



# Newsletter

## February 2024



### **Pleione bulbils/ small bulbs**

I have a number of packs of Bulbils and small Bulbs that I am happy to donate to anybody that would like to give them a try.

They will not flower this year but will develop into bigger bulbs that may flower next year.

I have the following:

**Pleione formosana** (A lovely pink and white species that is easy to grow) - 2 packs

**Pleione formosana Alba** - A white form of the above species - 1 pack

**Pleione Ueli Wackernagel** - A light pink large flowered variety - 1 pack

**Pleione Kilauea Curlew** - A light pink hybrid raised by Ian Butterfield. A cross between formosana and humilis - 1 pack.

**Pleione Berapi** - A dark pink hybrid again raised by Ian Butterfield - 1 pack.

**Pleione Jorullo** - A purple Pink Hybrid - 1 pack

If anybody would like to reserve any of the above please let me know and I will reserve them for you.

I will bring all packs to the Meeting in March.

**Malcolm Moodie**

## Call for budding writers

**We remain without a report writer for the wonderful talks we enjoy at our meetings.**

**These reports form an integral part of each newsletter as they allow members to access a summary of the talk who may not have been able to attend on the day.**

**They also serve as a record of the talks that we have enjoyed over the months.**

**The write ups can be short or even in bullet point form.**

**Please do let Grace know at**

**[gew30@outlook.com](mailto:gew30@outlook.com) or in person at the next meeting if you would like to volunteer to write up a talk – even just one per year would really help. Without any volunteers, the write ups will not be able to continue.**

**Click link below for news of International Orchid Show this year**

**<http://malvern-ios.org/index.html>**

## Next Meeting

*Our next meeting will be on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2024.*

*We shall enjoy a talk from Michael Radley on 'A history of Sanders & Co Orchid Nursery and its place in the world of orchids'.*

*Michael is very well-known in the world of orchids and he is a member of both the OSGB and Lea Valley Orchid Society. He is also an accredited BOC Judge.*

*Please do bring along any donations you have for the Spring Show. George will be collecting prizes for the tombola.*



**You can follow Solihull & District Orchid Society on**



If you have any pictures or information you would like to put on our website please email: [lina\\_sala@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:lina_sala@yahoo.co.uk) or copy and pictures for newsletter: [ballm1@mac.com](mailto:ballm1@mac.com)  
Society email address: [www.solihullorchidsociety.co.uk](http://www.solihullorchidsociety.co.uk)



# FEBRUARY TABLE



**Shirley Daiper -  
Dendrobium Nobile White  
- 30 pts**



**Bob Grove - Dendrobium  
Kingianum Alba - 25 pts**



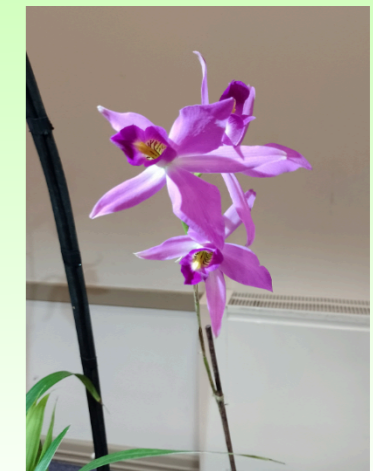
**George Mayes -  
Paphiopedilum  
Gremperel - 30 pts**



**John Choong - Phalaenopsis  
Dusty Belle - 32 pts**



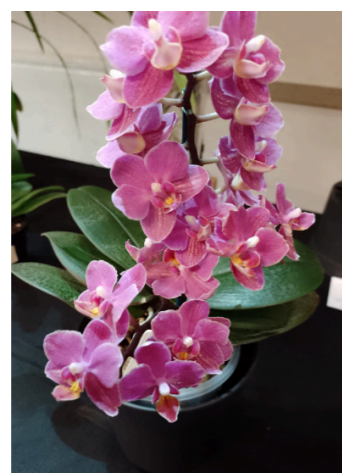
**John Choong -  
Phalaenopsis Lieke - 32 pts**



**Pat Bussy - Laelia anceps -  
28 pts**



**George Mayes  
- Paphopedilum Hybrid  
(yellow) - 31pts**



**John Choong - Phalaenopsis  
Diffusion (b) - 32 pts**



**George Mayes -  
Cymbidium Hybrid - 31 pts**



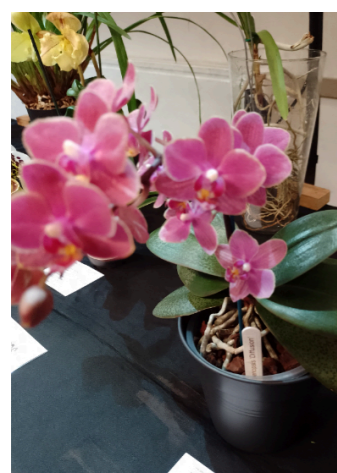
**Pat Bussy - Bulbophyllum  
watsonianum (now  
ambrosia) - 33 pts**



**John Choong - Phalaenopsis  
Pinlong Cheris - 34 pts**



**George Mayes - Vanda  
Hybrid - 24 pts**



**John Choong - Phalaenopsis  
Diffusion @ - 32 pts**



**Malcolm Moodie Coella  
Bella - 32 pts**



**Pat Bussy - Laelia  
Gouldiana- 32 pts**



**Malcolm Moodie -  
Paphiopedilum In Charm  
Mystique - 29 pts**



**Malcolm Moodie -  
Paphiopedilum De Devant -  
31 pts**



**Pat Bussy - Coelogyne  
Intermedia - 26 pts**



# ORCHID CULTURE

At the last meeting Malcolm, our President, gave a workshop/talk on the culture of orchids whether that be in the home, conservatory, or greenhouse. With a quick show of hands, it was established that about half of members grew on a windowsill with the other half split between conservatory and greenhouse culture.

Malcolm explained that when he joined the Society some 30 years or so ago most of members grew in greenhouses. During the intervening years orchids have increased in popularity but with a large reduction in greenhouse culture due to increased cost.

As a result, growers have had to adapt their growing techniques and now many home growers produce extremely high quality specimens. This was evidenced, on the day, by the large number of excellent plants entered in the Windowsill section of the display table. A number of these grown by John Choong were of an exceptionally high standard.

Another member, Graham Jones, achieves superb results in growing Vandas in the house so it shows that everybody can grow high quality plants regardless of whether a greenhouse is available.

The culture of good quality plants depends on a number of key factors, and these were addressed one by one.

## TEMPERATURE

Always choose plants that match the conditions you can provide so some research is needed to understand the conditions required by each genus. Most people start off with Phalaenopsis hybrids which are readily available and will tolerate a wide array of growing environments.

Once ones growing techniques have been honed there are limitless opportunities in

increasing the range of plants one can grow but always being mindful of the temperatures required. If you are growing on a windowsill, make certain that especially in the winter the plants are removed when the curtains are drawn.

Cymbidiums can spend the summer outside, and Dendrobiums generally prefer a cool dry rest during the winter. Plants, such as Masdevallias are a little difficult to grow indoors as they do not like warmth and the dry atmosphere of modern houses.

## LIGHT

Avoid south facing windows particularly in summer months. Greenhouses and conservatories offer better light conditions but will need extra shading during the summer.

If you only have south facing windows then lace curtains will diffuse the heat or place a table 3 feet from the window and grow the plants there.

## HUMIDITY

Most of the orchids we grow are epiphytic and like elevated levels of humidity (something that is in short supply in modern houses). Indeed, conservatories can be difficult to maintain good levels of humidity as the spaces tend to be used as living areas as well as for growing orchids.

Water and soft furnishings don't mix. One of the solutions is to grow plants on trays which have a layer of expanded clay balls (Hortag, Perlag or Hydroleca) which hold a lot of water without the plant itself standing in water and this will dramatically increase humidity.

In addition, a regular misting whilst the plant is standing on the draining board will also be beneficial. Increased humidity will also reduce the instance and severity of any attack of red spider mite.

# ORCHID CULTURE

## WATER QUALITY

Malcolm brought along 2 samples of water, one from his water butt and the other from his tap. These were measured using a Dissolved Salts Meter measuring in microsiemens ( $\mu\text{s}$ ). The water butt water read circa 40  $\mu\text{s}$  with the tap water reading in excess of 700  $\mu\text{s}$ . Orchids cannot tolerate high concentrations of salts and so using tap water with this level of salts would be damaging to many orchids and even terminal to some.

He encouraged the use of rainwater collected from a clean surface such as glass, slate tiles or fired clay tiles. It should be noted that concrete tiles have a high salt content.

Fertiliser – Malcolm showed numerous brands of fertiliser available at garden centres that ranged from packaging that did not have any NPK values or information of the make up through to numerous types with the Nitrogen being made available via urea which is unsuitable for plants that are not growing in soil as urea breaks down slowly when soil microbes are unavailable. I

n addition, many brands do not contain the full range of macro and micronutrients required. Ideally, choose a fertiliser that is urea free and contains a full range of nutrients including Calcium and Manganese that are immobile which means the plant needs them available all of the time as the plant cannot readily move them around the plant's tissues. Malcolm brought a wide range of DynaGro and Orchid Focus fertilisers which all contain the required macro and micronutrients.

## PESTS

Malcolm had already referenced red spider mite, but growers are likely to encounter greenfly, mealy bug and scale insects. Greenfly is easily dealt with as several products that are available deal with this

pest, but many pesticides have been removed from the market making the eradication of mealy bug and scale insect more difficult.

Always choose a systemic pesticide as scale insect have a waxy cuticle that does not allow for a contact pesticide to be absorbed.

## COMPOST

Be careful when purchasing orchid composts from a garden centre as they often contain too many fine particles. Choose a good bark compost from a specialist – Orchid Accessories ran by our member Peter White is a good choice. Select the right grade for the plant you wish to repot. The rule of thumb is fine roots fine bark, thick roots coarse bark.

## REPOTTING

Unfortunately, only 3 plants were brought by members, but each one was used to aid discussion. The Coelogyne was in a large pot and had multiple growths but with many back bulbs. It was suggested that the plant be split into about 5 or 6 smaller plants with an active growth and a few back bulbs. The Phragmipedium was in a very small pot and desperately needed to be repotted. Malcolm did not have the appropriate compost so offered to bring some next month for the owner to repot themselves. The third plant, a Phalaenopsis, had not been repotted in many years and was standing on an abundance of toots completely clear of the pot. The large root mass was drastically cut back to enable the plant to go into a slightly larger pot (orchids should never be over potted as root rot will occur) and then handed back to the grower for the repotting to be completed.

Many questions were addressed and it is hoped that everybody took some useful tips from the afternoon.

**MALCOLM MOODIE**