

**Sheffield & District
Orchid Society
Newsletter
November 2015**



**November Plant of the Month
*Bulbophyllum annandalei***

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Business

The AGM is next month, and will be followed by a finger buffet. Please contact Christine prior to the meeting to see what food/drink may still be required.

The accounts are included with this newsletter (the AGM minutes were in the December 2014 newsletter)

Any members holding trophies from last year is reminded to return them at the AGM so that they can be re-awarded.

NB. the closing date for the BOC photo competition is 31st December (details in the BOC minutes sent out with the Sept newsletter).

The Table Show

This month Ted Croot delivered the commentary on a very impressive Table Show. He started the commentary with a group of four Pleurothallids, three of which were entered for judging.

The plant considered best of the group was a *Scaphosepalum parvum*, a very typical example with spikes of small yellow flowers. *divaricans* was another good plant with very small flowers which “could easily be mistaken for

greenfly” said Ted, tongue in cheek. *palliolata* was an attractive plant where the flowers rest on top of the leaves this can make it difficult to tell when the flowers are open. *quadrifida* – a plant with small yellow flowers on short stems was again a very typical example of a Pleurothallis. A short discussion followed between Peter White and Ted regarding the short and long stemmed varieties.

Pda. Little Blossom (Vanda (Neofinetia) falcata x Ple. Miss Joaquim) is a very pretty hybrid, with delicate pink flowers. Miss Joaquim is not an easy plant to encourage to flower but this hybrid with the Neofinetia is the second spike this year.

Dendrobium Ellen, (*D. tetragonum* x *D. kingianum*). This plant is grown in a cold house with just enough heat to keep the frost off. Often it flowers over a three month period with one spike at a time, this year the spikes have all flowered at the same time creating this lovely show of cream flowers.

Brassocattleya Golden Mull ‘Orient’. It is the third time this plant has been seen on the table show. The splendid new leaves and show of yellow flowers prove it is certainly not losing its vigour. Cattleya Wendy Patterson. This is a three year old plant which has had a problem with scale, now coming round and producing nice clean flowers, white, pale green/lemon. Epidendrum Serena O’Neil, this plant is growing nicely and flowering on all spikes. *Sophronitis coccinea* var. *cernua* (now a Cattleya). Ted bought this plant from the collection of the late David Binks. Peter and Ted had the opinion that the leaf is rather large for a *cernua*.

Milmitonia Sunset (Milt. Goodale Moir x Mmt. Norma MacRae) is normally darker than shown, the plant had three spikes which were not flowering simultaneously. Some roots of the plant were coming out of the pot and turning brown. The question was, should it be repotted or should the roots be removed. The advice given was to repot in open compost as the roots may still be alive. Cool grown and readily available at garden centres. (This was originally a Miltonia, but when the names were changed a few years ago it became the oddly named Milmitonia - Ed.). Oncidopsis Nelly Isler. There was a slight wrinkling on the leaves which is difficult to avoid, sometimes put down to irregular watering. Peter White commented that it could also be due to the compost used. When bought it would have been in a mixture of coir and bark. Coir is good for growing plants but can cause wrinkling of the leaves. Peter grows the plant on the floor of the greenhouse in summer, to provide cooler conditions and shade. Not easy to flower.

Oncidium or an Odontioda – this plant was bought from a Garden Centre without a label and no flowers. It has been successfully resurrected to

produce flower spikes. *Oncidium longipes* – Long individual flower stems, flowering profusely. A very nice plant.

Paphiopedilum Carola Adenauer, (*P. chamberlainianum* x *P. Prince Edward of York*), was bought from Roellke's Nursery where it was bred and raised. *Paph Psyche* (*P. bellatullum* x *P. niveum*) and *Paph Sugar Suite*, were both exhibited at Radcliffe on Trent, last month and are lasting well.

Catasetum expansum 'Fanfair'. The plant was flowering unusually late with three spikes. Brian brought the plant in to demonstrate the deciduous nature of the leaves which were turning brown. New growth should appear before Christmas.

Bulbophyllum annandalei. A very nice plant with two lovely spikes and clean leaves. Awarded plant of the month with 22 points (see front cover). Congratulations to Jim once again (last month's winner had 24 points).

At the end of the table was a nice collection of *Phalaenopsis*. Brian had a collection of three plants in a pot which had been on a display. There was also a deep pink hybrid without a name which Peter White said he would try to identify.

A discussion followed about the registration of *Phalaenopsis* being a nightmare. The RHS are trying to sort out the parentage of various hybrids which can even come down to a simple spelling mistake.

Thanks were express to Ted and Peter for their input to the table show.

Breaking news... "The speaker kicked himself afterwards for having missed out a superbly grown little *Ascocentrum miniatum* carrying three spikes of flowers and looking very happy on its cork bark mount. He would have congratulated the grower if he'd been more observant." Thank you Ted.

November Plant of the Month

Bulbophyllum annandalei

Bulbophyllum annandalei is a 'high altitude species with umbels of up to eight blooms, which are 5cm in length, coloured yellow with red veining on the petals and spotting on the lip'.

I purchased this plant from Orchid Alchemy when Andrew visited a meeting at Ranmoor approximately two years ago.

It is grown on a shelf on the north light side of the greenhouse at an intermediate temperature. Depending on the weather I water and feed it small amounts every two or three days. This is the first year of flowering and surprised me by presenting one spike then two spikes.

A very unusual and satisfying plant to grow. **Jim Charlesworth**

Commercial Orchid Growing in Holland

by Peter White

Phalaenopsis are by far and away the largest in number of pot plants produced in Holland. Most of these are produced in Thailand using tissues culture resulting in cheap supermarket plants. Those purchased in nurseries being dearer. The plants fall into four categories, A, B, C and D. Grade A and B plants are selected by the growers who pay a premium for them. They take 14 months to flower, which is initiated by feeding the plants fertilisers and dropping the temperature (see later). Grade C and D plants are produced for the supermarkets; they take 7 months to flower as they receive hormones rather than fertiliser. These are un-named varieties. Garden centre plants can be returned if they fail, with supermarket plants there is no after sales service. Repotting after 3 or 4 months is recommended to get rid of the hormones.

Peter breeds and registers his plants in this country and then has them grown in Holland. The reason for this being the high heating costs and the inability to acquire sufficient glasshouse area in this country. All the Phalaenopsis growers in Holland are found near to Amsterdam as the climate is warmer there and light levels are better. Oncidiums are grown further north. Plants are grown under an alias so that competitors can't trace the cross. Plants are given a false name, often the name of a city and a code number, this enables the grower and the breeder to trace them. Very cloak and dagger stuff.

It costs 5.2 euros to grow the plant, they receive between 16 and 19 hours of light per day at a temperature of 90 deg. F for 4 to 6 months. A robot then moves them, by the bench, to another house which has a temperature of 65 to 70 deg. F. This initiates flowering which can be controlled to coincide with demand, such as Christmas, Valentine's Day, Mother's Day etc.

The nurseries are vast, one bench can contain up to 3 million seedlings. Automated benches move sections containing 400 plants very slowly around the glasshouse, the benches move up and down as well as backwards and forwards to allow repositioning. The plants are watered and fed from above once a week. The relatively high temperature dries the water from the plants so that they don't suffer damage. Water is stored in vast underground tanks some half a mile deep. After being warmed it is circulated by pumps. One of the smaller growers (Koehler) who specialises in miniatures had a problem with red tips on the ends of the leaves. Their water was stored outside, not underground. Their research team found that the problem was caused by Boron from aviation fuel. The nursery is situated close to Schipol airport. Their water is now passed through sand filters four times and stored indoors.

The high tech lighting is computer controlled and plexiglass is used for glazing. Cycles are used to get around the nurseries, inside the glasshouses, as the distances are so great. Any plants which are substandard are consigned to a skip, this amounts to between 7 and 10%.

The plants are not sold to individuals and they are either contract grown or sold by auction. The packing area is also computer controlled. A magic eye can select colours even when in bud, also the number of spikes, 2, 3 or even 4. The spikes are staked to prevent damage in transport as well as for aesthetics. Very tall spikes are trained in a curve so that they fit onto trolleys, not just so that they look nice. Automated sleeving has problems and a lot is carried out manually as is the staking. The flower auction in Aalsmeer sells up to 30 million cut flowers a day, as well as pot plants. The auction is extremely rapid and controlled by a huge clock. Each lot is sold in less than 90 seconds. The price, also shown on the clock is per stem or per plant but the entire contents of a trolley has to be bought. The trolleys move continuously through the auction. There is a 10% auction fee and non-Dutch speaking buyers usually employ a broker who also charges 10%, but is well worth it. The flowers come from all over the world. Roses from Colombia can be delivered to a customer in UK within 48hours thanks to Fedex. Next door to the auction building is a wholesaler where smaller quantities or specific plants may be bought at auction price plus 15%.

Hundreds of new varieties may be trialled in a year and only 10 selected the rest are binned. From the flask seedlings are put into trays of sphagnum moss and grown on for a year. They may travel to Tuscany for this, growing conditions being ideal there, they then return to Holland. Colours are isolated on the benches; many whites are among the new varieties. At this stage 90% can end up in the skip. Plants with two, 50cm branching spikes with large flowers are desirable, also miniatures with 5 stems. Colours must be stable and every plant immaculate. Inspection is continuous throughout the production this can take as little as two years to flowering in Holland compared to up to ten in UK. If you are lucky enough to be allowed to visit any trial houses you will be expected to gown up to protect the plants from possible pests or diseases. Trial plants only have numbers, no names at this stage.

Peter finished by showing us beautiful, large clumps of *Cypripediums* grown by Anthura Garden Orchids in the grounds of their nursery. The soil is sandy so a 2" layer of wood-chippings is applied to conserve moisture. It is only possible to buy these plants through the UK agent and not directly from the nursery. New varieties are trialled inside before being produced in large numbers. **Carolyn McQueen**

5 Top Tips for Cold Weather

(Courtesy of Burnham's Nurseries)

- Mist your orchids' leaves with a water spray every day if you can. This will increase the humidity in the home, especially with the heating on more.
- Keep your orchids warm on the cold nights, avoid standing too close to the cold glass of a window or trapping between window and curtain. Insulate the greenhouse and check the heating works.
- Give your orchids lots of light in the winter, if we see the sun, there is no power in it to burn the leaves.
- The cold weather means the pots don't dry out very quickly so water sparingly at this time of year.
- Make sure all your cooler growing orchids are in from outdoors now. It's been so mild but now it's time to bring them in to a conservatory or cool room.

Dates for your diary...

Monthly meetings at Ranmoor – 10am

Dec 13th AGM and finger buffet

Jan 10th 2016 TBA

shows/exhibits/conferences etc

Feb 28th 2016 Harrogate OS annual show at the Britannia Hotel, Bramhope. ** SDOS Exhibiting **

Society website - www.sheffieldorchids.org



Above - Rlc. Chief Pink 'Diana' AM/AOS - One of the editor's best Cattleyas,
flowering again after suffering for several years
Below - Vandachostylis Charm 'Pink Star'

