

MIRIAM ANN ORCHIDS NEWSLETTER
ALAN'S COLUMN NOVEMBER 2008

By the time you read this newsletter most of the orchid shows will have finished. This year we have seen a lot of new cymbidium seedlings flowering for the first time. Cattleyas have also produced a lot of new colour combinations, flares, multi coloured and of course the big exhibition types. In the Australian Natives the hybridists have been very busy with line breeding. Dendrobiums, especially the "Cooktown" line and those wonderful "Sarcs:". When you see some of these, you wish you would have bought some of the seedlings when they were first offered! The moral of this saga is always buy a few seedlings of the genera you like most. To see what is on offer, one must circulate to some of the orchid fairs that come around every year. You can always send away for a "cattle dog" and make your choice, then order by mail. But nothing beats talking to the hybridizer at a fair!

This year we have had some great fairs at St Ives, Castle Hill, Richmond and Cronulla. The one day fairs at Graeme and David Banks have also been very successful. Some of the orchid vendors often bring a few niceties that do not reach the main fairs!

So next year, make an effort to visit a fair and buy a seedling or two!

During the year I have had numerous enquiries of where to go to buy seedlings – mature plants and of course all of those bit and pieces that are needed to grow your plants. Most of the orchid nurseries advertise in the Australian Orchid Review, Orchids Australia or the Orchadian. Starting in the next issue I will start to compile a list of suppliers that I have personally dealt with, and or know the principals! I hope this information will help those new growers.

GREAT NEWS!!

For those growers in the Sydney area, we now stock 'ORCHID MATE' coco peat. This will help a lot of you who run out of your potting mix during a weekend potting session. At the moment we are only stocking medium and course grades.

For all of your "ORCHID MATE" supplies, give Miriam or myself a ring on 4739 5141 or 0439 514141.

GROWING REQUISISTS

Some of you have been a bit worried since I retired that I may not have all the products that we used to stock. Well, the good news is we still stock most of your needs, and can still get most other products. In fact, I can now source a few different brands of products that I could not acquire before! So hope this puts your minds to rest!

To those growers who use "ORGANIC LIFE" for top dressing plants or putting in potting media, we are pleased to announce that we can still supply bags of "ORGANIC LIFE".

FERTILISER HANDBOOK

We are pleased to announce that the first printing has sold out, but we now have plenty of copies in stock again. This is available at \$22.00 plus postage. If you would like a copy, give Miriam a ring or send an email.

MERRI COTE

Sorry that our supply had run out. All sorts of problems arose regarding the mixing, then the delivery caught a snag! We now have some emergency supplies until our consignment arrives in the next few weeks.

FERTILISER COSTS

During this year the cost of base fertilisers have been rising at a great rate. Some ingredients have gone up over 100%. This has effected the price of most formulated fertilisers such as the PETERS and OSMOCOTE range. NITROPHOSKA BLUE has jumped nearly 120%!! Even garden fertilisers have gone up such as Sulphate of Ammonia, Urea, ShirleyNo17 etc.etc. What makes it worse is that the transport companies have now put a fuel surcharge on most deliveries which compounds into a higher G.S.T component! Things must get better!!

Our "MERRI" range of fertilisers have only gone up marginally. We are trying to keep the prices down as long as possible. I hope you all understand.

NEW PEST and DISEASE HANDBOOK.

As mentioned in a previous newsletter the DPI'S new book is now available. This is a must for all orchid growers. If you would like a copy send \$29.95 plus \$6.00 for postage to BOOKSHOP, ORANGE AGRICULTURAL INSTITUTE, FOREST ROAD.

ORANGE NS.W. 2800

The book code number is B276 Enquiries phone (02) 6391 3994. This handbook is a must!!

AMINO – K

Amino – K has been around for sometime now and it has got a band of supporters. Most growers use it after repotting – dividing to help get the new roots away. Others use it as a flower stimulant. Some years ago I used it on one bench and found I had to use it in conjunction with a high nitrogen fertiliser. Because of the Amino Acids and plant hormones Amino – K should encourage a good root system. It is said it helps prevent fungal diseases and helps to reduce the attack of two spotted mites. My trial plants (20) got black spot and also got a two spotted mite infestation. But mind you, all the other plants had their problems too.

The analysis is as follows: N1.0 P7.0 K 18.5

Nitrogen 10.0g/l

As nitrate 0.49g/l

Ammonium 0.6g/l

Phosphorus 70g/l

Potassium 185g/l

As potassium sulphate 110g/l

Sulphur 53g/l

Trace elements : Iron, Manganese and Zinc as amino acids + silica.

Rate: as irrigation 4ml/l, foliar 1ml/l

Well what should we be doing to our plants?

CATTLEYAS and allied genera can now be taken out of their winter homes and make friends with some good fresh air. Now is the time to move plants out into your shade house. Either place on benches or hang on the proverbial barbed wire fence. Don't place plants in full sun. They will need around 50% shade, depending on where you live. Full sun can burn their leaves very easily!

Plants that are over grown can now be divided, pot on or even a good clean up. If you had back cut during the winter, wait till you see signs of new growth before removing plant from pot. Repot into your favourite potting mix. You can apply a little MERRI COTE around the top of the pot or even place a few pellets of ORGANIC LIFE® around the top.

Check plants for scale insects around the bulbs and under the leaves. Spray with ECO – OIL® or ANTI-SCALE®. Inspect bulbs for signs of bulb rot. Browning or dark areas on bulbs. Spray

with AGRFOS 600® if you have a large collection or use ANTI ROT® if your collection is on the small side.

Water plants when just starting to dry. Fertilise weekly with GROWTH BLOOD and BONE® at 5ml/litre.

PHALAENOPSIS: At long last my plants are now starting to send down new roots and a new set of leaves are starting to develop. A lot of growers have had a few disasters this year. For some unknown reason I have found many plants just would not respond to the spring weather conditions. Many plants that were repotted last autumn did not move! Bacterial rot was a problem and many plants refused to spike. Those plants that are overgrown can now be repotted into your favourite growing media.

Watch for bacterial spot. If you see watery spots on the leaves, spray with HYSAN®. DO NOT OVER WATER. Depending on the weather, you may have to water every four or five days. Fertilise weekly with GROWTH BLOOD and BONE® at 5ml/litre. Watch out for grubs on the new leaves. Spray with DIPEL® or SUCCESS®.

AUSTRALIAN NATIVES: Now is a good time to repot those overgrown plants. After dividing, drench plants with AUXINONE®. This will make the plants send down new roots. If you want the best out of your plants for next year, fertilise every second week with MERRI FERT at 1.5gram/litre and add the required amount of SUPERTHRIVE®. This will push the new growths along. Keep plants just moist for maximum growth. Watch for black spot. Spray Plants with BRAVO®, CAPTAN® or MANCOZEB®.

CYMBIDIUMS: By the time you read these notes, the season will have finished. Maybe a few late clones could be still in bloom, but most will have finished. Divide plants as soon as possible into your favourite growing media. Don't forget to add a little iron sulphate too and zeolites to your mix! After repotting drench plants with AUXINONE to encourage new root growth. For fertilising you can apply MERRI COTE around the top of the pot or apply a 4-5 month controlled release fertiliser – or fertigate with PETERS GENERAL PURPOSE – or use MERRI FERT or even GROWTH BLOOD and BONE. By the second week in November change over to PETERS EXCEL Cal-Mag Hi K or MERRI FERT to encourage spike initiation.

Keep plants JUST moist (weekly at the moment). Check for two spotted mites under the leaves. Spray with ECO OIL® mixed with AZAMAX®. Some growers like to use NATRASOAP® mixed with a vegetable oil such as SPRAYTECH OIL®. Watch for leaf spot. Spray with ECO ROSE®, MANCOZEB®, CAPTAN® or THIRAM®.

Give plants plenty of air space and room to grow. Give plants plenty of sun WITHOUT BURNING.

If your plants are carrying seed capsules, watch out for the dendrobium beetle, for they can burrow into the pod!

MISCELLANEOUS: Yes! That word again. All those wonderful plants lumped together. Repot if necessary, weed out those plants not doing so well. Top dress with new compost if necessary, plus a little MERRI COTE. Check for grubs, beetles etc. Spray with NATRASOAP® or AZAMAX®. These two sprays will clean up all of your orchid pests. Look under leaves to see if there are any nasties there. I was sent a few leaves off some Pleurothallis and you would be surprised what I saw under the leaves. If leaves turn yellow, drop off, inspect plant carefully.

FREE FREE.

I have some six foot Malleys glazing bars, that I do not wish to store any longer. Forty years is long enough. If you want them, first in has them!!!

FOR SALE FOR SALE

Miriam's little FORD LASER is up for sale. As she has updated, she no longer drives two cars. It has done around 56500 Km's, automatic, all standard extras plus cruise control. It is a 2001 model and the colour is Aquamarine. Her asking price is \$9950.00. If you hear of anyone wanting a small petrol miser to go shopping etc. give Miriam a ring on 4739 5141 or my mobile 0439 514141.

CHRISTMAS PARTY

This year it will be held on Saturday afternoon the 8th November commencing at 2pm. Terry Davis, one of Sydney's best cymbidium growers will be giving us a short talk on how he grows his cymbidiums. Over the years he has won many prizes with his plants. He also puts on displays with Norm Shipway alias "DENDROBE BEETLE" from the Cymbidium Club and Parramatta Societies.

This should not be missed!

After Terry's presentation we will proceed with our annual B,B,Q party. Ladies are asked to bring something along for the extra's. If you do not know what to bring, give Miriam a ring. A chair or two could be helpful.

All of our growers group are welcome including members of the Blue Mountains and Penrith Districts Orchid Society. If possible could you give Miriam a ring if you are coming. So as we know how many Snags, bread, salads will be needed. If you could do this it will be a great help for the catering arrangements. Thanks.

Well this is all for now. After the November class, the next class will be held on 14th February 2009.

There will be a short Newsletter for December, and again the end of January 2009.

Until next time

GOOD GROWING

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