

SHEFFIELD & DISTRICT ORCHID SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2010



**OCTOBER PLANT OF THE MONTH
PAPHIOPEDILUM RED DRAGON**

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EDITORIAL

“By ‘eck it’s reet cold” said oor lass t’other day. She’s not wrong. Autumn has suddenly arrived with a vengeance. This is usually the time of the year to check up on greenhouse maintenance, as well as looking back on what sort of summer it has been. The external shading has now been removed, and I can see that there is a layer of green algae (that has been building for several years) that needs removing prior to the dark winter days. My electric heater only has 2 of 3 bars working, so a bit of repair is needed to fit a new element before the heavy frosts. I’m not concerned about it during Summer/Autumn as 3 bars tends to create too much dry heat once they kick in. Trial and error do help, but sometimes it takes a failure to show you an advantage. I’ve used an extra circulation fan this summer, and it has helped to strengthen the growths, especially in my paphs, where I’m now looking forward to a colourful winter.

BUSINESS

The committee have discussed in some detail the 'situation' regarding the annual show. Without covering the relevant points (and there were many) in detail, we have decided to return to Chatsworth in 2011, but staying with the 1 day show format. This is expected to be on Sunday 8th May, with setting up on the previous afternoon.

Two exhibits have been made at recent shows at CANWOS and EMOS, and thanks are given to all who provided plants and helped out. It was notable how the 2 shows varied – CANWOS was a disaster, and EMOS a roaring success.

The AGM is now rapidly creeping up on us, and any members with cups from last year are requested to return them, preferably at the November meeting, but December will do. Sadly there will be no calendars available for classes without trophies.

The treasurer wishes to remind members that subscriptions are now due.

TABLE SHOW

John Garner volunteered to do the talk this month, and started with Ascda. Daryl Venables. This small yellow flowered plant is a regular visitor, and was last here in July, and has been re-basketed since then. Vandafinettia Pat Arcari 'Nuit Blue' is another frequent visitor with 8 flower spikes of small pale blue flowers. Several buds are yet to open, and it will be a real picture in a few weeks time. V. Hu Jiongzhou (Suwapee x Dr. Anek) was a well grown plant of decent sized mottled purple flowers.

C. Binottii had 2 nice purple flowers on a reasonable sized plant. RLC (or is it BC?) Deesse 'Charles' is a huge white, with a yellow throat and just a hint of pink on the petal tips. It is very eye catching, As was the next plant – BLC Alma Kee 'Tipmalee' with a deep red trumpet on a full yellow background, clearly displaying the *dowiana* heritage. By their side, C. Angel Bells was quite modest, with a couple of white flowers showing a bit of travel damage (from recent shows).

Paph. Red Dragon returned from last month, and looked splendid with 4 open flowers, and was adjudged the Plant of the Month. Two plants of Paph. Joyce Hasegawa were next, and always flower together, but this year they are consistently 4 months late! It was hoped that they miss flowering next year to grow a bit more strongly. Paph. Maudiae had 2 good flowers

of pale green and white, and was a note good do'er. Paph. *helenae* is rarely seen, and is a true miniature in the slippers. It had a strong yellow flower with a pinkish lip. Paph. *barbigerum* is closely related to *helenae*, and is similarly tiny, but with a better constructed flower of pale colours with a pinkish lip. A plant labelled Paph. Hot Spots was had 2 very nice vinicoloured flowers, which lacked the spotting that should be present from the henryanum parent, but was still a lovely flower worth a place in any collection.

Two plants of Bakeria Samurai were a recent division, and had small attractive purple flowers with a half white lip. Oda. Keighleyensis is a real old timer (1908) but still has great looks with small spiky orange flowers. *Spiranthes cernua* had just a single spike of tiny flowers that was still opening. *Zygopetalum* B.G. White (Blackii x *mackayi*) with deep blue overtones to the brown background. The final plant was the only Phal. present, which was Newberry Parfait, a daintily coloured flower of mainly white with pink veining towards the edge. A perfect end to a decent display. **JG**

OCTOBER PLANT OF THE MONTH

PAPH. RED DRAGON

This is a complex hybrid of *philippinense* x *Gloriosum* (which is a mix of *callosum* and *lawrencianum*). I am using 50% bark 25% rockwool and 25% perlite as a growing medium. I am feeding the plant with Dyna-Grow at every other watering. It has been kept in a warm shaded part of the greenhouse for the summer. The plant is still in beautiful condition with four flower heads even after 3 months. I think it is one of the best plants that I have ever grown, I am very proud of it. **Graham Young**

TAIWAN REVISITED

CHRIS & JEAN BARKER

Chris and Jean have previously talked to us about Taiwan, the countryside, culture, and more importantly the Taiwan international Orchid Show. This, their latest visit was in March 2009, and also

involved mounting a display on behalf of the OSGB. The display nearly didn't go ahead as Chris was delayed in Hong Kong due to having less than 6 months remaining on his passport. Fortunately the diplomatic services in HK were able to issue a new one, and after a day's delay they were able to continue – “let that be a warning to you” is a valuable bit of advice.

The TIOS is one of (probably) 3 world class annual orchid shows, with highly artistic displays and is well funded. It can afford to be with over 300,000 visitors and sales orders over US\$100M. The show is in a dedicated orchid display area in 3 of several huge greenhouses – which are still being built. Many of the large number of Taiwanese growers have a permanent presence here. With the perfect tropical climate, orchids will grow in abundance with little cost to the growers. Consequently there are always enough plants for huge displays, and often it is more the nature of the display than the flowers themselves that wins awards. Plants are however in profusion, with over 1000 Paphs on the Taiwan paph. Society display alone.

The TOGA display was over 20' high and very long – it has over 300 commercial members. TOBS (Taiwan Orchid Breeders Society) have another huge display. They aren't the serious commercial producers, but mainly enthusiastic amateurs who make hybrid crosses by the thousand, hoping that just a few of their plants will be selected by the commercial nurseries for mericlones. Although they aren't well known in the UK, I-Hsin won the best exhibit with mainly Phals, with most of these usually becoming available (through the Netherlands) at UK nurseries a couple of years later. I-Hsin Black Jack, Tinny Honey, and I-Hsin Waltz were shown.

Everything in the show is on a large scale – even the judges, where there are over 200 for 53 classes. Judging seems to work by a process of elimination until the best is selected. Eventually 1 GC and 4 reserves are agreed. Some politics does come into play, and if a cane or tie is just in the wrong place then the plant can be discounted – as happened to an enormous, and old, Phal. amabilis. Plants for judging are not on the displays, but in a separate hall

where they are normally put into ceramic jars or similar. The AOS come to the show to do their own award judging, including plants from displays, and then charge the winners for the privilege. It appears that their operation is somewhat regarded as intrusive by many of the exhibitors who neither want their plants removed or wish to pay for something they aren't interested in. Consequently there are a lot of "no AOS judging" signs around.

Within the plants themselves, there are huge Dendrobiums massed in flower. Cattleyas are trained together resulting in their petals nearly being squashed. Phals are around in plenty, with the harlequin types the current trend – such as happy Tree and Harek Galaxy. Although much of Taiwan is warm/very warm, the mountains are cooler, so Cymbidiums are also in abundance, as are Dendrochilums. The GC was paph. Michael Koopowitz, with V. Bitz's Heartthrob and Staurochilus Ionasma amongst the reserves.

As you would expect with CITES, no plants were transported for the OSGB display, but funding was available to purchase some plants, as well as some borrowing from local nurseries. The planned display was soon seen to be 'not in keeping' with the desired effect – which is the arrangement of plants. An arch of posters displaying scenes of the UK had to be relocated, leaving somewhat of a gap of pale green backcloth.

Most large flower shows have additional activities, and the TIOS has associated tourism and nursery trips. During the show, it was the Matzu festival. This is a celebration of the "goddess of the sea" and was surrounded by colour and noise. The well publicised Chimea museum was a bit of a disappointment (for the English) as it contained only European art. A rather unusual tourist attraction is the Gigu salt mountain which is a high point on a flat coast. Coaches bring tourists by the thousand just for the long distance views. The mountain has grown over the years from the extraction of sea salt from the local coastal marches. This practice has now been stopped, and as a result the Black faced Spoonbill numbers are now recovering.

The nursery trips are even more interesting, more for the scale of production than anything else. I-Hsin is a more old-fashioned style of nursery with hand watering the norm. They produce over 100,000 flasks for export each month. Yu Pin is a younger company and has embraced technology to the maximum. 30 huge greenhouses contain the plants. Ventilation and shading are automatic, and spring into action even for just a passing cloud. The benches contain around 400 mature plants, and can be moved around to a shower watering area. Each bench is microchipped, and can be plugged into a movable computer for updates etc. There is a huge repotting area where usually extra sphagnum moss is added as the pot size grows. This all works on a conveyor belt system. Norman's Orchids (Norman Fang is US based, and also in Hawaii) grow for export only. It is highly automated, yet there isn't a flower in sight. Taisuco is another old company, now with low tech facilities. They are still amongst the largest operation with greenhouses covering acres. They grow at a minimum of 27C to avoid spikes forming, and now reckon to get from flask to flower in about 12 months only. They export 3,000,000 flowering sized plants annually. Gosh! After an odd question a hearty round of applause was given. **JG**

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY...

MONTHLY MEETINGS AT RANMOOR – 2PM

Nov 14th Tina Stagg, Aesthetics of Orchid Growing

Dec 12th AGM

Society website - www.sheffieldorchids.org



Above; Huge flowers of Rlc Deesse 'Charles'
Below; Colourful Blc Alma Kee 'Tipmalee'

