

NZ Odontoglossum Alliance Growers Newsletter



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Vol 1 # 2, February 2021

Message from the Group Facilitator: Allan Watson

2020 has been and gone and will be remembered by all of us in different ways. As orchid growers I suspect most of us were lucky during the lockdown phases that we had something to provide us with a pleasurable focus within our various orchid collections.

We in general became frustrated by the NO SHOW allowed but in saying that there were some great posts appearing on the various orchid facebook pages.

2021 looks to be an interesting year with the new hybrids that Tuckers have imported starting to come on to the market and shows fingers crossed being allowed to happen.

There also appears to be a growing interest within the international orchid world as to what's happening in New Zealand. To maintain this interest we need your help. Be it with plant photos, comments for the news letters and hybridising.

We are happy to continue to produce this newsletter we simply ask for support with content or even subject matter we can research and publish for you our reader (s).

Till the next edition stay well and continue to share your knowledge.

It would also be remiss of me not to acknowledge the passing of a well respected Odontoglossum grower Alf Day and our thoughts go out to his family.

Allan Watson

Editor's Ramble

When we changed from Miltonipsis to Odontoglossum we moved from a fairly exclusive format (Mps and its close relations) to a more inclusive situation including the whole of the Odont (Oncidium) alliance. From an editor's point of view, I now have to cater for a very varied group of readers/growers—from the traditional crispum type of Odonts that I am very familiar with and have grown for over 30 years to ones that can be cloned and are available through the pot plant trade—vulstekeara (Oncidopsis) Cambria 'Plush' as an example of an early one. There is also a great following of the miniature types like Onc. Twinkle'.

What I need is for you to tell me the areas that interest you, if you like to send me pictures and perhaps write about what you grow, then that would be great.

Another the thing that has been suggested is a species register for our New Zealand growers to see what is available in this country. If you would like to send details and pictures if you have them to Allan Watson aj.watson@xtra.co.nz and he will put together a register.



Here is one to start with

Brassia villosa

It is a small growing and flowering plant that flowers faithfully ever January in the southern hemisphere.

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Hybridizing . Our efforts in this area are showing results. It looks as though 3 are germinating—more details later.

There are more pods waiting to mature for harvest this Winter. The aim is to make the flasks that we hope will eventuate available to interested people at a cost that covers the Lab costs and a royalty to the owner of the pod.

I will keep you up to date with what is happening when they get to the replating stage. Watch this space

Vale

Alf Day, MNZM, 1923 – January 2020

by [sandra](#)



The Father of Odontoglossum growing and hybridizing in New Zealand

Veteran orchid grower Alf Day started what was to become a consuming hobby in 1950 after purchasing two *Paphiopedilum insigne* from a garden centre at Ngaruawahia, quickly adding four *Cymbidiums*, gifted to him by another grower.

Alf joined the NZ Orchid Society in 1952 and moved to Auckland 2 years later to work in the meat industry, saying that orchid growing was a relaxing diversion from the pressures of work. He also began to seriously extend his collection, including importing plants.

Serving as an officer for NZOS from the mid-1960s through to at least 2010, Alf was also a foundation member of the South Auckland Orchid Society. He was a life member of both societies and in 1990 received the Gold Medal of the NZOS.

Alf told a newspaper reporter in 2010 that he'd registered between 20 and 30 hybrid orchids, but thought he'd probably made up to 400 others that hadn't been registered. Among the orchids registered with the RHS were *Odontoglossum Uro-Day* (*Odm. uro-skinneri* x *Odm. Vexativum*) in 2002 and



Odontoglossum Uro-Day

Odontioda Flashy Clem (Oda. Saint Clement x Oda. Devon Flash) in 2003 and Wilsonara Kiwi Day (Wils. Nicola Jane x Odm. Stropheon) in 2004.

He mainly concentrated on Odontioda (Cochlioda x Odontoglossum) and Wilsonara (Cochlioda x Odontoglossum x Oncidium) hybrids as he believed they were plants well suited to the Auckland climate.

Made a Member of the NZ Order of Merit in 2006 for services to horticulture, Alf was given a Plant Raiser's Award in 2010 by the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture. At that time he considered his best registered hybrids to be:



Oda. Flashy Clem



Odontocidium Papatoetoe Prophet 'Prediction',

Odontocidium Papatoetoe Prophet 'Prediction', Grand Champion at the NZOS winter show in 2009 and given an Award of Merit by the OCNZ

Odontoglossum Soissons

Odontioda Cerolia

Odontioda Dekala Jesto.

The greatest challenge, he said in his RHSNZ citation, had been producing a worthwhile red-flowered hybrid – he had produced numerous red-flowered seedlings but hadn't made a selection at that stage – along with producing Wilsonara hybrids with flowers other than yellow, although he was having some success with the latter.

As an orchid judge, Alf travelled to Australia, the United States and Jersey, as well as in New Zealand.



Onc. Han's Parade

He enjoyed reading to learn and had a large collection of orchid books, as well as journals, some dating back to the 1950s. When his collection of journals became unwieldy, Alf took up book-binding as a hobby.

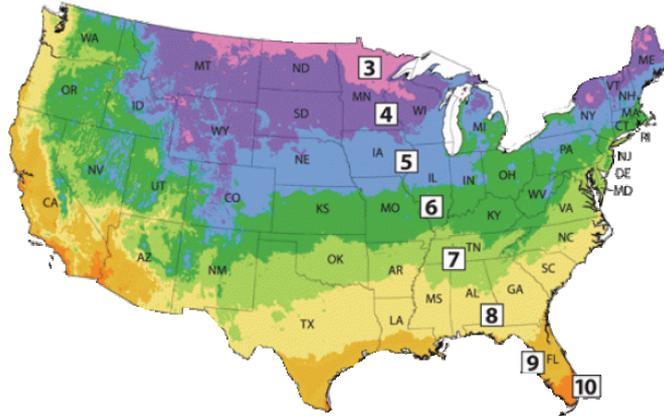


Onc. Papatoetoe Anne

Alf passed away after having spent 6 or so weeks in hospital. His wife Mona pre-deceased him in 2004.

Food for thought?

Often when you look at some overseas posts you will see the grower referring to a Zone. In particular this is most noticeable in posts originating from the US. As per the map below these Zones are related to the Max Min temps that one may experience across these almost defined latitudes 3 being the cooler temperature area to 10 being the warmer or tropical temperatures. This map shows the defined growing Zones in the US.



Apart from obvious geographical influenced areas provide a guide to the genera of orchids that would thrive, the best in this environment.



Unfortunately, I have not been able to transfer the regions across from Allan's copy.

Basically (1) is the northern half of the North Island, (3) is the Southern half of the South Island and (2) is what's left in the middle.

Ed

Would the same work in New Zealand? My food for thought reason being that this may be a way to save some new growers from purchasing orchids that may fail.

Obviously I feel New Zealand is too small to split into more than the suggested three zones and as with the US there will always be pockets of exception.

If these zones become a guide for orchid supply the next phase is to identify the genera or specific genus that would flourish in the relevant zone. Some will obviously be applicable to all zones as others will only survive in specific zone with the aid of a controlled environment.

Zoning would help I believe in a number of ways.

The Genera/Genus of plants that flourish in the zone

The type of Structure required or best suited to grow your plants

A foundation base from which you can develop your own particular Orchid Culture.

Within the Odontoglossum Alliance there is such a wide range of Genera that require a wide range in temperature and environmental conditions to grow well. Unless you have access to a program like Orchid Wiz or hard copy reference you can purchase a plant that unfortunately may have a lesser chance of survival.

In summary

I have only included 3 Zones others may think that more is needed or even perhaps the use of provincial zones as always open to suggestion.

My thoughts for example would not prevent someone in Zone 3 from buying a Zone 1 plant it would just make them aware of the minimal conditions required for that plant to hopefully flourish.

A final question being:

Is this exercise of any value and have I provided food for thought?

Allan Watson

I need a Bigger Green House.

Like most Orchid Growers I have to confess this has happened to me on more than one occasion as a result of shifting location.

The most recent being our shift back to Taranaki.

First off I constructed a growing environment in an out of the way part of our section making it twice the size required to fit my then collection (12 years ago).

The growing environment provided me with what I defined as 4 separate growing zones all able to be controlled with water /fertilizer and yes heat.

Little did I realise at the time that a passion would be ignited and my subsequent focus would change. I became aware of the Odontoglossum Alliance. Prior to this I had a number of Miltoniopsis (20) and a few Odontoglossum Genus (20) but they were spread over my various growing locations.

Along came retirement and I decided that my first project was to catalogue and correctly name and locate plants in my collection from information contained within Orchid Wiz.

With around 1000 plants and multiple genus despite this exercise taking some 12months on and off it has been extremely worthwhile in so far the need for a bigger house was put beyond a shadow of doubt. To put it into some perspective.

Miltoniopsis had now increased to 160. (Filled the hot Room)

Oncidopsis had increased to 50

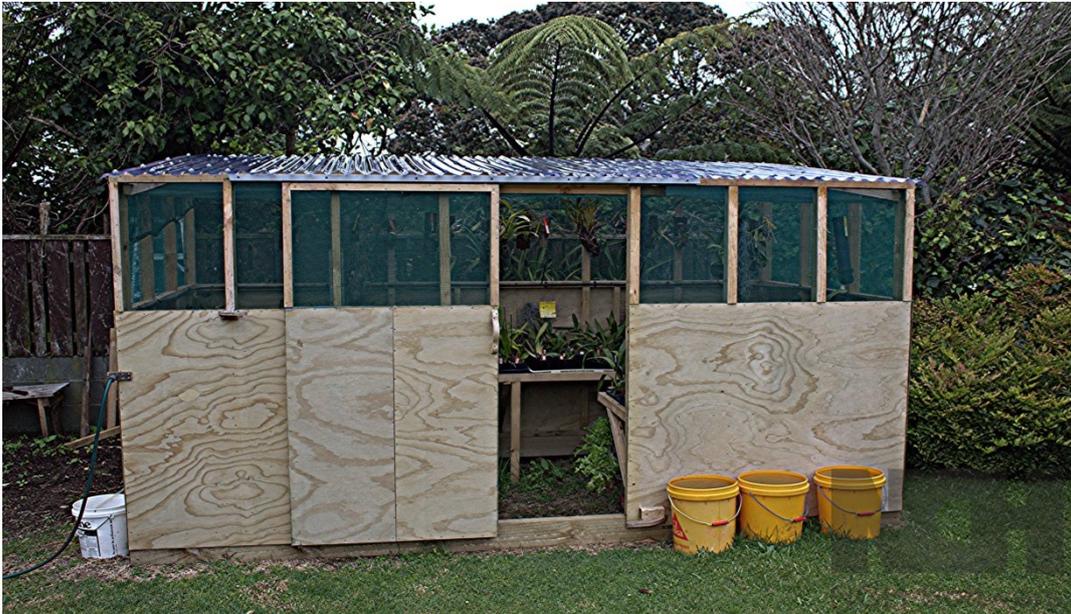
Other Odontoglossum Alliance plants had increased to 250

The rest of the collection of Cattleya, Promeneia, Cymbidium, Dendrobium and other genera making

up the balance of the collection.

The Idea behind the bigger house soon shifted towards being designed to contain the Odontoglossum Alliance collection and suit my orchid culture and most importantly the Taranaki Environment. (And yes I have left room for expansion)

I had look at several other growers environment and decided that a kit set form suited my requirements but remained open minded. The photo shows the finished product as yet to be stained so it fits into the background. I suppose we are also lucky having plenty of back yard space.



With the help of a brother who just happens to be a builder we settled on a kitset type design. The four walls were prefabricated and assembled onsite with the roof being fitted to tie it all together. Pavers yet to be installed over the floor area.

The walls are solid 2/3rds of their height with the top 3rdd covered with 30% shade cloth. The roof is clearlite with 30% shade cloth underneath. The walls being well ventilated allows for air flow over the top of the plants. A water spray and Fertilise system has been installed.



The 3.2 meter x 1.8m house, roof shelves and water system cost less than \$1000 including the labour (while it was a family project we costed the hours to construct the panels) It took us 3 hours at site to assemble and start to load up with plants.

The plants all seem to be enjoying their new home with spikes appearing on plants that have not spiked for a number of years.

Allan Watson.

How often have you heard the saying?

“It comes to those who wait” or “The proof is in the pudding”

Both these sayings in my view are quite apt when it comes to growing orchids.

With the challenge of a two year long Fern Fibre substrate growing medium trial with the support of Fernwood New Zealand I embarked on this growing journey. As I have said in previous articles I was a traditional bark medium grower so the introduction of fern fibre substrate into my orchid culture required some growing changes to be implemented.

In the end these changes were fairly simple while I became used to the fern fibre substrate.

Less water required

Less Fertilizer required and

Greater time span between considering repotting.

The goal or trial outcome was to simply test the effectiveness of Fern Fibre substrate over the traditional bark medium.

I have a reasonable diverse orchid collection and launched into the trial subsequently soon expanding the trial sample from one genus to a wider number of genera in the Odontoglossum alliance while others in the Odontoglossum alliance are yet to flower those in the Miltoniopsis trial group (10 in fibre and 10 in Bark) of some 20 plants, those in fibre are a stand out above the rest. I have just finished repotting all 160 Miltoniopsis into fern fibre.



160 Miltoniopsis into fern fibre.



This first photo shows a clear difference in size between the flowers of two identical clones in different substrate mediums.

Mps Robert Jackson ‘Wild Thing’ both these plants flowered out of the normal flowering season partly due to the warmer than expected climate conditions.

The photo below shows the outcome when Miltoniopsis flower in their norm flowering season.

This is Mps Pink Cadillac ‘Toddy’ AM / OCNZ its flowers are 105mm in Diameter and its trial buddy in Bark only produced two flowers 75mm in Diameter.

This Mps was also awarded the Orchid Council of New Zealand Award of Merit.

This award is significant as it’s the first award to be given to Mps Pink Cadillac and what makes it even better as the exercise or trial outcome with fern fibre adding weight to the saying “The proof is in the pudding.”

The two year trial was defiantly worth the wait to see this sort of end result and will when the time is right be repotting all my Odontoglossum Alliance plants into fern fibre.