

# **SHEFFIELD & DISTRICT ORCHID SOCIETY**

## **NEWSLETTER**

**AUGUST 2012**



**AUGUST PLANT OF THE MONTH**  
***DORITIS PULCHERRIMA***

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## EDITORIAL

Suddenly we're heading towards the back end of the year – in the local supermarket school wear is out, and Halloween is in. I simply don't know where the year has gone to, and I'm still waiting for summer to start – some hope. I think that many plants have benefitted from being cooler, although others like the Vandas haven't done as well. If my greenhouse was longer I would consider partitioning it into cooler and warmer parts – as discussed later in the newsletter. Either way, I'm only going to leave it a couple of weeks and then remove the external shade to try and get the most of the early autumn sun – perhaps I hope for too much.

## BUSINESS

Arrangements for the display at Norfolk Park were discussed and finalised, and it has now taken place. Arrangements for the next

display at EMOS (on 30<sup>th</sup> September) will be finalised at the September meeting.

Richard has had no positive responses to his letter requesting volunteers to join the committee and take over the vacant positions of Chairman, Treasurer, Membership Secretary and 'Chatsworth Arranger'. This is disappointing, but time is still available to contribute. We are still hoping to stage the display at Chatsworth in 2013...

Ted and Annette were thanked for hosting the June meeting, and Derek Jackson was congratulated on winning an award at PIOS.

## THE TABLE SHOW

John Garner volunteered to give this month's commentary. He started on the left with the non-existent hat stand (oh, those were the days...) with a Darwinara Charm 'Blue Sky' that was only just coming to its best. The genus Darwinara is a complex vandaceous genus consisting of *Vanda*, *Neofinettia*, *Ascocentrum* and *Rhyncostylis*. *Doritis pulcherrima* was a well grown plant with lots of leaves and 2 tall spikes of small deep purple flowers (see front cover). This was adjudged to be the Plant of the Month. Dtps. Kenneth Schubert is a hybrid from *pulcherrima* (x *violacea*) and is less tall, but with slightly larger flowers of a pink colour. Phal. Seestern was a very nice mottled pink, as was Dtps. Leopard Prince. Dtps. City Girl was a medium sized attractive flower of mainly white with a pink lip. Phal. *bellina* was the final Phal, and had a couple of small flowers that are produced sequentially.

An unknown *Miltassia* (now *Bratonia*) was a very well grown plant with a couple of spikes of maroon flowers. (Checking on Orchidwiz, this is almost certainly Brat. Royal Robe 'Diplomat' – Ed.).

Paph. Carola Adenauer (*chamberlainianum* x Prince Edward of York) is an unusual cross, with a compact size. The flower was a little distorted – possibly from transportation, and should be better next time. Paph. *coccineum* is a variant of *barbigerum*, and is quite petite with a pale brown and white flower. *niveum* was a nice small speckled white with a reasonable shape. *hainanense* is closely

related to *appletonianum*, with just a shade of colour difference. *javanicum* is a slightly fuller shape and greener than *hainanense* with a taller spike.

Rlc. Magic Meadow 'Napoleon' had a single large pale yellow flower with just a splash of pink on the tip of the lip that creates an attractive flower (see back cover). Walkerinter was a well grown plant of a smaller nature with a couple of flowering spikes of medium sized pure white flowers. Ctyh. Newberry Butterscotch (C. *Purpurata* f alba x Ctyh. Westconnett Gold) was quite a surprise with the tips of the 2 flower spikes about a yard apart. The flowers are mainly orange with a contrasting purple lip (see back cover).

*Disa aurata* is a small yellow flowered species from South Africa. *watsonii* is another species, this time with larger pink flowers. Unifoam 'Firebird' is a large flowered deep pink hybrid. Riëtte is a smaller hybrid from *watsonii* (x *uniflora*), and this was more of an orange colour. This colourful genus is quite rewarding to grow requiring little heat. The final plant was *Catasetum sanguinianum* 'De Neus'. We saw it last year with hard green female flowers, and this year it has flowered as a male. Flowers are still green, but a bit more flamboyant with speckles on the petals.

## **AUGUST PLANT OF THE MONTH**

### **DORITIS PULCHERRIMA**

I have had this *Doritis pulcherrima* for at least ten years. It lives in a southwest-facing conservatory with air-conditioning/heating, kept medium-warm and with about 70% humidity. It has flowered regularly but this is the best yet. I recently repotted it into coir chips and from spring to autumn, I feed it weakly weekly with Orchid Focus. **Valerie Minogue**

## **GROWING ORCHIDS ON A BUDGET**

### **ANDREW BANNISTER**

Andrew runs Orchid Alchemy and concentrates on cooler growing species and hybrids, so is well placed to talk about the subject matter. Much of this is probably common sense and straightforward,

but we are all a bit naive when growing orchids and a few handy tips can come in useful. There are a few general areas that complement the budget theme. These are reduce costs, insulate, rationalise plants, cull/reduce collection, or grow hardies or near hardy orchids.

In reducing costs comes controlling costs through better management of resources. Thermal density is a useful technique that is much underused. This means using material such as ash based concrete blocks to absorb daytime heat, which then can radiate it out during the cooler nights. A good thermostat is a sound investment to ensure that your heater isn't creating more heat than required – an extra 1C costs a small fortune. Can you split your greenhouse into different heat zones? Just having a cold part will save cost. Alternatively could you grow the warmer plants in the house somewhere?

If you have a greenhouse, is the location correct? Full sun in winter is the best target with the ridge running east/west. This may prove too warm in summer though, and a large degree of shading will be required. Traditional greenhouse construction of wood and brick is still the best as they are warm compared to aluminium. If the walls are dug below ground level this also helps. Polycarbonate sheeting is a newer material, and has benefits. Inside the greenhouse, doors and vents should be well insulated for especially cold nights. Thermal screening such as woven aluminium is beneficial to use as required. Benches should be constructed of concrete blocks – painted a dark colour to absorb heat. Water tanks will also absorb heat, as well as ensure that it is at room temperature when used. In the home, LED lights and growlights will suffice, as would wardian cases. Avoid south facing windows in summer, and other direct heat sources such as radiators and televisions are best avoided. Growing in the home is more specialised, and drip trays become essential.

Can other structures be used? Tomato houses will suffice in summer for many plants, and maybe a conservatory will suffice in winter. Houses have more stable heat due to their construction methods, whereas greenhouses are more extreme, more quickly.

With hundreds of thousands of species and hybrids to choose from there is great variety to choose from. Most are tropics, but come from cooler altitudes, and this is often overlooked when growing the

plants. It may be that overheating is used for a large part of the collection. How cool is cool? Most books say a minimum of 50F as a general consensus, however a lot of them naturally drop to near freezing such as Australian Dendrobiums. They will however need a daytime rise to this figure rather than a constant low temperature. Some cool growing species are in reality frost free, so would manage with a minimum of 5C. This includes many terrestrials, which just need to avoid winter wet such as *Habenaria*, *Stenoglottis*, *Pleiones*, *Disas* & *Calanthe*.

True Hardy orchids need no heat, and can provide a range of spring and summer colour. These have become more available in the last few years. Many of these will self seed, and costs can be reduced by swapping with friends for other species or hybrids. Most *Dactylorhizas* are shades of pink, but *alba* forms are common, and in *Dact. sambucina* both red and yellow forms exist. *Cypripediums* are fully hardy and have a range of colours as well as some being quite tall. *Epipactis* is a genus that bulks up well, and very available. *Epcts. royleana* is a good red colour. These need to be kept damp even when dormant as they don't have tubers. *Calapogon* is another genus that needs to be kept damp. *Spiranthes* is a genus of chalk lands rather than the bogs that others commonly thrive in. Many other genres are hardy, and are too many to mention. Small plants are often cheap to buy, and can come via mail order. Seed grown plants are better than divisions as they will become specimens more quickly as well as aid biodiversity.

In summary, don't waste heat. Only heat what you need to heat, and make the heated space to fit the plants. If possible, rationalise plants to a single low heat category, and use other places in the home for warmer plants. Grow outdoors with just a bit of extra care on raising beds to aid drainage. Research your plants to get a proper understanding of their requirements so that you don't waste money. Do all this and you can enjoy growing orchids for just a low outlay. After a few questions on compost for hardy plants, a hearty round of applause was given.

# **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY...**

## **MONTHLY MEETINGS AT RANMOOR – 10AM**

- Sep 9<sup>th</sup>** Ted Croot – EOC at Budapest
- Oct 14<sup>th</sup>** Chris & Jean Baker - Orchid Hunting in Malaysia.  
Chris & Jean are regular visitors to us, and will talk about their travels around Malaysia following the last WOC in Singapore.
- Nov 11<sup>th</sup>** John Garner – Nomenclature and terminology.  
Nomenclature is usually the realm of botanists and scientists – not some half wit like John, so it may be interesting and erratic.
- NB. This is Armistice Sunday, so there will be a minutes silence at 11.**

## **OTHER SHOWS**

- Sep 9<sup>th</sup>** Darlington & BOGA show at Josephine Butler College, Durham
- Sep 30<sup>th</sup>** East Midlands OS – Radcliffe-on-Trent  
**SDOS exhibiting**
- Oct 26-28<sup>th</sup>** BOC at Writhlington School, Radstock, Somerset  
**SDOS exhibiting**
- Nov 24<sup>th</sup>** BOGA Pre-Christmas fair, knowle, Birmingham



Above: - Ctyh. Newberry Butterscotch

Below: - Rlc. Magic Meadow 'Napoleon'

