

Cultural Notes – Spring



Now that summer is on the way we are entering what is probably the busiest period of the orchid growing year, just when everything else is demanding attention too. Not many plants are coming into flower, but there are a few: *Cymbidium madidum*, some *Epidendrums* and *Encyclias*, some *Coelogyne*s, *Oncidium sphacelatum*, the splendid *Calanthe triplicata* or Christmas Orchid, and soon the magnificent *Stanhopeas*. This year we have had unusual weather conditions so you may even have late flowerings of soft cane *Dendrobiums*.

However all plants are going into their main growth period and need regular, and probably more frequent, water and a higher Nitrogen fertiliser. With the longer, hotter days and higher light levels there is a possibility of leaf burn so you must consider extra shading or repositioning plants to give them less severe light. However while keeping up the humidity try to do it early in the day and keep water out of the tops of new growths and the papery sheaths that persist on many *Cattleyas* and some *Dendrobiums*. There is an exception to the 'early' watering. Most *Cymbidiums* want to experience a drop in temperature from day to night. They will not develop new flower spikes for next year if there are persistent hot summer nights. Water late to keep them cool in the evenings.

While attending to all this do not forget that this is when much of your repotting should be done when the flowering is over and before there are too many tender new shoots.

In spring/summer watch out for chewing pests and for fungus problems. You have to take precautions here as by the time you see the signs it is too late. Use snail baits and **Two-in-One** [Killyptus & Pyrethrum] for insects, and **Mancozeb** or **Fongarid** (for fungus).

Cattleyas (and their hybrids with *Brassavolas*, *Laelias* and *Sophronitis*) Most of these have finished flowering and have new shoots. Many of these plants will be scorched by full sun on hot afternoons, so require more shade. Repotting is probably the main task, especially if your plant is starting to "climb out" of the pot. *Cattleyas* "enjoy" repotting. Consider dividing the plant and potting the back bulbs.

Dendrobiums (Hard cane types, Australian natives & their hybrids, including Intermediate types.)

These plants love this time of the year. Give them plenty of light but do not let them overheat as they will do in our common black plastic pots

Dendrobiums (Soft cane types & their hybrids)

These are used to a hot, wet, monsoon type summer so it is impossible to overwater or overfeed them in the summer months. Depending on the sort of summer we have you may have to shade them.

Oncidiums (As well as *Miltonias*, *Brassias* & their hybrids)

In summer, the main requirements are not to let their leaves burn and to keep them moist. Most hybrids have already but *Oncidium sphacelatum* will have sent up its 4 foot long flower spikes ready to flower in November. Give them some support as they may have up to 200 flowers. Fertilise with high nitrogen fertilisers for new plant growth.

Repot if necessary, probably because the plant has out grown the pot. Most of them were not designed to live in pots. Be adventurous and try mounting them but remember they will then need more frequent watering.

Vandas (and their related species and hybrids)

These plants need humidity so they *should* be watered every second day, and humidity levels can be kept up by extra, light misting or by damping down the floor below them.

A few may already be showing flower spikes. Give them high phosphorus fertiliser alternated with the high nitrogen one you are using on everything else.

Phalaenopsis

Like the Vandas they must not be left to dry out, nor should they be left with water in the crown of the plant. During the summer months they also appreciate a high nitrogen fertiliser. If they are developing a 'trunk' they may have to be repotted lower in a pot.

Paphiopedilum (The Asian 'slipper orchid')

These plants also lack pseudobulbs and so need regular watering, probably every third day. Again, water sitting in the crown of the plant can rot newly emerging flower bulbs. Remove old dead leaves.

Phragmipedium, (South American 'slipper orchid'). There have been 'phrags' at each of the recent shows in our region. Mine has not even started to show a spike. It grows in straight sphagnum moss, kept continually moist and sitting in a tray of water.

Ian McLaren 21-10-2008

These notes have been used at our Cultural and New Grower's Meetings. They are from various sources and we thank the author. All articles are supplied in good faith and the Bribie Island Orchid Society and its members will not be held responsible for any loss or damage.