

SHEFFIELD & DISTRICT ORCHID SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2010



**NOVEMBER PLANT OF THE MONTH
MASDEVALLIA *LILACINA***

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BUSINESS

The next meeting is the AGM, and preparations for this are well underway. The notice of AGM, and accounts are attached to the newsletter for perusal prior to this important meeting. We will once again be providing a buffet as a carrot to attend, and as this would be best after the meeting (given the short daylight length) it has been agreed with the members present to hold **the meeting in the morning at 10.00am.** This has also been confirmed by the church. Several members have already indicated that they will provide items of food for the buffet, and if you are able to add to the feast, please contact Julie Binks (number above) beforehand to see what may still required. Any cups and trophies not yet returned should be brought to the meeting.

It appears that the trophies this year will be awarded to a very small number of members. The committee would like to see a wider range of

members bringing plants for the table show – as well as being entered for judging - they are all important.

Plans for the annual show at Chatsworth are now moving ahead, and the hall has been booked. Advance publicity releases have been sent out on the theme of “Orchid Show returns to the Chatsworth estate”. We will be providing cold food and warm drinks on the day.

When we relocated to Ranmoor 18 months ago, we had to change the timing of the meeting to the afternoon as the church couldn't guarantee availability in the mornings. On occasion the vicar has pulled rank, and we have had to move to a week earlier or later. The afternoon meeting has proved to be more of an inconvenience to many members as they tend to lose nearly all of the day rather than just the morning. Richard has had some discussions with the church, and they will now accommodate us in the mornings on the second Sunday. Previously christenings have been randomly spaced, which has been the issue. They will now be arranged on a regular sequence that avoids us. Subject to agreement at the AGM we are likely to return to 10.00 on the regular 2nd Sunday. This will be confirmed (or otherwise) in the next newsletter.

THE TABLE SHOW

This month's talk was given by Charles Ford – reluctantly press ganged into action at short notice. He started with a small dry plant of *Masd. ignea* 'Pink' that was actually a decent red(?). 3 other similar plants were of similar colour and shape – and also fairly dry. *Masd. lilacina* was a smallish pot of dozens of starry white flowers not much higher than the leaves. This excellent plant was adjudged the plant of the month (see front cover). *Masd. nidifica* var. *alexanderi* is a hooded species of spiky pale pink/white, and a nice potful was shown. The next plant was a huge *Pl. tuerckheimii* with a mass of spikes of deep purple flowers as open as they get. By comparison *Darwinara Charm* 'Blue Sky' was quite a small vandaceous plant with small bluish flowers – the size of the plant and flowers is contained from the *Neofinetia* parentage (see back cover).

Milt. vexillaria was a lovely flowered specimen, and though the spikes were a bit weak, the flowers were a lovely pale pink. *Milt. Belle Glade* is of a different type with several medium sized flowers of pastel yellow, brown & white. *Odm. ariasii* has quite small brown spotted yellow/white flowers on a tall spike. The species is relatively new to cultivation.

Coelia bella was a deceptive plant. It has squashed pseudobulbs like a *Coelogyne* but with long soft leaves. The flowers are fairly small of white and pink tips on a short spike that grows from the base of the bulb. An unnamed yellow *Cymbidium* was doing quite well.

Phrag. Hanne Popow is a delightful small pink slipper, as was Carol Kanzer, whereas the species *sargentianum* was very tall (over 1m and still going) with large flowers of the more normal greeny brown. Phrag. Inca Fire was a smallish *besseae* hybrid of a superb red colour. Phrag. Cardinale was a huge specimen plant with 5 good spikes of whitish flowers with a red pouch.

Autumn see the start of the Paph. season, and several were on show. *helenae* is a nice miniature, as is *barbigerum*. Little Alexander is a small plant with longer leaves and a small stippled yellow flower on a short spike. *concolor* is a larger plant with mottled leaves, also with a smallish flower of pale spotted yellow. *tranlienianum* is an odd flowered species that only a dedicated slipper grower would admire. *braemii* is often considered a form of *tonsun*, and is pale brown. Lady in Red was a reasonable round red complex. A white form of *Maudiae* had a couple of decent flowers, whilst Dusty Miller 'Shelley' is a noted complex form of white with tiny freckles – which was humorously misread as 'Smelley'...

Pot. Miyaki 'Little King' is a small hybrid, with a single purple flower that was produced as the leaves emerged. It has no sheath as such, and is generally regarded as more tricky to grow than many of the 'standard' Cattleyas. Ctna. Keith Roth was a little disappointing with just a single maroon flower on each of 2 spikes. It probably needed more water during the growing season. C. Princess Bells was a large white with 3 flowers in good health, but would benefit from repotting.

Calanthe Tokyo is an old deciduous hybrid with a huge spike (over 1m) with several flowers of pink with a white lip. An unnamed *Dendrobium* with small round pink/purple flowers was identified as possibly *compactum*. *Catasetum pileatum* had 3 large white flowers that were male with a slight scent of vanilla. Generally female flowers are created in brighter light. *Psychopsis mariposa* was supposed to be an album form (which in this case is yellow), but was the standard yellow & brown. The imposing flowers are produced sequentially on a long spike. The final plant was *Renanthera kilaeua* with a large spray of deep red flowers (see back cover) that lasts up to 6 weeks. The plant is a good grower, and has many new roots all up the plant. Thank you Charles. **JG**

NOVEMBER PLANT OF THE MONTH

MASD. LILACINA

I bought this plant 3 years ago at the London Orchid Show. I grew it cool for the first year and it did not thrive. The second year I moved it to the intermediate section and it thrived. This plant originates from Peru where average daily temperatures are 20-25deg C.

My culture of this plant is as follows - Diffuse light, never direct sun, high humidity and good air circulation. I keep the compost evenly moist spring to autumn and reduce water from late autumn. I fertilise at every watering, but reduce this in winter. The compost is a mixture of fine bark, sponge rock and sphagnum moss. Masdevallia's like to be repotted once a year and this plant really thrives after repotting.

This is a very rewarding plant to grow, it is very floriferous and seems resistant to pests - a big plus in my view! **Hilary Hobbs**

THE AESTHETICS OF ORCHID GROWING – TINA STAGG

Tina is a long established member of CANWOS, and has talked on orchids for a while as well. This particular talk has an interesting title, and is definitely well away from the 'norm'. Although aesthetics is a complex word, the subject itself is fairly straightforward once the basics are understood. It is very much a subject to be taught rather than try to self learn. 'Why we like what we like' is the alternate title, and applies to many things other than orchids, but it fits orchids best!

Aesthetics in this case is a visual thing – about beauty, and how this is shared. It is based on many things that nature throws at us. The first is maths based. Spirals are found throughout nature from fir cones to pineapples, and such orchids as *Anacamptis pyramidalis*. In the case of the pineapple, there is a perfect spiral both ways, whereas in the fir cone it can be misbalanced, often in the ratio of 1:1.6. This ratio is part of a natural sequence that creates golden rectangles and triangles, as well as circles, ovals and squares. This ratio fits in with the Fibonacci sequence – 1,2,3,5,8,13,21 (never expected to hear that associated with orchids – ed.).

The next is proportion and balance, with the ratio having a role here. Leonardo's Vitruvian Man fits into a circle as well as a golden rectangle. Symmetry is important with balance, and all orchids fit nicely into this bracket. *L. anceps* is both circular and rectangular. Tina grows a lot of clones – often unseen as they flower in December and January when generally there are no shows. These are grown in a mixture of large bark, moss and oak leaves, except var. *veitchiana* which grows in a basket of moss. *L. jongheana* is similar & *rubescens* displays a diamond shaped lip. Dendrochilums in flower such as *filiforme* have a circular shape (from above), and half spherical shape (from the side).

Colour is the third aspect, although of lesser importance. Some colours are seen as good, some bad, and this can be more of preference.

Nature gives us some 'factory settings' at birth (natural instincts etc.). We have to like round things such as babies faces and eyes (rejection would see the end to the human race), so we like round flowers such *V. rothschildiana* or *Miltonias*. We have dislikes as well - green is often disliked as a flower colour for many of the same reasons that kids don't want to eat green vegetables as it isn't a natural ripe food colour for apes.

Our complex lives means that we often forget our likes, and we will be given reminders such as a perfect sunset after a sunny day, and those warm colours of red and yellow eg. Pot. Little Toshie. Brown *Cymbidiums* are reminiscent of autumn tints.

Scent and flavour are important and provided by many orchids – vanilla being the main one, but also cinnamon (yellow *Lycastes*), and cedar (*Polystachia*). (The opposite end of the scale is the rotting flesh smell that attracts carrion flies).

We enjoy anticipation – whether it is for a holiday, or waiting for a bud to fatten and open eg. the massed flowers of *Lycaste cruenta*. We are also heartened by new growths, or lots of new roots. Anticipation can be seasonal of course. Christmas is associated with red, so we like red things at that time – poinsettias and *Cochlioda noezliana*, and also pink such as Burr. Nelly Isler. Spring is a positive time of year. We've had enough of reds and browns, and want to see the yellows of daffodils, *Lycaste luminosa* and Den. Stardust 'Chiomi'.

We all have personal tastes that can vary enormously. Harlequin Phals are a good example. Although they may be florally symmetrical, odd blotches here and there aren't normal to nature. Consequently you tend to either like or loath them. Huge plants can be natural and appear overbearing.

The perfectly random mixed colour display can be very appealing – it doesn't have to adhere to the 'colour wheel' of adjacent and opposite colours.

When planning to stage plants, there is a need to often train plants to get the correct shape, especially with multi spikes Phals. Staking them young to avoid each other should result in a fan shaped display (or a wall) once the canes are removed. Displays that are sloped create a good effect, creating natural depth. Plants can then be arranged either in genera, or by colour. Sometimes though in this case symmetry can appear tedious, so use of diagonals can be effective; especially in rectangles (don't forget the ratio).

At the end of the day though, what really hits us is the WOW factor, and to achieve this, many of the above factors come into play – not forgetting the correct culture for the plant.

All in all, a very good lecture that gets you thinking, and a heartily deserved round of applause was given. **JG**

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY... MONTHLY MEETINGS AT RANMOOR

Dec 12th **AGM – at 10.00**

Jan 9th **Ray Creek** on composts etc.

OTHER SHOWS

Feb 27th Harrogate OS annual show. Britannia Hotel
Bramhope. SDOS exhibiting.

Society website - **www.sheffieldorchids.org**



Above; *Renanthera Kilauea*

Below; *Darwinara Charm* 'Blue Sky' (on an overcast day).

