

HARROGATE ORCHID SOCIETY



Newsletter May 2020

Email: editor.hosnews@gmail.com

Dear Members,

I hope this finds everyone well and safe in these challenging times. I have been having 'fun', for want of a better word, playing with Publisher on your behalf. It has certainly given my brain a good work out! Hopefully the results have been worth the stress and frustration. My thanks go to this month's contributors. Please keep sending me details of your plants, growing conditions, queries even, so we can continue to feel connected. Please note the new email address, dedicated to all things Society related.

Liz Groves

Articles

Paphiopedilums as houseplants

By Ian Dorman

There are some Paphiopedilums which are suitable for growing in the home because of their compact habit and lower light requirements. However, in order to grow and flower these well year after year, there are a number of critical requirements which must be followed.

Choice of Plant

This is very important in terms of longer term success with these plants, otherwise they may be destined for the bin after flowering like so many Phalaenopsis hybrids bought in supermarkets and garden centres. When buying a plant it is important to consider the following requirements:

Species or hybrid? I would strongly recommend choosing a hybrid, particularly if you are new to orchid growing and/or Paphiopedilums. Ideally the plant should be compact and have a minimum of 3 growths. Whilst you may be lucky and pick up a bargain in a supermarket or a garden centre I find that usually there is no cultural information available or anything about the origin and breeding of the plant which is important in assessing how easy or difficult the plant will be to grow in the home. In my experience it is better to buy a suitable plant from a reputable orchid nursery which nowadays is likely to be online. 2 orchid online orchid nurseries I would recommend are Elite Orchids and Spicesotic Plants who can both give appropriate growing advice. Of course if you attend orchid shows there are usually some traders selling Paphiopedilums. Unfortunately using orchid nurseries does push the price up a bit and you should expect to pay at least £20 for a suitable plant. If you must buy a species then this significantly reduces the options available. However, one species I would recommend is Paphiopedilum delenatii.



Cultural Conditions

Paphiopedilums can do well in a north facing window, preferably with no radiator close by which will crucially impact adversely on humidity which preferably should be around 60%. This can be supplemented by placing the plant on an upturned saucer in the centre of a much larger saucer surrounded by Hortag or some other similar material. The plant sits just proud of the Hortag which has been covered in water. Water quality is important for most orchids so check your tap water to determine the level of dissolved salts (parts per million or ppm). If it is high (more than 150 ppm) then you should use rainwater. Feed about once a week in Summer, preferably with an orchid fertilizer but one off the supermarket shelf may do at half strength. No feed should be given in winter when depending on your house conditions watering could be restricted to once every 2 or 3 weeks. Only repot Paphiopedilums when absolutely necessary and use a bark based compost. Keep in the smallest pot possible. Watch out for Mealy bug.

The Genus Miltoniopsis

By John Gay

Today's Miltoniopsis were formally lumped into the genus *Miltonia* by the English botanist John Lindley in 1837. It was only later in 1889 that it was described as a separate genus but not generally accepted until 1976 following a publication by Leslie Garay and G.C.K. Dunsterville. To me the most amazing aspect of Miltoniopsis is the fact that until fairly recently the great diversity of flower colour and patterns in the hybrids has been developed by continued crossing of hybrids originally obtained from three Colombian species: *Miltoniopsis vexillaria*, *Miltoniopsis roezlii* and *Miltoniopsis phalaenopsis*.

Miltoniopsis vexillaria is endemic to the Andean highlands of Colombia and Northern Ecuador growing in cloud forests at 4,000 – 6,500 feet, the flowers come in various shades of pink to pure white and can be 4 inches across.

Miltoniopsis roezlii is endemic to western Colombia and is found at a much lower elevation to *Mps. vexillaria* at 1000-2500ft. Plants are smaller than *Mps. Vexillaria*, as are flower size. There is a pure white form and a beautiful pure yellow form which I have a very nice plant of.

Miltoniopsis phalaenopsis is endemic again to Colombia and grows in shady, humid locations at 4000-6500ft. The plants are quite small with the flowers measuring 2-3 inches across smaller than *Mps.vexillaria* and *Mps. roezlii*.

There are a few more species in the genus namely *Miltoniopsis santanae*, *Miltoniopsis warscewiczii* and the more recently discovered *Miltoniopsis bismarckii*. However, these have been used very little in hybridizing.

Miltoniopsis Hybridizing

Early hybrids concentrated on using the species *Miltoniopsis vexillaria* and between 1973 and 1930 there was 48 different cultivars of *Miltoniopsis vexillaria* awarded by the Royal Horticultural Society. The first hybrid registered was *Miltoniopsis Bleuana* (*vexillaria* x *roezlii*)

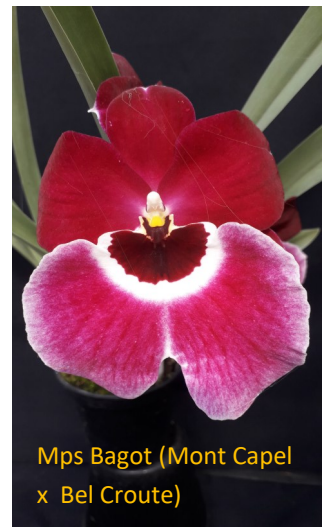
The pinnacle of Miltoniopsis breeding was the interwar period from 1918 to 1940 when approximately 250 new hybrids were registered. The greatest breakthrough was the development of a large red hybrid. *Miltoniopsis*

vexillaria has no red pigmentation and the red colouration was from the inner portions of the species *Miltoniopsis roezlii*. It was during the late 1930s and the early 1970s that the interest in hybrids waned and it was not until the 1980s did the breeding take off again. Both in the USA and Europe during and after the 1980s some fantastic hybrids were produced. I well recall the famous firm of Mansell and Hatcher in Leeds producing some stunning *Miltoniopsis* hybrids and it was always a pleasure visiting their nursery to see them when they were in flower. Simultaneously in the USA they were also making some fantastic hybrids.

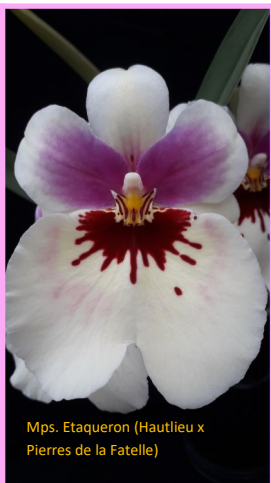
Today the leading hybridizer in the world of Miltoniopsis is the Eric Young Foundation in Jersey. It was there that they learned how to change the polyploidy of orchids by treating them with colchicine - a carcinogenic chemical .The result was larger flowers with a greater substance and today all of their new hybrids are tetraploids (4N). After the discovery and

availability of the yellow form of *Miltoniopsis roezlii* the Foundation have used this species to produce some delicate stunning yellows (see photographs).

Popular and very attractive hybrids have a 'waterfall' patterning which create great variation in colour, nowadays many colour variations and patterning are available for everyone to enjoy.



Mps Bagot (Mont Capel
x Bel Croute)



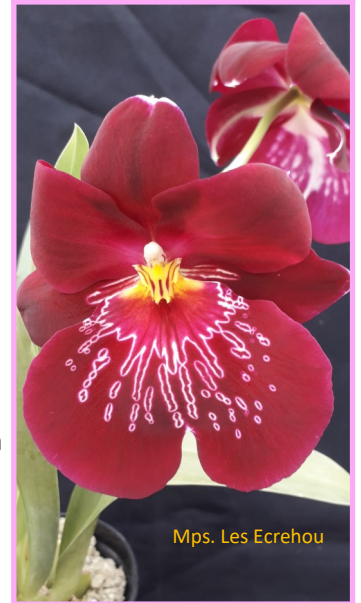
Mps. Etaqueron (Hautlieu x
Pierres de la Fatelle)

Culture:-

I should say that the genus is not the easiest to grow unless you can create the specific conditions that these plants require. In the wild the species grow mainly in moist humid mountain cloud forests.

For all species there is generally little variation in maximum and minimum temperatures throughout the year. Ideal temperatures are 60F (15.5C) at night and 75-80F (24-26.8C) during the day with humidity around 60-80percent.

The plants need to be almost pot bound to promote superior culture since they do not tolerate decomposing media and need to be repotted every year. Small 9cm plastic pots are ideal except for all but the largest specimens. Since most hybrids flower from late winter to early summer they tend to make new growths in August and September and this is the ideal time to repot. I grow in a mixture of 70% Grodan (Rockwool) and 30% perlite. As far as watering is concerned, I generally use rainwater which in my area has a low salt reading of around 25ppm. As a general rule I water twice a week in Summer and once a week in Winter. I am just in the process of changing (for a trial period) to a feed of Peters Excel Cal Mag (15-5-15) at a rate of 350ppm. Previously I used Akernes Rain Mix. I will be feeding on two consecutive watering's with a third watering of plain water with a full flush through.



Fortunately, Miltoniopsis will tell you when they are unhappy. Pleating or wrinkling of the leaves occurs when they are not receiving enough water. This could be due to infrequent watering or lack of roots. Fortunately for me the light requirements are very similar to that for my Phragmipediums which share my greenhouse. It has around 80% shading which is moderate light. A sign of good culture is a slight reddening of the leaves and plants that make two new growths from the last pseudobulb. Most hybrids stay in excellent flower condition for four to six weeks. Finally, the plants like a consistent high humidity of around 60 to 80 % which is where the investment of my automatic greenhouse fogger comes into its own.

Whilst I have not tried growing them in my house as windowsill plants, I suspect they would struggle due to lack of humidity.

Included among the text are a few of the nice interesting hybrids that I have recently flowered.



Miltoniopsis La Blanche Charrier

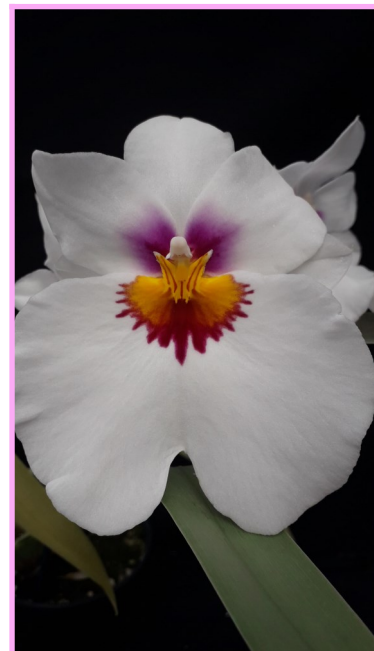


Table Display



Dendrobium infundibulum

Species from SE Asia, Chinese Himalayas and Eastern India.

This plant is very floriferous and the flowers are very long lasting: up to 6 months or more.

Hilary Hobbs



Dendrobium eximium x D. atrovioleaceum

Registered by Randall Tajima, Hawaii 1999

This plant received a CCC in 2017

This is a good example of hybrid vigour as both parents are much more difficult to grow.

Hilary Hobbs



Masdevallia coccinea x M. triangularis

Registered in 1892 by T C Hinks . This plant received a CCC in 2017

I think this is a lovely Masdevallia, very floriferous and flowers reliably in May every year.

I have had this plant about 10 years and have never re potted it, perhaps this is why it has grown so well? In my experience Masdevallias often deteriorate when re potted.

Hilary Hobbs



Dendrobium delicatum

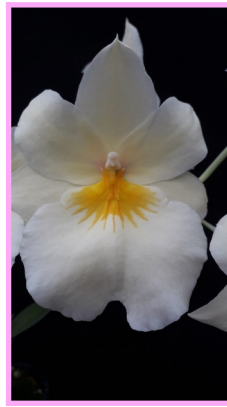
I've had this plant for 5 years and this is the first flowering! It lives outside under some shrubs from May to October. It is then moved into my pop-up greenhouse and left to its own devices. During the summer it gets fed when I remember and watered with the rest of the garden when/if dry. I tried it in the house for a year but a bit too warm, I think. Flowered this year because it has been a milder winter?

Liz Groves



More of *John Gay's*
Miltoniopsis

Miltoniopsis Hajime Ono



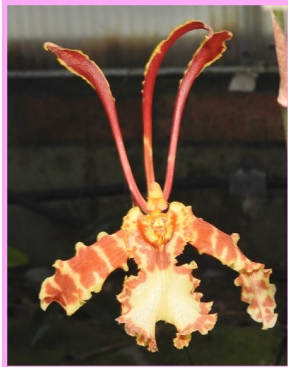
Miltoniopsis Fauvellerie (Havre des Fontaines x roezlii f. xanthine)



Psychopsis papilio by Tony Garthwaite

We all know about moth orchids but only orchid enthusiasts know what a butterfly orchid looks like. The Latin name for this orchid is *Psychopsis papilio*. The first time I saw an example was over 20 years ago in the botanic Gardens of Sri Lanka. That situation is about half-way around the world from Central America and West Indies where it grows on the trunks of trees.

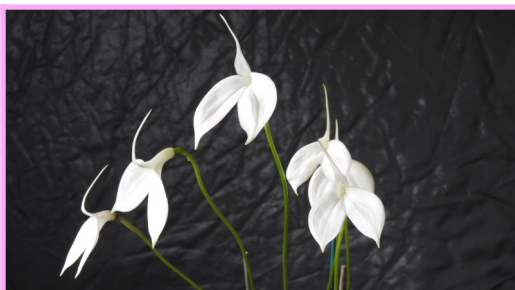
I managed to purchase an example with two pseudo bulbs about seven years ago and over a period of about two years managed to consign it to the compost heap which was most disappointing. Two years ago I managed to purchase a second example. I have to confess that when I purchased this it was in much better condition than the first example having four or five pseudo bulbs and so was well established in the pot. It was still in the same pot earlier this year. Last year it produced one flower on the end of a very long flower spike about 25 cm long. As we came out of the winter this year two more flower spikes began to form making a total of three spikes each with a flowerbud at the tip. You can imagine my excitement with the prospect of three flowers of the butterfly orchid to be able to take to the meeting at Harlow Carr and display for everyone to appreciate. The first flower opened and was huge, about 7 cm across!



What I had not allowed for was my propensity for breeding slugs with specialist feeding requirements. The day after it opened the slug decided to make a meal of the flower stem and consequently on entering the greenhouse next day the flower head was hanging limply by a very thin strip of stem. In tipping the plant out of its pot I could see the villain of the piece which was disposed of instantly (size 9's) so we were now down to 2 flowerheads and another three weeks into 'lockdown' saw the second bud opening but the third bud looking rather dry. Cutting a long story short the third bud dropped off but we now have a plant with three flower spikes: one has a flower and two have buds, so maybe later this year we will have three flower spikes and three flowers. Fingers crossed!

So how was this cultivated? Well basically the compost, when bought, consisted of fine bark and perlite. When I found the slug, I re-potted into a mix of bark and Sphagnum moss. These plants like to dry between waterings but with the very hot spell that we have had this spring I inadvertently had let the compost dry out for too long and this probably was the reason for the third flower bud drying and falling off. So from this I have hopefully learnt my lesson and this particular orchid requires moisture at all times but not standing in water for long periods. I must be doing something right because it now has nine pseudobulbs. The plant gets a half-strength feed about 3 or 4 times a month. With a pure water rinse once a month.

A final point: NEVER cut the inflorescence because the plant will flower on it for years to come if you treat it well!



Masdevilla cochinea alba

Seen at Malvern
Liked a lot
Purchased 'for wife'
Rewards with blooms
Should be better next year!

Tony Garthwaite

Coelogyne christata.

This easy to grow orchid likes dappled shade and a good temperature difference between day and night.
So, under the Apple Tree would seem to be perfect for about 8 months of the year.....



Of course, watering is a slight problem!

Tony Garthwaite



And finally:

Attached photo of Orchid found on 2nd May by our grandchildren at edge of woodland walk they take most days near their home. There were five or six all told. They live in South Lincolnshire in Bourne. Think it's an early purple.



Sylvia Lawson