



**NZ ODONTOGLOSSUM ALLIANCE**

# **NEWSLETTER**

**Volume 9 Number 1  
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## From the Editor

It has been a dry summer in my region with much higher temperatures than normal. Temperatures in the low thirties are very rare here. First time in twenty years we have had water restrictions out here in the county! Plants have been drying out and watering and damping down has been a real chore - often in the cool around midnight. Thankfully we have had several good falls of rain in the last week but I have started thinking about rigging up an overhead watering system for the Odonts as I'm sure they have suffered. Now with autumn temperatures we will see a growth spurt as they make up for lost time.

On the weekend I joined thousands of gardeners who attended an excellent Gro Expo in the local racecourse grounds. I saw the local bark merchant there selling bark and a few Phalaenopsis plants and mini cymbidium cut spikes but that was the total of it orchidwise.

There were masses of flowers and shrubs for sale, wonderful garden furniture and pools, fountains and so forth. A husband and wife team were busily carving pine logs into animals and even indian totem poles with chainsaws before a fascinated crowd.

There were a couple of items that interested me. A product which some of you will know as Crystal Rain was being promoted. These synthetic crystals are mixed with soil and when watered swell up many times, retaining water which the plant can call on when stressed. A local orchid grower has been using these in his orchid mix along with a little bark and those marble-sized clay balls. He reckons the plants are doing well in the mix! Anyone out there tried Odonts with these crystals in the mix?

Another firm had obviously imported a container of products from the USA. They were selling things off really cheap and I bought some bird netting packs to stop a persistent thrush from digging up my disa tubers. One product reminded me just how few pests we really do have to contend with here in NZ. This was another bird repeller. A large painted up, styrene hawk owl or great tufted owl. Can't remember its name but it sure looked scary. This was guaranteed to scare all manner of rodent, bird and reptilian pests out of your garden! I had half a mind to see if a NZ thrush would be deterred by this fearsome but foreign bird but decided against buying one. I also wondered whether a starving chipmunk would really be deterred by the grotesque object in a warm orchidhouse in North America during the winter! I very much doubt if it would scare a NZ mouse that Jane says is eating her Odont pods!

Subs are rolling in. This will be your last issue if you aren't financial. Thank you to those who have paid. Good growing.

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## BREEDERS CORNER

Well now, 1998 has started off with a bounce for me at any rate and I trust the same for members as a group. Dr. Guido has sent further species pollen namely, *subuligerum*, AP68, (Bolivia), the completely yellow form and *crocidipterum* AP67, Columbia. We will use Dr. Guido's numbers in future when handing out the pollen, reason being that later pollen sent to us, often comes from different plants of the same species and for which he has different numbers to emphasise separate characteristics. Ron is bringing all species pollen to me to care for and send out in future so please make a note of that item.

**Pod Success.** The cross I did of *Odm. ramosissimum* var *maculata alba* x *Odm. ioplocon* (Dr. Guido's pollen), Ron reports a pod chockfull of viable seed. which means there will be enough plants for all to share. I expect these to grow into tall branching types, the flowers a fascinating combination of the short dainty clusters of the *ramosissimum* (white tinged mauve pink) with the long petalled rich purple flowers ( gold masked) growing more in bunches than clusters of the *ioplocon*. We expect the perfume to come through but it may not. Alf reports disappointment on the first flowering of *Odm Vexitivum* x *Odm. uro-skinnei* as they lacked both size and colour and hope the reverse cross may prove better.

**Seedling Notice for Seminar.** This issue of the newsletter is coming out early so that notice can be given to all those attending judges seminar on March 14<sup>th</sup> at Nelson Orchid Society's venue that Alf Day, who is giving a talk and slide display; will be bring Odont seedlings from both his and my crosses. They will come wrapped in sphagnum moss, so please bring your own pots and labels for safe transport home. These plants are **free** to all so more can share in same, as we feel the Southern members should not miss out on any "freebies" going! Quite a few have already been given out up here in the North and I am delighted with one newcomer to Odonts -- Pam Lang who put the little punnet of plants out into a tree and through all this blazing heat we are having at present, has not lost a single plant.

**Alan Moon's Slides.** Here is a list of Odonts they hybridise and which Alf Day will show at the Seminar:

1. *Oda. La Hougue Bie* 'Saint Brelade' FCC/RHS, a truly super cross but is a non breeding triploid.
2. *Odm. Augres* 'Trinity' AM/RHS, the finest white cross to date (4n).
3. *Oda. Samares*, an Eric Young hybrid, some of these measure a full 120mm. (4n)
4. *Oda. Mont Ube* -- the best yellow cross as these are 4n.
5. *Oda. Eric Young* -- a line bred plant from Eric Young 'Isle of Jersey' x Eric Young.
6. *Oda. Boulivot* -- by using *Oda. Shelley* and *Odm. pescatorei*, makes a fine novelty.
7. *Odm. Mont Pellier* -- another *Odm. pescatorei* hybrid.
8. *Odm. La Ponterrin* -- *Odm. rossii* crossed onto a diploid.
9. *Odm. Mont Rossignol* -- *Odm. rossii* onto a tetraploid .

The slides will be shown in the above order allowing judges a better chance to evaluate what they see when list cross is already familiar.

**Colour Chart.** Ron has given me an excellent colour chart as used by the Royal Horticultural Society and cited by the National Bureau of Standards. The graduations of colour as well as explanatory notes on back are extensive, even to a chapter on *The Meaning of Colour*! Being passionately interested in colour from the hybridiser's point of view, as well as judging, this chart will be of great help in describing odont alliance exact shades in future columns.

**Odm. hallii Again.** Alf reports 2 large pods that are getting bigger by the day (no pun intended) on his strong dark green leaved clone that has large yellow ground flowers, including the lip -- one pod is a selfing and the other is of *Odm. hallii* 'Verutu' HCC/OCNZ which by contrast is yellow green in bulbs and leaves and has a large very white ground to lip so any viable seed we get should give interesting seedlings in the 2nd cross. The xanthic pod I have on 'Verutu' is also growing well and the plant has put up new growths so no danger to its health evident so far. In case members think I am grumbling needlessly, the hybridising road is a tough one but someone has to travel that road or there never would be seedlings of anything new. Whether the seedlings turn out good or bad, a price still has to be paid one way or another. A plant will get pods to a halfway point, then collapse and die, or it will go the full 11 to 12 months and the pods are empty. So, one goes on testing, trying to find the willing seed carriers and keeping notes of resultant progeny. Hours can be spent checking parentages for the unwelcome triploids which mean the line has reached a dead end and thus save further waste of time. One must salute the pioneers in Odont hybridising (other than the great English ones of the last century) Gerald McCraith of Australia and Robert Dugger of USA must have met heartbreak aplenty on the long roads to success they travelled, without benefit of any later found ways to tell which plants had reliable and stable chromosome counts. A very expensive business that testing is too ! I have lost six superb parents, one, the lovely *Oda*. Goldwood 'Ajax' and I am about to unload a 12 months old pod to Ron of *Odm.* Aloreus 'Roke'AM/RHS x with 'Ajax' using 3 year old pollen! Also have a 4 month old pod of two fabulous ruby purples = *Oda*. Trixmahnee 'Purple Haze' x with *Oda*. Katie Weaver 'Water Lily' and there again using 3 year old pollen from 'Water Lily', not that this plant is lost, but has proved difficult either to hold a pod or give pollen and this is the first time real willingness has been shown to grow a good size pod. Altogether, there are 5 *Oda*. Trixmahnee clones carrying pods, all crosses positively oozing colour so, fingers crossed everyone that we get to see nice seedlings.

Jane Frear, Manukau City

## Travels of a "Ham" Orchidist

Here I am sitting in the kitchen, enjoying the morning sun, and large pieces of yesterdays ham trying to write an article I promised Ron on my recent (July - August) visit to the U.K. And not having the journalistic ability of my good friend Chris Hubbert, I'm finding it a little difficult, but I do find the odd slice of ham helps.

We left N.Z. late July for England with a three day stopover in Los Angeles, arriving in the early afternoon. We went straight to our hotel which is close to the airport at El Segundo. After booking in and stocking up the fridge, my wife, who has a 'black belt' in shopping, dragged me off to the local mall, like your average N.Z. mall only bigger. After quick look around we decided to go our separate ways and meet in a certain bar 1 1/2 hours later. My first stop was a huge drug store "GoLo" I think the name was. Why they call them drug stores I don't quite know, they sell almost everything, clothing lawn-mowers, fresh fruit , you name it oh, and of course magnetic force guided me to the gardening section, not a big section by some standards, but not bad for a 'Drug Store'. My only purchase here was "Shultz Blossom Booster" 10-60-10 fertilizer, 2 large tubs for USS5-00 that is about \$7-50 here. Just the job for the Phally's. So here I am, less than an hour into my holiday and I am loaded down with fertilizer. I promised myself I wouldn't do that this time, but I couldn't resist at that price.

I wandered around a few more stores. I bought a few different kinds of marker pens. Some have proved O.K. but some fade away fairly quickly. Among the good ones are "Sharpie" by Sanford, but make sure that it's the extra fine tip, also "Pilot" make several styles. All this shopping makes one thirsty so I headed for our pre-arranged meeting place proudly clutching my goodies. "Wifey" arrived a short time later loaded down with plastic bags. A couple of beers and back to the hotel for 'Show and Tell' and this is where we tip everything out onto the bed to see what the other one has bought. My fertilizer came as no surprise, but my purchases seemed insignificant compared to the vast array of very important items that she would need, she assured me, in the coming weeks. I conceded defeat once again to the "Black Belt".

The rest of our stay in L.A. was pretty uneventful, the usual visit to Hollywood, Santa Monica etc. though we did go to one store worth mentioning. It is called "Ross Dress for Less". They have them all over U.S.A. and Hawaii. It is designer clothing at reduced prices, for example, Levis jeans\$14-95, shirts Ralf Lauren -Pierre Cardin etc.\$12-00, Nike Air trainers \$29-00, nice wrinkle-free cotton trousers name brands for \$18-00. The womens clothing my wife assured me is equally cheap. These are the genuine article, not 'Bangkok' copies, so anyone going to the U.S.A remember Ross DFL and take an extra suitcase, so you won't have to buy one.

Our onward trip to England was with British Airways and being a 'Pom' myself thought that was O.K. Well it wasn't, it was easily the most uncomfortable flight I have ever made. I'm sure they fit in an extra ten rows of seats into a 747, 'the worlds favourite airline'? The less said about that the better.

We arrived in London early on Monday morning and were booked into a cheap hotel in Victoria; did I say cheap? There is no such thing in London, I meant cheaper. One of the reasons for our visit to the U.K. was for me to spend some time with my mother who is 80 but keeps remarkably fit and well. She now lives in Taunton, Somerset which is in the south west of England and in my opinion the best part of the country. My wife, understandably didn't relish the thought of 3 weeks with her mother-in-law, so she arranged a tour of Poland, Russia, Finland, Sweden and Denmark which left on the Thursday morning so we had 3 days wandering around London. I did notice some orchids in the odd florist shops, *Phalaenopsis* with about 6 blooms £10-00 that is about \$NZ 25-00 and a very nice un-named *Oncidium* with many yellow and brown flowers £15-00. All too soon Thursday morning arrived and it was time for me to see the 'Wanderer' off on her tour of northern Europe, and for me to get the bus to Taunton. The 'Coach' as the Pom's call it is about the cheapest way to travel in the U.K. For example London to Taunton by train is about £40-00, by coach £15-00 return, and the train is quicker but not by a lot. My trip took about 3 hours.

The day after my arrival in Taunton I hired a small car for £10-00 a day and then we started our round of visits to the rest of the family, and a very enjoyable time was had by all. One of my intentions while in the U.K. was to visit the Eric Young Orchid Foundation in Jersey. I thought a couple of days in the Channel Islands would suit Mum and me just nicely, so with only 8 days of my visit left we drove down to Bournemouth, where my younger brother lives. It is just a short drive to Poole Harbour where the ferry to Jersey leaves from. The weather was beautiful and Bournemouth was crowded with holiday makers as it was August Bank Holiday weekend. Our intention was to go over on Monday and back on Wednesday, so the next morning, Saturday, off I go to the Tourist Centre, mother in tow. 'Sorry Sir' the next ferry available was Thursday morning. It seems that Jersey is a very popular place during England's short summertime. Well that was no good as I had to be back in London on Saturday to meet the 'Wanderer' when she returned from her tour.

We were both more than a little disappointed to say the least, but all was not lost. McBeans are just up the coast near Brighton, so on Monday morning we took a leisurely drive to Lewes where we found a nice B&B. Tuesday morning we went to visit McBean's Orchids which is only about 3 miles from Lewes on the A275, easy to find. They have several large glasshouses and buildings which the public are not encouraged to view, though I do believe that if you ask nicely a tour can be arranged. I was happy just to visit their sales and

display area where we were met by a charming hostess called Sally Moon; a name to be reckoned with in orchid circles. Sally is a fully qualified florist who knows more than a little about orchids. The display area, though not overly large was stocked with some of the most beautifully grown plants I have ever seen. My mother like most people was amazed at the number of different genera, as she thought orchids started and finished with Cymbidiums. Even 80 isn't too old to learn something new.

The *Phalaenopsis* were especially good with plants of all shades ranging in price from £15 - £30 in flower, but some from as little as £7-50 for flowering size. The Odonts also were exceptional, McBeans having some time ago purchased the world famous Charlesworth collection which forms the basis of their breeding stock, prices being about the same as for *Phalaenopsis*. No Cymbidiums to talk of as this was the height of the northern summer, but plenty of nice Miltonias, Cattleyas and Paphiopedilums. But the 'Show stealers' were a couple of *Paph. Schillianum* each with many blooms, absolutely lovely, they were £130 each, that is about \$325NZ at the then exchange rate. I would have happily paid that had I been able to get one home safely, they were so beautiful. I'll have to get myself a Shillianum in the new Year.

McBeans also sell flasks of seedlings, £20 upwards if I remember rightly. I was very tempted to buy a couple but I still had over a month of travelling to do before I got home so I resisted the temptation. We were only there just over an hour but it was well worth the visit. I advise anyone who finds themselves in South-East England not to give it a miss. I spent the rest of that week in and around the west country, the weather was lovely and I enjoyed my stay immensely. I look forward to my next visit maybe in another two years.

(to be continued ) Nick Symes, Auckland

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## Calling Disa Growers

Trevor Gillbanks, editor of the Masdevallia Newsletter has asked if we will announce that he is importing copies of Karsten Wodrich's new book entitled "**Growing South African Indigenous Orchids**". Karston recently made an eight day visit to the North Is and gave slide talks to hastily arranged meetings in private homes. His excellent book fills a gap on our bookshelves and in club libraries on how to grow terrestrial and epiphytic orchids from South Africa. It is full of colour and black and white photos of habitats, species and hands on potting and growing from seed. It gives lists of hybrids, suppliers agar formulas, how to build glove boxes and laminar flow cabinets plus a classification of South African orchid genera.

If you or you club would like a copy please contact Trevor by the end of March. He can get you a copy for \$90-\$95 if he orders 20 or more from Holland direct. Contact him at - 28 AkeAke Avenue, Palmerston North. Ph/Fax 06 359 1848

## NEED FOR HYBRIDIZER'S GROUP

My letter published in vol.7 No.2 was written primarily to create a reaction. To see if the situation out there was as bleak as it appeared. The response was somewhat as I had expected, no commercial grower that I didn't already know about came forward offering plants or flasks for sale, either now or in the near future. During the last few months, I have heard that one nursery has closed down, one has been sold, two are for sale and one has been scaled down to semi-commercial. It is possible that the new and prospective new owners may bring new enthusiasm to the industry, but the overall affect is still likely to be downwards.

So what to do? When this group was formed in 1990 it was stated that it would not undertake any activity likely to compete with commercial growers. I feel that in the present situation what ever we do will have little affect on the commercial scene. I suggest that we start a hybridizer's group, either as part of the Alliance or within it. The object would be to set up a pollen bank, to make pollen freely available to members and to make available flasks of seedlings at cost. Members would be encouraged to make available to the group the remaining seedlings of their crosses at replating after their own needs had been met. The group would order flasks according the interest expressed by other members. This could be taken a step further by engaging a grower (commercial or otherwise), to de-flask and grow on plants on commission for those members who prefer to buy established plants rather than flasks.

The facts are simple. The only way we're going to have a good range of new hybrids coming on to strengthen the Alliance and to maintain interest in it, is to do it ourselves. It is very clear that no-one else is going to do it for us. Collectively, we have a range of plants available that are as good as can be found anywhere, so why not use them. I have revived my own hybridizing program with this in mind and am willing to make pollen and (eventually) flasks available to any of you that desire them.

If you want to be part of this group, or are able to provide surplus seedlings for re-plating, please let Ron or myself know.

Seedlings flowered for the first time.

I have recently flowered some seedlings that have really impressed me.

These are:-

Oda. Lovely Remember (Trixell x Remembrance) a good, strong, medium- red with good size, shape and substance (lasted well - for an odont. - when cut.)

Oda. Remembrance x Red Cougar. Another good red, similar to the last one, both have award potential.

Odcdm. Tiger Hambuhren 'Mieke' 4n x Odm. Goldrausch. These have been good, strong, bright yellows with brown markings. Good size and fair to good shape.

Wils. Tiger Brew (Oda. Mem. Rudolf Pabst x Odcdm. Tiger Hambuhren 'Mieke' 4n). Yellow with orange-brown markings, good shape, medium sized, well presented flowers. Need to see if flower count increases on a larger plant to off-set size.

All these plants have come from the Geyserland stable, and are notable for their vigorous growth and tendency to flower at a young age.

Alan Locke, Arohena



## STAGE 2 --- POTTING UP ODONT SEEDLINGS

Now that the seedlings have made a bulb and started a side growth, it is time to shift them out into individual pots. Depending on the roots some may need the size 7cm pot and others a size smaller.

Materials needed, all adequately sterilised are ; polystyrene chips (for crocks), a mix of No 3 and No 4 bark, with pumice in larger sizes than the fine grade which has a tendency to 'cake', some fine quality sphagnum moss (or oasis chips). Lastly some Ai-de-chef skewers 25cm long.

Now I notice Ron Maunder uses Oasis quite heavily in his pots for both seedlings and adult plants and that works well in his conditions, but, having used Oasis and sphagnum moss in separate trials I consider that sphagnum moss has the edge possibly because the seedlings adapted to it from flasks in the first stage.

Make sure the mix is moist enough so that no water is needed for at least two weeks. Overhead misting twice daily is sufficient to help the seedlings over the transplant shock. Prepare pots by having polystyrene in the bottom third, over that place a thin layer of sphagnum moss. Holding the plant by its upper leaves (not at the join of roots and top), place it to rest the root tips on the moss and gently spoon the mix in and around it, keeping the seedlings base just below the rim of the pot. Two or three taps on the side of the pot is the only settling required. Insert a skewer into mix to support the seedling until the roots take up the job. This especially applies to very long leaved seedlings, i.e. *Odm.* Queen Charlotte Straits x *Oda.* Trixmahanee 'Tommy' which was some 15" tall out of the first stage.

Do not press the mix down around the plants with fingers and thumbs, but leave it to settle naturally. More harm has been done by this pressing down business than anything else; as it squashes the air out of the mix and often breaks the fragile roots as well. Conservatively, most good quality seedlings cost at least \$3 (out of flask) so it pays to take care with what are infants in the plant sense. If each one is looked on as a potential champion, there is no hassle in taking the extra time and care.

Having potted your seedlings and properly labelled them. mist them with **weak** Phostrogen spray at one quarter the usual strength, with a pinch of Captan added. Keep this up once or twice a day until it is time to run clear water through the pots which will have dried out after two weeks, but not the sphagnum moss which still holds moisture even when the mix above it is quite dry. In clear watering be careful not to get water into new growths. Keep a slow fan stirring the air. Other natural fertilisers like Nitrosol, fish and seaweed etc. can be used but very weak and always misted onto the plants and never into the mix as only clear water should be used to remoisten this.

These notes are for the amateurs like myself who do not have large automated areas to grow seedlings and mostly rear them in the kitchen on a sideboard (7ft long) under a wall of windows.

Jane Frear, Auckland

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## Heating Pads

I own two Dennison heating pads 5ft by 2ft. and have had them for 7 or 8 years. One is covered with sand and is run at 10° C. and on the other I have put 2 litre ice-cream containers, in which I have about an inch of gravel, around the gravel I have water. The plants sit above the water in very warm 14° C. humid conditions. I also use this pad for my hot-box (see Vol.1 No.1). The ice-cream containers look a bit untidy but have worked well for me. Some plants will send roots down into the water and attach to the gravel.

Colombian type Odonts like the even temperatures the pad gives, especially on a frosty night. My fan heater keeps the orchid house at 5° C. which is a lot cooler than on the pad. The constant temperature is a big help in growing young plants. This has also enabled me to use a less open mix of crushed punga. There has been a big improvement in the roots of my plants since I have been using it

My *Oncidium macranthum* sits on a small pot on the sand covered pad, it's roots grow up to 18 inches through the sand. It seems very happy maybe because it can't be carted off to orchid shows etc.

You have to be careful with your watering as the pots get dry from the bottom up and the plants are dryer than they look. The other problem I have is that the conditions are that kind to the plants that some don't initiate spikes. This could be corrected by removing the plant from the pad. The pads are switched off for the warmer months of the year.

I recommend the use of pads and think they would be very suitable to somebody with limited space and who wants to grow a few plants well.

Peter Hawkins, R.D.2., Featherston

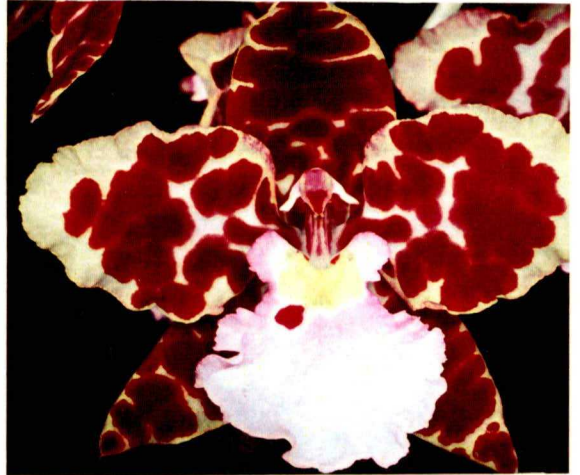
## Photo Credits

The photos this issue were sent to Alf Day by Alan Moon of the Eric Young Orchid Foundation, Jersey. We thank Alf and the Foundation for sharing these with us.

# Breeding at the EricYoung Foundation



1 Oda. Samares



2 Odm. La Ponterrin AM/RHS



3 Odm. Mont Pellier



4 Oda. Mont Ube



5 Oda. Boulivot



6 Odm. Mont Rossignol