

THE SPECIES ORCHID SOCIETY OF WA (INC.)

[http://members.iinet.net.au/~emntee/species Newsletter.htm](http://members.iinet.net.au/~emntee/species%20Newsletter.htm)



Vol 34 No 11 April 2023



Anne O'Callaghan Award March 2023
Brassavola nodosa
Ray

NEWSLETTER

NEXT MEETING Tuesday 12 April

Contents

2. March meeting minutes
3. Notes from your Committee
4. Noticeboard
5. Monthly plant
6. An Interview with Gary Sweikert . Reproduced from Cymbidium Chatter Vol2 No 1
8. Plants displayed
12. About us



MINUTES OF THE GENERAL MEETING

14 March 2023 7.45 pm

Present: 23 members as per register.

Apologies: 6 as per register.

Visitors: 1

New members: Nil

Minutes: Acceptance of minutes from February meeting moved Ray, seconded Lynne. Carried.

Business Arising: Nil

Financial Report: Adrian presented the finance report as at 28 February 2023. Balance \$7,056.34. Acceptance moved Ray, seconded Lynn. Carried

Business Arising: Nil

Correspondence:

Inwards:

- Tara – suggestion re sale of surplus monthly sale plants – “second chance monthly plants”.
- Tony – sale of surplus orchids
- ISODW details from OSWA
- Draft Orchids WA meeting minutes
- Harry – 2023/24 fees
- Paul - updated membership list
- Committee members – additions/ amendments to agendas and minutes

Outwards:

- Committee – draft GM minutes, draft committee minutes, draft GM agenda, committee and general meeting minutes, purchase of raffle plants from Tony.
- March newsletter to members.
- Cards to Caterina and Peter.
- Paul – articles for website

Acceptance of correspondence report moved Lynn, seconded Graham. Carried.

Business Arising: Nil

General Business:

Inter Society Orchid Display and Workshop

The 2023 ISODW to be hosted by OSWA is scheduled to be held the 5th-6th Aug. SOSWA members have agreed to participate and stage a display, and committed to providing plants for the display, and assisting in setting up and taking down the display at the end of the event. The venue is the Manning Community Centre, 2 Conochie Cres, Manning, with set up on Saturday 5th and open to the public on the Sunday 6th. The cost of the spit roast meats, salads desserts dinner is \$50 per head (vegetarian options are available). OSWA requires RSVP of numbers and payment by 1 June 2023 which means those members planning to attend the dinner will need to pay the Treasurer at May GM.

Perth Orchid Fair

At the February GM, members agreed to participate in the Perth Orchid Fair to be held at John Septimus Roe College, Mirrabooka on 2nd- 3rd September. This event gives the public the opportunity to purchase flowering size orchids. SOSWA can also take advantage of the opportunity to attract new members and allow our members to sell surplus orchids.

Therefore, it is to our benefit to stage a substantial and impressive display that shows the wide variety of orchids that can be grown in WA.

Member's agreement in Feb to participate at the event creates the commitment to providing flowering species orchids for the display, assisting with setting up and dismantling the display and volunteering at the event.

Membership renewals due 1 March 2023 –
Membership fees \$20 for individual member, \$30 for family

Committee Meetings

Committee agreed to a suggestions that the number of committee meetings be reduced from 11 to 7 per year, and that they be held at weekends recognising that some current members are reluctant or unable to drive to night-time meetings. This takes advantage of the recent decision to reduce the frequency of home visits. The trial meeting date selected is the third Sunday of each month at 10.00am. The AGM is scheduled to be held in May and it is hoped that this change might encourage some other members to nominate for committee.

SOSWA website

Paul Somers has developed a new website and we are busy populating it with current and past year's information. It will be demonstrated to committee at the next meeting and details will be provided to members so that they can access the webpages.

Anne O'Callaghan Cultural Award:

Awarded to Ray for *Brassavola nodosa*

Raffle: Helen, Adrian, Murray, Jordana, John, Vik.

Badge Prize: Graham

Meeting closed: 9.15pm

NOTES FROM YOUR COMMITTEE

This month's article comes from the Cymbidium Chatter newsletter, and has been sourced by Harry who sought permission to republish. Thanks Harry

• SOSWA website

Thanks to Paul for the design and construction of our new website. While we are still working on it, the website is now live and we encourage members to access it and let us know about any errors or omissions and any suggestions for other material that we might include. However, when doing so, remember that the more information available, the greater the impact on website performance. The website can be accessed at <https://speciesorchidsocietywa.com/>

• ISODW

- Members who wish to attend the ISODW dinner Saturday 5th August will need to pay \$50 per head to the Treasurer by the May GM

Monthly sale/raffle plants.

If you have species orchids that are surplus to your needs, or have successfully grown species orchids from flask that you wish to sell, the Society needs monthly sale plants (minimum of 20 plants) and raffle plants. Please us know if you have plants for sale.

• Annual Membership

Individual member \$20, family \$30. You can pay the Treasurer at the meeting, or transfer payment by EFT to the Society's account at Bendigo Bank, BSB 633-000, account 122491988 including your surname.

NOTICEBOARD

FORTH-COMING EVENTS

Home visits:

At 10 am on Sundays. Please bring chairs and food to share. The next home visit is scheduled for:

* 30 Apr Adrian & Deanna , Safety Bay

MARKETPLACE - FOR SALE/WANTED

Karl would like to purchase a plant of *Ceratocentron fessellii*. If you have a plant for sale, please contact Karl on 0432 956 885 or e-mail karl.khlee@gmail.com.

Harry would like to buy plants of *Cattleya purpurata* var. *werkhauseri* and *Cattleya neokautskyi*. Contact Harry on 0412 403 696 or harry.ashton@live.com.au.

Lynn would like to purchase *Section Latouria Dendrobium* orchids.

Contact Lynn on 0414 922 923 or contrarymiss@hotmail.com.

President: Adrian

Vice President: Murray

Treasurer: Adrian

Secretary: Ken Jones

210 Hermitage Drive, The Vines

6069. Phone: 9296 1765

e-mail: kcjones@tpg.com.au

Editor: Ken

Committee: Paul

Graham Peter

Maxine Mavis

Life Members

Graham & Margaret

Chris (dec'd)

Barry (dec'd)

Gordon (dec'd)

Maxine

Ken & Chris

Adrian & Deanna .

Joan (dec'd) & Ted (dec'd)

Trevor (dec'd)

Neville (dec'd)

Noel (dec'd) & Eva

Tony (dec'd) & Mavis

Barry (dec'd)

Quiet Achievers

2013 Ian

2014 Chris (dec'd)

2015 Margaret

2016 Tom & Pat

2017 Charly & Gerda

2018 Paul

2020 Adrian & Deanna

2021 John

MONTHLY PLANT

Dendrobium bigibbum

.....
Country of origin: Queensland and Papua and New Guinea
.....

Description: Phalaenanthé type Dendrobium.
.....

Difficulty: Relatively easy to grow providing some warmth can be provided during our winter months.
.....

Cost: \$5.00

This month's sale plant has been grown on from a flask purchased by Tony and grown on by Peter and Adrian - thank you both.

This species, commonly known as the Cooktown Orchid comes from Queensland and southern Papua and New Guinea. It is a medium to large sized, hot growing epiphyte or lithophyte from semi-arid low elevations of sea level to 400m in bright light.

Some authors refer to the *Dendrobium bigibbum* complex with three recognised varieties *Dendrobium bigibbum* var. *bigibbum*, *Dendrobium bigibbum* var. *superbum* and *Dendrobium bigibbum* var. *compactum*, they assert that in fact there are three distinct species *Dendrobium bigibbum*, *Dendrobium phalaenopsis* and *Dendrobium lithocola*.



Photo source: <http://www.orchidboard.com/community/dendrobium-alliance/62677-dendrobium-bigibbum-compactum.html>

This species flowers in autumn and we have seen plants in flower displayed at the last two meetings.

Dendrobium beetle is a major pest in the Eastern States, but fortunately is not present in WA. The species is under threat in its natural habitat due to clearing and illegal collection with very limited populations of some varieties remaining in their natural habitat.

An Interview with Gary Sweikert (from Cymbidium Chatter Vol.2 No. 1)

Editor: It is my hope to feature an interview with a grower, enthusiast, hybridiser or nursery operator in each issue. For this interview, Gary has generously put together a detailed response and cultural information on the Australian species. Photos are Gary's unless otherwise stated.

Hello readers, my name is Gary Sweikert and Joshua has asked me to do an article for Cymbidium Chatter. I wish Joshua well in taking over the production of the newsletter.

I began in orchids way back – 50 years or so ago – when living at home with my parents in the southern suburbs of Sydney. Dad used to grow Australian Native Orchids back in those days and they were easy to source from some great nurseries, all now gone, and so my passion started with encouragement from Dad all along the way. We grew orchids up till 1980, when I moved out and started a new job further afield. For the next 10 years or so I did not grow an orchid but still subscribed to a couple of Orchid Journals.

In 1990 we moved again to the NSW Central Coast and orchids again became part of my life; we then moved up to the NSW Mid North Coast 10 years ago. I still grow Dendrobium Native Orchids, but I have diversified into the three Aussie Cym. species and their hybrids – more on that later in this article.

We have always lived in NSW – seven locations over the years in total. Apart from growing orchids as a hobby only, we also grow heaps of vegetables, fruit trees, have chooks for eggs, I like to walk in the bush, relax and listen to good music and enjoy cooking. Having an Electrical Engineering background, I also play around with building audio amplifiers when I get a spare moment – these are few and far between these days, it always seems to happen when you retire from a permanent job, you are always busier than ever. Living on a couple of acres has allowed me to grow my orchid collection, but I have scaled it back to a manageable size; my wife is happy with that decision. You can't grow every orchid you see for sale; one needs to specialise and channel your time and energy into growing a few genera and species and do that well.

Editor: What got you interested in growing Cymbidiums and how long have you been growing them for?



A specimen of *Cymbidium suave* in the wild near Gary's place.

As I mentioned above, I have always grown Aussie Native Orchids, now selecting just a couple of the species to concentrate on that also grow well here. My passion for Cymbidium orchids grew instantly from the day we moved to our current location and a few short bushwalks later revealing some magnificent clumps of *Cym. suave* in full flower, all only 10 minutes' drive from home.

The other thing to spur me on was a visit to a long-time friend's nursery, a prominent grower about an hour from here. The visit was perfectly timed, viewing a magnificent display of flowering *Cym. canaliculatum* in all its forms and colour combinations. Also, on that visit I was fortunate to see many flowering Cym. hybrids using all three great Aussie Cym. species in their breeding. From that day I was hooked; I also came away from that visit with many Cym. seedlings to start my Cymbidium journey.

So, I have only been growing Cyms for 10 years or so seriously – but I am no expert. I concentrate on the three Aussie species and hybrids containing them. I have also a small collection of “normal” type Cyms – mainly miniature and cascading or pendulous types. I steer away from the intermediate and standard types and leave them to others to grow, but still appreciate their beauty.

Editor: What groups or types of Cymbidiums are your favourite? What do you like about them in particular?

As I have mentioned, my focus is solely on the three Aussie Cyms. – namely *suave*, *madidum* and *canaliculatum*. I also collect primary hybrids of the three as well as later generation hybrids with other Cym. species and hybrids. I am drawn to these types because of the smaller flower size, abundant number of



Two different alba forms of *Cym. canaliculatum* – green (top) and yellow (bottom) – owned by Gary's friend.

Graham & Margaret

Dendrobium bigibbum

Ken & Chris

Bulbophyllum amplebracteatum

Cymbidium finlaysonianum

Dendrochilum macranthum

Dendrochilum uncatum

Mormolyca ringens

Oncidium spp

Adrian & Dee

Coelogyne tomentosa

Miltonia x bluntii

Joel

Bulbophyllum mastersianum

Siva

Paphiopedilum dianthum



Paphiopedilum dianthum

Siva

MEMBER PLANTS DISPLAYED March 2023



Bulbophyllum mastersianum

Joel



Oncidium spp

Ken & Chris



Coelogyne tomentosa
Adrian & Dee



Bulbophyllum amplebracteatum
Ken & Chris

MEMBER PLANTS DISPLAYED March 2023



Miltonia x bluntii
Adrian & Dee



Dendrobium bigibbum
Graham & Margaret

flowers on a raceme, smaller-growing plant size in general, and the fact that many are fragrant and the spikes are gently arching or pendulous. These make a great sight in the greenhouse when hung at eye level to view the detail of the individual flowers and to get a whiff of the intoxicating fragrance. I have plenty of hanging space in my three greenhouses and so these types relieve a lot of bench space for growing other orchids (and in the case of my wife, ferns).

Editor: What is the climate like where you live? Have you had to create any special microclimates (such as a heated or cooled greenhouse, use of humidifiers, etc.) in order to grow your preferred Cymys?

Where we live, slightly inland on the NSW Mid North Coast, is not the ideal climate for growing a diverse range of orchids – one could ask, where is? Our summers can be extremely hot with temps up to 45°C on the odd day, but normally mid 30°s. Our winters can get down to just below zero at night on the odd nights with an occasional light frost thrown in for good measure, winter daytime temps would average around 15°C. When you talk to the old timers around here who have lived here all their life, it was not unusual 30 years ago to get 45 days in a row with a good frost (last winter



One of Gary's plants of Cym. Black Stump, which puts on a great show.



Cym. Morris West in Gary's collection.

we had 2 days with frost) – this points to global warming and its overall affect, I say.

The spring and autumn months are perfect, mid 20°s average, so we have a dose of all weather during the year. I got the three greenhouses (40 square meters each) built when we moved here (they were finished and ready to go before our house was finished, you need to get your priorities right) and they are covered in good quality

70% knitted shade cloth with the roof also fitted with Solar Weave for winter frost protection. They are fitted with automatic sprinkler systems controlled by timers and with fertiliser injection. I do not have heating or cooling, so the orchids must adapt to the climate.

I have worked out over the last 10 years what grows well and what does not. I don't waste time and energy in trying to grow exotic orchids that need extra care – again I leave that to others who have the facilities and climate to succeed.

Editor: What challenges (pests, disease, culture, etc.) have you encountered whilst growing your Cyms and how did you overcome them?



A seedling of *Cym. Son of Sambo*, which flowered for the first time for Gary in 2018.

Living here has raised some challenges over the early years; having enclosed greenhouses has not really seen a pest problem to any great extent, but scale attack raises its ugly head from time to time. One needs to be vigilant and treat it as soon as it is spotted; if not, it can spread through a collection quickly. I have had a few fungal problems over the years, but as I do not like spraying chemicals very often, I bite the bullet and these days dispose of any orchid that shows signs of disease.

Culture of orchids is always an evolving issue – growers say never change a perfect mix, but I am still to find the perfect mix. What suits one grower may not suit another grower. Basically, I use Orchiata bark from NZ; yes, it is dear, but it lasts in the pot. Sometimes I add an ingredient or two depending on the orchid being potted. I have always used Peter's Excel Cal Mag water soluble fertiliser and supplement that with organic based fertilisers every month. I normally

fertilise all year round, applying every 2 weeks normally, then increase to every week in the peak growing season mainly to try and get the orchids to flowering size as soon as possible. I also supplement with 9-month Nutricote slow-release fertiliser on many of the orchids, but not all.

Editor: What has been the easiest Cym. for you to grow?

This might seem a funny answer to many, as a lot of growers have struggled with this species. Now I know how to grow *Cym. suave*, I am rewarded with great growth and beautiful flowering in November, and I find it easy to grow once the plant gets to a certain size. The fragrance from the small flowers fills the greenhouse in the morning hours. I will add more on its growing later in this article.



Cym. suave in cultivation.

A lot of the “common” Cyms are quite easy to grow – hell, they will even grow out in the garden with all the other plants, so it is pleasing to see how well one of the more challenging species grows when you get the conditions right.

Editor: Is there anything you would do differently if you were starting out in the hobby today, but knowing what you know now? Alternatively, if you were giving advice to a newcomer just starting out in the hobby, what key things would you want them to know?

After growing orchids for 50 years and Cyms for the past decade or so, I most definitely would only grow the species and hybrids that grow well in the wild and concentrate on growing them to emulate how they survive naturally in their native habitat. Of course, I am only talking about the Aussie orchids when I

say that.

Advice to newcomers (unfortunately they are few and far between these days) would be to do your research (we did not have the internet or computers when I started out – so it was books, journals and



Cym. Pakkret Sunrise.

catalogues back then) and decide what will be easy to grow, be readily available and not too expensive to get hold of and be willing to provide the correct conditions required to grow them well and to the best of one's ability and always appreciate them. It is of no use whatsoever to see a beautiful orchid in a sales catalogue or an online website, pay out top dollar for the orchid and get it home to find you cannot provide

the correct conditions or climate for it to survive.

The best thing to do for any newcomer, no matter how old, is to join and actively participate in an orchid society or two (they are always looking for new younger members). Listen, ask questions, read as much as possible, take advice from other members on board and go and visit their collection at their homes to learn and view the tips and tricks of the trade.

Editor: Just for fun, what's the oddest or most interesting piece of Cymbidium-related trivia you've come across?

This question raises all sorts of scenarios for me in my mind. A lot of things have occurred in the past, mostly trivial and soon forgotten. But I do find it odd for example, when one gets to know certain so-called “experts”, judges and authorities on all matters orchid – only to find out that some of them do not actively grow a single orchid. Putting it another way – like students just out of university, they might have all the theory in the world tucked up in their brain, but put that theory into practice and it all comes unstuck quickly.

Editor: Gary has also kindly provided his notes on the Australian Cymbidium species, with much of the material drawn from his friend and expert, Mr. Ken Russell. These are reproduced here for the benefit of the reader.

Some notes on Australian Cymbidiums in Nature

Ken Russell has made an extensive study over the years of these three species where they grow naturally in NSW and QLD. He has found surprising differences in their cultural likes and dislikes, particularly to do with pH of the decayed material surrounding their roots. These results provide especially useful clues as to how these species can be grown more successfully by the hobbyist grower. Ken has done many society



talks on this subject; I have been to three of them and he has evoked much discussion on each occasion, with members going away to re-evaluate the growing of these species.

For *Cymbidium canaliculatum*, Ken has studied plants in situ over a 1500km range in NSW and QLD with daily temps in the range from -10°C to +50°C.

pH tests were made around the root system near the surface and well down around the lower root system.

Cym. canaliculatum in the bush in northern NSW.

Host	pH Near Surface	pH Lower Down
Live pines	6	9
Pine logs on ground	6.5	9
Other live trees	7	9.5
Other stumps and logs	7.5	9.5

The pH near the surface differed markedly from lower down as shown below.

From the results above it can be said that the *Cym. canaliculatum* root zone prefers an alkaline condition.

For *Cymbidium suave*, Ken studied plants over a 1000 km range, some near sea level and others up to 700 metres above sea level. Most hosts were various types of Eucalypt trees, with a few occurring on pines and sheoaks and a few occurring on rocks as well.

Host	pH Near Surface	pH Lower Down
Dead stumps	4 to 5	4
Logs and deadwood	4 to 5	4
Live trees	4 to 5	4
Rocks	5	4

Looking at these results, the root system of this species prefers acidic conditions (totally different to *canaliculatum*). All plants in nature had at least a 25mm layer of good leaf mould from decaying leaves, twigs and bark around their base. This species is



renowned for very long root systems penetrating down into the decayed centre of stumps and trees; the decayed matter (known as mudgut) from stumps had a pH level as low as 3.5 in some locations. Ken recommends getting hold of some of this matter when potting up this species at home.

Contd. next month

Cym. suave growing in the bush.

ABOUT US

Monthly Meetings

Monthly meetings held on the second Tuesday of each month at Wilson Community Hall, Braibrise St, Wilson commencing 7.45 pm. Usually, the short formal meeting is followed by plant descriptions given by members. Supper follows to allow member's time to socialise and discuss orchids. All visitors are very welcome

Membership Fees

Family \$30 pa. For first year only, new family members will need to purchase two name badges. Badges come in two versions - pin fastening \$11.50 or magnet fastening \$13.50 [*Please indicate preference*]

Single \$20.00 pa. For first year only, new members will need to purchase a name badge. Badges come in two versions - pin fastening \$11.50 or magnet fastening \$13.50. [*Please indicate preference*]

New members who don't live in Perth will not require name badges, therefore membership cost will be at the renewal fee only

Monthly Home Visit

On the weekend following the fourth Thursday of each month (generally on the Sunday morning), a home visit is held at a member's home. This gives members an opportunity to enjoy the fellowship that our mutual interest provides, and to see how others go about growing their orchids.

Monthly Plant Display

Given that the prime objective of the Society is to promote the cultivation of species orchids, only species or natural hybrids are acceptable for display. Since we all may be uncertain about the identification of a plant from time to time, we encourage

members to bring plants along about which they are unsure since someone may be able to identify them. There is no competition nor restriction on flower count, quality or length of ownership. We want members to be able to see species plants in flower. So even if your flowers are a bit past their best, bring them in as others may not have seen that species in flower.

Plant Sales

The Society provides an opportunity table for members to sell surplus plants and equipment, and for the Society to sell product from time to time.

Plant Purchases

The Society endeavours to obtain a different species seedling for sale at each meeting, usually costing between \$6.00 and \$15.00. The Society makes a small profit on these sales which is invested in benefits to members. As it is always difficult to get new or different species, should members have 20 or more plants of one species which they feel might be suitable as a monthly plant, please contact a Committee member.

Raffle

The Society conducts a raffle each meeting and at home visits as a means of generating funds. If you have spare species orchids that you wish to sell to the Society for raffles, please advise a committee member.

Management

In accordance with the Rules, the Annual General meeting is held in May each year at which time the office-bearers and committee are elected. The majority of Committee members serve two year terms.

If unclaimed, return to
The Editor
210 Hermitage Drive, The Vines WA 6069

Next meeting Tuesday 12 April