



# Solihull & District Orchid Society

## AGM and Plant Auction

This will be on Saturday 1st September and will be the Annual General Meeting and the Plant Auction. As a result the timings for the meeting will be different to normal meetings.

The Hall will be open by 1.00 for your plants to be booked in for the Auction. Please ensure this is completed 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 as other members will be eager to buy them.

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

## Wisley Trip

On Sunday 5th August we will be heading to Wisley for a wonderful day out at the world famous Wisley Garden. In addition, we will be taken on a behind the scenes tour of the orchid collection.

All the details regarding pick up location and time will be sent out to all those who have booked by Friday 27th July.



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



Chairman: Malcolm Moodie  
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If you have any pictures or information you would like to put on our website please email: [LaeliaM@aol.com](mailto:LaeliaM@aol.com) or copy and pictures for newsletter: [ballm1@mac.com](mailto:ballm1@mac.com)  
Society email address: [solihulldistrictorchidsociety@gmail.com](mailto:solihulldistrictorchidsociety@gmail.com)

# Mick Bee - Disas - The way I grow

Mick started by showing a beautiful Disa in flower and stated that this plant is "dying" but new growths are coming at the base and they are the new plants for next year. He has been growing Disas for 30 years, and to this day he still keeps losing plants for the reasons he can only guess.

Disas mainly come from the Western Cape of South Africa with a few in the Southern and Eastern Cape. There are 169 species, but only 7 are evergreens and these are the ones that are used in the majority of hybrids and are the ones he grows. In 1704 John Ray an English botanist, first found Disa and described it as "Orchis africana flore singulari herbaceo". However, the first Disa uniflora description as we know it today was published in Linnaeus's book "Species Plantarum" in 1753. The Disa genus was fully described and illustrated in 1767 by P.J. Bergius, a Swedish physician and botanist.

The flower structure is arranged in a very different way from most of the orchid family: the 3 sepals have evolved to be the most colourful part of the flower, with the dorsal sepal forming a hood shape. The 2 petals are fused and close to the column with the third modified to form a lip. Mostly, Disa flowers come in shades of red; however, there are some that have a yellow mutation due to the two pigment groups switching their places inside the petal.

Underground, Disas are unique in that they have a tuber which consists of root tissue, stem structure and a dormant bud. These tubers are replaced annually by production of a new tuber and sometimes stolons (new growths from the roots) in some species.

The mountain pride butterfly (*Meneris tulbaghia*) is the prime pollinator of Disa uniflora and is attracted only by flower colour, therefore yellow Disas are not pollinated by this butterfly as the insect can't see this colour. Therefore, the only way of propagating yellow Disa uniflora is vegetative. Other Disa species are pollinated by carpenter bees, short-tongued flies, long-tongued flies and hawk moths.

Disa, like most orchids, needs a continued association with a mycorrhizal fungus to survive. However, the 7 evergreen species are not dependent on this fungus and that's why these are extensively used in hybridisation programmes.

The main species are as follows:

- D. uniflora - grows by the mountain streams
- D. cardinalis - grows along the rivers
- D. tripetaloides - grows at altitudes up to 1000m
- D. aurata - yellow flowers
- D. venosa - flowers after wildfires
- D. racemosa - flowers after wildfires
- D. caulescens - grows in shade along streams

All these names can be found in the hybrids that are still being created to this day.

## Culture

Mick grows Disas in two types of compost:

1. Moss and perlite at 50%
2. Peat, perlite and grit all in equal parts.

He keeps to a minimum temperature of 2C in winter, with a fan for ventilation all year round 24hrs a day. He adds summer shade and uses rainwater only, adding a drop of vinegar to lower pH to maximum of 7.0. He feeds at 200 ppm, using increased nitrogen in February to encourage growth. His plants stand in beds of water at all times with his greenhouse being stripped and cleaned every year during August/September.

Some early hybrids:

- D. Veitchii 1891 by Veitch uniflora x racemosa
- D. Kewensis 1893 by Kew uniflora x tripetaloides
- D. Diorea 1898 by Veitch uniflora X veitchii
- D. Watsonii 1900 by Kew uniflora x kewensis
- D. Kirstenbosch Pride 1981 by J.Winter cardinalis x uniflora

The records show that there were no hybrids registered between 1922 and 1981 – Why?

Disas can be bred very easily and germinated straight onto the moss in pots - no laboratory equipment needed. Seed pods require only 6 weeks to mature, and they bloom 2 to 3 years after sowing. Some commercial nurseries are even set up to grow Disas for the cut flower industry as the flowers last up to 3 weeks.

Mick has produced many hybrids of his own.

- D. Luke Edwards 2004 is Mick's first hybrid was named after his grandson.
  - D. Louise Bee 2007 was named after his youngest daughter.
  - D. Suzanne Bee 2007 was named after his eldest daughter.
  - D. Glasgow Orchid Conference (GOC) "Orange Glow" 2007.
  - D. Linda Bee 2009 was named after his wife, and finally one after himself in 2017 D. Michael Bee.
- Disa GOC x racemosa turned out rather unusual with different colour flowers on one spike shows but unfortunately the following year reverted to one colour only.

It just goes to show that with a little knowledge, you can propagate Disa's without any laboratory equipment and create your own new hybrids.



# JULY TABLE

1. *Maxillaria tenuifolia* 27pts Martin Mitchell - 2. *Ponerorchis graminifolia* 25pts Maureen Jones - 3. *Phrag. Grande* 30pts Malcolm Moodie - 4. *Miltassia Shelob Tolkien* 25pts Monica Johnson - 5. *Den. amabile* 25pts Pam Eden - 6. *Bulbo echinolabium* 29pts Stan Taylor - 7. *Eria hyacinthoides* 29pts Stan Taylor - 8. *Paph lowii* 28pts Malcolm Moodie - 9. *Phal. cornu-cervi x equestris* 27pts Lina Smalinske

