

**NEWSLETTER**  
**FEBRUARY 2001**



## From the Editor

Hi there all,

Welcome back for another issue of the newsletter. I hope you are finding it interesting enough. Not being a grower myself I find it a bit difficult coming up with ideas to fill the pages. I know that with each issue I'm continually asking for items for the newsletter. They are always wanted. However, even if you aren't able to put pen to paper or fingers to keyboards, just an idea or two would be more than welcomed.

One reader asked about what fertilising systems were used when plants were grown in the sphagnum moss mix mentioned in an earlier article. We use the same program as we used when we were growing in bark. The plants are showing improved growth with plump juicy bulbs and increased inflorescence. The sphagnum looks a bit green on top but it's still okay and doing it's job and if it really upsets you you can always take a little off the top and replace it (especially for the shows).

We had a good turnout for the Taranaki Summer Show. The weather held up for us nicely and it was enjoyed by all but more about that later in the newsletter.

A new column you'll see is "Know your Neighbours". Here I hope to feature one individual from within our group each edition. This is based on a one to one interview with the individual. Usual story, if anyone is willing to interview someone from their area for this column, I would love some help. I can only interview people I can reach.

'Til next time,

Susan Tucker

email: [tuckersorchidnursery@clear.net.nz](mailto:tuckersorchidnursery@clear.net.nz)

Ph/Fax: (09) 489-2689



## Carl von Linné (1707-1778)

Amongst the first outstanding systematic botanists, Carl von Linné (known academically as Linnaeus) was certainly the most famous. Orchidology as a study was yet nonexistent in the eighteenth century; only as recently as 1731 had the first tropical orchid (*Bletia verecunda*) been carried back to England from one of the colonial outposts in the Bahamas. All Plants interested Linnaeus, however, and by his remarkable accuracy of observation and philosophical mind, he became the most eminent naturalist-botanist of his time. His arrangement of plants based on a system of sexual relationships prepared the way for many later systems of classification.

Carl von Linné was born near Stenbrohult, in the province of Smaland, Sweden, on 24 May 1707. He developed an early interest in botany and physiology, but his father, a Lutheran minister of small monetary means, was unable to further his son's interests. Nevertheless, in 1727 Linnaeus began the study of medicine at Lund, entering Upsala University the following year. Poverty continued to hinder him but through the assistance of Olaf Rudbeck he was able to continue his studies. In the meantime he was curator of the botanical gardens at the university.

In 1732 Linnaeus was given government aid to make a study of the flora of Sweden and Lapland, and soon thereafter he published his *Lapland Flora*. Later he studied mineralogy at Fahlun and in 1735 received a degree from the Harderwyk University in Holland. During his stay in Holland Linnaeus became associated with many eminent naturalists and, as a result of his botanical researches, especially as relating to plant classification, he occasionally announced original discoveries. His greatest and most important contribution was the development of the binomial system of nomenclature for scientific names of plants and animals - a "tool" which was widely adopted, revolutionising all branches of biology.

His first treatise on orchids appeared as "Species Orchidum" in *Acta Societatis Regiae Scientiarum, Upsala*, 1740. In this work he established, for the first time on record, technical names for orchid genera and species. Those listed genera were *Cypripedium*, *Epidendrum*, *Limodorum*, *Liparis*, *Ophrys*, *Orchis*, and *Serapias*. The species given were *Cypripedium calceolus*, *Habenaria viridis* (as *Satyrium viride*), *Orchis coriophora*, *Orchis maculata*, and *Serapias rubra*.

After visits to Germany, France, and England, Linnaeus became president of the Stockholm Academy and in 1741 was made professor of medicine in Upsala. The following year saw him accept the professorship of botany.

In 1753 his important work *Species Plantarum* was published, in which he introduced his sexual system founded on the number and position of the stamens and pistils in plants. There was no designation of plant families as such, but all the orchids were placed in class XX under two categories: Gynandria (stamens adnate to the pistil) and Diandria (two stamens present). In this first edition he listed eight genera of orchids, including fifty-nine species within those genera.

In his *Genera Plantarum* (1754) the eight orchid genera then known were described at length. His diagnoses were commonly based on the descriptions by older botanists and herbalists, on the dried specimens of Clayton from Virginia, on the common species of Europe, and on his own earlier works. Throughout this work he adhered strictly the binary system of nomenclature, i.e., the generic name (such as *Orchis*) followed by the specific name (as *spectabilis*). Of the eight genera described, all but *Epidendrum* were based on native European orchids that were entirely terrestrial. The genus *Epidendrum* was deigned specifically to encompass epiphytic orchids and included *Vanilla*, *Arachnis*, *Luisia*, *Vanda*, *Brassavola*, *Broughtonia*, *Dendrobium*, *Cymbidium*, *Phalaenopsis*, and *Rhynchostylis*.

Other of his works include *The Natural System*, *Fundamental Botany*, and *Philosophy of Botany*.

## Subscriptions

Thank you to all of you who have sent in this year's subscriptions so promptly. I'm glad to see the increased interest in receiving the American Odontoglossum Alliance newsletter.

I realise that the request for last year's (and possibly previous years') subs was made during the first issue of the new year and follow ups made in the second issue. However, I found that I was still getting subs as late as October last year and I feel that this was dragging it out a bit too much.

I have put coloured dots on the address labels of those people who haven't yet paid up. I have also included an additional subs form just in case you've lost the previous one.

# Know Your Neighbours

G. L. Alf Day

Many of you already know Alf. Some have only heard of his name (or his reputation ☺). Alf has been growing orchids for near on 50 years now and he's seen the orchid world grow and orchids become much more accessible. His collection started in Ngaruawahia with two Slipper orchids in 1951. When he first started his collection he had to buy most of his plants from overseas. A limit imposed on postal orders meant that he was generally only able to order in only one plant at a time. Importing didn't start in a major way until around the 1960's - 70's.

One of Alf's early successes was winning the Holland Cup with Odm. Crutordo. It was the 18th orchid he owned. His first *Odontoglossum* was Odm. *Petulum* (*crispum* x *toreador*), a plant that's still alive today! Over the years he's had around 790 different *Odontoglossum* orchid hybrids that have made it through the doors of his glasshouse, some of which are as a result of his own hybridising. Over the years he has made around 400 crosses. The last cross he de-flasked was a remake of Odm. *hallii* x *hallii*. There are many more pods to come.

His ideas for the future are: the intergeneric *Odontoglossums* may change the shape of things but the classic *crispum* type will bounce back as *Odontiodas* due to their shape and strength of growth. Also, at the moment the intergenerics' worst feature is the lack of fertility.

His best hybrid was a Mansell and Hatcher flask of *Wilsonara* Bardot (*Oncidium tigrinum* x *Odontioda* Aviemore) with several good clones and the best 'Charles' gaining an AM/NZOS in 1997. Several judges acknowledged this was the

best *Odontoglossum* hybrid ever flowered in New Zealand and should've been given an FCC.

Over the years he has grown many thousands of seedlings from flask using every reported method of de-flasking and growing. Today he is successfully able to de-flask and grow nearly 3,000 *Odontoglossum* plants in his backyard nursery.

## **Taranaki Summer Show**

This was, as expected, a wonderful weekend. The weather was reasonably kind to us. It was a bit overcast during the boot sale but there was no rain during the day to speak of. I even managed to get a bit burnt around the neck where I didn't have enough cover. I was only wearing a baseball cap and hadn't put on any sunblock (naughty, naughty).

The meeting of the *Odontoglossum* Alliance was set for Friday evening. I learnt for the first time about the rotation system the Taranaki Orchid Society have for the various Alliance meetings. Ross and I had driven down from Auckland during the day and called into the show first before trying to find the motel. That's when we found out that our meeting was starting in just a couple of hours time. It had me in a little panic but, hey, I can cope - I was fully prepared like a good little Girl Guide should be.

The meeting itself went off really well with around 50+ people attending and standing room only. We talked about some of the plants in the display, and then debate went on about the pros and cons of growing in sphagnum moss. After that, we broached the subject of holding a show specifically for the alliance. As a trial, Ross and I will host a show at our nursery here in Auckland. If it takes off, then other people can host it around the country each year if they wish. We will hold the first one during Labour weekend - that way people that live outside of

Auckland came come if they want to. We'll give more details in the next couple of newsletters.

We then held our auction with plants donated by Bill Liddy and Ross (of course). We raised approximately \$150 from the auction. I thought that we could put this and the funds we raised at the Hamilton show towards inviting a guest speaker from across the ditch to the Labour weekend show. I know that won't pay for the airfare but if we can raise some more money either through the Orchid Council or through the Labour weekend show itself (or both), we should be able to manage it.

There was a very respectable display of orchids on show. Quite a decent showing of Odonts, Oncids et al, too. Bill Liddy's Odm. cordatum 'Annie' certainly stole the show. It was probably around 60cm in diameter at least with heaps of arching inflorescences all around the pot. Not surprisingly, it had already received a CCC/OCNZ. Other notable plants were J & B Orchids' Wils. Tiger Brew 'Bombay' HCC/OCNZ, and their equitant Onc. Linda 'Shangrila' - a plant that's not the easiest to grow and flower here in New Zealand.

The boot sale held on Saturday afternoon did well and people were buying from a wide range of orchids as well as the significant range of pseudo-orchids (bromeliaeds, cacti and succulents). Afterwards we dined on a beautifully prepared buffet meal. There was a wonderful selection of meats and vegetables and plenty of dessert for everyone. After such a big meal we just had to go and walk it off.

George Fuller then granted our wish and took us for a guided walk through Pukékura park and the Festival of Lights. We had the added surprise of a few people attempting to inflate a couple of hot air balloons. One had a print of my favourite animal, the cat, printed on the balloon. Unfortunately, the wind was too strong for the balloons to be inflated safely. After an



afternoon of standing around at the boot sale, I was more than happy to take a few shortcuts around the park. We'd just gotten back to the van when we had our first real bit of rain for the weekend (and, from what the locals say, for some time longer). A few fellow walkers, who weren't as tired, no doubtedly were caught in the moderately heavy shower.

Sunday morning for Ross and I was a case of packing up, checking out, stopping briefly at the show to say our goodbyes, and then driving the long haul back up to Auckland. We were dutifully impressed with the amount of money being spent by the various districts on road upgrades, especially bridge building. The new bridge at Mokau is a huge improvement. Our next trip south will be a whole heap better.

## WebOrchids

Bella Online

<http://www.bellaonline.com>

This is a massive website with a wealth of information about a range of subjects from computers and sports to education and money. Of course, for it to get a mention here, it does have a lot of information on orchids, too. I found this to be a well presented site, easy on they eye and even easier to navigate.

The section on orchids is found by clicking on Home and Garden, then Garden, and lastly Orchids. From there you have access to book reviews, newsletters, chat groups, orchid culture, vendors and societies, games and competitions and publications.

As I seem to mention each time I review a site, there's bound to be something there for everyone. There's an article on red orchids, and on addictions (to orchids, of course). The book reviews are really interesting. I 'borrowed' this newsletter's book

review from a link on this site - all okayed by the author and publisher, naturally. I've even taken notes of some books I'll look for when I'm in the States in about 2 - 3 weeks time.

Check out the Orchid Profile on Onc. Sharry Baby - a popular plant. Unfortunately, there's not a lot on this site specific to the Odont. alliance - you will need to go into the links to get any information. Still, I've spent the last 4 hours online (thank goodness for Zfree) looking at just this website and I haven't even scratched the surface!

If you're like me and appreciate a bit of music playing in the background to break the quiet, well you can get that while surfing this website. They have over 20 channels to choose from including sports, news and a variety of types of music. So, what more can I say? Get out there and explore!

## Book Review

The Orchid Thief

Susan Orlean

Random House

January 1999

In her new book, *The Orchid Thief*, the *New Yorker* writer sets out to discover what it is about the flower that drives people to the brink of obsession - and beyond. To get her story, she had to venture into some pretty strange and scary places. An excerpt:-

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A ranger named Mike Owen met me at the Fakahatchee Strand headquarters, and before we went to see the stolen orchids we went for a drive around the Blocks. The roads were chalky and heat-beaten, and hip-high weeds knit an edge along them that shut off almost anything other than a straight-ahead view. The blocks

were straight and squared, like blocks in a real suburb, and the roads were wide and white, like suburban streets, and some of the intersections had street signs with ordinary-sounding street names and stop signs that jutted up out of a mesh of wild pine and salt grass and poison ivy. Driving around the Blocks wasn't like driving through a jungle - it was like driving through a suburb that had had all its houses and people erased. Every once in a while we passed a shaved-down patch in the thick growth, probably the start of what would have been a driveway that would have led to what would have been somebody's home. Some of these clearings were dotted with piles of junk - old rusted-out refrigerators missing their doors, a black heap of tires, a lawn chair. In one clearing I saw a pickup truck that looked as if it was operational. The bed of the truck was loaded with a dozen beekeeper boxes, but there was no beekeeper around. Far ahead, on the horizon, miles down the road, I noticed a shimmer, and then the shimmer became a blot and then the blot became a bigger blot and then it became a black sedan that looked as if it was growing rather than moving. In an instant it was in front of us and then in an instant it whooshed past and the road was blank again. It was spooky not to see any other cars or people but it was almost spookier to finally see one - it was like an intruder intruding on an intruder. I opened my window and stuck my head out. There were only a few sounds, and each of them was amplified - the thumping of the ranger's car, the whirring and whining of invisible insects, the whistle of a bird. It was a weird unquiet stillness, and yet the place had a weird overfull emptiness. It was more ghostly than a ghost town. In a ghost town only the people are missing. Here the buildings were missing, too. It didn't seem like a peaceful place where nothing ever happened - it was full of the feeling of a million things planned on and never done.

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Mike Owens, the ranger who drove me through the Blocks, was going to drop me off near the big sinkhole lake where some of Laroche's orchids had been wired up. He said that he was not going to go into the swamp with me - he was going to leave me there because he had some other things to do, and Katherine, the other ranger, was already out near the lake and would walk me in. He mentioned that Katherine might have a few volunteer workers with her who would join us so they could see the stolen orchids too. After I changed into my swamp clothes we drove a couple of miles down the Fakahatchee's only road. Every mile looked like every other mile to me - profuse and green and impenetrable. After a few minutes we pulled over and parked at a profuse, green, impenetrable-looking spot, and in a moment Katherine emerged from the woods. She was solidly built and had flushed cheeks and curly brown hair that had frizzed into a nimbus around her head. Her ranger uniform was soaking wet up to her waist. Behind her were two huge men, the biggest men I have ever seen, as big as sides of beef, shoulders like sirloin roasts. I had once read that the Skunk Man who supposedly lives in the Fakahatchee is seven feet tall and weighs seven hundred pounds. These huge men were dressed in shapeless pastel prison uniforms and they had rags wrapped jauntily around their hair. "Come on in," the ranger said, waving to me. Mike Owens said he'd see me later and got back into his car and drove away.

I stepped off the shoulder of the road into the swamp without looking; if I had looked, I might not have done it, since stepping off a high bank into deep black water is something I can do only if I don't think about it too much. I sank up to my knees and then over my knees. Bladderwort and pennywort floating on the water surface looped around my legs. The muck on the bottom was soft, but not soft in a pleasant way - it was mushy-soft, like cereal that had been sitting too long in milk. The ranger set off at a

clip, and we waded after her in a line - first me, then Giant #1 and then, a few feet behind him, Giant #2. The ranger mentioned the orchids were in a swamp lake that we would be able to walk through because it was deep but not as deep as some lakes in the Fakahatchee. Deep Lake, for instance, drops ninety-seven feet into the ground. We walked for about ten minutes to a spot where the underbrush opened and you couldn't see through the water to the floor of the swamp. This was the lake. In the middle of the lake were a few pond apple trees, and the ranger beckoned me over so I could see the orchids that she had attached to them. There were several sawed-off sections of logs attached to branches by baling wire. Laróche had removed the orchids by sawing off sections of the tree limbs they had been attached to because he didn't want to risk hurting them by prying them off the limbs. The rangers got the orchids back after they had been photographed for evidence, and they left them on their limbs and wired the limbs onto pond apple trees. They'd put them in several locations around the swamp. Here there were two clamshell orchids and one butterfly orchid and one ghost. None of the plants were in bloom - they were just small knots of roots and almond-shaped pseudobulbs, and all but the leafless ghost orchids had light-green tapering leaves. The baling wire was wrapped a couple of times around the trees to hold the limbs securely. It was a crazy-looking concoction, but so far the orchids hadn't died.

To get a good look at the orchids we had to walk from thigh-high water into waist-high and deeper. It was a good time for me to recite to myself the section of the Fakahatchee Strategic Plan that states, "The preserve attracts visitors with an affinity for totally undeveloped areas, who enjoy strenuous hikes and have no aversion to wading hip-deep in a swamp." When the four of us were gathered by the tree, the ranger finally introduced me to the giants and said they were in the inmate work-release program of

Copeland Road Prison, just down the road from the Fakahatchee - I had passed it on my way in. Both of the men were bashful and spoke in tiny, mumbly voices. After we were introduced I noticed that both of them were carrying three-foot-long machetes. I'm not sure how I hadn't seen the machetes before that, but maybe it was because the men had been wading behind me most of the way. I hate hiking with convicts carrying machetes. We stood in the lake for a while and every now and then one or the other or both of them would raise their machetes and then smash them into the water with a frightful, squeamish look on their faces. The speed of their swings was ferocious, and the machetes smashing against the water sounded like someone getting spanked. The ranger leaned over and whispered to me that she had given the men the machetes because they were both terrified of snakes and had refused to get into the swamp without some protection. After she gave them the machetes they had agreed to get in, but even heavily armed they were as jumpy as rabbits and stood holding their hands stiff and high above the water. Every time a bubble would rise to the surface of the lake or a tree would drop a leaf or a bird would peep, the giants and I would panic. When I panicked I froze. When one of the giants panicked he would pop up nervously and then the other one would pop up nervously too, and the water displaced by their combined weight rolled in silky waves across the lake. The cold black water slapped at my belly button every time they would pop up and down. The swamp was hot and hushed except for all the splashing and the smack of the giants' machetes against the water. You could disappear in a place like this, really disappear, into one of these inky sinkholes or in the warm muck under the thick brush. No one could find you in a place like this once you sank in. Just then I got extremely curious but decided to wait until we were out of the swamp and in a

secure government vehicle before I asked the giants what they were in prison for.

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## **PhotoFile**

Regrettably we have no photos available for this edition. I had taken quite a few using the digital camera at the Taranaki show. This time Ross did not accidentally wipe them. We did, however, have a similar problem. Somewhere along the line the disk we had saved all the photos onto became corrupted. We are unable to recover any of the photos on the disk.

So.... if anyone out there who was at the show has taken some photos and is prepared to loan them to me I'll scan them into the computer and return them straight away.

## **Buy, Sell, Exchange**

I have received an enquiry for a mature plant or division of Odm./Ross. grande alba. If anyone has a plant available please let me know.

Susan

**SENDER:**

**Susan Tucker  
30 Pupuke Road  
Takapuna  
Auckland 1309  
New Zealand**