



Newsletter



MAY 2020

A few new ideas this month . . .

If the May's edition of the Newsletter finds all the members and their families and loved ones continue to be heathy and well, then many congratulations for staying the distance so far. Well done and give yourself a pat on the back. It also means that we have all been good and heeded government advice. Prolonged periods of staying at home can't be easy for many of us as we enter the 8th week of the partial lockdown but all the signs are looking better and improving going forward. The plan to ease and relax movement restrictions announced by the government will provide us with a glimmer hope that the temporary suspension to our daily life may begin to resume, albeit with a lot of caution and continuing observation of social distancing. I don't believe anyone of us expect our life will go back to anywhere near the pre Covid-19 days anytime soon but the prospect of a little more flexibility and freedom will be something for us all to look forward to.

There will no change to the announcement made in April regarding the foreseeable future meetings. The Committee will continue to review and monitor the developments and advice members accordingly.

I cannot believe that I am sitting down to prepare the May edition of our Newsletter, where has the month of April gone? It seemed like only a couple of weeks ago when I started organising/collecting the articles for the April edition. For me, staying home is inconvenient

but it has not drastically altered my lifestyle.

Each day I do some work in my small L-shaped, split levelled, walled,

terrace garden (see pictures). As there is only a small raised bed and the rest of the plantings are either against walls or free standing in barrels, planters and



pots of various sizes, spending time in the garden is actually quite fun and not too much of a chore. Now that the garden is in some semblance of order and earlier than the normal time of year, I wouldn't feel so guilty for not being there when the golf courses finally re-open.

Records broken

April has been a record breaking month for my daily steps; those of you who don't know me well may not know how obsessive I am in achieving my daily target of 15000-20000 steps. The restrictions on normal daily activities, but following the government recommendation to do daily exercise has prompted me to walk more steps each day than ever. I managed 758,477 steps equating to spending 115 hours walking 335 miles. The biggest bonus for me is that I also managed to burn off 32,131 Kcal, that's approximately 42% of my month's calories intake, allowing me to eat whatever I want without feeling guilty!! At a time when all the golf courses are closed, it is a great pleasure to do my last walk of the day, weather permitting, on the municipal golf course with a short iron (for my balance you understand) and finding a few balls in my pockets. Prefect end to a lockdown day but then I am easy to please!

One day last week, for the first time since the stay home advice came into effect, my daily walk was extended to beyond the neighbourhood where I live. I drove to Walton Hill (next to Clent Hill) about 10 miles



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



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away to enjoy the wonderful spectacle of acres upon acres of bluebells at their peak, in an undulating woodland setting. The sights were

something to be behold and no pictures or videos can really do them justice. One just has to be there in person to witness and appreciate this wonder of nature.

There were a number of cars in the carpark but it seemed all the visitors were walking along the ridge of the hill and I was the only person who enjoyed a walk amongst the bluebells in the woods. Bliss

My Greenhouse

From this month, we are starting a small series of article entitled "My Greenhouse". We are fortunate to have a number of members who consistently produce outstanding orchids in their greenhouses. Each grower will have his/her own motivations and circumstances for having an orchid greenhouse and each greenhouse will have been set up differently depending on the requirements of the genera of plants that the growers choose to specialise in. I hope the series of articles will prove to be interesting reading and provide an insight to those of us who can only grow our plants on windowsills. Malcolm has been kind enough to be the first to write about his greenhouse and share his experience. Monica and Keith have already agreed to contribute articles to the next two editions and I am hoping that all members with greenhouses will share their experiences and

expertise in growing orchids in a greenhouse.

A few members have shared pictures of their Spring gardens and these have also been included in the Newsletter. Perhaps there will be more pictures of gardens as the year goes on.

Ken and Monica found a Newsletter going back to March 2005 and thought that it would be nice to go down memory lane for those members who were around at that time. It will also be interesting for those of us who became members much later to see what went on with the society 15 years ago.

Once again, my thanks go to those who have contributed to this issue of the Newsletter, including a number of new contributors. A huge thank you also goes to Martin Ball who very efficiently formatted and produced a professional and attractive Newsletter in an amazing turnaround time. The Newsletter would not be possible without your continuing input and support. We look forward to further contributions, please send in your articles and/or photos to me at tjinong3103@gmail.com

Stay well, remain healthy and hopefully we will meet again soon, we know where but we don't know when but let's hope it will still be a sunny day when we all meet up.

Virtual BOC Congress photo competition

If members feel frustrated that they can't share and show off their beautiful orchids because all the shows and events on the 2020 Orchid calendar so far has been cancelled, why not enter the one off BOC Covid-19 Congress 2020 on line photo competition and have them judged and awarded by BOC judges.

Hopefully members will have seen details of this on the last two issues of the BOC Newsletter that were circulated by Martin Ball on the 3rd May under the heading of COS Bulletins.

Closing date for the photo competition is 7th June. It will be added to the Newsletter email this month.

A touch of nostalgia

from Ken Johnson

Season starts at Hinckley

Hinckley Orchid Show is on Saturday 20th March, and an usual our society will putting on a display of members orchids there.

If you have plants we can borrow for the show let Janet know. They can be collected when possible and returned after the show.

The show is held in the Marston Hall, 10 May's Road, Hinckley. There will be trade stands by Don Goodwin, Peter Stone, Martin Moorle, Don Carlisle and Plants Plus etc.

This is a lovely show, well worth a visit. There is also a good market in the town on a Saturday.

Greetings from Guernsey . . .

One of Ken Jones' relatives has made contact with Gloria Collins, a great member of the society.

Giving new lives on the beautiful island of Guernsey.

Remembering Trish

Trish, aged 83 joined the society in 1985. She was a very active member and was also very keen to encourage other members to join the society.

Trish was a very kind and helpful person and was always ready to help other members. She was a very active member and was also very keen to encourage other members to join the society.

February focus . . .

Another beautiful display of plants were brought in to the February focus.

Members are invited to bring their plants to the focus. The plants will be displayed in the society's greenhouse.

Plant Corner

Members are invited to bring their plants to the focus. The plants will be displayed in the society's greenhouse.

March meeting

The next meeting is on March 15th. The speaker will be Ian Wright talking about Orchids of South East India, with plants to suit.

A study visit for our 40th anniversary will be presented at the meeting. If you suggest your year and would like to be the speaker for this year, or would like to volunteer for the next year, it would be greatly appreciated.

Where would you like to go?

Members are invited to bring their plants to the focus. The plants will be displayed in the society's greenhouse.

Thanks Malcolm

At the February meeting Malcolm Perry was the guest, giving a very entertaining talk. Illustrated with a digital slide show and plants, on his very personal way of growing some of the more unusual species of orchids. Members being surprised to hear how well that he does it on any hillside on his plants etc.

In memory of Lillian

The society have sent a donation of £25 to Cancer Research in memory of a past member Lillian Auer. Lillian was a member for 30 years, only resigning in 2003 through failing health.

For sale

Some of the plants and books are for sale to members. A list is attached. Please contact Janet at 01564 822897 for more details.

Collection

A collection for a donation to the society is being made at the February meeting. If you would like to contribute please let Janet know. It will be the cheque that will be used off as soon as possible.

Finopnepsia

Finopnepsia is a rare orchid. It is a very beautiful orchid and is very difficult to grow. It is a very beautiful orchid and is very difficult to grow.

Janet

01564 822897

My Greenhouse

Malcolm Moodie

About 35 years ago I made the decision to either grow orchids properly or throw the ones I had away. Fortunately, Andrea worked for a company that manufactured Alton Greenhouses and an opportunity arose to purchase a site greenhouse that was no longer required, at a knockdown price – the decision was made.

So I embarked on the quest to try to grow orchids properly and I stress try, as I knew precious little in those days.

Before building and setting up the greenhouse I spoke to a lot of experienced growers and spent a lot of time with Bill Gaskell of Woodstock Orchids (no longer in existence) who was great and gave a lot of help as to how to set up the greenhouse and what equipment was needed. Interestingly, although I have made a number of modifications along the way, the basic set up and equipment remains the same to this day.

The greenhouse has two zones, cool and intermediate with the greenhouse soon filling up, as in the early days I bought almost everything I liked which was nearly everything I saw. Some plants grew well while others withered but my knowledge and



ability was growing all the time. My first love was Laelias (now mainly called Cattleyas) but I have very few today with Paphiopedilums and Phragmipediums dominating the



intermediate house and Masdevallias and Oncidiinae filling the cool house. It is important to try lots of different genera because this enables you to find out what grows well for you in your greenhouse (every greenhouse is unique in terms of its aspect, position and climatic environment) and which ones you really love as you can't grow every one of the 30,000 or so species or the 160,000+ hybrids.



The greenhouse is made of cedar and measures 18 ft by 10 ft and has a limitation of a low apex which means tall growing specimens are out.

No matter what size of greenhouse or of what material it is constructed there are a number of key things that must be adequately controlled and I have spent years making adjustments to these in order to

optimise growing conditions for the genera I grow.

Temperature – It is critical that the zones in the greenhouse are set up to provide the optimum temperature for the genera that are being grown and I do this with 2 x 2 KW electric fan heaters which are clean and move the heat readily around the structure. They are controlled by 2 x Day/Night Controllers that switch the heaters on and off as required to maintain the temperature I need.

These controllers are set so that the night temperature is at least 5 degrees Centigrade below the day temperature with an added facility for switching extractor fans on if the temperature gets too warm (they are wired to suck air in rather than blow it out) as I have no windows in the greenhouse. Everything is controlled electronically.

Air Movement – I have 2 breeze fans that run 24 hours a day to ensure that the air is fresh and that no area of the greenhouse has stagnant air.

Humidity – The greenhouse is plumbed into mains water via a water softener with under bench sprayers, controlled by wet leaf sensors above 18 inches of pea gravel ensuring that the environment remains humid all of the time. I have added a Hydrofogger controlled by a humidistat to supplement the humid atmosphere. The water softener stops the Hydrofogger from caking up with calcium deposits which destroyed my first fogger.

Light – During the winter I have no shading whatsoever but during the summer I have 60% aluminium shading on the outside elevated 1 foot away from the glass to ensure a good airflow between the shading and the greenhouse. This eliminates any heat gain on hot days. During the middle of the summer this shading is



supplemented with green shade netting on the inside of the south side of the greenhouse.

Water – Rain water is collected in 4 water butts before being transferred to one further butt inside the greenhouse to ensure the water is at the same temperature as my plants. A water pump and aerator have been added to stop any stagnation.

The water in Banbury is very hard with added chlorine in the summer neither of which orchids like, so rain water is king.

Fertiliser – I add feed every time I water which is once a week in summer and every 10 days in winter. Personally, I am a great fan of DynaGro fertilisers that are liquid based for rapid dispersal and contain all the macro and micro nutrients including Calcium for good growth. The pH is adjusted to between 6.2 and 6.8 for optimal take up of nutrients.

Compost – Phragmipediums are grown in rockwool cubes which ensure a permanently wet environment

whereas the Paphiopedilums and Oncidiums are grown in various grades of Orchata depending on the root system. The Masdevallias grow in a mix of Orchata, chopped sphagnum, pumice and chopped horticultural foam to ensure they are kept moist all of the time.

I am still making minor adjustments aimed at improving the quality of my plants but I only ever change one thing at a time and only assess the benefits after one whole year. Obviously, if plants react negatively I will remove the modification immediately but this rarely happens. Generally, I don't expect immediate results and have learned that "impatience and



orchid growing do not go together".

Over the years I have gone from having a huge number of plants (circa 500) with relatively few in flower to a much smaller number today (less than 250) but these are much more likely to be at specimen size with a much higher percentage in flower. Quality is much more important than quantity as large plants flower better and less plants means more attention is given to those I have left.

Looking back I am glad I made the decision to grow orchids properly as if I hadn't I would have missed out on an enormously enjoyable hobby of growing the most wonderful plants on the planet.

Wild Orchid Walk

Recently, my daily exercise allowance has become a little more exciting. My family went to Snitterfield woods on two occasions in the last 3 weeks. First time we went was 19th April and then second time on the 8th May.

On our first trip, the swampy birch land was still very wet from the winter and the moss was visibly holding a lot of water. Usually, this wood had *Dactylorhizas* growing right on the main path as soon as you enter, however this year I found heavy machinery tracks and lots recent wood clearing. At first sight it looks like the authorities are tidying the brambles, however regretfully no sight of orchids there anymore. I knew the spots to look for from previous years so I headed deeper into the woods. I have seen a lot Common spotted (*D. fuschii*) just with leaves out and no sight of flowers forming. A few of them growing right on the path, so some bigger plants I have marked with sticks for people not to trample over. We picked lots of nettles and made a fantastic soup that day.

On our second visit, on the 8th May, we have planned a picnic. This time, where it used to be wet it was a scorching dry moss and same wonderfully spotted and stripped *Dactylorhiza* dotted all around with small flower buds forming in the middle.

I have not managed to see many Early purple (*Orchis mascula*) orchids on the first visit apart from one specimen directly on the path. On the second - there were long flowers scattered in between the blue bells deeper in the woods, further from the path and easily distinguishable from the blue background. A fantastic sight! Some already were going over and none of the specimens I saw had spotty leaves and were also very scattered not like the neighbouring *D. fuschii*.

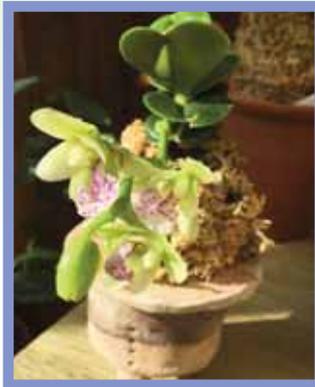
We had a lovely afternoon and are planning a third visit in another 3 weeks time for the next round of gorgeous flowers, however the blue bells won't be there next time.

Lina Smalinske



Our

Lockdown Pictures



LINA SALYTE

Here are some photos to add to the newsletter of my orchids



LIZ KIRK

If anyone knows the name of the Pleoine I'd be grateful. I've taken 3 pics of my garden, please don't feel beholden to use any of them. And you're welcome to crop. My top, half barrel pond is rotting and neglected. The white and bluebells are in my wildflower area, and the apple tree is over 50yrs old, my kids climbed it when we moved here 44yrs ago. Sutton Coldfield is high and cooler so everything comes out later than surrounding places! Hope they can be of some use anyway, I've not taken the grotty bits! The garden is keeping me busy, just wish nowadays it was a bit smaller!

Our

Lockdown Pictures



JANET JAMES

Kingianum alba, the cream *Sarcochilus* is *Fitzgeraldii* hemsrainbow x *weinthalii* and the smaller *Sarcochilus* is *Canary*. I had it off Peter Higgins years ago, it was supposed to be yellow, its the first time it's flowered and there's not much yellow about it. *Serapias lingua*, no name for the yellow *Cymbidium*.

MAUREEN JONES

KI have attached a photo of the Waterfall *Miltoniopsis* which Graham is quite pleased with. It came into flower just in time for our Spring Show (which of course did not happen). I've also attached a picture of the lemon *Phalanopsis* which Peter gave me at last year's show, Graham has been looking after it for me. Nothing spectacular, but quite pretty.



Thanks to everyone who emailed their pictures for inclusion this month. We've had to hold some over, but they will be appearing in the June Newsletter

TJIN ONG

Cypripedium hybrid and *Sarcochilus hartmannii*



BILL CARMEN

Here are some photos of my orchids and the garden to add to the newsletter

