

MIRIAM ANN ORCHIDS NEWSLETTER
ALAN'S COLUMN SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER 2008

Over the last month I have been very busy travelling up the north coast of N.S.W dropping into some societies to give a presentation or have a day long workshop. This started early this month with a day long workshop at Tinonee Orchids at Taree. From there to Nambucca, Kempsey, Alstonville and the Maclean Society. I had a great time visiting these societies and then visiting some of the members collections. I had a wonderful time with the Maclean society where we had a one day workshop for the local growers. This was really great to see some of these growers. In fact all of the Societies we visited wanted as much information as possible on culture etc. In fact some of these Societies up north want more workshops next year! Miriam and I would like to thank all of those Societies we visited for their hospitality. Thanks! Next year – February – March!

Those Societies up north who read these notes, and would like us to come along etc please drop me a line or ring and I will see if I can fit you in!

We found it hard to find out meeting nights and secretaries phone numbers up in the northern area. Ray Clements of Tinonee has produced a hand out of all the Societies from Taree to Nambucca and I heard a whisper that Murray Shergold is going to produce one from Nambucca to the border This will be great for people on holiday as they could drop into a meeting or maybe give a presentation or even let their member know what is happening down in the big smoke!

At the moment I am writing these notes at a little place called Emerald Heights, just north of Coffs Harbour. This is where I started to write the second edition of my Fertiliser Handbook (yes at last my Fertiliser Handbook second edition is now printed). After a few hiccups its out. Many growers have asked me over the last few months, when its ready please send me a copy! Well! I have misplaced the names and addresses of those growers. (not lost). Could those growers please ring, write, email me so Miriam can get them posted out to you. The cost is \$22.00 plus postage. Thanks!

While away we have had rain, wind, cool, hot, so I wonder what has been happening down your way.

Well, what should we be doing to our plants? Most cymbidiums are now in the later part of the season. Forty years ago we would have called then the mid-season show bench! Clones like Swallow, Cassandra, Anita, Woodpigeon, Sirius, Balkis etc. After these clones finished we had the Etta Barlow's, San Francisco's etc. But now, by the time we get to October, the season is virtually gone!

Dividing, repotting should now be full steam ahead. After dividing give plants a good soak and then give plants a drench with a good rooting compound such as AUXINONE®. This will get the roots on the move for you. While repotting, many growers top dress with a slow release such as Alan's Merri Cote. This will help get the plants on the move over the next few months.

Mature plants, fertilise weekly with MERRI FERT or CAMPBELLS YELLOW, or even PETERS GENERAL PURPOSE. After flowering it is a good idea to keep the potassium levels up a bit.

Now is the time to pot on your seedlings. Give them a drench with GROWTH BLOOD and BONE or MAJOR CARP®. This is also a good time to introduce SUPERTHRIVE® to your plants.

Water every five to seven days late in the evening. DO NOT OVER WATER newly divided plants. If you experience bulb rot after repotting, drench plants with ANTI ROT®, AGRI FOS 600® or FONGARID®. Inspect for two spotted mites. Many growers are now using AZAMAX®. A little on the dear side, but it works, especially if mixed with ECO OIL®. Watch for black spot fungus. There are many preparations you could use such as ECO ROSE®, MANCOZEB®, ZINEB®, CAPTAN® and THIRAM®.

CATTLEYAS are now on the move. While away I saw many outstanding plants and they were all coming into growth! Divide if necessary, once you see some root action. After doing so, give plants some rooting hormones. Mature and seedlings – SUPERTHRIVE®. Watch for scale. Use one of the horticultural oils such as PEST OIL® or ECO OIL®. Water when necessary.

PHALAENOPSIS are now growing well. Repot if necessary. Fertilise with GROWTH BLOOD and BONE. Watch temperature in your house. Don't be too eager to turn the heat off. Keep just damp i.e. maybe you could water every five to seven days. Watch for mealy bug and bacterial spot.

AUSTRALIAN NATIVES have been great this year. Now is the time to divide, repot etc. Watch for Blackspot. If you can purchase it, try BRAVO®. There are many generics around that could be cheaper and in smaller packs.

Watch you watering. Over watering a newly divided native is history!! i.e. it will soon be on its way to heaven!

With spring now here, our plants should be now moving into growth. Cymbidiums thinking about next years flowering, Cattleyas maturing or pushing new growths, natives jumping into growth and all sorts of botanical wonders jumping ahead. Softcane dendros now in their floral glory, and some of our deciduous plants now waking up such as Thunia. This means this wonderful genera needs repotting into a very rich humus type media to make them grow and mature quickly so as they will flower for Christmas. Don't forget to place a small saucer of water under each plant. This works wonders! Plenty of air, moisture and liquid Growth Blood and Bone!

Now is time to get a good magnifying glass and look under the leaves of your pet masdevallias for little mites. This is very important as these little mites can spread VIRUS!.

Now is the time you can repot and give attention to all of your collection. Start cleaning up the growing areas, leaves, weeds etc. (I will have to do mine also). This is a great time to inspect all of your plants. Have a great time!

While I have been away I loaned my good friend Colin Andrews some slide programmes that he is now converting to digital programmes. If some country societies would like some of these discs I feel sure Colin will oblige as long as his out of pocket expenses are met. Give me a ring if your society is interested.

I managed while away to drop into Kempsey for a few days for the KEMPSEY SPECIOSUM SPECTACULAR. This was the seventh annual spectacular organised by Ted and Winsome Walmsley with the help of the ANOS MID NORTH COAST GROUP. This is a must for all to see even if you don't grow D SPECIOSUM. To see so many plants of the one SPECIES in flower all at the one time is something all orchid growers should see. Visitors arrived from all parts of Australia as well as New Zealand. The ANOS Mid North Coast Meeting was held in the big tent which include a Bar B Q and Phil Spence gave a wonderful presentation on some of the New Guinea's special treasures. We were entertained by Lloyd Edwards who gave us the world premier of the "Ode to the Rock Lily". It may not make the top 100, but it was great entertainment. He also performed again at the Kempsey Heights Bowling Club where the prize giving was carried out. This was also a special occasion as it will be Ted and Winsome's 50th Wedding Anniversary in November so a cake, candles was enjoyed by family and good friends – congratulations.

To all orchid growers, put the date in your calendar for next years SPECTACULAR! This will be held on the first weekend of September 2009. If you want further information for next years SPECTACULAR you could give Ten a ring next year on (02) 6562 7150 or Ernie on (02) 65859328.

As I did not go on the field trip to Kookaburra, I will try and find someone who did to give us a report on what orchids they found in that wonderful area.

Today 20th I am enjoying beautiful sunshine at Woogoolga – 10am and 24 degrees C! Next week we head for home. Leg operated on and plenty of orchid repotting to do. Big clean up, compost mixing etc. etc. Its been a great time away, met many old friends and a lot of new enthusiastic orchid growers. We have already started to plan next years trip. Seems like February – March 200, so we are already looking forward to next year!

I must thank Andrea Rozea from Agrichem, Carlene Khoury from Scotts and Mellanie from O.C.P. for the hand outs that were distributed to growers on our trip.

Some time ago a cymbidium grower asked me what levels of fertilisers do they use in Holland for flower production.

One large grower uses the following levels:

Nitrogen 100ppm Phosphorus 40ppm Potassium 50-100ppm Magnesium 25ppm.

For growing small plants – Nitrogen 125-175ppm Phosphorus 30-40ppm Potassium 70-80ppm Calcium 30ppm. So now you have it takes time!!

ADVICE FROM THE PAST

In a past issue of the Australian Orchid Societies "Journal of Orchidology" I read an article way back in the 60's by Jim Lawler. I first read this article way back n 1962, in fact soon after we were married. At that time I knew Mr Lawler not as an orchid grower, but as a ballroom dancer at a dance studio at Rockdale. It was to be sometime later that we met as orchid growers. This friendship remained until Jim and Faye sold their orchid farm at Dural to retire on the Central Coast.

The article was called "Culture for the Novice". What renewed my interest in this issue was in a previous issue of our orchid notes, I mentioned a few orchids of the past – Cym. Balkis "Luath" and Cym. Dorchester "Jeanette". At that time the going price of "Luath" was around ten pounds per bulb. At that time my weekly income was around twenty pounds and Miriam's around seven pounds, no equal pay in those days!

Jims suggestion was "Luath" grows like a weed in the Sydney area in a compost of 5 parts peat moss, 3 party rice hulls, 1 part sand and 1 part fowl manure. If you but a plant, wait until late September or October then repot into this compost. Every six weeks after repotting, the plant must be topped with fresh fowl manure until the end of February. At least four times per week more in heat wave conditions, the plant must be thoroughly watered until the water is pouring out of the bottom of the pot.

He also mentioned that no plant must be within twelve inches of 'Luath'.

Dorchester "Jeanette" must be treated differently. Potting and watering is the same as "Luath", but from there, culture is different. "Jeanette" does not like to grow a good root system.. The Lawler system is that "Jeanette" needs fresh compost if possible each 6 weeks as well as the manure topping. Turn the plant on its side without disturbing the roots and use a hose to wash away as much compost as you can. Fill the pot up with fresh compost, top it with manure and watch the difference in the plant as it retains its root system.

I wonder how these two clones would grow with the help of AUXINONE and SUPERTHRIVE?

I still grow BALKIS "LUATH", but sadly I do not have DORCHESTER 'JEANETTE' any longer. If any one has a piece of DORCHESTER "JEANETTE" I would love to make friends with it again!

OCTOBER GROWING CLASS

This will be our annual visit day. All of our growers are invited to Keith and Loma Oxley's place on the 11th October 2008 at 2pm. Please bring a plate of goodies and your camera with you for a great afternoon. The address is 21 Geoffrey St., Turramurra. For further information give Miriam or myself a ring on 4739 5141 or 0439 514141 . The November class will be on Saturday 8th at 2pm, it will be our Christmas Party B.B.Q.

For all you supplies come and see us- bark, potting media, fertilisers, labels, hangers, port pots, wire baskets and hangers, chemicals and many more things to help you grow you plants to perfection. We also sell plants. My new Fertiliser Handbook is now available.

Till next time

GOOD GROWING

ALAN & MIRIAM MERRIMAN

MIRIAM ANN ORCHIDS

89 Levy Street, GLENBROOK NSW 2773

PHONE 02 4739 5141 FAX 02 4739 8090 MOBILE 0439 514141

EMAIL mirannorchids@pnc.com.au