

THE NZ ODONTOGLOSSUM ALLIANCE



NEWSLETTER

Volume 5 Number 4
December 1994

FROM THE EDITOR

Great weather for the beach around my way right now; nice to be rid of all the treacherous gales at last. A late frost here has ruined many kiwifruit orchards just as the flowers were opening. I passed acres of scorched vines enroute to Auckland the other day.

Up in Auckland growers are still watching their water consumption and most I visited have installed large plastic barrels to save roof runoff. To keep a good humidity for your crispum-types and yet conserve water you should seriously look at putting polythene down on the floor of your greenhouse. If you have an earth floor you should clear out all plants and cover the floors (particularly under the benches) with with old polythene film. A cheap source is the old carpet roll plastic from furnishing shops. They ususally give it away. Cover the floor with it, then put your pumice/gravel or riverstones on top. When you water your plants the surplus water remains on the floor and keeps the humidity high. If it builds up, just stab a few holes through the plastic. Not too many or the water will drain too quickly. You will be surprised how the atmosphere in your greenhouse will change and plants will not need to be watered so often.

Have you registered for the Taranaki Orchid Society Summer Display yet? See our last newsletter for details. If you are a keen grower you will enjoy the weekend. We meet at 4pm on Sat. 7th Jan - after the Boot Sale. The Masdevallia, Paph, Disa, and NZ Native orchid enthusiasts will all have meetings during the weekend too.

Alan Lewington from Gisborne is organising an Odont Alliance display at the 3rd NZ International Confernce at Palmerston North next October. We will discuss our design etc. on Jan 7.

Orders for the NZ Odont Alliance flasks are still coming in. Any late orders should go to Alan Locke, RD 7, Te Awamutu, now. See crosses etc in previous newsletters. Another cross will be offered later if the lab reports good viability - thanks to Frank Briljevich.

Philip Altmann from Victoria had a successful visit and we should see some new odont hybrids and rare species coming through from his flask sales. Thanks to Ross Tucker, who, on behalf of OCNZ, organised the tour, and our member Lee Ducker for notes "scrawled in the dark" from his slide presentation.

We enclose an updated membership list. As you can see we have held our numbers well. This is our fifth year of publication and probably a good time to have a change of editor. If any member is interested please contact me. Funds are healthy and no increase in subs is warranted. Articles are always required as are your adverts for sale or wanted plants.

Once again I thank all contributors to the newsletter and to Jim and Rae, Alan Locke, Alf Day and other members for their various assistance in getting the newsletter out. Seasons greetings to all members. We hope you will notice the coloured subscription form attached and rejoin in time for the March Newsletter.

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Illustrations.

1) Wils. Salgrin 'Stubbie' HCC/OCNZ (1994)
This Dugger hybrid of Onc. tigrinum x Oda. Salway was first registered in 1978. Grown by Ross Tucker of Tucker Orchids, Auckland this lovely clone had 64 fls and 4 buds on a well grown plant with one spike. The plant had a 1.4 meter spike with 74mm wide flowers. Colour was described as heavily spotted with deep claret with paler edges. Lip creamy yellow fading to pale rose claret. Photo Val Bayliss, Howick.

SEARCHING FOR ALTERNATIVES TO BARK.

A few weeks ago I called in to see a friend who was concerned about his Odonts. He had been growing them for two or three years and had been doing quite well until now, The shrivelled bulbs and rotten roots said it all. Sound familiar? Most Odont growers experience this problem at some time. I did in 1989. All the plants that I repotted that year deteriorated badly, so I changed from using straight bark to half bark and half punga fibre. This seemed to overcome the problem, but the plants still didn't perform like they used to.

It was about this time that I started using sphagnum moss for deflasking. This method is simple - partly fill a pot with moss, remove the plantlets and agar intact from the flask and place on the moss in the pot, pack moss around the plantlets and that's it, no washing or separating. It worked that well that I started using moss to pot up the small plants out of earlier com-pots, the bigger plants were potted in bark. Within a year the small ones had caught up and a further year saw them well ahead. One unexpected thing was that the plants in bark flowered earlier even though they were smaller. The flowering took a lot out of them and they took a long time to recover. The plants in moss took another year to flower, by which time they were a decent size. There was little or no bulb shrivelling and in many cases the new growth was coming away before the flowers had finished, which I considered to be a real bonus. At this point I started repotting all plants into sphagnum regardless of age or size. This process is nearly complete and already I am seeing better growth and improved flowering.

I use sphagnum straight from the swamp. It is not dried, treated or sterilised. I repot once a year and the method I use is to pack the moss in and around the roots and then put it into the pot. It takes a bit of practise to get the density right. If it is too loose, it will dry out too much and be very hard to rewet - this is very damaging to the plant. If it is too dense, it may get water-logged. After repotting water lightly for a few weeks to encourage new root growth.

Feeding: I use Nitrosol, Phostrogen and Peters general regularly at a low strength. I don't have a problem with green algae or slime build up on live moss, but it may occur if the moss is dead. If it does occur, it is no problem to remove the surface layer of moss and replace it.

The use of sphagnum moss as a potting medium has certainly improved my culture, but it may not suit everyone and supply may be a problem in some areas. If you have had problems with bark and found a better alternative, why not write about it. Ron is always looking for articles for the newsletter, and you may just help someone else to improve their culture.

A.Locke
Arohena

Illustrations.

2) Wils. Star Trail 'Milky Way' HCC/OCNZ (1994)
A Mansell & Hatcher cross of *Onc. unguiculatum* x *Oda Oreal* first registered in 1989. This awarded clone was also grown by Tucker Orchids of Auckland and had 15 fls and 4 buds on a well grown plant. Flower size was 78mm overall width. 'Milky Way' was described as purple with lilac mottling. Lip was yellow with purple flushing towards the skirt. *Onc. unguiculatum* was once considered a lower altitude form of *Onc. tigrinum*, requiring more warmth. Its often dark chocolate colour sometimes gives much darker hybrids than *Onc. tigrinum*. Photo by Val Bayliss, Howick, Auckland.

3) *Onc. Mem. Ralph Yagi 'Kristi'* HCC/OCNZ (1993)
This lovely awarded plant was grown by Paddy and Dale Whittaker of Waitara. Its well known parents are Sniffen x Irene Gleason and it was registered by K Oka in 1989. The plant had one spike of 10 fls of 31mm O.W. Photo by George Fuller, New Plymouth.

POLLINATION AND MOON PHASE

The idea that the phases of the moon can influence plant growth is an ancient one. It is believed by some that the moon phase can influence the production or otherwise of orchid seed. The late W.W.G.Moir was an advocate of this. He was one of the worlds most prolific hybridizers, especially in the Oncidiinae. There is little in the orchid literature on this subject. Nevertheless we have been impressed by the number of orchid hybridizers (some very well known) we have talked to around the world who, when pressed, have admitted that they did try to hybridize by the moon 'just in case there is something in it'. There is some divergence of opinion as to the correct time to pollinate but it is usually on the waxing moon.

Is there anything in it? From 1988 we have included in the records kept of our crosses a note of the moon phase at the time of pollination. Since that time we have made a total of 357 pollinations in various genera and of these 67 or 19% produced seed pods which have remained on the plant long enough to harvest. 184 of the pollinations were made during the 10 days immediately preceding the full moon (commonly believed to be the best time) and 16% of these resulted in seed pods. The other 173 pollinations were made outside this period and 22% of these produced seed pods. On these figures there is not much in it, the last 10 days if anything being less favourable.

Below, for what it is worth is a table showing detailed results. 'Cats' includes the whole cattleya alliance and 'Odonts' includes the whole odontoglossum alliance. It is stressed that 'pods harvested' means just that and does not indicate the viability of the seed. We cannot rule out the possibility that a particular moon phase tends to produce a greater number of stronger growing plants. We do not think so but this information is not on our computer database and we can't be bothered laboriously going through written records to extract it. No attempt was made to extract and try and correlate other details such as the age of the flower at pollination, the condition and age of the pollen and any special treatment(eg hormones) and these factors could have influenced the results in individual cases.

Finally, there are a number of experienced hybridizers who will tell you that on one quite ordinary day they made a number of crosses and they all succeeded. The W.W.G.Moir (who brought planetary influences into it) said that there were a few magic days during a life time when anything pollinated, even the most outlandish crosses would succeed. If anyone has had this experience please tell the editor about it.

| | Total pollin ations | PODS HARVESTED | | | | |
|-------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| | | Total harvested | Pollinations 1 - 10 days | | Pollinations 10 days to end | |
| | | | No. made | Pods Harvested | No. made | Pods Harvested |
| Cyms | 40 | 12 (30%) | 17 | 3 (18%) | 23 | 9 (39%) |
| Cats | 138 | 30 (22%) | 76 | 12 (16%) | 62 | 18 (29%) |
| Dens | 158 | 23 (15%) | 79 | 12 (15%) | 79 | 11 (14%) |
| Odonts | 21 | 2 (10%) | 12 | 2 (17%) | 9 | 0 |
| Combined Total | 357 | 67 (19%) | 184 | 29 (16%) | 173 | 38 (22%) |

I.D.James, Hamilton.

We were up early and got all our gear onto the St.Malo Station and joined the ticket queue to buy tickets to Paris. Our nerves were in tatters by the time the slow ticket seller handed us our tickets and we scrambled onto the train. An hour or so later we reached Paris and piled out at a very modern station. I guarded the gear while the others went off looking for the platform to catch trains to Belgium and Germany. After much delay it transpired that the international station was on the other side of Paris and a taxi was necessary. We found our way to the taxi stand and hailed a stationwagon taxi to take us and all our gear. Russell got a quote and we piled in with our legs on top of our gear. The surly, sallow woman in blouse and shorts and thongs seemed to be breaking all sorts of road rules, shouting at gendarmes in a car alongside and giving them the finger sign. We were glad to get out at the station! To our consternation she now wanted twice the number of francs before she would let us unpack! When we opened the doors and started dragging our bags out she put them back and then some of the man taxi drivers at the rank assisted her! With a good deal of shouting and gesticulating and obvious swearing from the other taxi drivers we decided to pay up rather than be shoved in a lockup and have to prove our innocence!

It was my turn to go and do battle with the queues. This station was fine for me with a train leaving every half hour for Belgium and Holland. The others would have to catch the Metro (underground) down the road. I found a moneychanging queue, got some change, found a locker and left my gear then we struggled up the street a block or two with all the cartons and bags and down to the underground station. Each time a ticket was fed into a machine at the platform entrance a bar came down to let one person through. After the rush had gone we put one ticket in and jammed a bag in the gap while Russell and Lorraine climbed over the top and I passed the bags and boxes over. The next ticket freed the bag and they were off on their own to Germany where they flew back home at 11am next morning.

I caught my train to Brussels on time and had an uneventful trip north through flat country with no sign of hills or mountains anywhere. In Brussels several hours later I phoned my contact and caught a suburban train as instructed and was soon being entertained by Dr. Guido Burghegraev who had the BBQ going in no time. The back of the property was a real oasis with vege garden and blossoming fruit trees of many varieties. Heather Verstraaten wrote of her recent visit to Guido in the last issue so I won't cover the same details. Although I had arrived 24 hours late I soon found our common interests in orchids overcame any embarrassment caused and it was well after midnight when I went off to bed after a slide show and pouring over many books.

I was up early and again in his greenhouse with him before he went off to work at 7.30am. For the week ahead he would work till 8pm each night! I was free to photograph plants and take flowers for pollen. Guido must have one of the most complete collection of Odont species there is and all growing magnificently on slabs or in rockwool mix in pots. The floor of his greenhouse was awash with water which kept up a good humidity.

Later in the morning Guido's charming wife took me to the station again and after a trip into the city to get more funds I travelled on to Holland on the train. The small communal gardens on wasteland beside the railway lines and canals fascinated me. Some had small painted "sheds" with the gardener's bikes leaning against them and in one I saw a live horse!

I stayed the night in a family home/hotel and next day tried to get an appointment to visit Floricultura who have a huge tissue lab and a number of nurseries. They raise most of the Vuy1.Cambria

'Plush', Edna 'Stamperland, *Odtna.Lulli* 'Menuet' and newer varieties seen in N.Z. Unfortunately Jan Post was tied up with after Conference tour parties so I didn't get to buy the flasks I had wanted. I went and visited a huge anthurium nursery where breeding, tissue culture and bulk growing took place in two most hygienic modern nurseries. I made arrangements for flasks to come to N.Z. for a friend. The owners then took me to a nearby nursery where in heated glasshouses thousands of Floricultura and German Odont alliance clones were grown for pot plant sales. It was fascinating to see trays of *Odcdm.Susan* Kaufman 'Butterfly', *Vuy1.Cambria* 'Plush' and its mutants - 'Noyo', 'Borde Hill' and orange and yellow forms plus others like *Odtna.Susan* Bogdanow with spikes just opening, ready for market. All were grown in rockwool and oasis with spaghetti tube watering. The proprietor didn't know the names and didn't care and never saw the flower by photo beforehand. The various clones just had code names and went out unnamed - by the thousands weekly! I was dropped back at the railway station and made my way to the airport by train and flew back to London in the evening with executives and salesmen busily using laptop computers and calculators or reading their complimentary English evening paper supplied by the airline! Next day was to be my last in England and I hoped to get to see one more Odont hybridizer if I could fit it in.

Ron Maunder.

LETTERS

TO

THE

EDITOR



Dear Ron,

I was using 'Sanders' the other day and out of curiosity I idly looked up all the genera in the Odont alliance which had featured in hybridising. The list I found is as follows:

| | | |
|-------------|------------|----------------|
| Ada | Helcia | Odontoglossum |
| Aspasia | Ionopsis | Oncidium |
| Baptistonia | Leochilus | Ornithophora |
| Brassia | Lockhartia | Rodriguezia |
| Cochlioda | Macradenia | Rodrigueziella |
| Comparettia | Miltonia | Tricopilia |
| Gomesa | Notylia | |

Now what I would like to know is what do the hybrids of the lesser known combinations of these genera look like. What characteristics do they impart to their progeny. The crosses have been made and someone out there must have the answers. Remember that these are the generic names retained for hybrid registration purposes - some species have of course been removed by taxonomists to newly created genera not recognised by 'Sanders'.

Rae James
Hamilton

Illustrations.

4) *Onc.*(Aurora x Wilbur) 'Fiona' HCC/OCNZ (1993)
This attractive and as yet unnamed hybrid was another grown by Paddy and Dale Whittaker of Waitara. The awarded plant had ten beautifully marked pink flowers with full, rounded skirts. Size was 30mm wide by 34mm high. George Fuller took the photo which unfortunately had to be trimmed to fit the page.

PHILIP ALTMANN'S VISIT TO AUCKLAND

On the usual November monthly NZOS meeting Philip Altmann was the guest speaker. Phil's visits to Auckland and Levin were arranged by the OCNZ.

You can imagine my reaction when I was confronted by Alf Day at the meeting and had a piece of paper and biro thrust into my hands to take notes on the talk! It seems Ron had rung Alf at the 11th hour and asked him to get me to do the job as he was unable to come up from Tauranga! (Her reaction was unprintable - Editor). Much of Phil's talk was given during the showing of slides which made my notes almost indecipherable. Any way here goes.

In Warrnambool (165 miles west of Melbourne) temperatures range from 3°C to 42°C. Being near the sea Phil's plants get a good sea breeze in the summer but need heating and cooling equipment. He tries to maintain a correct environment for crispum type odonts which are his major genera and aims for 8-10°C minimum and 25°C maximum. He says it doesn't matter what you pot your plants in - it is how you handle them that counts. Bark will not give best results he believes. Phil says the plants need moisture and air at the roots and is currently using 50% sphagnum moss and 50% polystyrene. The mix must retain moisture. Crinkled leaves can be a genetic problem and could grow out.

Pescatorei breeding lines give different results from crispums. They have smaller flowers and branched spikes and reach maturity or flowering after only two years. Crispums will branch too but will often bleed colour onto the back of the flowers. Pescatorei and cirrhosum give clearer colours. *Odm. triumphans (spectatissimum)* is a diploid and very strong flowerer. Uro-skinneri transmits awful leaf markings but will take higher summer temperatures.

When hybridizing you need consistent parents like Ann Wood (Annette x Whitewood), Joe Marshall and Eric Young (greenish alba) also Nation Wide. Slow maturing types like *Wils. Bardot* and Nicola Jane can take 3-4 years from flask. *Onc. tigrinum* crosses are very easy to grow.

Culture: There are no secrets. Get the conditions right and copy successful growers you know. Don't be always changing the type of mix. Get a mix that retains moisture.

Lee Ducker
Auckland

Illustrations.

5) Unknown *Onc./Odm.* species.

This interesting species (?) was imported from South America a number of years ago and when it finally flowered in a member's collection this year was found to be wrongly labelled. Les Taylor of New Plymouth owns the plant and his friend George Fuller set a selfed pod, which is germinating in the lab at present. George took some excellent photos which will be sent to Dr Guido Burghegraeve in Belgium (and others), to try for an identification. The plant had a 125cm long spike with 6 branches and 29 28mm x 22mm flowers. The flowers have recurved labellums and the plant could well be an *oncidium*, or even a natural *odontoglossum* hybrid. It does not appear to be recorded in 'The Genus *Odontoglossum*' by Leonore Bockemuhl.

6) Vuyl. Monica 'Burnham'

An old Charlesworth hybrid registered in 1932, this plant was cloned by Burnham Nurseries but needs to be cloned again. The colour is a rich velvety purple like this photo supplied by owner Paul Cable. He reports in his article herein that his plant produced 42 large flowers on three spikes, all from the one bulb. So far only one cross has been registered with Monica- by Bob Dugger in Solana, Southern California.

MY WAY

After much coaxing and a welcome visit from our editor, I have been persuaded to try to explain the way that I am growing my odonts. Every grower has a different environment, each has their own special growing medium and their own methods of raising their precious plants, my methods will probably raise a few eyebrows but they are ideal for my conditions.

My odonts and intergenerics, excluding *Miltonia* and *Brassia*, are housed in a glasshouse approx 20ft x 10ft. facing N-S, insulated with a single layer of bubble plastic, a layer of 30% shade cloth is added during the summer months, a concrete path runs down the centre and the floor is covered with 4 inches of red scoria. Wire mesh shelves on both sides of the path, 6 roof vents and a louvre at the southern end and a seldom used 20inch fan provide ample ventilation. The house is unheated but I have a Dennison heatboard for seedlings, flasks and compots, an automatic overhead misting system ensures an even coverage of all areas in the glasshouse.

Since obtaining my first odont (*Oda. Astomar*) in 1963, I have been experimenting with including Ponga fibre in my mixes with various degrees of success, I have now confined it only to my odonts and they are thriving.

It was the late Lew Wyatt who convinced me that the ideal medium in which to grow the odont alliance was one that would dry out 24 hours after a good soaking. To this end I have experimented with many combinations and eventually come up with one that is ideal for my purposes. Ponga is put through a mulcher and cut to lengths of $\frac{1}{4}$ to $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches, this is thoroughly washed and sieved to remove any dust and fines, the end result resembles shredded wheat. Using 80% of this fibre I add a mixture of pea sized pumice, vermiculite (also sieved), a small amount of charcoal and a dusting of dolomite lime.

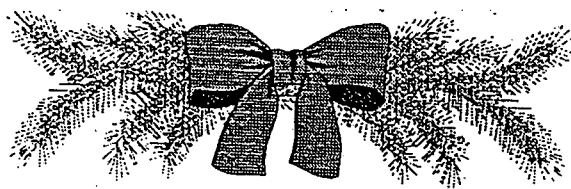
I use 4 to 6 inch squat pots and 4 to 6 inch lattice pots, plants with large root systems get large pots. In the base of the pots I place a layer of scoria which adds weight, retains a little moisture and is very porous. During the warmer weather the misters are activated for 5 minutes at 11am. daily, every second day during early spring and late autumn and as required in winter. Fertilizer is used only twice yearly, Thrive with a little mag.sulphate (Epsom Salts) added during October and Phostrogen in March.

Where I am situated we experience 3 to 4 frosts a year, temperatures have been down to zero on several occasions and once to -2°C without damage to the plants. During summer it averages between 25°C and 30°C. I grow my plants with as much light as they will tolerate, some of the darker coloured ones have very bronzed foliage.

This method has produced for me multi spiking plants, some with 3 spikes per bulb, I recently had 42 large flowers from 3 inflorescences on one bulb of *Vuyl. Monica* 'Burnham' and 88 flowers on one branched inflorescence of *Oda. Honiton* Lace so I must be doing something right!

As you will appreciate we seldom need a fan in Wellington but it is used if a frost is forecast. The combination of a reliable misting system, good ventilation and the humidity created by the scoria, seems to me the best environment in which my collection in my Ponga mix can grow and thrive, and they do!

Paul Cable, Johnsonville.

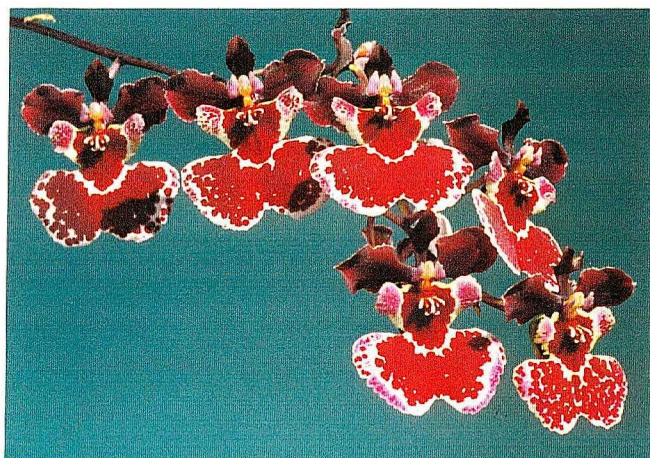




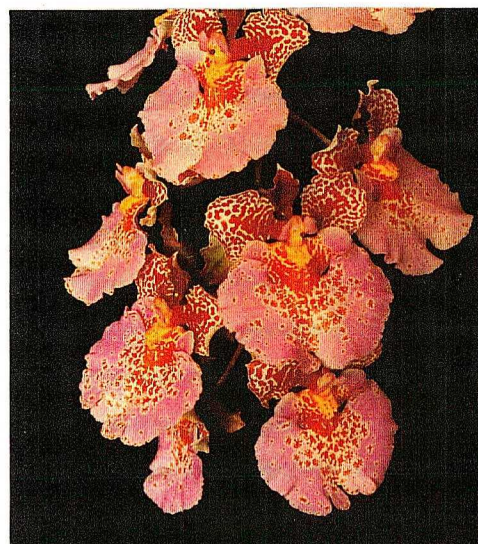
1 Wils. Salgrin 'Stubbie'
HCC/OCNZ



2 Wils. Star Trail
'Milky Way' HCC/OCNZ



3 Onc. Mem. Ralph Yagi
'Kristi' HCC/OCNZ



4 Onc. (Aurora x Wilbur)
'Fiona' HCC/OCNZ



5 Unknown Onc/Odm species



6 Vuyl. Monica 'Burnham'