

A.S.G.A.P. INDIGENOUS ORCHIDS STUDY GROUP
NEWSLETTER NO. 2.

Leader: Len P. Butt - 8483515

Asst: Brian Runnegar - 2861164

New Year's Greetings to you all, let us make this 1992 year a great one for the study and discussion of native orchids wherever they occur. This group is so far too small to carry passive members so please let me hear from all of you regularly. Just a few words occasionally on how you grow, or what is in your collection will be fine.

Also report to me any act of wilful destruction you know about in connection with these plants we love.

You will note by this newsletter that although there will always be articles written by me, I do not intend to be the only writer, so the size of your regular newsletter depends on you all.

Yearly subscriptions are due on first of June each year, and that means June, not three months after, as in the case with my other study groups. Earlier subscription payment will be gratefully received and noted.

With so much of our valuable heritage going under the loggers chain saw now, it is sad to note that this means demise for our native epiphytic orchids especially in Queensland and North N.S.W., for this is where the biggest quantity grow.

It is also remarkable that after a clearance our larger chain stores always appear to have lots of epiphytes for sale. I approve of the ones offered on mounted cork, or on rafts of natural timber, but too many are just offered wrapped in plastic, a practice that only tends to promote harmful fungi, to the new eyes.

Some few Queensland orchid nurseries now offering good lines of improved native cultivars, and if from good stock I endorse it. If you hear of any let me know so we can endorse it. One that comes to mind, is at Beachmere, Qld. run by John Newcombe popularly known as (Troppo John). He has exceptionally good stock.

- L.P. BUTT

DENDROBIUM DELICATUM

This natural hybrid, *D. Speciosum* x *Kingianum*, was first discovered at Spring Bluff near Toowoomba in 1884. At first it was thought to be a form of *Dendrobium Speciosum*, and was named *Speciosum* Var. *delicatum*.

In 1931 a plant was found on the Alum Mt. at Bulahdelah in N.S.W. As no plants were found between the two areas (about 350 miles) it was at first thought that they were different species.

Since those days it has been found to be fairly plentiful from the Hunter River in N.S.W. to the Blackall Ranges in Queensland.

The variation in flower form was responsible for the wrong identification. This is to be expected in hybrids, especially when *D. Kingianum* is one of the parents.

The southern form has short stout pseudo bulbs, while the Queensland form is much longer.

Flowers vary in size, shape and colour, the commonest colour being creamy white with a pink flush on the reverse side.

A plant found in the Helidon scrubs had comparatively long and slender spikes of flowers (white) which cascaded over the sides of the pot.

A beautiful canary yellow form was found on Mother Mt. near Gympie.

The best form that I have seen came from Mapleton (near Nambour). The plant is very robust with long flower spikes carrying up to 25 large white flowers with a few "pepper spots" on the lip.

Den. delicatum is a very easy plant to grow. A cymbidium mixture with plenty of charcoal is ideal.

Maximum sun without burning and regular sprayings with a good fungicide when new growths are developing will give you a specimen plant in next to no time.

COCONUT FIBRE IS THE ANSWER

Coconut fibre in various forms seems to be ideal for growing most epiphytic orchids.

In North Queensland where coconuts are plentiful many growers cut the nuts in halves, remove the kernel and tie the plants to the husk.

There is no waste as after mounting your plants you can sit down and eat the kernel.

DENDROBIUM BIGIBBUM - grows exceptionally well on old coir matting. One experienced grower at Yeronga cuts mats to suitable sizes, rolls them tightly and ties with copper wire.

His "Cookies" were growing to perfection and by way of bonus Cookie seedlings about 1" high were as thick as hairs on a cat's back beside the parent plants.

So keep it in mind when you are visiting your friends they might have an old mat or, if they are not looking, a new one.

Failing this, you could filch small quantities at a time from your mother-in-law's mattress.

She won't suspect you but after a few months will probably tell you that mattresses are not made as well as in the old days.

The fine fibre as discarded by the bedding manufacturers is a very good additive for your finer composts.

If you have a large garden you could plant a couple of nuts and dream a little dream of the future (about 50 years) when you can (may be) lie in a hammock strung between two palms and gaze at the beautiful orchids growing on the trunk.