

TOPIC: "ORCHIDS".

GUEST SPEAKER : STEVE FLOOD

MALENY GARDEN CLUB MEETING : 24 NOVEMBER, 2020 AT MALENY SHOWGROUNDS PAVILION

- Orchids are the second largest family of flowering plants on the planet with about 20,000 species followed by the legume/pea family with 18,000 species. The largest is the sunflower/daisy family with 24,000 species
- Orchids occur in every zone on the planet from desert to mountain cliff tops – except in the Arctic and Antarctic
- They have diverse needs and habits. They are not just epiphytes growing on trees
- Lithophytes grow on rocks and Terrestrials grow in soil. Saprophytes were discovered 100 years after Australia was settled and grow underground feeding off sugars in roots of trees across the country
- They are amazing in adapting to the environment. Aerophyte roots absorb moisture from the air, dew and rain
- Cattleyas can be tied onto trees and don't need much attention. Choose a tree with corky bark e.g. bottlebrush tree
- Many orchids are insect specific for pollination – they depend on each other
- King orchids can be pollinated by beetles, ants etc
- Steve likes to collect species orchids because they are endangered
- Species Encyclia orchid flowers nod and wink in the breeze. Lobbii flowers a number of times a year. Collect them and you have joy forever as a different one will flower each week
- A hardy type is Oncidium (dancing lady) easy to grow. Spider orchid is very hardy and easy to grow
- Roman Holiday has wonderful colours
- Grass orchid (Lithophyte) grows on rock. It is covered in tiny red flowers creating a red hue
- Dendrobium flowers on the hard canes not on new growth. Can flower 2 – 3 times on old canes. Golden flowers only last a few days unlike Cattleyas
- Terrestrials flower all year in full sun. In Singapore they grow to 2 metres
- Steve makes up bark poles attaching Dendrobiums with cable ties until roots grip then cuts ties. An old fence paling will also suit. Include 10g of slow release fertiliser in a fine mesh bag. Buy on line from orchid suppliers, it lasts 6 months. Can also use Plantacote
- Ground orchid – Spathoglottis – grows in northern Australia and likes morning sun and afternoon shade. New one from Thailand, has long thin cane with flower on the end
- Steve uses an open mix for good drainage- charcoal, perlite, and New Zealand orchid mix. Thicker roots need a chunkier mix
- Terrestrials are suited to ordinary potting mix
- Searles potassium boosts flower quality

- One serious pest is the Dendrobium Beetle which attacks every part of the orchid plant. Spray won't penetrate its hard shell. The carnivorous Pitcher Plant reduces the beetle population by 90%. If beetles drop or are knocked off the orchid plant, they scurry into the roots and can't be caught
- Light is critical and fungal problems develop if drainage is poor
- Beneficial bacteria – Lactobacillus – used to be used as an antifungal treatment for tineas
- When dividing orchid pseudobulbs, always keep at least two bulbs attached
- Bat Flower is not an orchid. Graminifolia is the grass flower orchid
- Ethylene from rotting fruit will stimulate flowering
- Fernlands is Steve's one-stop-shop. Their 'Companion' product stimulates good growth on cuttings
- Tropical Cymbidiums flower well in our climate. Terracotta pots breathe so are OK for Cymbidiums

CONTACT : STEVE FLOOD, HORTICULTURALIST, 9 RIVERVIEW COURT, MOOLOOLAH VALLEY, QLD 4553.

END.