

**Sheffield & District  
Orchid Society  
Newsletter  
February 2014**



**February Plant of the Month  
*Dendrobium speciosum***

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# Business

Arrangements for the upcoming display at Bramhope were covered – now outdated. A number of fliers for the annual show at Chatsworth are available to all members to distribute as they see fit. This is on top of the ones that will be sent out by the publicity secretary as a matter of course.

£6 tickets for the show at Malvern can still be ordered from Carolyn. Each one can be used on any one day, so aren't restricted.

Members are reminded about the photographic competition, and to send pictures to Ian Wilson. Any queries to Brian.

Any member who is willing to open their greenhouse to other members should contact Brian to ensure they are included on the 'list'. So far, there are just 2 on the list – Brian & Ted. A few more would be an advantage.....

Dave Parkinson, one of our former members has recently been awarded a number of RHS Prizes for 2013. Firstly, **The Eric Young Orchid Trophy** for the exhibitor of the most meritorious group of orchids staged at any RHS show during the year (this was at Hampton Court). This is the first presentation of the trophy. Secondly, **The**

**Williams Memorial Medal** – awarded to the best group of plants/cut flowers of one genus (Disas) which show excellence in cultivation staged at one of the Society's shows during the year. This isn't restricted to Orchids, so is far more difficult to win. Finally, **The Mrs F E Ravis Prize** (cash) awarded to the gardener or employee responsible for the cultivation of the of the plants for the Williams medal above. Obviously this is recognition of Mary's talents... This is on top of winning the Westonbirt Orchid Medal in 2011. Well done to both Dave and Mary. We understand that Dave hasn't been too well recently, so this should have cheered him up.

It's sad to have to report the death, on Tuesday February 4th, of Mrs Connie Squire, widow of the late Eddie Squire and mother of Christopher and his siblings. Eddie and Connie joined the SDOS (or the SSYOS - Sheffield and South Yorkshire OS as it then was) early in the 1970s when the Society was very young. Eddie's business acumen proved very useful and he was, for many years, the Society's treasurer, overseeing the process whereby we became a registered charity. Connie attended meetings when she could and was one of the regular rota of tea and coffee providers. We offer our condolences to Christopher, Jane and Tim. TC

## The Table Show

Charles Ford gave the February commentary, and started with *Rhynchostylis gigantea* with a good sized pendant cluster of smallish mottled deep purple flowers. The plants are more compact than Vandas, and come in a range of colours from purple to white. V. (formerly Ascda.) Meda Arnold was a very tall Vanda of almost 1m tall, and looked very healthy. The medium sized flowers were a rosy red, although not quite as good as it has been in the past. Cym. Angel Wings was growing well, and a clean plant. The flowers were of a good size, well spaced and off-white in colour.

Den Ise is a small thin caned *Dendrobium* with a floppy habit, with a few white flowers. Although just in a small pot, and hung up in the greenhouse it has a lot of new growths that should create a stunning display in 12 months time. Den Cassiope is closely related (both are primary hybrids sharing *moniliforme*), and was growing very well. The flowers are also white, but with a purple centre. It is fairly easy to grow, and a good starter plant. It has a tendency to create many keikis, and so is easy to find and acquire. Den. Hibiki was a little more open than last month, and looked very good. Den. *speciosum* var. *speciosum* was just starting to open its flowers last month, and is now in full bloom with 2 spikes of starry flowers that are creamy white. There is a lesson to be learnt here in that one of the spikes was from a back bulb around 5 years old – so don't chop them off until they are obviously dead! This plant was adjudged to be the plant of the month - see front cover.

Onc. Stirling Tiger was a good strong plant with a branched stem of decent sized yellow spotted flowers that were well spaced. It is more of an intermediate growing

plant rather than being cool. Coel. *flaccida* 'Becky Falls' had 2 pendant spikes of pale brown flowers that can be fragrant at certain times of the day. It is best grown hanging up. *Dendrochilum javieriense* is a grassy type plant, almost a specimen size, and had a few arching spikes of tiny lemon coloured flowers, and a little bit of scent. Phal. Penang Starbright was a smallish plant with horizontal flower spikes of off-white flowers of medium size with good shape from its *violacea* background. It grows in shade, and is scented in the mid afternoon.

Rth. Young-Min Orange had 2 flowering spikes of deep orange flowers – inherited mainly from a strong background of *auriantica*. C. Louisa's Love was a compact plant with 2 smaller purple flowers – quite a good hybrid.

In the slippers, Phrag. *Sedenii* was a smallish plant with a pink flower. In comparison Phrag. *Schroderae* was quite large with 2 heavy open flowers with decent length tails. This is a plant that soon bulks up, and divides easily. This fine clone was originally from the David Binks collection. Paph. *insigne* is a species from the foothills of the Himalayas and is fairly easy to grow. Paph. *insigne* 'Harefield Hall' is probably the best known clone being larger and heavier substance. It is probably a tetraploid. Albion is an early hybrid (1922) that is a large percentage *niveum*, but on a taller stem. It has stood the test of time better than many hybrids, and its simple white flower with a green spot on the staminode makes it easily recognisable. Pittsburg is a decent complex hybrid with good shape and will have 2 flowers when the 2<sup>nd</sup> bud opens. Prim 'n Proper is a multifloral hybrid although it had only a single flower. Gaymaid 'Juliet' is a large round yellow/green flower that was cupped rather than flat, but still good. A number of smaller hybrids, including several first flowering seedlings of relatively modest size completed the show. Thank You Charles.

## ***Dendrobium speciosum***

This one has been growing on now for two years. I keep it high up in good light all year, with little shading in the summer and with none at all during the winter.

Temperatures in that part of my Conservatory regularly reach 28-30C and go down to 14C on winter nights but this a very temperature tolerant species, growing naturally in hot temperatures at sea level (19 to 40 C) and experiencing frost on the Blue Mountain peaks so it will acclimatise to your growing conditions, the only necessity being a high light level.

Feeding is the same as all my *Dendrobiums*, plenty of water and feed throughout the growing season, followed by reduced watering and feeding during the resting period, allowing the plant to become nearly dry between waterings.

The growing medium is a mix of medium bark and coco husk with a little charcoal thrown in for seasoning. The bark seems to stand up well with little sign of deterioration. **Charles Ford**

# Dendrobiums and Allied

## Mel Steven

Mel is familiar to many of us who have been to any show where EMOS is exhibiting as he is their show team co-ordinator. He has been growing orchids for 30 years, and has tended to specialise in Dendrobiums.

This group are found mainly in tropical SE Asia from India to PNG & Australia. They are considered a confusing group, which the taxonomists are in the process of sorting out – whether successfully or not remains to be seen! There are around 1250 species of which 450 are found in PNG within 32 sections. Borneo is next with 170, but many more are yet to be discovered due to the difficult terrain. Within Dendrobium itself there are 42 sections. Previously there were 48 recognised, and some of these have been elevated to genus status eg. Dockrillia, Epigeneium, although they will almost certainly be labelled as Dendrobiums. The largest section is Grastidium, with 192 species, although these are rarely seen in cultivation. There are 18 groups with 6 or less species in them, and many of these are endemic. The commonest sections are Nobile (eg. *nobile*) and Callista (eg. *thrysiflorum*) which are both freely available and can be grown without too much difficulty in the home or greenhouse. Section. Dendrobium (eg. *anosmum*) and Latouria (eg. *spectabile*) can also be grown easily.

Mel's greenhouse is a 20 x 10' home design and is sunk into the ground. It is brick based with quad walled polycarbonate on top for heat retention. Fans at each end circulate the air, however small areas of varying microclimates exist which can be used for selected plants that need something a bit different. Many plants are hung up on wires for improved light and heat, and also to 'get more plants in there'. The Greenhouse has benches just around the outside which allows a centre 'wall' mesh to be installed which is where all the mounted plants hang out. The polycarb roof has inbuilt aluminium braiding, so no extra shading is required even in summer. Light reaches up to 4500 ft. Candles. He collects rainwater at 42ppm, ensuring that the water temperature is no lower than 10C/50F when used by storing 1000L in the greenhouse. Fertiliser is the RainMix balanced low nutrient. Over winter this is applied at 270ppm, and 560ppm in summer when in active growth – with a PH between 5.8 & 6.5. Heat is supplied by 2 x 3KW heaters running to a minimum of 58F, and a maximum of 85F. Vents are used only in the hottest of weather – when a humidifier also helps to lower the temperature.

The Dendrobium family is extremely variable in its growing habitats – some need a rest and others don't. Some see monsoons, and others grow in much drier conditions. As a result each plant (esp. Species) is researched, and listed on a traffic light system for watering – which runs to many pages of A4. This is essential as many need a dry rest (no humidity?) alongside light and temperature variations to help induce flowering rather than to produce kiekies.

An ultra-violet zapper light helps to control flying insects, alongside the usual controls of Provado and liquid Sluggit. Repot often is useful to check all is well, and uses good quality bark (the new stuff from Peter White) alongside coco chips and perlite. Those that are hung up tend to be put into clear pots. One of his good tips is to buy plants at the time they start to grow – usually May/June time to help reduce the shock.

Mel then showed us pictures of a wide range of species flowers. With there being so many different species it isn't possible to cover them all, or even a sample of many of the sections. Here's just a few of those covered;-

*spectabilis* (Section Latouria) is well named for it is a spectacular flower of many colours from white to brown.

*antennatum* (Spatula) is one of the antelope types with 2 petals as twisted ears. This one is white with a hint of purple veining on the lip.

*biggibum* (Phalaenanthe) The section helps to describe the shape of the flowers that have a similarity to Phalaenopsis. White to pink and 'blue'.

*aphyllum* (Dendrobium) is quite common with long pendant canes and flowers on naked canes. Flowers are white to pale pink.

*bracteosum* (Pedilonum) is fairly common, and tends to have shorter canes with tight clusters of many flowers. All colours from white to deep pink, with an orange lip – apart from the album form which is pure white.

*chrysotoxum* (Callista) is one of a large group with tall uptight canes that produces bunches of flowers on a pendant spike from the top of the cane or just under. This one is a bright yellow.

*chrysocrepis* (Dendrobium) is quite unusual as the lip has evolved into a pouch/slipper. It is called the golden slipper Dendrobium due to the shape and colour.

*cucumerinum* (Dockrillia) is an Australian oddity with strange leaves that are lumpy like a small cucumber. The flowers are upside down.

*denudans* (Stachyobium) is a smallish plant with a pendant spike of long petaled pale green flowers.

*fimbriatum* v. *oculatum* (Dendrobium) is part of a species complex. The flowers all have frilly lips on flattish golden flowers with a dark mask. The standard form is a clear colour. The leafless canes will re-flower over a period of many years.

*fleckeri* (Dendrocoryne) is a small flowered species from Queensland with almost triangular apricot flowers.

*glomeratum* (Pedilonum) is a striking species of bright pink clustered flowers.

*jenkinsii* (Callista) is like a smaller version of *lindleyi* with orange flowers. The bulbs are very short, and can form a spectacular tight mass of short flowers.

*mohlianum* (Calyptrochilus) is a small species with very fleshy orange flowers.

*munificum* (Inobulbum) is a plant with large fleshy leaves, and long racemes of small starry flowers of brownish green.

*polysema* (Latouria) is similar in shape to *spectabile*, but is more white, purple and green – quite spectacular as well.

*trantuanii* (Breviflores) is pale pink and has a small fleshy and furry brown lip. It was only discovered in 2003 in Vietnam.

*unicum* (Dendrobium) is noted for its bright orange flowers and has been widely used for this colour in breeding.

*bellatulum* (Formosae) is a spectacular flower of white petals and a striking orange lip.

*dearii* (Formosae) is a large white flower – nearly 3” wide.

*lowii* (Formosae) has interesting flowers with a lip that has columns of hairs.

*sanderae* (Formosae) is another species complex of white flowers. The main varieties are *major* with a split lip, and *luzonicum* with a large flat lip. Var. *minor* is a more compact form of *major*.

That was just a taste of what the genus and allied has to offer, and a hearty round of applause was given. Thank you Mel.

## Dates for your diary...

### Monthly meetings at Ranmoor – 10am

**March 9th** David Menzies - Orchids of and in New Zealand. David is well known to us having spoken to us on regular intervals. Being from NZ he is well qualified to speak on this interesting group of orchids.

April 13<sup>th</sup> Forum

### shows/exhibits/conferences etc

**April 6th** NEEOS Annual Show, Bowburn. \*\* SDOS exhibiting\*\*

**April 11-12th** RHS London Orchid Show

**May 11th** SDOS Annual show at Chatsworth. It will soon be here! Plants required please.

Society website - [www.sheffieldorchids.org](http://www.sheffieldorchids.org)



Above: - *Rhynchostylis gigantea*

Below: - Most of the SDOS display at Bramhope on Saturday – prior to completion on Sunday

