

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



**September Plant of the Month
*Dendrobium venustum***

Officers of the Society

President & BOC representative

Richard Baxter
Hall Farm House
Shelton, Newark,
NG23 5JG
01949 850713

richardandsueb@ineedbroadband.co.uk

Vice President

Julie Binks
254 Abbey Lane
Sheffield S8 0BW
0114 236 1900

Chairman

Brian Woodward
23, School Lane,
Stainton, Maltby,
Rotherham S66 7QX
01709 790427

Woodward.d@sky.com

Administration Secretary & Show Co-ordinator

Carolyn McQueen
3, Milton Court,
Swinton,
South Yorkshire,
S64 8RE
01709 587208

carolyn.m.mcqueen@gmail.com

Programme Secretary, & Vice President

Ted Croot
11 Marsh House Road,
Sheffield S11 9SP
0114 236 2283

annette.ted@talktalk.net

Editor and Publicity

John Garner
Dike Royd,
Dick Edge Lane,
Cumberworth
Huddersfield
HD8 8YE
01484 687605

Johngarner546@btinternet.com

Treasurer & Membership Secretary

Norman Jenkins
Acorns, 24, St Erics Road,
Doncaster
DN4 6NG
01302 534900

norm@normanjenkins.plus.com

Librarian

Jeff Bagnall
128, Huddersfield Road,
Meltham,
Holmfirth,
HD9 4AG
01484 318113

jw.bagnall@ntlworld.com

BOC Representative

Silvia Maunder
14 Whitechapel Close
Leeds LS8 2PT
0113 273 1347

Any other member

Peter Battle
Jim Charlesworth

Editorial

I'm now back from the recent WOC held in Johannesburg, armed with many pictures to show you all in the November meeting - so I won't say anything too much about it at this point, but there is a picture of the Grand Champion on the back cover - Angulocaste Olympus 'Honey'.....

As I wasn't at the September meeting I have to thank Christine Charlesworth for writing up the table commentary and providing the cover picture. I don't have a write up for Ian Dorman's lecture, so have included the write up from a similar talk of from last year. I hope you find it just as interesting.

Business

Amy Hinsley, a PHD student at Kent University is studying various aspects of orchid trade, and has another online survey to help her out. The survey can be found at: <http://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/1619973/orchidsurvey> and takes less than 2 minutes to complete.

Our next meeting is to reveal the results of the photographic competition, and an explanation of why the 'winner' is the best one. It promises to be a fun meeting. Since the September meeting The Dowager Duchess of Devonshire has sadly passed away. Her son, the current Duke is the patron of our Society, and Richard has sent a letter of condolence to him.

The Table Show

Ted gave the September commentary where 12 different plants were shown. Starting with *Doritis pulcherrima*, now classed as a *Phalaenopsis*. The plant on show, supplied by Val, had two spikes both branched with purple flowers. Through selective breeding the species has changed to this cultivated state, compared with another plant at the end of the display which had four spikes (from the late Reg. Bradley's collection) and smaller flowers. Colour can vary from purple to yellow.

Dendrobium venustum was judged to be plant of the month. This came from Willie Kenntner some time back and displayed a prolific show of pale yellow flowers (see front cover).

Oncidium Splinter var. Norman was considered to be a piece of orchid history which has been around for a long time. This particular plant was taken from a very tall parent, too large to transport, and was doing very well, it was good to see.

Two "Cambria" were on display, this is a general term for hybrid *Oncidiums* used by garden centres. Aliceara Peggy Ruth Carpenter, an attractive plant with two flower spikes, the flowers are clumped together with one spike paler than the other. This could be caused by either light or watering. Staking can also affect clumping. Ted felt the other yellow/pink specimen was the more attractive plant with well spaced flowers.

Mexipedium xerophyticum, Ted commented that he had one for 'yonks' but had not managed to get it to flower. The plant on show has flowered consistently for the last two or three years since Derek acquired it in 1997: pale lemon/white flowers following on the same spike.

Paphiopedilum thaiamum (a form of *niveum*), this species was found only about 10 years ago. The spots are larger than most and slightly different. A nice shaped plant. *Paphiopedilum barbigerum* was considered to be a good plant.

Domingoa (formerly *Nageliella* & *Hartwegia*) *purpurea*, small purple flowers on a long stem mounted on cork. Jeff has had this plant for about 10 – 12 years and grows it near to the door facing east, in an intermediate temperature fertilizing every 2 weeks.

Restrepia contorta – cool growing epiphytic plant mounted on a raft, showing a spotted flower for the first time. *Masdevallia veitchiana* – orange flowers on long spikes flowering regularly in September but some other forms flower in

April/May. The flowers on this specimen were pointing in different directions which prompted a discussion on the staking of the flower spikes to get uniformity. In its natural habitat the flowers would hang down. This plant is grown in a cold greenhouse, with the lights and door open. **Christine Charlesworth.**

September Plant of the Month

Dendrobium venustum

I bought this plant from Willi Kenntner's nursery during our expedition to the D.O.G. Congress at Ulm in Germany in March 1999. It is an unusual *Dendrobium*, not often offered for sale in this country and this particular plant doesn't quite fit the description of the species given in Baker and Baker's monograph on the genus. *D venustum* is an intermediate-growing species from what used to be known as Indo-China (Thailand, Burma, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia) and it is very closely related to *Den. delacourii*. It is quite distinct from it though – *D delacourii* flowers in May on short (c.5cm) compact canes, with fewer, larger flowers (mine is usually on our stand at Chatsworth) whereas this one flowers in September on longer (c.15cm) thinner, canes. *Den. ciliatum* is probably a synonym of *D venustum* differing only it seems, in the length of the cilia on the lip of the flower.

This plant is deciduous: the leaves fall in late autumn and then it is kept almost dry until the new growths appear in spring. Careful watering is started now (the new roots are easily drowned by standing water). When growth is well-established it is watered more freely provided that drainage is good. I feed with Orchid Grow until the flower spikes show in mid-July, when I change to Orchid Bloom, gently increasing the feed in spring and tailing-off in autumn.

The compost I use is a very little chopped sphagnum moss with medium bark, charcoal and coarse Perlite – drainage must be good. It is kept hanging up, in good light and in continuous breeze from a fan. The drop in temperature from a minimum of 70F in the daytime to a minimum of 60F at night that my thermostat provides is apparently important in inducing flowering. My plants always get this, so I can't say what happens if they don't! **Ted Croot**

Paphiopedilums: A Grower's Perspective – the first 25 years

A presentation given by Ian Dorman at the meeting of the British Paphiopedilum Society (BPS) held on February 9/10 2013

Ian introduced himself and explained that the idea for the talk had occurred on the 25th anniversary of the date he had originally started growing orchids which was now 5 years ago and since then he had given the talk to a number of orchid societies in the UK; hence the title which should now probably read “the first 30 years”. There would only be a small amount of Paph taxonomy included in the talk which was best left to the botanists with the emphasis being strongly towards growing plants.

Ian showed a slide of Paphiopedilum Copper Spice “Menston” which was the first orchid he had ever purchased from Mansell & Hatchers in 1983 and the spark for the talk was the fact that this same plant started to bloom almost 25 years to the day since he had first set foot in Mansell & Hatchers. Some members may recall a short article Ian had written for the BPS Journal in which he described his humorous experiences in trying to find Mansell & Hatchers on that fateful day; a day which started a passion for orchids which continues after 30 years.

Ian explained that he had never seen a plant as wonderfully exotic as Paphiopedilum Copper Spice before he set eyes on it at Mansell & Hatchers and of course at around £7 it was a small fortune to him at that time but he had to have it. Paphiopedilum Copper Spice is what we now call a novelty hybrid being the result of a cross between *spicerianum* and a complex hybrid Copperware made by Ratcliffes. The reason the plant was on sale at Mansell & Hatchers was because of the reciprocal arrangements which existed with Ratcliffes at that time during the dark days of the Gray ownership of the 2 firms which is another story. Ian’s passion for growing Paphiopedilums was cemented a couple of years later when Paphiopedilum Copper Spice was exhibited on the display table at a Sheffield & District Orchid Society meeting with 4 large bold flowers and the late Dr Jim Binks who was doing the table show was full of admiration and praise for this particular clone and Ian was completely hooked.

Ian summarised the main geographical areas where extant populations of Paphiopedilum species occurred in the wild from the mountains of India to the steamy jungles of Borneo, Sumatra and the Solomon Islands so any cultural guidelines had to be of a general nature with specific cultural information required on a species by species basis dependant on geographical location. He regarded all Paphiopedilums as essentially humus epiphytes which had significant implications for their culture in a greenhouse or in the home. For taxonomy purposes Ian preferred to follow Cribbs’ classification system as he found this relatively simple and straightforward, although there were obvious shortcomings. Ian commented that he personally felt there were between 80 to 90 valid Paphiopedilum species with more being discovered all the time so he regarded himself as a “lumper” rather than a “splitter”

Ian presented a number of slides showing external and internal views of his greenhouse which was approximately 30 feet long by 10 feet wide split into 3

sections ie warm, intermediate and cool. He didn't believe there were any cool growing Paphiopedilums so his collection was split between the warm and intermediate sections Warm represented an average minimum temperature of 17C during Winter and an average maximum of 32C during Summer with corresponding intermediate temperatures 14C and 28C respectively. Due to Ian's busy work schedule and the large size of the collection of Paphiopedilums the greenhouse had been set up with as many automatic controls as possible which made it an expensive investment, however those growers with less resources shouldn't despair as it was perfectly possible to grow good quality Paphiopedilums on a much lower budget.

Ian then summarised some of the key elements in achieving good growing results based on his experience. He emphasised that other growers achieved good results with different methods:

Plant Selection:

Know your plants, check where they come from in order to assess their specific cultural requirements. Start with easier plants such as spicerianum and insigne before moving onto narrow endemics where maintaining cultural best practice is more crucial

Heating

Gas central heating via a dedicated Worcester boiler is used throughout the greenhouse to provide the correct temperatures for the plants. Each section has control valves with electronic thermostats to maintain individual temperatures as required to suit the plants.

Shading/Ventilation/Artificial lighting

The greenhouse orientation is East to West so the long South Side is protected by 70% shade cloth on the outside which can be manually controlled by ropes and pullies. No shading is applied on the North side under normal circumstances, although occasionally some internal shading is needed to control light levels.

Gro Lux lights are used to supplement and extend day light in the autumn and winter months. Minimum requirement is 11 hours good quality light in winter

There are sliding ventilation vents down each side of the greenhouse at floor level protected by wire mesh to prevent access by pests. Each section of the greenhouse has a dedicated extractor fan to control temperature in summer.

Relatively cheap oscillating fans are used at low level speeds to provide some air movement at all times.

Potting and Potting Compost

A golden rule for Paphs is to use as small a pot as possible. NEVER over pot as this will result in a slow death. There are a multitude of potting composts used for Paph culture, however Ian still favours a bark based compost consisting of 60% good quality fir bark plus equal parts of NZ sphagnum moss, large perlite (sponge rock) and horticultural foam. Dolomite lime is added at one teaspoon per litre of compost. Re-potting should take place every 2 years or so depending on plant

growth and the condition of the compost. Some Paphs such as *rothschildianum* do seriously resent re-potting probably due to their lithophytic nature so extreme care is necessary in not damaging the roots, although the modern seed raised clones do seem to tolerate it better.

Watering, Water Quality and Humidity

This is absolutely key to successfully growing Paphs. RO and rain water are usually best with tap water only used where the dissolved salt levels are extremely low. The pH level should be as close to neutral as possible. Frequency of watering depends on greenhouse conditions. Never let Paphs become dry at the roots even in the winter months when pipe heat and artificial lighting can reduce humidity levels which should be maintained in the 70% range. There are a number of ways of maintaining the required humidity levels; Ian uses foggers purchased from Simply Control.

Pests & Diseases

Unless there are any obvious cultural problems, in the event that a plant is not doing well, instead of changing growing conditions check immediately for any pests which may be inhibiting growth. Mealy bug is the main concern for Paphs which if allowed to develop unchecked will rapidly turn into an infestation which is impossible to eradicate given the lack of effective systemic insecticides. Therefore it is important to deal with mealy bugs at the first sign of their presence in the greenhouse. Local applications of methylated spirits usually has the desired effect, although prevention of pests entering the greenhouse is the best course of action. Bacterial and fungal infections are of much greater concern as these can quickly spread throughout the greenhouse. It is often difficult to pinpoint the source of such infections, however an individual plant suffering stress can exhibit symptoms and quickly pass these on to other plants in the collection. Where individual plants are infected it is important to isolate these and remove carefully offending leaves. Spraying with a good quality fungicide is usually effective and cinnamon can be used to treat localised areas.

Feeding

A balanced fertiliser is necessary to promote optimum growth, particularly to replace trace elements where RO water is used. The normal feeding regime is to at the rate of 500 micro siemens throughout the year.

Flowering

Most Paphs will flower with at least 2 mature growths. It is important to stake emerging flower spikes at an early stage to avoid kinking. Opening flowers should not be tied too early as some Paphs have a tendency to hang their heads. When exhibiting plants foliage should be clean and pest free with all detritus removed from the compost surface.

Dates for your diary...

Monthly meetings at Ranmoor – 10am

- Oct 12th The photographic 'competition'
- Nov 9th WOC 21 - John Garner. A complete round up of all the pretty flowers from South Africa.

shows/exhibits/conferences etc

- Oct 17-19th Devon OS weekend, Dawlish Warren.
- Nov 29th BOGA pre-Christmas Autumn fair, Solihull

Society website - www.sheffieldorchids.org



Angulocaste Olympus 'Honey' - Grand Champion WOC 21