

Harrogate Orchid Society

Email: editor.hosnews@gmail.com

Newsletter September 2020



Dear Members,

Autumn has arrived bringing some cold, wet, miserable weather, so much more noticeable after a late summer surge. It's a funny old world we are living in at present: if it's not climate change it's Covid-19 bringing uncertainty. But...stiff upper lip and all that. We have some lovely plants on our Table Display this month so many thanks to the contributors. Not only are the plants good but the photos are great quality as well. I've pulled out another two articles from a Newsletter in the Society's early days for your delectation.

It seems very unlikely we shall be meeting in person until next Spring so please keep sending me your photos and articles and any suggestions for future subjects. I shall endeavour to keep these missives as lively and informative as possible to support your orchid interest.

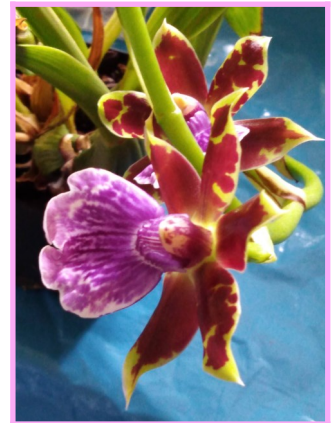
Keep safe and well and happy growing.

Liz Groves, Editor

Zygopetalum James Strauss
'Scentsation'

Phragmipediums

by John Gay



My love of Phragmipediums stems from as far back as the early 80's with the discovery in 1981 of the species Phragmipedium besseae. This bright red species native to Ecuador and Peru revolutionised what was a rather dull genera, enabling the hybridist to introduce great new red coloured hybrids such as Don Wimber, Jason Fischer and many others. I recall buying a plant of besseae from a well-known nursery in Germany whilst on my travels there. Today, with the added discovery of Phragmipedium kovachii in 2001 in Peru, the diversity of hybrids is incredible. I well recall seeing my first plants of kovachii in full flower on my first visit to Peru in 2002 and whilst this in itself is a spectacular species many of the early hybrids were a little disappointing.

My greenhouse in the 80's consisted of a large cool house where I concentrated on many genera in the Oncidinae. I also had a large warm house where I kept a minimum temperature of 62 degrees F. This enabled me to grow literally all sorts from Phalaenopsis, Aerangis, Cattleyas and of course Phragmipediums together with odds and ends of other genera. Whilst in theory Phrags. are intermediate growers they grew well for me at this minimum temperature in the brightest part of the house. In those days my potting mix was a bark-based compost consisting of some 80% medium bark (Cambark in those days) 10% large grade perlite, 5% chopped sphagnum moss and 5% charcoal. Phragmipediums in this mix required constant watering, particularly during summer weather, since in the wild the majority of species like their roots constantly wet. Feeding in the early days for me was a bit of a hit and miss affair until I

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invested in a reverse osmosis system and an accurate ppm gauge. This led me to feed regularly at around 500ppm although through reading some articles from America they fed their Phrags at up to 1000ppm. Like many Phrag. growers I started with a sizeable collection of species most of which were easy to grow with the exception of *Phragmipedium caudatum* which I found did better in the warmer parts of my cool house. I decided sometime in the 90's to try growing in a mix of a majority of small rockwool cubes. This enabled me to water less often and was of great benefit to me whilst spending time away on holidays. It was also around this time that I had the pleasure of visiting the EYOF in Jersey when I became in awe of the fantastic collection of Phrags they had. I was privileged to be allowed to buy some of their plants which were growing in a rockwool mix called Grodan with superb results. I recall Chris Purver kindly bringing me five bales of this product to Peterborough. Since then I have used this medium for the majority of my Phrags with the exception of *Phragmipedium caudatum* and the majority of its hybrids. The mix I use consists of about 80% Grodan and 20% large perlite. I top dress all the plants with Oyster shells which provide a slow release calcium fertiliser whilst also preventing that rather dirty algae growth on top of the pots.



(John in his greenhouse)

My downsized greenhouse at my newer home (two years) is much smaller - some 16 feet x 12 feet - and consists of a warm house only. Sadly, the cool growing stuff has had to go. Nowadays, I grow only *Phragmipediums* and *Miltoniopsis* which live and grow happily together, most of which I was fortunate enough to get from the EYOF in exchange for my

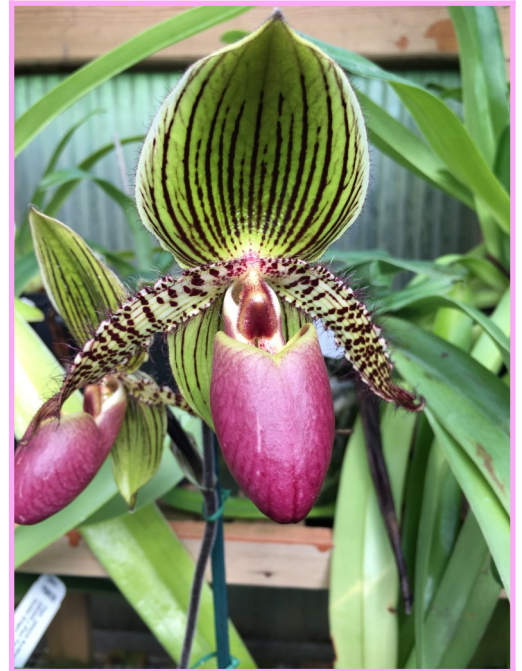
entire *Disa* collection. I was able to design and build the greenhouse myself to fit the space I had available. I have a full domestic gas boiler heating it through four well-spaced out radiators. I also installed an automatic plumbed in fogging system which enables me to maintain a minimum of 60% humidity and the benches are covered with water retentive matting covered with hydroponic pebbles which maintain the humidity around the plants. Recently I have changed my feeding regime and feed to Peters Excel Cal Mag on the suggestion of Chris Purver, feeding at 320 ppm which suits both my *Miltoniopsis* and my Phrags. I feed on two consecutive waterings followed by a rainwater washout (my rainwater has a measurement of only 24ppm). Previously I used Akerns Rainmix feed but it is too early to notice any difference in the effect on the plants of my new feed. I also invested in an adjustable LED grow light block which covers an area of some 4ft. x 2ft. 6" for bringing on my younger plants.

Recently, unfortunately, I have had an attack of thrips (no idea where they came from) which has caused lasting damage to the leaves of some of my Phrags. Hopefully, however, that is now behind me so onwards and upwards.

TABLE DISPLAY



Phalaenopsis gigantea



Paphiopedilum Transvaal



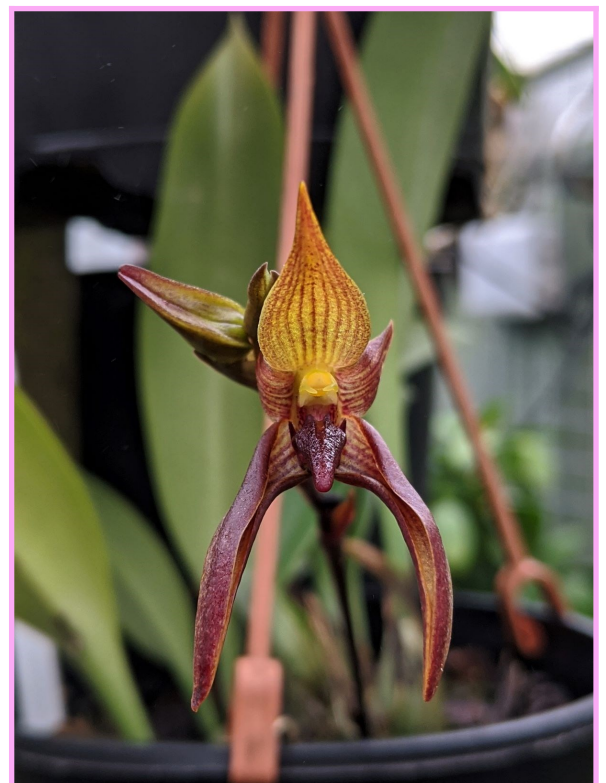
Miltonia spectabilis var moreliana

Ian Dorman

Bulbophyllum papulosum.

Habit and distribution: Bulbophyllum papulosum is endemic to the Philippines. It grows as an epiphyte at elevations up to 500 metres. The inflorescence is about five inches long. The greenish-yellow flowers are up to four inches long. The lip is three-lobed, fleshy with a warty surface, hence the name *papulosum*.

Bernard McDonald



Another excerpt from previous Newsletters. This, along with 'What's Moving in the Greenhouse' is from "Newsletter No 5. 1985".

As you can see, this piece has been written anonymously by 'Orchidology'. Now, I wonder who that could be? So let's have a competition. The first person to email the correct answer by 21st October will win....a prize. I will find something appropriate by the time of the next Newsletter. LG

'The Season of Mellow Fruitfulness'

Being British we can perhaps be accused of being obsessed with talk about the weather, and this year has given us plenty to talk about. Rain and more rain but unless you have the odd pane of glass missing in your greenhouse your orchids should not have been affected by the incessant precipitation. Indeed, with the frequency of overcast skies and high humidity I think they have been fooled into thinking they are living under the leaf canopy in the rain forests. Rubbish! you might say - but hold on a minute, go and have a look at your plants and see if they compare with what I have observed in our greenhouse.

Growth was late starting, but we have the best roots since we started growing orchids. Generally, leaf growth is late but Cymbidiums are producing spikes even before this year's bulbs are made up. Odontoglossums seem to be late but leaves are long and a nice green colour, the spikes which are just appearing are nice and thick with a tinge of purple. Cattleyas have given us the greatest surprise, growth did not start until late June and now some have reached full leaf length and made up their bulbs and, have spikes showing. Even Phalaenopsis which have a reputation for liking extremely high temperatures have produced large thick, deep green leaves, and some of ours which have refused to spike before are producing thick stout spikes. The one genus which has puzzled us is that of the Dendrobium, growth was late starting and indeed has been slow, if allowed to rest by cooling down during October growth will not be made up and the plants will become out of step with the seasons. To try to offset this we are going to put the Dendrobiums in a warmer part of the greenhouse and see if we can keep them growing. Later I will report on their progress.

Overall though, I think our orchids have liked this summer and are approaching a season of mellow fruitfulness with a promise of good flowers.

To achieve this utopia what have the conditions been like, well outside the greenhouse, cool with rain and high humidity, under glass it has been a lot more comfortable, also easy to keep a day temperature of 70° - 80° F and humidity at 60% and at night 55° - 60° F with humidity at 90%.

Finally, with Autumn sunshine I am sure you will be rewarded with some surprises this winter and when they appear let's see them on our table show!

Orchidology.

TABLE DISPLAY

Phragmipedium Haley Decker (kovachii x St Ouen)



**Phragmipedium Yelva Myhre
(Rosalie Dixler x kovachii)**



Phragmipedium species Andreetae

Pat Hollins



What's Moving in the Greenhouse

Unfortunately very little! after the very dismal "summer" weather over the last three months alot of members have complained about the lack of growth and flower spikes. *Stanhopea wardii* mentioned in the last newsletter has already flowered one spike with four flowers and another just flowered with six blooms, unfortunately these flowers only last a few days and it is very difficult to arrange to show them.

Several species should now be in flower or spike i.e. *Epidendrum vitellina*, *Epi. radiatum*, *Epi. boothianum*, *Odontoglossum grande*, *Eria coronaria*, *Gomesa crispa*, *Odontoglossum bicktoniense*.

Cymbidiums - shading can now gradually decrease together with less watering, and with the cool nights down to 50° F one can start looking for flower spikes, although it has been a difficult summer for *cymbidiums* - lack of sun for really good growth and ripening bulbs. Slugs are very partial to tender flower spikes so use either slug pellets or slugit in liquid form to keep them at bay.

Dendrobiums - cool types are benefited by greater exposure to light when growths are finished, so that the canes can be ripened. Watering should be reduced gradually and stopped altogether by the end of October for the winters rest.

Odontoglossums - plants that require repotting can now be carried out during September and October, but I personally prefer to do this in early spring.

Masdevallias - still require plenty of shade, but watering can be reduced gradually. I prefer to let the plants dry out between watering but this entails alot of extra time inspecting every plant even so I consider this well worth it. Several of my *Masdevallias* are in spike and it is possible to have the odd flower during the twelve months. This also applies to alot of other species.

September and October in general - the humidity of the greenhouse is dependant on the humidity of the air outside. Therefore damping down has to be reduced accordingly. If the heating has to be increased because of falling outside temperatures it will result in loss of humidity which must be compensated by more damping. Watering should gradually be decreased, shading should now be unnecessary and on mild days allow for plenty of fresh air but avoid draughts. This is the time of year to check all heating apparatus, oil heaters, electric fans and pumps, clean all the windows and generally clean up in the greenhouse.

Don Thompson.

Table Display

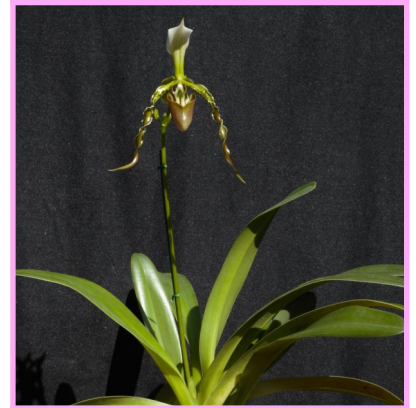


Paphiopedilum parishii

Comes from Thailand, Burma and China

It grows epiphytically in lower branches of trees in shade. Also grows in thick mosses on boulders.

I have found this species to be very susceptible to rot, so I hang it up in the warm section in well drained compost and ensure that water does not remain on the plant at night.



Aliceara Sweetheart Jonel "Gemini Girl", now known as Gombrassiltonia Sweetheart Jonel "Gemini Girl".

Cross between Bratonia Cartagena x Gomesa Enderanum

Ian Dorman gave me this plant about 3 years ago and it is the first time it has flowered. It is a division of the awarded Aliceara owned by Howard Frost which received a FCC from the RHS in 1991

It is a beautiful flower and certainly has the wow factor. I grow it in the intermediate section and am careful not to overwater it.



Miltonia regnellii

Comes from wet montane forests in Southern Brazil

I grow it in the intermediate section with moderate light and keep the compost constantly moist.

It is very vigorous and floriferous.

Hilary Hobbs