

MIRIAM ANN ORCHIDS NEWSLETTER
ALAN'S COLUMN MAY, JUNE 2011

The first of the annual fairs has just been held at Castle Hill in Sydney's north western suburbs. Being the first it is usually very successful. The sad note is that Ray Clement will not be on the organizing committee in the future. Ray have been a great help to all of us as that are vendors since its beginnings. Let us hope he will be able to spend a bit more time with his family.

The weather in Sydney has not been great over the autumn period. Bulb and root rots plus all sorts of leaf spots *Phyllosticta capitalensis* has showed up on some Cattleyas and dendrobium speciosums. This fungus is very hard to control. In the good old days of some years ago it was controllable with some of the systemic fungicides that were available. I can remember the trial work that the late Frank Hampshire carried out on the use of ROPSIN® on these leaf spots with great success.

Scale insects are becoming harder and harder to control, especially *Diaspis boisouvalii*. It attacks most genera especially cymbidiums and Cattleya alliances. To control this pest one must be vigilant! Remember, most sprays will burn or spot developing buds and flowers. Be careful! Most oils work, but a number of applications will be required. Some of the sprays that can be used are as follows:- ANTI-SCALE®, MALASCALE®, CLEAR WHITE OIL, PEST OIL®, ECO-OIL®, SPRAYTECH OIL®, ROGOR®, MALDASON® and CONFIDOR®. Many growers use an oil and add MALATHION, DIAZINON or ROGOR to the oil at label rate. Years ago SUPRACIDE® was widely used as it was legally registered for use on orchids for many varieties of scale insects. As of now, SUPRACIDE® will not be available for use. Once stock has gone, that will be the end of SUPRACIDE®.

If you mix your own compost, now is the time to put your heap down. If you are using pine bark, make sure it has matured and treated for nitrogen draw down. A few years back one would treat the bark as follows:

1.5kg of Lo-B urea
600gm of Iron sulphate
1kg of fine lime (agriculture)

When you make this mix up we used to add some crushed up some broken fern fronds and or some old tree fern fronds chopped up or even some casuarina needles. Let stand for a few months to mature.

If you are using medium coir you can make the following mix:

To each metre of crumbled up coir add the following and mix well:

1.0kg Dolomite
1.5kg Gypsum
0.3kg Iron sulphate
0.3kg Micromax (granular trace elements).
1.5kg Super fine superphosphate if using this mix for cymbidiums add the following:

0.6kg Calcium nitrate
0.6kg UF-38 (slow release nitrogen) dampen down and store in plastic bags or plastic garbage bins.
Before use – check pH of mix – pH 6.0 – 6.5.

Well what should we be doing now!

PHALAENOPSIS: Now is the time to give your plants the magnesium treatment. Mix up 6 grams of magnesium sulphate per one litre of water. Spray weekly for one month. During this one month period, DO NOT USE ANY OTHER FERTILISER.. Make sure you spray over the plant, especially under the leaves. Watch for mealy bug. Spray if necessary with CONFIDOR®.

Keep plants – just moist. Increase light – remove shading. Don't turn heat on until June the first! If you can afford it – try and maintain a minimum night temperature of 15 to 20 degrees Celsius. This year I will be dropping my minimum night temperature to around 12 degrees and drop the humidity down a little. During winter many growers like to use a high phosphorus fertiliser such as PETERS BLOSSOM BOOSTER (10+13+17+TE). This is the equivalent to the oxide formulation of 10+30+20. Start fertilising after your month of magnesium sulphate. Remember, when you have finished the magnesium programme flush out all of the undissolved salts before going on to your winter nutrition programme.

CYMBIDIUMS: Now is spike time. Move plants under shelter as spikes leaves the sheaf. Stake if necessary. Face racemes to the north. Place a few snail pellets into each pot. If mites are still around mist with MAVRIK®. If the weather is wet, cold etc. you may have to mist the plants with IPPON 500 AQUAFLO® to help control *Botrytis cinerea*. If flower spotting is a problem you may have to spray at 14 day intervals at 100ml in 100lt of water. NOTE: DO NOT OVER USE ANY DICARBOXIMIDE FUNGICIDE or you may end up with a resistance problem.

NOTE: IPPON® is available from Miriam Ann in one and five litre containers. DO NOT OVER WATER or you may end up with bulb rot problems. You should be able to control *Pythium spp.* problems by drenching with ALIETTE®, FUNGARID® or PHOS ACID -600. Watering weekly should be ample during the flowering season.

During winter spend a little time searching out some desirable seedlings at your local orchid nurseries and at the Cymbidium Fair at Dural on the 12th to 14th August. If you need directions on how to get there or other info give Peter Moore a ring on 02 9749 2205 B.H or 0438 914077a.h. The other big show is the "Big One". This is held on August 19th – 21st at the St. Ives Show Ground, Miriam Ann Orchids will be in attendance!

CATTLEYAS: By now all plants should be under cover. If you have a heated glass house, try and keep the minimum night temperature around 10 degrees Celsius. Water only when needed. Keep fertilising with an organic such as GROWTH® BLOOD & BONE at 3ml per litre. Apply weekly until mid winter then every 3 to 4 weeks. Watch for scale. If a problem spray with ANTI-SCALE® or ECO-NEEM® mixed with ECO-OIL® or SPRAYTECH OIL®. If flower spotting occurs, use the same control as in the cymbidium notes. Make sure plants have plenty of light and air circulation.

AUSTRALIAN NATIVE: Up here in Sydney they have been growing very well. Leaf spot has not been too bad. The use of T.M.T.D. has been very successful to some growers the WET autumn! Some growers have been using TRIFORINE. Aphids have been a pest but CONFIDOR® and PIRIMOR® is instant death. Still keep fertilising with MERRI FERT weekly or top dress with MERRI COTE. Apply now and again in three month time. This year looks like it is going to be a speciosum year! Big fat long bulbs! Lets hope! Don't forget the SPECIOSUM spectacular held at Kempsey on 3rd and 4th September. I will not be there this year as we hope to be in Switzerland, England etc. then. But there is always another time. If you grow natives – Be There!!

NOBLE DENDROBIUMS: Plants are now finished maturing. Now is the time to restrict watering. Only water when plants are nearly dry. Once the flowering nodes start to appear you can increase your watering a little. A little high potash fertiliser helps to increase the size of your flowers. Watch for aphids and loopers. Use DIPEL for grubs and CONFIDOR® for the aphids. Give plants plenty of light.

TECH TALK

Continuing the series on ag. Chemicals, this issue we will write about a very famous general purpose protectorant fungicide. This fungicide has had many formulations and trade names over the years. The one that interest orchid growers is a product called CHEERS 720®. This product is manufactured by an Australian Company called Colin Campbell (Chemicals) of Orchid Fertiliser A and B fame!@

The active constituent is a 720 g per litre formulation called CHLOROTHALONIL. It is a wonderful protectorant fungicide to control many fungal diseases that cause havoc to our orchids. Some of the diseases that can be controlled are as follows: Botrytis, Rusts, Septoria and many leaf spots such as Alternaria.

The rate of use for orchids is 100ml in 100 litres of water. Some of the precautions when using CHEERS 720® are as follows: DO NOT mix spraying oils or wetting agents with CHEERS WEATHERSHIELD®.

CHEERS® is compatible with other wettable powders, but, do not mix with oil – based emulsifiable or flowable pesticides. Oils SHOULD NOT be sprayed on plants treated with CHEERS® for at least 14 days after the last spray. Wetting agents are NOT required. I have never mixed a wetter or oil with using CHEERS®.

Technical info: It was formulated in 1963. Has low mammalian toxicity oral L.D.50 is greater than 10,000mg per kg. Has many formulation such as wettable powders flowables, dusts, emulsions and of coarse, the latest technology in Colin Campbells WEATHER SHIELD formulation. It is a class 6 poison. Only available in 5 litre containers. Available from MIRIAM ANN ORCHIDS.

Don't forget the next growers class will be held on Saturday 14th May at 2p,m. We will be dividing and potting plants that Gay Sacks has donated to our group. If you are lucky you could end up with a lovely plant.

This will be our last class for a while as we will be heading for Queensland and will not be back until the middle of July. This means our newsletter will be suspended for a while. The next class will be 13th August the same weekend as the Cymbidium Club fair at Dural as we had to fit it in before St Ives Orchid Fair. Then we will be away from the end of August until mid October on our overseas trip, then back to Queensland to see our new grand daughter as she will be born while we are away. (hoping all goes well with this). So the rest of this year will be very busy and hopefully very rewarding. We will put out our newsletter when ever we can to keep you informed of what to do over the next few months.

DON'T FORGET the Conference in Perth next year. The Regional Conference at Nowra 1st and 2nd October or the Winter and Spring Shows at Batemans Bay and Moruya – Narooma. For further information on these show ring:

For more details regarding the 19th A.O.C Conference and Show, contact Merle Arrah on aocconference@dodo.com.au.

Well this is all for now. Keep growing your plants to perfection while we are gone. See some of you next Saturday and those who live in the Sydney area at the "Big One", At St. Ives Show Ground in August. Meanwhile some of you in the lower Queensland region we will see over the next few weeks as we have our travelling caravan and give some talks to your societies.

Until Then

GOOD GROWING

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