



Newsletter

December 2025



CHRISTMAS MEETING

It is that time of year already - our next meeting will be our annual Christmas Party and Show on Saturday 6th December 2025.

Please note the earlier start time of this meeting with the hall opening from 1pm as we do not have a committee meeting prior to the party. The schedule and entry form for the show is attached to this newsletter. If you can, please email or text entries to David Wray in advance (wraydavid565@gmail.com or 07853 337976) but if not, bring along entries on the day. We would encourage everyone to give it a go. Entries need to be in place by 1.45pm to enable judging.

Please do enter your orchids in the Christmas Show. There will be prizes for Best Species, Best Hybrid, Best Novice, Best in Show and Most Points in Show. We will also present the Trish Carney Memorial

Trophy for the unsung hero of the year.

Members are encouraged to bring along some food contributions for our Christmas buffet table. For the last couple of years, thanks to everyone's generosity, we have enjoyed a very impressive festive buffet. Hopefully this will be repeated this year!

We will be drawing for the Christmas hampers which are kindly put together by Janet, assisted by Laura, with donations from members. If you were not able to bring along a donation for the hamper at the November meeting, do still bring it along to the Christmas meeting as it is not too late for it to be included. If you donate an item for the hamper, you are entitled to a free ticket for the hamper draw so it is really worth doing.

We will be selling raffle tickets for both the hamper and for our normal raffle.



We would like to extend our thanks to Colin and Jean who have successfully run the raffle at our meetings for many years. Over that time, the raffle has raised substantial funds which have helped to keep the Society going. A huge thank you to Colin and Jean for their commitment.

Bob has kindly agreed that he will take over running the raffle. A big thank you to Bob for this – make sure you keep Bob busy by buying lots of raffle tickets at the next meeting!

You can follow Solihull & District Orchid Society on



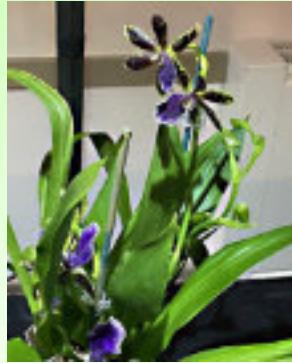
If you have any pictures or information you would like to put on our website please email: lina_sala@yahoo.co.uk or copy and pictures for newsletter: ballm1@mac.com
Society email address: www.solihullorchidsociety.co.uk



November Plant Table



Coelogyne mooreana grown by Bob Grove 29 points (15 for flower/14 for culture). Bob Grove



Zygopetalum Hybrid 28 points (14 for flower/14 for culture). Grown by Bernard Diaper

Coelogyne tomentosa - This particular plant also had the name (massangeana) added to the card. Massangeana is an old name with tomentosa being the current accepted nomenclature. It comes from south east Asia and known as "The Necklace Orchid"

Coelogyne mooreana - I can't be sure but think this plant had a clonal name "Brockhurst" that received an FCC . It was a much better flower than one normally sees reflecting its clonal name. This plant when it is at maturity will be of the highest quality. It should be noted that it always pays to get a named clone.

Lycaste macrophylla alba - This comes from northern South America and flourishes in shady and humid environments.

Maxillaria schunkeana - This is a miniature flowered plant with flowers that are black. It comes from Brazil in the coastal Atlantic rainforest and not described until 1993.

Maxillaria sophronitis - Another small flowered Maxillaria that comes from Venezuela and Colombia. And will make a nice specimen in a fairly quick time.

Dendrobium Cassiope is an old cross between moniliforme and nobile registered in 1890.

Renanthera Gerald Tan is a new hybrid registered in 2017 by the Gardens by the Bay in Singapore. It needs bright light and a temperature between 16 and 25C to grow well.

Masdevallia Chloe Jackson was registered in 2007 by the late Ellis Eyre and is a cross between Ted Khoe and Confetti.

Masdevallia Highland Monarch "Hayley Suzanne" AM/AOS & CCC/RHS. This hybrid has received multiple AM's in the USA. This plant received a Cultural Certificate from the RHS in 2023 when exhibited by Malcolm.

Paphiopedilum Doll's Kobold was originally made by H. Doll in 1992 and is a cross between charlesworthii and henryanum showing characteristics from both parents.



Renanthera Gerald Tan 27 points (13 for flower/14 for flower). Steve Wade



Dendrobium Cassiope 26 points (13 culture/13 flower). Steve Wade



Paphiopedilum Doll's Kobold 30 points (15 for flower/15 for culture). Malcolm Moodie.

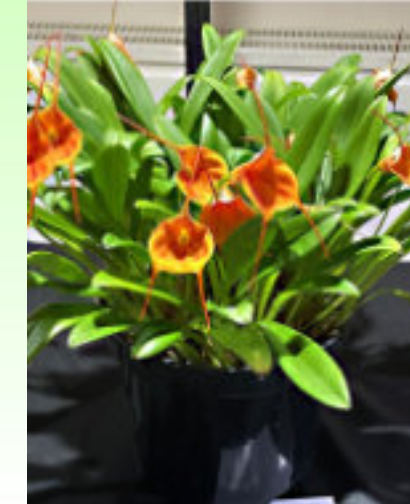


Maxillaria schunkeana 26 points (14 for flower/12 for culture). Steve Wade

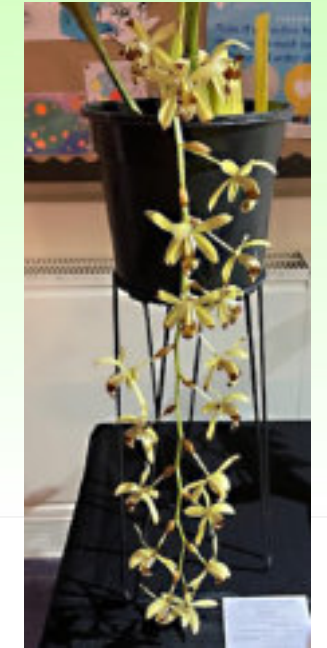
November Plant Table



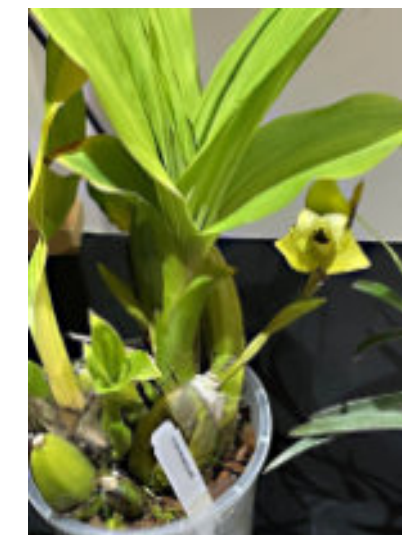
Masdevallia Highland Monarch "Hayley Suzanne" AM/AOS & CCC/RHS 33 points (17 for flower/16 for culture). Malcolm Moodie.



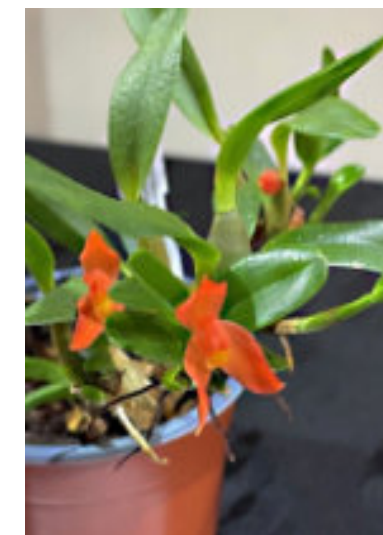
Masdevallia Chloe Jackson 30 points (15 for flower/15 for culture) Grown by Malcolm Moodie.



Coelogyne tomentosa 29 points (15 for flower/14 for culture) Steve Wade.



Lycaste macrophylla alba 25 points (13 for flower/12 for culture). culture). Steve Wade



Maxillaria sophronitis 27 points (14 for flower/13 for culture). Grown by George Mayes

BOC Photographic Competition

The BOC is once again holding an online photographic competition. Pictures can be of any subject but must contain an orchid. You can submit up to three photographs. You should submit your entries to the: chairman@britishorchidcouncil.org.uk.

Take a look at the website at <https://britishorchidcouncil.org.uk/competition-2024/> to view past winner and for further information about the rules of the competition.

ORCHIDS – BUT NOT AS WE KNOW THEM

At our most recent meeting we were delighted to welcome Helen Milner, who gave an enthralling and visually stunning presentation on the hidden world of orchids as revealed through macrophotography. Helen has developed a specialist interest in photographing orchids at high magnification, uncovering details that are often astonishing even to long-time growers. Her talk combined deep botanical knowledge with practical photographic insight, and it quickly became clear why this niche area of orchid study has captivated her for so many years.

Helen began by explaining how dramatically orchids transform when viewed at extreme close range. Features that appear smooth or simple to the naked eye are, in fact, highly textured and structurally complex. The frilly lip of a *Brassavola*, for instance, becomes a landscape of folds and fringes under magnification, while *Paphiopedilum sukhakulii* reveals sepals lined with fine, intricate hairs. These details are completely invisible during normal inspection of the plant. Helen's images reminded us that orchids are architectural wonders, built from finely engineered biological components.

A major portion of the talk focused on pollination strategies, an area where macrophotography reveals mechanisms that would otherwise remain mysterious. Helen demonstrated how many orchids undergo resupination, twisting 180 degrees during bud development so that the lip is repositioned to guide the pollinator. In some genera, such as *Pescatoria*, the structure forces an insect to insert its tongue along an extremely narrow channel, ensuring contact with the reproductive parts. In *Porroglossum*, the lip acts as a hinged trap, snapping shut when an insect lands on it and temporarily imprisoning the visitor long enough to guarantee pollinia attachment.

Even more surprising were the orchids whose flowers evolve features that mimic food, scent, or even the appearance of other insects. Helen showed examples of [name not recorded], which produces hair-like structures intended to deceive insects into probing areas where little or no nectar is present. Some orchids that produce no nectar at all create tactile cues that trick the pollinator into searching for a reward that does not exist. In certain *Restrepia* species, lip shape varies subtly between species, and Helen showed how high-resolution imagery is often the only way to confirm identification—particularly important given how frequently these plants are mislabelled in cultivation.

Helen also discussed the deceptive, and occasionally brutal, nature of orchid pollination. Some orchids mimic female insects, luring males into attempting mating behaviour, only to leave with the pollinia firmly attached. Others present apparently

inviting landing platforms which, under magnification, reveal startling spikes, hooks, or sticky areas designed to ensure the insect cannot leave without fulfilling its pollination duties. As Helen pointed out with a smile, orchids are not always the gentle and elegant creatures we imagine—they can be surprisingly ruthless.

The presentation moved beyond flowers to look at leaf microscopy. Helen demonstrated how photographing the stomata—the tiny pores through which leaves breathe—can reveal meaningful differences between genera. Using an ingenious but inexpensive technique involving nail varnish impressions, Helen compared *Cymbidium*, *Stelis* and *Masdevallia* leaves. Some had dense fields of stomata adapted to high humidity environments, while others showed fewer stomata, suggesting a natural habitat where water conservation is essential. This part of the talk reminded members that orchids are adapted not only in their blooms but throughout their entire structure.

In the concluding section, Helen provided a concise introduction to macrophotography techniques. She emphasised that this form of exploration is accessible to anyone: modern smartphones equipped with simple clip-on lenses can achieve surprisingly detailed results. For more serious work, Helen showcased her specialist setup—a focus-stacking rail that moves the camera in minute increments, allowing dozens (or even hundreds) of images to be blended into a single sharp composite. Microscope objectives mounted directly on the camera were used to capture many of the extraordinary images displayed during the talk, providing magnifications of 5× to 10× without sacrificing clarity.

Helen's final message was an invitation to look at our orchids through fresh eyes. The next time we admire a lip or column, she encouraged us to pause and consider how it functions. What guides the pollinator? Why is this part hairy, sticky, or ridged? What evolutionary challenge might have shaped it? Her macrophotography demonstrates that even the most familiar orchid on our benches contains a world of detail waiting to be discovered—a world of miniature landscapes, hidden mechanisms, and evolutionary craftsmanship.

The talk was met with great enthusiasm and members will likely never again look at their orchids in quite the same way. Helen succeeded not only in revealing the beauty of these microscopic structures, but also in reminding us that orchids are intricate ecosystems in their own right, filled with secrets that only careful observation can uncover.

STEVE WADE