



Solihull & District Orchid Society

Last write-up for the Newsletter

Unfortunately, we do not have a volunteer for writing up the talks given by our guest speakers. So this one covering the interesting talk given by Dr. Wilson Wall will be the last. Many thanks to Lina who stepped in to cover the last three meetings - it is much appreciated. If anybody feels that they can take on this task, please let Malcolm know.

Next meeting September

Our next meeting will be our AGM and Plant Auction on Saturday, 3rd September.

The Hall will be open by 1.00. So please ensure you have your plants booked in for sale by 1.45pm so that the AGM can start at 2.00 pm.

All plants should be bug free with 10% of the sale price going to the Society.

This is a great chance to acquire plants grown by society members and so if you have any plants that are surplus to requirements please bring them along - other members will be eager to buy them.

It is always a fun afternoon so look forward to seeing you.



Pure white common spotted Ettington Cutting

Martin Mitchell

Trip to Burnhams Nursery

Before we have another meeting a number of us will be off to Burnhams Nursery on Sunday 14th August.

I will send out the pick up point and time details direct to all those coming.

Look forward to a lovely day out.

Show Secretary vacancy

So far I have not been knocked over in the rush to take over as Show Secretary role but a replacement is needed otherwise next April's Spring Show will be our last. All the help needed will be provided so if you feel you can volunteer please speak with Malcolm.

**Chairman:
Malcolm Moodie
01295 788159**

You can follow Solihull & District Orchid Society on Facebook and Twitter



If you have any pictures or information you would like to put on our website please email: caroline.reid1@blueyonder.co.uk or copy and pictures for newsletter: ballm1@mac.com

July table display



Paph. nive-um - 29pts -
Malcolm Moodie



Dend. cuthbertsonii - 29pts - Stan Taylor



Paph. Honey - 32pts -
Malcolm Moodie



Dend. Ong Ang Ai Boon - 32pts -
Monica Johnson



Dend. Illusion - 29pts - Stan Taylor



Lycaste cruenta - 34pts - Martin Mitchell



Dend. harveyanum - Stan Taylor
(display only)



Paph. Armeniacum x James Bacon -
30pts - Malcolm Moodie



Paph. lowii "doll"
- Malcolm Moodie

Dr Wilson Wall
Bewdley Orchids

British native orchids

Conservation in your garden

Dr Wilson Wall is Technical Director and Partner of Bewdley Orchids which is a relatively new company in the UK and the theme of his talk was how to establish a successful wild orchid meadow in your garden

Dr. Wall is well known within the DNA and forensic science communities with many books published. Hence, his approach to growing orchids from seed started very methodically and from a scientific perspective. After many years the plants, all UK species, grown by Bewdley Orchids are now available for the general public. For many years Dr Wilson Wall and his colleague botanist David Morgan have been establishing the best techniques and selecting the best plants so an average grower would be able to successfully grow orchids in their gardens.

In a period of 20 years an orchid plant can produce millions of seeds but only a dozen of the young seedlings will actually mature to fully grown plants. This is why Dr Wilson Wall emphasises the importance of growing orchids from seed and re-introducing them back into the meadows. In the past, he mentions, the biggest threats for orchid population was not only pesticide use and land cultivation, but the most damage was done to the populations by people picking plants to either grow them in their gardens, or collecting as wild flowers for home decoration. He mentioned a story in the 1930's of a boy going to visit his aunt passing through a meadow in Shrewsbury where Butterfly Orchids were so common and prolific that the air was full of their fragrance.

The seeds are collected through various sources but mainly from private growers who in return for some seed are promised a quantity of fully grown plants as a return with the rest being sold. Sadly, Wild Life Trusts are not very keen to share seeds, but explained that those who are not willing to share or mix their plant populations with different gene pools will eventually end up with a depletion in plant numbers and infertile seed pods. Fortunately the situation is slowly improving with more and more enthusiastic orchid re-introduction projects organised around the country and seeds can be obtained much easier now. Being a bio-scientist Dr Wilson Wall has established a chemical based agar technique that provides all nutrients that orchid seed needs to germinate with a current germination rate of around 50-80% for

most species. This removes the need to use a special symbiotic fungus to germinate the seeds. He also mentioned that once the plant has germinated, most soils naturally have the necessary fungus for successful continuous growth of the plant. Therefore, if a particular meadow has been recorded in the past to have had orchid plants it is highly likely that the necessary fungus will still be present and therefore the re-introduction of orchid population is considerably easier, with guaranteed results. To prove his point he then showed pictures of a particular garden lawn, where it only took about 5 years to establish a well populated orchid meadow.

There are 54 wild orchid species recorded in the UK with Bewdley Orchids working with 11 of them although other species are planned for the future.

The Butterfly Orchid he mentioned is a particular favourite along with the Common Spotted Orchid (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*) which also has beautiful spotted leaves. The spotting variations on the leaves is thought to be a half gene, half environmental consequence although this is still to be proven with more years of observation required.

Historically, fields that are the least fertile and that have been left untouched for very long periods of time have the best chance to establish orchid populations. According to Dr Wall, one would think that orchid names suggest their growing conditions (for example Marsh Orchid), but it is not the specific soil that is needed, these orchids can adapt to most conditions. When establishing a new population competition comes from surrounding plants, grasses etc., but once established orchid roots are very deep (down to 60cm) and are then susceptible to damage if a plant is moved. Therefore, it is important to consider the permanent position very carefully as these plants need to be left alone.

Dr Wilson Wall says they established a method that has allowed them to get most plants from seed to flowering in 3 years' time. This is due to a continuous growth with no seasons whilst still in jars, with permanent light and relevant temperatures. They do occasionally try and take other terrestrial species from the Mediterranean region giving them different insights and allowing them to try out different growing methods. They are a commercial company, but with a very specific objective to bring orchid species back into the British countryside. He encourages everyone to try and grow orchids in their gardens, either planted in pots or directly in the soil.

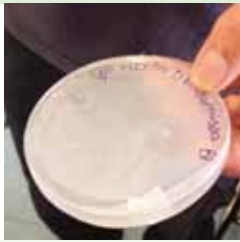
A book, due to be published next summer by Bewdley Orchids titled 'Orchids in your garden' where more information on how to grow orchids can be found. This will be a useful reference in helping us all grow British native orchids in our own garden.

By Lina Smalinske

Orchid conservation with Philip Seaton

Philip has been running a small laboratory at the King Charles 1st High School in Kidderminster in what used to be the school fitness centre for more than two years. In a not more than 20 m2 corridor type space he has managed to fit growing, seed storage and teaching activities. Philip teaches students the intricacies of growing orchids from seed.

As previously mentioned he is one of the founders of the Darwin Initiative project OSSSU (Orchid Seed Stores for Sustainable Use). This involves many countries around the world and is part of Kew's network of global seed banks. Myself and fellow society members Caroline Reid, Margaret Cressy and Malcolm Moodie have taken up Philip's encouragement to join him at his laboratory for a day to learn how to grow orchids from seed. Philip is very passionate about educating even though he retired many years ago, the work of spreading the knowledge doesn't end, he says. We started the day with strict cleanliness routines, white laboratory coats, clean and bleached surfaces. Nevertheless the first thing Philip showed us was a mouldy seedling jar. He mentioned that,



unless you take great care, you can never be sure, no matter how well the sowing process has been done, there is always a danger that there will be one mould spore that will ruin a whole jar of plants.



On to the process, and we have been told we will be learning how to sow orchid seeds using a 'packet method'. We have been shown how to correctly make a seed packet and correctly hold scissors. The packets are made from brown, unbleached, coffee filter papers because they have to go, once filled with seeds, into a 10% Domestos solution. Apparently the white, bleached, filter papers tend to dissolve after 10 minutes in the solution. "Why Domestos?" I asked? Philip's answer was, "Because this product has a suitable concentration of hypochlorite and no harmful additives" ... "and it works", he adds.

Once seeds had gone into the sterilant for 10 minutes, we set up our work space and the sterile Petri

dishes of medium and tools in two flow cabinets. Once set up and 10 minutes had passed, we washed our hands with hot soapy water and headed for the flow cabinets to open the seed packets. Once the packet had been removed from the jar of bleach it had to be washed in a jar of sterile water. We were using seeds from *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* (Southern Marsh Orchid) and *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* (Common Spotted Orchid) which were then transferred to a sterile Petri dish where we cut off the stapled part of the packet, opened it and lightly dabbed the paper with seeds onto the agar and oat mixture in the germination dish. At this point we received a separate dish to cut off a small cube of the special B1 fungus that Philip was very proud to successfully cultivate, and place it into the dish with seeds. Then the dish was taped up and wrapped in tin foil for germination to begin. The waiting can begin and if successfully germinated the seeds will begin to feed on the fungus, fill up and start to grow. The next step is to maintain and check for unwanted mould growths and to transplant the tubers at regular intervals with the same strict cleanliness routines. A year later little seedlings will emerge looking more like plants.

Philip has initiated a one thousand orchid project with his students. Seeds around Worcestershire meadows are collected and reintroduced back into the area. He also is very keen to work with everyone who has interest in orchid conservation. The same day a box had arrived from the Eric Young Orchid Foundation with seeds for him to germinate. He says, "Opening a box like that is better than all Christmases coming at once". Once we looked through the flasks full of seeds he showed us trays of germinating seed sent from growers all over the country. The passion Philip has for what he does is very infectious and the knowledge he is keen to share with younger generation is unmeasurable. I was always under impression that



growing orchids from seed is not possible without a complicated laboratory equipment, but Philip has proved me wrong. He also goes around the country giving demonstrations how to plant and successfully germinate orchid seeds. He has also written a beginner's guide, *Growing Orchids from Seed*, with Margaret Ramsay. The book is

set out in a very simple manner and aimed at the home grower. I got to keep the seeds I have planted and will continue to come back to Philip's laboratory to help with transplanting. I hope myself to produce a seed pod soon and plant my seeds with confidence. Malcolm has already supplied some seeds from *Bletilla striata* and *Masdevallia bulbophylopsi* and has 2 pods developing on his *Paphiopedilum haynaldianum alba* which we will no doubt hear about after our next visit to King Charles School.

By Lina Smalinske



ORCHIDARIUM ESTEPONA SPAIN

Dear sir/Madam,

As you may be aware a new orchid house has opened this year in the beautiful Spanish town of Estepona which is full of Andalusian charm. I have just bought a house which is just 5 minutes walk from the orchid house in the heart of this beautiful, traditional Spanish town and are in the process of refurbishing a ground floor apartment.

This comprises of 1 double bedroom, bathroom with shower and open plan living space with fitted kitchen including washing machine and dishwasher, dining area and large living space with two double sofa beds. There is also a small indoor terrace perfect for a relaxed breakfast or maybe a glass of wine after a day of exploring all that this area has to offer, including of course the orchidarium but also the many bars, restaurants and shops or just stroll along the narrow streets and admire the fantastic display of flowers.

A little further afield just 10 minutes' walk is the sandy beaches of Estepona and 20 minutes' walk along the esplanade takes you to the lively leisure port.

The closest airport is Gibraltar which is about 50 to 60 Euros by taxi or there is a bus service to Estepona.

If any of your members would like to visit the orchidarium and take in the charms of a typical Spanish town the apartment will be available to rent from August onwards for 60 euros a night.

Contact details - Mr Alan Barton

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