



South Coast Orchid Club of South Australia

Affiliated with the Orchid Club of South Australia Inc. and with The Australian Orchid Council

PATRON: Mr. L.R. Grey (Mayor of Marion)

MONTHLY NEWS SHEET
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Written by Mr. B. Hansen. Printed and edited by Mrs. I. Nash.

A HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR TO ALL

Our next meeting will be our CHRISTMAS MEETING and party, and will be held on Tuesday December 10th. in the R.S.L. Hall, Morphett Vale at 8 p.m.

The meeting will be brief, with the presentation of prizes to all the lucky winners. Following this, the Christmas festivities will begin.

All members are requested to bring along a gift to the value of 50c. for your own sex. These should be placed in the appropriate boxes at the door, either 'His' or 'Hers'. All visitors are welcome, but please see that you have an extra gift for each visitor, so that no one is left out.

Please also bring along a supply of 'grub and grog', so that we can all 'Eat, drink and be Merry'.

Any flowering plants which you can bring along, will help decorate the hall, but no points will be allotted at this meeting.

We have another new addition to the junior ranks, Doug. and Gwenda Lang have a son, our congratulations on the happy event.

NEW MEMBERS

Mrs. R. Miller, 11, Burnley St., Fulham. 5024.
Mr. & Mrs. Jack & Beryl Pfeiler, Unit 3, 4, Hammond St., Clarence Park.5034.
Mr. & Mrs. Robinson, 16, Arsherfield Ave., Christies Beach, 5165.

Well, the figures from the Marion Orchid Show are nearly finalized, and when you look at the money taken at the Spray bar, you realise who was working through the week and I think all members will join me in thanking Ellie Shaw and her willing band of workers. It's a wonder Iris Nash slept, with all that money going through her fingers as official Ba ker of moneys.

MONTHLY COMPETITION RESULTS. (November)

OPEN CLASS

Cymbidium	N icky Kuringai x Joan of Arc	Mr. & Mrs. L.Poole	3pts
Cattleya	Catt.TRIMOS x L.C.Helen Wilma Catt. Priscilla Ward Epi.Catt.C.Forbesii x E.RANDII	Mr. G. Adams Mr. W. Harris Mr. W. Harris	3pts. 2 pts 1 pt.
Paphiopedilum	Restdale x Amber Star	Mr. & Mrs. L.Poole	3 pts
Phalaenopsis	Star of Rio Bruceys x Lued Ochrases Zada x schilleriana Surfrider x Zada	Mr. & Mrs. W. Gray Mr. G. Adams Mr. G. Adams	3 pts 2 pts 1 pt.
Aus.Natives	SARC 'hartmanii' Den. 'broomfeldii'	Mr. W. Harris Mr. W. Harris	3 pts 2 pts

NOVICE CLASS

Aus. Natives	Cym. 'madidum'	Mr. M. Donhardt	3 pts
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POPULAR VOTES

These are missing from the list I have, but they would be included in the following yearly aggregate results.

YEARLY AGGREGATE

OPEN SECTION.

First Prize	Mr. W. Harris	102 pts.
Second "	Mr. & Mrs. L. Poole	30 pts.
Third "	Mr. & Mrs. Hoffner	18 pts.
Fourth "	Mr. & Mrs. Gowling	12 pts.

NOVICE SECTION

First prize	Mr. M. Donhardt	12 pts.
Second "	Mrs. M. Lang	8 pts.
Third "	Mr. & Mrs. W. Gray	6 pts.

POPULAR VOTE

Orchids	Mr. & Mrs. R. Gowling	6 pts.
Indoor Plants	Mrs. D. Grave	9 pts.

WATERING

(Article from 'You too can grow Orchids' by Ralph Handcock and Margaret Smith)

WATERING IS ONE of the most important aspects of the care of Orchids. Although plants may be grown quite successfully under a wide variety of conditions, in many types of mediums, in a glass house, bush house or on verandahs, they will not flourish unless the grower understands how and when to water them correctly. This is just a matter of following a few simple rules.

It is a widespread belief that only slightly acid or rain-water should be used for orchids. This is not so. Flourishing orchids can be produced even with water which is sufficiently alkaline to change pink litmus paper slightly blue. Water which is very alkaline may be neutralised and even brought to an acid condition by the addition of dilute hydrochloric acid, which has no effect on the tissues of the plants.

Tankwater may be used without danger. Bore-water is not suitable for the orchids themselves, but growers in out-lying areas should not overlook the fact that when water is scarce, ^{not} precious tankwater may be saved by the use of bore-water for damping down. It is ^{not} therefore the water itself which may retard the development of the plants, but the method of applying it.

It is clear that there can be only three degrees of watering.

(1) Too little; (2) too much; (3) the right amount.

Both the first and second will, of course, be damaging to the plants. But the question which springs to mind is - how is the grower, who has little experience of orchids, to know whether his plants are receiving an adequate or overgreat supply of water. The answer is that the plants themselves will tell him. It is simply a matter of knowing what signs to look for.

THE EFFECTS OF UNDER-WATERING.

Look at the leaves of the plants. If they are dark green in colour, dull looking and with the bottom leaves drying and dropping off then the plants have been receiving too little water. They will be weak and incapable of flowering. This condition is readily seen and easily detected.

OVER-WATERING.

This is the usual fault among new growers who, in their enthusiasm, deluge their plants with water feeling neglectful if they allow them to dry out at all, and who unwittingly do their plants considerable harm. Apart from too frequent watering, other causes of excessive moisture may be, bad drainage, heavy soil or insufficient air circulation around the pots.

BLACK SPOT AND IRISH BLIGHT CAUSED BY EXCESSIVE MOISTURE.

Once again, the leaves will give an indication of the trouble. Continued dampness in the pot will break down the soil and exclude air, killing the active plant life bacteria. This encourages the accumulation of toxic substances and the growth of bacteria such as those which produce the parasitic fungi known as

WATERING cont.

"Irish Blight" and "Black Spot". The foliage may blacken and wilt and black blotches may appear on the leaves. These conditions are very commonly seen along the coast where they attack crops of tomatoes, potatoes and spinach. These diseases are in no way connected with the white fleck or mosaic disease. The fungoid diseases are much more fatal, but, fortunately, they are much more easily cured by correcting the conditions (i.e., surplus of water) which have brought them about.

These are not, however, the only signs shown by the leaves of orchid plants to indicate an excess of moisture. If the tips of the leaves of the plants are black, this is not a disease, but may be likened to chilblains in that it is brought about by cold. The roots have become chilled and have produced this effect upon the leaves.

Now look to the roots. Continual dampness sours the soil in the bottom of the pot. The roots therefore will be seen to have risen to the surface of the pot, where they form a mat in an attempt to obtain suitable conditions.

Apart from marks on the leaves, the actual colour and conditions of the leaves themselves will show excessive watering. They become yellowish and sickly weak because they have become starved of plant foods -particularly nitrogen.

OVER-WATERING CAUSES PLANT STARVATION.

To understand this, one must know a little about the root of the orchid. A root consists of a spongy outer casing and a slender central fibre of conductive tissue which feeds the plant, surrounded by a hairy mass of fibre roots which grow about half as long as the root is thick. These fibre roots are very numerous and they absorb the moisture from the surrounding soil. The spongy outer casing retains it until it is needed by the plant. If the soil in the pot is continually damp the root is able to absorb sufficient moisture from a small area in its immediate vicinity. Along with the moisture it should also draw in plant food. But it would soon exhaust the amount of food in that small area. If, however, the pot is allowed to dry out a little, the roots will draw moisture from further afield and bring with it the plant food which is waiting to be used. It is useless to provide plants with nourishment if at the same time they are over-watered. For very little of the food supplied will reach the plant itself.

If plants are watered correctly they will remain healthy under other adverse conditions. The bulbs will be clean and full, the leaves glossy-green and erect and flowering all that could be desired.

HOW TO AVOID ERRORS IN WATERING

The actual method of watering employed is not of very great importance. It may be done by immersion or by means of a set sprinkler. Probably the best method is to water the plants several times at intervals of 10 minutes with a watering can or hose.

WATERING cont.

It is vitally important that the plant should be watered thoroughly and for this reason it is better to water at intervals rather than continuously as it is then easier to determine whether the plants have received sufficient water. When employing this method, care must be taken to avoid the running off of large quantities of water through the drainage hole. This is simply a waste of water and of energy, and washes away the plant foods from the soil. Do not use a strong volume of water. Remove the nozzle from the hose and obtain a suitable spray by placing a finger over the flow of water.

Two mistakes often made when pots are standing on a bench along a wall are, firstly, that the backs of the pots receive no water. It is very important that the whole of the soil in the pot be watered, not just that portion of it in front of the plant. Secondly, pots are often arranged in such a way that small pots are situated behind larger ones. When watering is carried out by sprinklers, the small pots are often overlooked.

FACTORS AFFECTING FREQUENCY OF WATERING.

Once the soil in the pot has been thoroughly saturated, skill and judgment are needed to know when to repeat the process, remembering the dangers that follow from over-watering. A great deal depends on individual conditions which vary from one house to another. Factors requiring consideration are:

- (a) The Arrangement of the Bush-house. - Is it draughty letting in drying winds, or is it well ventilated?
- (b) The Nature of the Soil. - Is it porous, allowing for quick drainage and evaporation of water, or heavy, retaining the moisture for some time?
- (c) The Degree of Dampness of the Benches, Pots and Floors. - If these are damp there will be little evaporation and the soil will dry out slowly. Under these conditions thorough watering needs to be carried out at intervals of a fortnight or even longer.
- (d) The Weather. - This naturally has an important bearing on the matter. If it is hot and windy, drying out the soil quickly, the plants should be watered once a day.
- (e) The Size of the Pots. - Large pots dry more slowly than small ones. Group the pots, if possible, according to size. Then by examining one or two of each group, it will be obvious whether the entire group is ready to be watered.

If, after taking into consideration all the factors which effect the watering of orchids, one still cannot determine the appropriate intervals for attending to the plants, place a saucer of water beside them on the bench. Note how long it takes the water to evaporate. This will act as a guide to the amount of evaporation taking place in the orchid pots.

WATERING cont.

Try to imagine the condition of the soil in the centre of the pot and water accordingly. The weight of the pot may serve as an indication as to the dampness of the soil. A moist pot is noticeably heavier than one which is almost dry. If showery weather sets in when the period for watering comes round, do not rely on showers to do the watering, for, when the plants are ready to be watered, the job must be done thoroughly.

Always remember, however, that orchids are equipped by nature to withstand dryness, as this is a constant threat under their natural conditions. Therefore it is better to water too lightly than too heavily. Any mistake will soon become apparent and less harm will have been done by underwatering for a short time than would have been done by over-watering.

The most important points to remember are -

- (1) Never allow the plants to be thoroughly dry for any length of time.
- (2) Avoid over-watering.
- (3) If in doubt, postpone watering until the next day.
- (4) Wise watering will produce healthy plants and numerous flower spikes.

Cultural Notes for December

As the weather is starting to Hot up, all dividing and repotting should be finished.

Regular feeding of your favourite fertilizer will help the plants produce strong growths for next years flowers. Do not fertilize a dry plant, it is better to water the plants 1 or 2 days prior to feeding.

If you have overhead sprinklers one good watering a week is all that is necessary when you fertilize by hand. For the rest of the week either daily or every two days depending on how hot and dry it is, turn on the overhead sprinklers for 10 to 15 minutes, this will dampen the plants and wet the growing area. This can be done Morning, Noon or Night, I have found that a sprinkle in the evening is very beneficial.

If the plants have not been sprayed for a couple of months, a fungicidal spray would not go amiss, drench the foliage and pots, this can be done when fertilizing.

Perhaps to the Novices I can explain a few terms used at potting demonstrations etc.

Divide To break up a plant into divisions.

Repot To remove all old compost from a plant and repot into same size pot.

Pot On To remove the plant from a pot and put it in a larger pot and top up with fresh compost.

Staking. When referring to a newly divided plant, means a short stake placed alongside a made up bulb, tied to the stake with a twisty to hold the division firm until the plant is self supporting.

Trim the leaves When dividing, the older growths of the division can have the leaves shortened by about one third to help save the plant from shrivelling.

Back bulb A leafless bulb on its own, with all roots removed.

NEW MEMBERS

If any words or expressions are used do not be afraid to ask their meanings, because even some of the older members do not really understand all the words used by the very experienced growers.

WATCHIT All the speed limits have been lowered from the bottom of Tapleys Hill to the hall by approximately 20. K.P.H. so if the 'coppers don't gitcha da Debil will'.

I hope that you all learnt a lot about the art of display from the comments given by Mr. Hay at our last meeting, and next year our show will be even better than this year.

Thanks go to Aileen and Ross Gowling for their interesting talk and potting demonstration last month, and to Syd Monkhouse for his monthly tips.

This months selection

The amateur gardener, who loved to experiment with plants, sat locked in his room. He refused to take any food all day, and his wife finally insisted on being let in.

"You must tell me what's on your mind", she said, firmly. "You have been brooding all day, and I must know what's wrong".

The gardener sighed heavily.

"It's just that one of my pet experiments didn't turn out the way I expected. Remember the time I crossed a potato with an onion?"

"Yes, yes", coaxed the anxious wife. "What happened?"

The gardener shook his head sadly.

"No good", he murmured tearfully. "All I got was a potato with watery eyes!"