium insigne should be predominant in the background of many modern Cymbidium hybrids. And by the way, although I showed a pink picture of insigne above, the species can range from white to pink and shades in between. But colour isn't the factor we are looking for here.



hookerianum



lowianum



insigne



The following extract from a great article "Cymbidium Pacesetters" by Julian Crocker on the OSCOV website, offers an insight into its importance. :-

*"In the course of cymbidium breeding, probably the greatest hybrid cymbidium of all time appeared in 1922 from the crossing of Cym. Eburneo-lowianum 'Concolour' with Cymbidium insigne 'Sanderæ'. It was of course Cym. Alexanderi 'Westonbirt', flowered by H. G. Alexander. It became the cornerstone parent for producing quality hybrids until recent times. It was the first chance tetraploid and owes many of its superior characteristics to this. We still grow Cym. Alexanderi 'Westonbirt' and although it is not up to show standard now, it is still a very useful cut flower and, by maintaining it in cultivation, we and others are preserving one of the greats from the past. There were many other crosses of Cym. Alexanderi made from the early 1900s, some of them albinos, and a number of clones from these also played an important part in the history of hybridising.*

*Of the Australian-flowered (English-bred) cymbidiums, one of the greatest was Cym. Girrahween 'Enid'. With Cym. Flamenco as one parent and Cymbidium lowianum as the other it also set a standard of excellence in Sydney that was unsurpassed for many years. By today's standards it is an ordinary, small, pleasantly*

conformed flower, but we must remember that sixty years ago when it first flowered, it was the best. Unfortunately, unlike Alexanderi 'Westonbirt', it was not a breeder and so it does not leave a line of progeny.

Also in the 1950s another great orchid appeared; Cym. Burgundian 'Chateau'. It received the highest accolades then and still remains an orchid that deserves a place in any collection. Its parentage, registered as Cym. (Remus x Babylon) has been contested, but when well flowered, it is still capable of winning on the showbench with its flowers having a conformation and colour that is difficult to surpass. Unfortunately it is also a non-breeding triploid and so although hybrids were attempted with hexaploid conversions, no outstanding progeny has resulted. ...."

As explained above, until Alexanderi 'Westonbirt', Cymbidium breeding stock were all diploids (2N) but the 'Westonbirt' cultivar was a chance tetraploid (4N). It was a mutation with a double set of chromosomes and displayed fuller shaped and heavier textured flowers. When crossed with diploid Cymbidiums the progeny inherited the superior characteristics but there was a problem because those progeny were all triploids (3N) and therefore almost entirely sterile and unable to be used to breed on further.

Eventually however, more chance tetraploids were found, and more tetraploid parents created. Eventually, man even found a way to create artificial tetraploids through chemical means.

In the pictures below, look at the difference between the tetraploid 'Westonbirt' cultivar and the other two diploid cultivars of Alexanderi ('Purity' and 'Fine').



Cym Alexanderi 'Fine'



Cym Alexanderi 'Purity'



Cym Alexanderi 'Westonbirt'

Congratulations on another Best of the Evening ripper Geoff. We love to see them when you bring them in.

### Best of the Evening Novice – Phalaenopsis unknown (white) grown by Bob Taffel



Gee, 'unknown' seems to be the biggest cross sold commercially these days, and it comes in so many different colours and patterns. Its hard to believe the breeding.

But wait, what's that? They are different? Well I'll be blown.

There was once a time when an orchid labelled unknown was labelled that way because its label had faded off, broken off, fallen out, or otherwise just been lost in the mists of time. Not today. Flowering orchids have become big business in florists, supermarkets, hardware stores, and even petrol stations. And the quality of the product is very good. So good that even orchid growers buy them despite them being un-named. Such is life I guess. Occasionally I have tried to identify a good looking Phally that is being sold by the thousands as identical

clones. The thinking being that an orchid cloned to that extent because it is very good, may well have been registered to get an award which would make it more valuable to clone. My thinking used to work occasionally, but more recently the breeders and producers don't even bother with awards and registration. And what is more, they use slightly different criteria to select individuals to multiply in the laboratory. Especially physical characteristics. They want the subject to be a good fast grower, absolutely reliable to flower triggering, and the physical dimension of the plant have to be exactly what they want. Miniature flowers have to be on miniature plants etc.

In the old days, white Phallies used to be bred for bigger and bigger, flatter, and best shaped flowers and more of them. They had to be to get awards over what was already in existence. Modern commercial criteria for production are not the same. They are not selling to orchid hobbyists who compete against each other to have the best. They are selling alternatives to a bunch of flowers or an African Violet, often purchased as a gift for loved one. Awards mean nothing because they don't sell with a name anyway. I wonder where this will all go in the longer term?

Bob's white Phally is a real charmer. I would give it space on my dining room table anytime. It looks to be closer to white species like Phal amabilis and aphrodite (syn formosum) but who knows what genes sit behind it.

Congratulations on your Best of the Evening Bob. It was really well grown and presented. Well done.

## Milioniopsis Culture (from Craig Miles presentation)

*Editorial Introduction : As our society published a history and introduction to these lovely orchids in only January this year (bulletin still available on our website), it was perfect timing for last meeting's presentation by Craig Miles to give us the insights of a specialist in the field of their culture. The principles he describes for potting, media, watering, humidity management, and feeding, certainly helped some of us understand why we may have failed with Milioniopsis in the past. Craig's understanding and experience certainly provides him with optimum results.*

*The following explanations were created from notes on Craig's presentation. All the products mentioned in the article are available at Craig's business – "Orchids of Distinction"*

### Temperature, Humidity and light

Milioniopsis species are a small group of the most beautiful of all orchids. They are found in the tropics from places like Costa Rica, Panama, Columbia, Venezuela, Peru & Brazil. Where they are found it is warm and humid, and in addition, they are found at only relatively low to moderate elevations. That is, 200 to 2000 metres, but mostly in the lower part of that range. They are definitely NOT what you might call an alpine plant.

Milioniopsis like moderate temperatures, medium light, and HIGH humidity. All are key factors but humidity is critical. They need around 70% relative humidity all the time. If they are grown in too low humidity they may tend to produce concertina like new growths and will not grow to potential.

To cater for his Milioniopsis' needs, Craig goes to substantial means to moderate winter low temperatures and summer highs. He showed us slides of massive rainwater storage bladders installed under his benches that act as a huge heat sink to absorb temperature during the day and release it again at night to moderate cold nights and reduce other heating. They are also a reserve of clean, soft, water in his closed growing house.

The growing house is under 50% shade cloth but he feels that additional shade could be needed in the hotter parts of summer. The growing house also has large evaporative coolers drawing fresh air from outside and delivering it into the growing environment through wet evaporative pads, all set up to run automatically and monitored and controlled via an app on his mobile phone showing him the environmental readings and graphs of the outside and inside environments. The evaporative air system both cools the air and raises humidity.

He also has multiple circulating fans in the growing house to keep the air constantly moving, and a misting system to help maintain humidity.

Even if you aren't able to implement the sophistication of Craig's system, these principles make clear what you might need to do help manage a smaller environment when Sydney's weather delivers 'un-Milioniopsis' conditions. Apply a bit more shade, put the plants nearer the ground to aid humidity, or perhaps even create smaller humidity boxes for yourself. Just don't let your Milioniopsis sizzle and fry.



**Key culture indicators** - Shading is important. Leaves need to be light green to get the best flowers. A yellow green may mean too much light, darker than normal green indicates too much shade.

- Humidity is critical to Milioniopsis as they have a soft thin leaf. Low humidity can produce concertina growths.
- Plants that are grown too cold tend to have black spots on their leaves (perhaps from cell collapse).

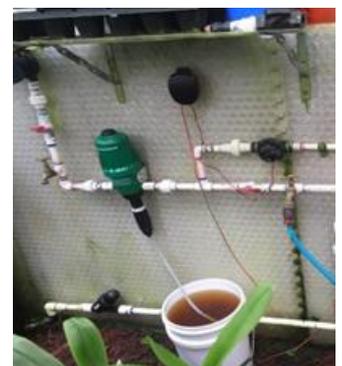
### The importance of feeding

The media in which we grow orchids provides virtually no nutrients. We must feed our orchids separately if we want them to grow successfully. Craig stressed that is extremely important to feed Milioniopsis while actively growing.

Craig uses a soluble chemical fertiliser - Peters Excel with Calcium and Magnesium, and applies it at 300 ppm (parts per million). This means 300 mg or 0.3 g in 1 Litre of water in which he also mixes additional iron chelate at 1 g per litre. Chelated iron is a special form of iron that enables iron to be applied in a way that doesn't immediately bond with other fertiliser elements and become locked away from plants.

He also applies liquid lime once per year, and Epsom salts at 1g per litre twice a year, and Ezi-Root to encourage root growth. Craig uses a commercial injector system that draws fertiliser concentrate out of a bucket and mixes it into the water stream when watering or spraying.

We smaller hobby growers can achieve a similar system of application by using a relatively inexpensive and less sophisticated venturi siphon injector system attached to our hose. The end result is pretty much the same, but the make-up of the concentrate bucket for the venturi tube has to be worked out accurately in advance.



A venturi siphon device (a more simplistic device than Craig's) draws up concentrate at a rate specific to that

particular brand of device, usually somewhere around 1 part concentrate to 16 parts or 19 parts of water, depending on the device. There was an article dealing with venturi devices in our Dec 2016 Bulletin (see our website) and many such devices are available online if you google 'fertiliser venturi siphon'.

Also, our Society sales table sells what is perhaps the same as Craig's fertiliser – ie Peters Excel CalMag Finisher.

Craig expresses the rate he uses in parts per million which may need some explanation. The "ppm" term tells you how much of something is dissolved in water, expressed in the number of milligrams of the substance is dissolved in each litre of water. In other words, Craig's 300 ppm concentration is 300 mg (just under one third of a gram) per litre of water but he is using it every time he waters.

For the Fertiliser Kur-Ring-Gai Orchid Society sells on its sales-table, we recommended use at 5 grams per 9 litre bucket of water (about 550 "ppm"). This solution is made to water directly onto the plants, not for a concentrate bucket. (Note that if you use kitchen measuring spoons to measure the 5 grams, *it is approx 1 level 5ml spoonful*)

**Seedlings** - In addition to their fertiliser program, Craig always uses Auxinone root hormone to stimulate root growth when repotting established plants and de-flasking seedlings.

### Potting

All repotting at Orchids of Distinction is done in March or November. Plants are grown in square pots and trays to provides spacing. Pot sizes are based on plant size and all the same size pots are grouped together to facilitate appropriate watering.

The potting mix used is one part charcoal, 1 part styrene, 1 part perlite, 2 parts kiwi bark, 2 parts composted bark. The grading of the bark used is dependent upon pot size. Smaller pots, smaller bark. Regular repotting in fresh mix, and growing in a pot just big enough, will promote good root growth.



### Flowering

Miltoniopsis will try and flower three times a year. Generally, February, July and October. For show plants, February flowers are removed due to lack of size and quality of the flower. This is caused by the hot weather over the summer months. By removing the flowers, energy is retained in the plant to enable new growth and bigger bulbs.

**Light** - To produce a plant with a nice display of flowers, spikes are staked with the plants backing onto the north facing wall of the glasshouse (i.e. facing north, the direction of maximum light). This helps to ensure all flowers are facing the same way.

**Managing flowers** - Staking occurs as soon as the flowers start to come away from the stem and are arranged around the plant. To give longevity to your flowers, do not allow them to get wet as they are soft and will rot quickly.

Miltoniopsis flowers will last for 4 weeks in good conditions when still on the plant but last only a few days as cut flowers in a vase.

### Plant Care Summary

- \* Plants that are grown too cold tend to have black spots on their leaves. To prevent this offer more winter protection
- \* Humidity is critical to Miltoniopsis as they have a soft thin leaf. Leaf tips become black if humidity is kept too low.
- \* Leaves need to be light green not a yellow green to get the best flowers. Shading is important
- \* Plants tend to shed leaves during the summer. You must pick these up to prevent bacterial rot around the plant.

**Pests** - To minimise pests and diseases in the growing areas at Orchids of Distinction we use:

- Octave fungicide at 3 grams per litre as a spray
- Lorsban insecticide at 1ml per litre as a spray
- SLUG OUT for slugs and snails (very effective and such small pellets most pets ignore them)
- Racumin to control mice

*Editorial Conclusion - even if your circumstances don't presently allow for installing humidifiers, misters, or electronic control systems, Craig's explanation of the fundamentals the plants are looking for will still allow you to figure out how best adapt your conditions to provide your Miltoniopsis with what they require to grow properly.*

**Pirate Joke** – A seaman meets a pirate in a bar and talk turns to their adventures on the sea. The seaman notes that the pirate has a peg leg, a hook, and an eye patch. The seaman asks, "so, how did you end up with the peg leg?" The pirate replies, "Harr, we were in a storm at sea, and I was swept overboard into a school of sharks. Just as my men were pulling me out, a shark bit my leg off."

"Wow!" said the seaman. "What about your hook?" "Harr," replied the pirate, "we were boarding an enemy ship and were battling the other sailors with swords. One of the enemy cut my hand off."

"Incredible!" remarked the seaman. "How did you get the eyepatch?"

Harr replied the pirate. "A seagull dropping fell into my eye".

"You lost your eye to a seagull dropping?" the sailor asked incredulously.

"Harrrr", said the pirate, "it was my first day with the hook."