

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



**Encyclia alata
July Plant of the Month**

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Business

This being the first meeting at Ranmoor for 3 months, it started with 2 minutes silence in memory of Jeff Wilson & Bev Ellis. Jeff was of course a former chairman, and both are sadly missed.

Whilst there hasn't been a formal meeting the society has been quite busy with our own show at Chatsworth, and the 'Garden Up' event at the Botanic Gardens (see last month's notes). Our Chatsworth show saw just over 400 attend, and we made a small profit of just over £200. Special thanks are due to Jim for the organisation of the show (the reduced trade tables was better for their own business), Charles for the exhibit, Christine & co for the excellent catering, and finally Joan for the catering table floral decorations. The likely date for Chatsworth in 2015 is Sunday 10th May, and for 'Garden Up' is the weekend of 21-22nd June.

Our next planned show is at EMOS, and a volunteer to mount the exhibit is being **urgently** sought, otherwise we may sadly have to cancel.

Ted has about 19 members interested in a trip to the EOC in London next April. a minimum of 25 is required, so if you are interested, please let Ted know ASAP. PS. Don't forget to send your photos to Ian Wilson, or bring them to the August meeting.

NB. A list of available library books is included with this month's newsletter

The Table Show

Ted was in the hot seat (although stood up) for this month, and was surprised by a decent number of plants for the time of the year. he started on the left with Cattleychea Newberry Butterscotch (*C. purpurata* f. *alba* x *Ctyh.* Westconnett Gold 'Mendenhall') which was tall & elegant with 3 flowers of deep yellow with a reddish tip. The plant had been recently split and was settling down well. Rth. Hsiang Yu Beauty was more compact with 2 attractive shapely flowers of mainly yellow with a purple lip. *Encyclia alata* was a huge specimen sized plant that had shot away after being repotted earlier this year. It produced 7 spikes with a lot of well spaced starry flowers of pale green & brown. This was selected as the Plant of the Month. Another *alata* had a single shorter spike with larger flowers - which should look even better as a specimen....

Phal. Zuma Aussie Delight was a plant of few flowers, but of strong colour with brownish yellow flowers. Brother Golden Embers was pale yellow with a short branched spike after the tip of the original had been broken in early growth. Again the plant had relatively few flowers, and it is an issue with yellow phals compared to the pinks and whites. Leopard Prince had good strong foliage, and produced a number of mottled pink flowers and buds. Chew Ging Hoe was an interesting plant with only a couple of small yellow flowers on a short spike. This is a type of breeding from Malaysia (M. Ooi) using the sequential flowering *cornu-cervi*, and should keep producing flowers for quite a period of time. *bellina* is a more compact form from Borneo where it grows high up in the canopy. The flowers were a pale red with the traditional dark inverted 'V' mask on the bottom half. *lobbii* is a tiny plant, with even smaller flowers, closely related to *parishii*. a number of white flowers with brownish lobes are closely held on a very short spike.

In the slippers Paph. Vanguard was an old plant still going strongly (as it should) with 2 well shaped flowers. Armeni White was produced from 2 album parents, and didn't have the dark centre usually produced. *niveum* was a pretty small white flower with a good shape and also a tall spike. *primulinum* is a pretty small yellow sequential flowering species from Sumatra. *barbatum* is another small flowered species, this time of mainly red with white. Although not of the best shape, it is pleasing to see. 2 plants of Red Shift x *charlesworthii* showed the

variability of hybrids. Both were reflexed, but 1 was a vinicolour, with the other mainly red with a small white halo. *Mexipedium xerophyticum* 'Oaxaca' is a tiny white flowered plant that is very slow to grow and flower. It has fleshy leaves, and is reputed to prefer drier conditions.

'Tis the Disa season, and it is always a pleasure to see these brightly coloured flowers on the table. *aurata* is yellow (as the name suggests) and is compact with smallish flowers quite tightly spaced. Auratkew is a primary hybrid (*aurata* x *uniflora*) a bit larger, more orange, and fewer flowers. *uniflora* is a species from table mountain in South Africa, and has 1 or 2 larger reddish orange flowers. When crossed with D. Foam it creates Unifoam which is fairly tall with red flowers in this case. D. Robert Parkinson is another with uniflora lineage (Sea Lord x Unifoam), and was a strong orange.

Bulb. *flaviflorum* (syn. *tingabarinum*) is a Cirrhopetalum type with tiny umbels of yellow flowers that dance about when touched. The plant is kept warm with good light, and is bark mounted. *Bifrenaria aureofulva* is an interesting plant with almost tubular shaped flowers of orangey yellow, which is grown in intermediate conditions. *Specklinia grobyi* is a miniature (pleuro) with lots of miniature flowers of mainly yellow. *Maxillariella variabilis* had a single small yellow flower in a plant that looks just like a clump of grass. This intermediate species can vary from yellow to almost black - Ed. The flowers of *Catasetum Fanfair* tend to last for only a week - which is a bit disappointing. This deciduous plant has mainly brown flowers with a bright yellow lip.

Many thanks, Ted.

July Plant of the Month

ENCYCLIA ALATA

This species is largely native to Central America and it was in Costa Rica that I first became familiar with it (identified by David Menzies). There can be significant differences in flower size and form within the species. This was perfectly illustrated by comparing the two plants I had on the table show. This plant had seven multiflowered spikes whereas the other had but a single one. However, the flowers on the single one were of better size and shape. This, I suppose is just one of the fascinating things about orchids – seeing the variations there can be even within the same species.

This plant is grown at intermediate (borderline warm) temperature in normal light conditions (shading from March to October). Normal weekly watering and feeding is done. Despite claim and counter-claim, I have never experienced noticeably different results from a variety of feeds such as Peters, Phostrogen and Tomarite. I have recently changed to Akerne's Rain Mix – largely because it is easily available from Keith Kent and although in powder form it is easily soluble.

What has pleased me about the plant is that it was repotted in early Autumn and although this can occasionally set back flowering, the reverse has happened in that seven spikes is the greatest number it has produced – so far, fingers crossed.
Brian W.

Footnote

We hear regular references to the “new bark” so, perhaps, a word about it may be appropriate. Firstly, let’s turn the clock back a couple of years. The best bark available was imported from the USA and was originally very good. A take-over of the producer followed by “economies” in processing led to significant deterioration in quality to the extent that it became very poor.

The current bark is referred to as the New Bark because it has replaced what we had before and has been available in the UK for only just over twelve months. In fact it is not that new as I became familiar with it in Taiwan several years ago. We got to know the family in New Zealand who were producing it and demonstrating it at the Taiwan Show. I asked them about its’ possible availability in UK but, at that time – surprise, surprise – the EC authorities were being less than helpful. The then obstacles have obviously been overcome. It is available in five sizes ranging from seedling to extra large. It is extremely easy to work with being very clean with virtually no debris in it and very little dust left in the bottom of the bag. It does not require pre-soaking and has a claimed pot life of five years thus significantly reducing that labour of love repotting. It must be said that a close eye needs to be kept on watering as there is a tendency for this bark to dry out a little quicker than previous ones. That could be an advantage in some respects in that I am sure there is often a danger of over watering to the detriment of the plant. Additives like foam or sphagnum should not be added as they will deteriorate faster than the bark.

Plant Assessment

Last year members who attended the May meeting were given a choice of 2 free seedlings. These were either *Sarchochilus (roseus)* and *Osmoglossum (now Cuitlauzina) (pulchellum/pulchella?)*. The year seems to have passed quickly, and now is the time to assess the results in a non competitive way. The assessors appointed for the review were Silvia Maunder & John Garner.

They started with the 6 plants of *Osmoglossum*. These are cool growing plants from Central America where they would grow in damp forests with decent air movements. A couple of the plants had been repotted, and generally these had done better - the fine compost tends to decay more quickly, so an annual refresh is best. A couple had some shrivelling, and were perhaps a bit too dry. Generally though, they were all doing OK, and still had some growing to do before they get to something like flowering size.

The Sarchochilus were in the main still tiny plants, although a couple were in flower, and 1 had finished. Of the 6, 3 had been repotted - 2 into smaller pots, and 1 into larger. The larger potted plant was in fact the only one that had shown some reasonable growth. Only 1 plant had gone a bit backward, and not by too much. They had all been kept reasonably warm, but with varying light levels. The plants that hadn't been repotted were developing roots above the compost, and these would probably benefit from repotting to get the roots into some regular moisture as well as refresh the compost.

As an additional review, we had asked to see the Calanthes from earlier in the year - there would be more to see from these relatively fast growing plants. We did expect to see some variation as some of the original bulbs had well formed new starts with embryonic roots, whilst others had almost no visible signs of new growth. This does affect the comparative growth at this stage of the year, and this was obvious where there were groups of plants in the same compost/size of pots. 1 member had put 3 bulbs into the same pot - with enough room for growth, and this will need very regular waterings to prevent drying out. Possibly the largest growth had come from a plant in a modest sized pot potted in moss which was watered with fertiliser each time it starts to dry out, which was every 3-4 days. This, and another couple would be dropped on into a larger pot (since done - Ed.). They were also growing under grow lights, and were kept fairly warm. The other plants were growing away quite steadily, and would benefit from extra feed and warmth in some cases. One member had actually kept his plants in a cold frame since May without realising they were the warm growing type! Only a single plant had developed 2 growths.

Just in summary for the Calanthes - keep fairly warm with reasonable light, and feed fairly heavily - certainly every watering at this time of the year, and up to the point where the leaves start to brown and wither. Hopefully the largest of the plants will develop sufficiently to flower towards the end of the year.

All in all it was a very healthy exercise, and once again proves how resilient orchids can be in the varying environments that we growers put them into. This is an exercise that we may repeat next year to see how the seedlings are doing.

'GARDENING IN A CHANGING CLIMATE'

A free talk from Paul Cook, RHS Garden Harlow Carr curator

DATE: Wed 17th September 7 - 8 pm (refreshments from 6pm)

VENUE: Worsley Medical Lecture Theatre, Room 7.35, Worsley Building, Level 7, University of Leeds, LS2 9JT (this postcode is for the university main entrance)

Link to directions: <https://tinyurl.com/directions-to-talk>

PRICE: Free and open to all members of public

BOOKING INFO: Please register a place via eventbrite: - <https://tinyurl.com/RMetS-RHS-talk>

BRIEF DESCRIPTION: The impact of a changing climate is now firmly at the top of the scientific, political and environmental agendas. Here in the UK the climate plays a significant role in determining what is grown and how best to grow it. In this talk Paul Cook, the Curator at RHS Garden Harlow Carr, will address how a changing climate is expected to impact the way we garden. Paul will illustrate some of the research that is being conducted by the RHS to investigate ways in which we can manage these changes, and how it will be used at Harlow Carr.

Dates for your diary...

Monthly meetings at Ranmoor – 10am

- Aug 10th** Francis Quesada-Pallares - Phalaenopsis
Everything you ever wanted to know about the species that go to make up those flashy plants produced by the million all over the world. The bulk of these come from just a handful of species, and the rest are very different, so see what you are missing...
- Sept 14th** Ian Dorman, Paphiopedilums
Ian needs little introduction, and is an expert on growing these spectacular plants 'up in t'north'

shows/exhibits/conferences etc

- Sept 7th** BOGA & Darlington show, Josephine Butler College, Durham City
- Sept 10-14th** 21st WOC, Johannesburg, South Africa (SDOS definitely not exhibiting!)
www.woc21.org

Society website - www.sheffieldorchids.org



Above: - *Speklinia grobyi*

Below: - *Phalaenopsis Chew Ging Hoe*

