



Newsletter



APRIL 2020

Newsletter in April? I hear you ask

I hope that the April issue finds all members continue to be well, able to remain healthy and staying a few steps ahead of Covid-19. Adhering to Government instruction and stay home may be a bore for most of us (see how Jackie manage and cope with her isolation later), especially now the weather has begun to improve but the consequences of not heeding the instruction and other governmental advice will be dire for us and the country and we all need to do our bit.

This crisis won't last forever and here's to better times when we can all meet again at the next meeting, whenever that may be!

A far as I am aware, traditionally because of the annual Spring show and therefore no meeting being held in April, we don't produce a Newsletter but there is always a first time for everything. Another first for the Society, I guess, is not being able to hold its annual Spring show! However, there will always be another Spring show, so let us look forward to making our 2021 show at our new venue a great success.

It will come as no surprise that we have cancelled both meetings in May. Yes, there are two meetings planned in May, the June meeting had to be rescheduled to the 30th May due to double booking of the hall.

Our next planned meeting is therefore on the 4th July and the committee has decided to defer making a decision about holding that meeting until nearer the time depending on how the present crisis develops. The same goes for the annual coach trip planned for 2nd August.

In the time when we all have to practice isolation and social distancing, I hope that most members can find a sanctuary near their home where they can go about their daily exercises, be it in the garden or public park and open spaces.

I am extremely lucky in that not 5 minutes' walk from my front door, I have a small woodlands where I can go walking and there is also a municipal 9 hole golf course opposite the woodlands where I can continue

to clock up my daily target of 15,000 to 20,000 steps, that takes about 2-3 hours, only 21 to go.....!

There is one thing for certain, with all the spare time on hands, our orchids must be receiving more attention than they normally would and the results of these additional tender loving care should hopefully start to manifest itself in the next weeks and months.

Please share the results with us by submitting pictures of them to the future issues of the Newsletter in lieu of the monthly display table.

My thanks go to those who have contributed to this issue of the newsletter with their articles and photos.

We are always looking for contributions to the newsletter from members, so if you have a story to tell and to share with us, may be pictures of your garden, greenhouse, windowsill, what you are doing to beat the boredom of self-isolation, antics you or the family get up to for amusement and light relief etc. please send in your articles and/or photos to me.

Love to hear from you.

Stay well and remain healthy.

My Email account hacked

My email account was hacked at the beginning of the month and some of you may have received rogue emails purportedly from me and I am sorry for any inconvenience caused. I have decided to stop using my old email address of tjin1@sky.com as it continues to cause me problems like lost mails, not allowing me access to my inbox etc. Any future email correspondence with me should be addressed to tjinong3103@gmail.com

We hear so much about email accounts being hacked and always thought that it wouldn't happen to us; we all try to be careful about not clicking on unknown and suspected links and not opening emails from unknown sources - I thought I did all that but it is clear that I haven't been careful enough.

Please let my recent bad experience be a lesson, be careful and don't be the next victim!



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



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If you have any pictures or information you would like to put on our website please email: tjinong3103@gmail.com or copy and pictures for newsletter: ballm1@mac.com
Society email address: www.solihullorchidsociety.co.uk

Phalaenopsis Growing Guide - for the home

by Peter White

Phalaenopsis are commonly called the "Moth Orchid" Unlike most orchids, Phalaenopsis do not have pseudobulbs and should never be allowed to dry out complete, Also, never allow water to lodge in the top of the leaf axis as rotting may occur. Never allow the plant to stand in a dish of water and never stand the plant outdoors even on a warm day.

Watering

Always allow the compost to be semi-dry before watering. The plant should always be watered from the top and allow the excess to drain away, never use water from a cold tap allow water to stand at room temperature for a few hours first.

Temperature

Phalaenopsis plants will thrive in temperatures above 65 degrees F. Warmer temperatures will be ideal in the summer, but in the winter it should never fall below 58 F. That is why they make a ideal house plants as most centrally heated homes never fall below 58 F.

Light

Keep in a semi shaded position in a light room, away from direct sun,

Humidity

Standing the plant on a damp gravel tray to create enough humidity, never allow water to come in contact with the bottom of the pot, a light mist with luke warm water first thing in the morning will also help, by keeping lots of plants together will create humidity for each other.

Feeding

Use a general balanced plant food at the recommended strength every other watering. Try to use feeds that are Urea Free, Ureic nitrogen is just a cheap synthetic nitrogen that will not absorb in the bark base composts. Recommended Feed, Orchid Focus Products, Dyna Grow Products.

Re-potting

They will need to be repotted every 2 years always use a special orchid compost. If in doubt talk to your local Orchid Society,

After the flowers start to fade After the flowers start to fade, cut the flower stem 1/2" above the 3rd node from the base of the plant, this can re-flower in a short time.

Other Notes Never place the orchid near a radiator or in a cold draught. Clean the foliage once a month with a damp cloth or plants wipes. Phalaenopsis Orchids can last in flower for up to 3 months, so enjoy them, you will probably get a surprise to find how easy they are to look after

My life in solitary

Well, this is the first time in my life I haven't had to go to work! So much time to do what I want! As the society is temporarily suspended, with the newsletter needing articles to fill it, I thought I'd let you know what I'm doing, just in case you fancy doing any of these things yourself.

I'm co-ordinating the volunteers who collect prescriptions from the two local pharmacies and then deliver them to vulnerable patients. This is taking up most of my time at the moment, but a lot of the admin work is nearly finished, so it will just be phone calls from people who "really don't want to bother anyone or make a nuisance of themselves".

There are a lot of people who don't use computers and don't see the help that is available, which is very worrying. Many of them are very elderly, live alone and don't see anyone from day to day.

I'm trying to do my accounts and tax for the year just finishing, but it's not very exciting and there always seem to be more interesting things to do.

I am deep cleaning the house, one room at a time, and am allowing one week per room.

I have already finished the downstairs toilet - only the rest of the house to go. I don't want to finish too early or I might have to go around again.

I've started a hoyas farm; these are plants that have the same sort of growing conditions as orchids, but are much more forgiving and they can be chopped up to get cuttings. If one part dies you just re-root the bit that's still alive.

They are very desirable on Ebay. I bought my kit from the local hydroponics shop in Hockley Heath.

Really, all you need are some rockwool plugs and a couple of simple propagators without heat. You can even root them in water. I had a delivery of unusual plants from Thailand and massaged some of them for cuttings, as well as my own collection.

I am now getting cuttings off the cuttings. My latest order from Thailand got as far as Bangkok Airport, but then was returned to the grower as the planes stopped.

Like many orchids, the plants might not be beautiful, but the flowers are amazing. Some do have beautiful leaves though.

While I'm playing with my new toys, the hoyas, I'm also looking after my orchids, although I don't think any of

THESE will be winning any prizes in the photo competition.

My finches are livening up now the days are longer and warmer, and there is a lot of testosterone in the aviary.

One of my Gouldians got egg-bound at the weekend (when an egg gets stuck on its way out). She wasn't well at all, but I put her in a small cage on the radiator and she presented me with her very first egg. I didn't know what to do it, so I put it in a nest where some Bichenos have been sitting on eggs for absolutely ages, so if they manage to hatch it out they will get a bit of a surprise. She had been in the warm to get over it, but she was desperate to get back to her boyfriend so I put her back in the inside aviary.

When I checked on her this afternoon she was soaking wet and shivering, so I had to bring her in and dry her with the hairdryer.

I have also got to learn Wordpress so that I can make a new website, but I think I'll leave that for a week or two.

To me, being in solitary is not that bad; I miss seeing my friends, but I talk to them a lot. I do know that many people find it difficult, but if it keeps people alive, it's a small price to pay.

My parents went through WWII and my grandparents went through WWI; they had people shooting at them and dropping bombs on their houses, so being stuck inside for a few weeks isn't the end of the world. Going out might be.

Stay safe everyone.

Jackie Quinn

Guess who?



Answer bottom P4

Happy Birthday!
to Martin Mitchell

75 on April 20th

Growing orchids from seed workshop

by Lina Smalinske

Last October I have been yet to another workshop organised by Philip Seaton.

The first one I went a year ago in 2018 June, was organised by BOC and Philip with more focus on pollination specifics with hands on pollination of different types of orchids approach. However, this time the workshop was focused on the process of germinating seeds specifically. The idea behind these workshops is that more people get involved in orchid seed conservation and hybridisation.



This area of interest was occupied only by scientists and big commercial orchid nurseries a few decades ago. However Philip believes, that all hobbyist growers should get involved at their homes as this would diversify and expand the results in orchid conservation. This was exactly what we did in the workshop: basic set up, no fancy laboratory equipment and simple instructions.

Philip started by going through some chapters in his book "Growing orchids from seed" published by Kew 2005, which is a simple step by step instruction guide enabling anyone collecting orchids to be able to pollinate and successfully germinate and grow on their seeds using nothing more, but a domestic kitchen.

As a hobby grower myself, I have been inspired by the fact of being able to create a completely new plant by myself. As Philip states in his book "there is nothing more satisfying than raising your own plants from seed".

I got hooked on to the idea very fast, however I soon realised that a huge open field of not knowing opened up right in front of me. It is a process that requires a "no fear for trial and error" approach, with a huge amount of time added into this mix. Just a seed pod to ripen from the point of pollination can take anything from 3-12 months.

Then depending on your experience you could either have a harvest of millions of seeds, or

nothing at all. Sometimes the seed pod can burst and split while still on the plant, while other times the seed pod can look full and ripe, but when opened you can only find fluff and nothing else. I have learned from Philip, that this experience is very common and all you can do is take notes and try over and over again, learning each time from the experience.

The whole group after morning discussion on sharing their own pollination and seed germination adventures, headed to Philip's seed storage fridge and got to pick out of the many different orchid species' seed storage containers.

We felt like kids being in some sort of magic sweet shop, everyone got so excited. We picked two small storage containers each and started the seed packet

preparations. Philip has a very well working method of how to pack the seeds, clean them and get them ready for the petri dish.

He also, when teaching, makes sure everybody is following the process methodically. And it works! I have not only learned how to make a packet for seeds out of a coffee filter, but how to correctly hold the scissors.

We then headed to his small lab room, where he keeps all seedlings, stores the seeds in his fridges and has a couple of donated laminar flow cabinets. In this room, he also teaches biology students at King Charles I school in Kidderminster.

This small space has everything and all has to be in order. We grab the petri dishes with growing medium and the tools, share the flow cabinets between us and place the seeds on to the growing medium. I get to take my planted seeds home and watch them germinate.

Now half a year later, spring 2020, all my seeds started to look like small plants. By now, the protocorms have developed into small rice size chunks, and green shoots have appeared, the petri dishes have now become too small - I

needed to move them on.

The book and Philip's encouragement kept me confident that during this Coronavirus pandemic and the lock down in place, I will be able to do this at home. I have bought some food grade Agar on the web, had powdered some oats, sterilised small jars in the oven and prepared the growth medium.

I have found a clear plastic box, spray cleaned every surface with ever so precious hand sanitiser and started to open up the petri dishes. I had successfully moved all protocorms into the labelled jars and now these little plants have got enough room and food for another year of growth.

I encourage to start exploring this activity every orchid collector as the learning journey is long and exciting.



Spring Show

The fact that we have had to cancel the Spring show doesn't mean that we can't have a display of all the plants you would have brought had the show been going ahead.

We usually have a good number of entries for the show and it would be such a shame if after all the efforts and time spent in getting the plants to flower in time for the show that they remained in your greenhouses and windowsills and not be shared with the members.

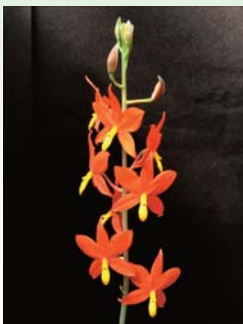
Please take pictures of the plants you would have entered and send them to me to at tjinong3103@gmail.com for them to be included in the May issue of the Newsletter.

Our

Lock-down Pics



Four pictures from Janet James



Five pictures from Malcolm Moodie, L/R Encyclia vitelin, Masd. Angel Frost x Golden Gate x veitchiana, Masd. Lyn Timone, Masd. Partizan Cinnamon 2, Masd. princeps



Four pictures from Stan Taylor L/R Maxillaria variabilis, Masd. equestris x, Renanthara Amayani R. moncahica x R. citrina, Renanhopsis Mildred Jameson, 'Bonsall' HCC/AOS



Three pictures from Martin Mitchell and D. Comet King 'Akatsuki' from David Wray