



The Cymbidium Newsletter

Reg No A0023705W COSV Website: www.cosv.com.au

September/October 2011

2011 Meeting Dates

January –
February 8
March 8
April 12
May 10
June 14
July 12
August 9
September 13
October 11
November 8
December 13

- President: **Terry Poulton** T : 03 9704 0101
 - Secretary: **Jenny Robertson** T: 03 5998 2535 or 03 5998 2226 ah
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 - Treasurer: **Henk Morren** T: 03 9763 7278
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 - Junior Vice-President: **Ern Kettle** T: 03 9555 5646
 - Assistant Treasurer: **Kevin Brown** T: 03 9808 1224
 - Assistant Secretary/Editor : **Karen Gillespie** T : 03 5998 2402 and
 - **Julie Forrest** T : 03 5978 6045
 - Assistant Editor/Website Manager: **Geoff Bailey** T: 03 5995 5524
 - Membership co-ordinator: **Andy Leamon** T : 03 9796 7935
 - Catering: T.B.A.
 - Registrar: **Ern Kettle** T: 03 9555 5646
 - Assistant Registrar: **Glenda Coutts** T: 03 9727 4849
 - Promotions & Sales:, **Peter Sunderland** T: 5998 2535, **Colin Gillespie** T: 03 5998 2402
John Forrest T : 03 5978 6045
- Meetings:** The 2nd Tuesday of each month (except January), Mt Waverley Community Centre, Youth Centre Hall, Miller Crescent, Mount Waverley (Melway 61/D12 and 70/D1). The hall is off Stephenson Road and is next to the Library.
Meetings start at 8.00pm. Basket Supper please.

* COSV 20TH ANNIVERSARY SHOW

Congratulations to all involved in making this show our best ever, Geoff Bailey and his committee, members who put up displays and members who put in plants in the club displays and anyone else I have forgotten to mention, attached to the newsletter is an evaluation of the show by Geoff Bailey.

*Last month's meeting:

Terry Poulton gave us a slide presentation on the Dural Show in NSW which was attended by a few of our members, this was very interesting to see how other clubs present shows and also visits to various nurseries, Well done and thanks Terry.

*Main Item for this months meeting

Once again our President will do a slide presentation on the National Cymbidium Show which was held in Adelaide in August. Please come along and join us, there were a tremendous amount of beautiful and well presented Cymbidiums at the National which was well attended by members from our club who took most of the major prizes.

*Trading Table

The Club will have a trading table at this months meeting of bits and pieces for growing orchids, so bring your spare dollars along.

*Growing Competition:

Please remember to bring in your plants for the growing competition, members who have been supporting this competition we thank you, by all accounts you are all growing your plants very well,

we would also like you to bring in any of the last 4 years growing competition plants they do not have to be in flower, below is a list to remind members of which plants we had for our growing competition.

2007	Mericlone – Lunakira Gleam	Seedling – Kellys Winter x Khan Flame
2008	Mericlone – Foxfire Veridian ‘Stargate’	Seedling – Paradisian Pride (Devon Parish x Ruby Eyes)
2009	Mericlone – Kimberley Splash ‘Calypso’	Seedling – Alvins Star ‘Southern Ocean x Paradise Star ‘White Cloud’
2010	Mericlone – Valley Olympic ‘Pink Perfection’	Seedling – Joans Era ‘No 1’ x Kingwin ‘South Park’

The plants in this year’s competition are:

Mericlone : Radiant Ruby ‘Aussie Gem” – dark red miniature

Seedling : Lunar Wall ‘Dural x Uluru ‘Orange Delight’ – standard cymbidium which should produce orange/yellow maybe with a bit of a splash petal.

As it nears the end of the year we will be investigating the purchase of plants for next years competition and will advise of the plants selected in the next newsletter and these plants should be available at the November meeting.

***Plant Commentary:**

As we have been doing for the last few months, we will have an extended plant commentary on the plants brought in by our members, there should still be a number of flowering plants around as the weather this year has extended the flowering season, please do not judge your own plants bring them in for everyone to see.

***Virus test kits**

Randall Robinson is still selling virus tests kits, he is normally at the meeting so please speak to Randall if you are interested in buying any, Please member that it costs 3 times as much plus postage if you send your leaves to Tasmania to be tested, and this way you can get the results straight away.

*** Results for the monthly Competition:**

There were plenty of lovely cymbidiums on last months plant table and here are the results, congratulations to all the winners, remember points are given for plants brought in and rewarded by prizes at the December barbeque.

Judges Vote	Hookeranium	Kelly-Anne Keily
Best in Open	Tuffet	Paradisias
Best Intermediate	Valley Zenith ‘Green Orb’	George & Barbara Wright
Best Species	Hookeranium	Kelly-Anne Keily
Encouragement Award	Oriental Legend ‘Pipita’	Peter Vassalo
Seedlings		
Best	Lancashire Ruby x Valley Olympic	Andy Tran
Large Standard	Kellys Winter x Kimberley Ingot	Henk & Marg Morren
Small Standard	Regal Fire x Kiata	George & Barbara Wright
Intermediate	Lancashire Ruby x Valley Olympic	Andy Tran
Miniature	Sleepy Sarah x Last Tango	Paradisias

***Monthly Raffle**

If any member would like to donate anything to our monthly raffle they are more welcome to do so, these funds all contribute to the running of your club.

***Advertising in the Newsletter**

Anyone wishing to place an advert in the newsletter please speak to the Secretary.

***Basket Supper**

Kindly bring a plate of eats to share after the meeting.

***Club Badges**

For any member who does not have a club badge these are available to order from Henk at a cost of \$12 each.

***COSV Website**

All members who have access to a computer please make use of our website for all the up to date news, show dates, photographs etc, Thanks to Geoff Bailey who maintains our website, a job well done.

***Cultural Notes for this month:**

As the flowering season nears an end, it is now time to start potting on and also dividing your plants, we enclose an article by Brian Milligan for which we thank him, please note that there are many ways to repot and pot on orchids this is just one persons view.

***Bark for SALE**

Andy Leamon has bark for sale @ \$60 per metre, kindly contact Andy direct or see him at the next meeting.

*** Annual General Meeting:**

Enclosed please find a notice for the AGM this will be held at the November monthly meeting, anyone wishing to nominate for committee please complete where indicated on the form and return to the secretary 21 days before the AGM.

Look forward to you all joining us at the next meeting on the 11th October 2011.

HOW I REPOUT CYMBIDIUMS by Brian Milligan

There are far more ways to repot cymbidiums than there are to skin the proverbial cat. What's more, the orchids usually survive the operation, unlike the cat! My method will certainly not meet with universal approval, but it works well in the sense that it provides enough acceptable flowering plants for my display at show time.

Potting-on, Repotting and Division. Potting-on means removing an orchid together with its potting mix from the pot, transferring them to a larger pot and then filling the remaining space with fresh mix. This operation involves minimal disturbance of the orchid, and it may therefore be carried out at any time of the year. However I do not recommend potting-on if the original mix is older than 18 months, unless it is planned to repot within the next year. If repotting is left longer, the older mix at the centre of the pot will begin to 'break down', leading to a mass of rotten roots which gradually spreads outwards.



*Cymbidium Kimberley Winter
'Tee Pee' AM/OSCOV*

Repotting means removing all the old mix from the orchid's roots and replacing it with fresh mix. At the same time it is advisable to remove most or all of any leafless backbulbs present. These backbulbs carry the oldest roots of the plant, and their removal therefore minimises a likely source of rot. If the plant has a clump of backbulbs in its centre, it will probably need to be divided into two or more pieces. Actually, it may fall apart when the backbulbs are removed. If not, it will be necessary to cut the rhizome connecting the growths with a sterile carving knife, or to tear the bits apart using brute strength. I prefer the latter technique, as the carving knife is never the same after it has been sterilised in the gas flame a few times. Neither are my hands, so I settle for a good wash with soap and hot water.

Hygiene. The main reason for sterilising orchid tools is to reduce the possibility of transferring virus from one plant to another. This transfer takes place *via* plant sap; if the first plant repotted is infected with virus, it's possible to transfer that virus to all plants subsequently handled. The best strategy to avoid this possibility is to handle each plant as if it has a virus infection. Sterilise all tools and wash your hands thoroughly after each plant is repotted.

Never use old mix from one plant to repot another, and if you re-use old pots make sure that they have been thoroughly cleaned and sterilised. Some growers use a potting bench covered with multiple layers of newspaper. After each plant is repotted they wrap any fallen mix (both old and new), root fragments and plant debris in the topmost layers of paper and discard them.

When to Repot. Experience has taught me that I should repot every second year rather than every third, because after three years the roots are so tightly packed that I cannot remove the plant without a struggle and sometimes it's necessary to cut the pot open to remove the plant. Also, most bark-based potting mixes remain in satisfactory condition for two years but not for three. They begin to degrade to finer material in the third year, thus restricting the free drainage that cymbidiums and most other orchids require for healthy roots.

Traditionally, cymbidiums are repotted in late spring, after the flowering season is over. I prefer to stick with tradition and repot those plants that need it in October. It's best to wait until the likelihood of cold weather is over, because cold, wet weather puts undesirable stress on a newly repotted plant, unless it can be given a dry, comfortable spot.

In recent years some cymbidium growers have taken to repotting their plants in March. They claim that their plants are growing at their fastest then, and that they are therefore best able to withstand the shock of repotting at that time. Also, they believe that the flowering spikes are already developing and that therefore repotting cannot interrupt the flowering process, whereas it may do so in late spring when many flower spikes are on the verge of initiation. Professional

cymbidium growers repot throughout the year (except for mid-winter), but only because they have too many plants to repot at the optimal times, which are October/November and March.

What Potting Mix? Various materials have been used in orchid potting mixes over the years. Victorian growers once used osmunda fibre and tan bark, but red gum chips and pine bark, with or without additives are now in favour. Most growers use pine bark that has been freed of natural plant toxins and aged to make it more water-absorbent (Debco and Propine are major suppliers). Some growers use fine grade bark (5-10 mm diameter pieces), especially for small plants, whereas others prefer the coarser grades (10- 20 mm).

Over the last few years I have used an equal mixture of these two grades of bark and then added one or more of a range of extra ingredients, depending on their availability at the time. These extra ingredients include Corangamite shells (shell grit), river pebbles, tree fern fronds, rice hulls and peanut shells. Immediately prior to use I also add dolomite lime, Hoof-and-Horn® fertiliser and Nutricote® slow-release fertiliser. The rationale behind this complex formulation is that it provides a long-lasting, free-draining

mix, that encourages the growth of beneficial mycorrhizal fungi and also releases a steady stream of nutrients for the orchid. I also top-dress the pots with Hoof-and-Horn® and Nutricote® fertilisers in October and March, but seldom bother with liquid fertilisers.

New growers: Please do not get the idea that it is necessary to use such a complex mix to get good results. Many growers get better results than I do with a simple all-bark potting mix, although they probably go to more trouble with regard to the choice and frequency of application of liquid fertilisers.

How to Repot. I find it easier to remove the plant from its pot and the old potting mix from the roots if the plant is neither freshly watered nor bone-dry. To untangle the roots it is easier to begin at the bottom and work upwards. Sometimes, especially if the plant has not been repotted for many years, the roots defy disentanglement and one must resort to cutting two inches off the bottom of the root ball with a carving knife! Having untangled the roots and removed the old potting mix, I then remove any backbulbs and divide the plant if necessary, as described above. I divide most plants that will not fit comfortably in a 250 mmpot allowing some room for growth. Plants in 300 mm pots are too heavy to transport and repot, and are more suited to sumo wrestlers! Finally I remove any old roots (which are soft or dark brown) using sterile scissors or my hands.

When repotting, I first place a layer of potting mix an inch deep in the new pot, to prevent any roots protruding through the drainage holes. With one hand I hold the plant by its leaves in position and with the other I fill the pot with fresh mix. Some growers position the plant so that its bulbs are just above the final level of the mix, but following Julian Coker's advice I now bury the bottom quarter of the pseudobulbs. Shake the pot to work the particles of mix down so that they fill all gaps between the roots.

Finally I top-dress the pot with Hoof-and-Horn® and Nutricote® fertilisers (about two teaspoons of each to a 200mm pot) and shake the pot so that they enter the mix. The last step is to move the pot to a shady, sheltered location and to water it. Coddle the plant for a few weeks before moving it back to its usual sunnier location.

STRIKING BACK-BULBS: ADVICE for NOVICE GROWERS
by Brian Milligan



Cymbidium Without Peer 'Soft Touch' HCC/OSCOV

For the benefit of novice growers I should explain that a back-bulb is a bulb that has lost all its leaves, hopefully because of age rather than disease. When a cymbidium is repotted, it's desirable to remove these leafless bulbs, preferably by severing the rhizome linking them to the rest of the plant. It's best to use a sterile knife or scissors, but some growers simply twist the connecting rhizome by hand until it breaks. Having removed the back-bulbs, how do you 'strike' them and why? 'Striking' is jargon for encouraging the back-bulb to produce new growth from incipient leaf nodes, which are mostly located near the base of the bulb.

To prepare a back-bulb for 'striking' first remove any old leaf husks, as these may harbour scale and other insect pests. Then cut any residual roots back to their junction with the back-bulb and trim the break if the bulb was removed by twisting. To minimise infection by any of the organisms responsible for rot the cut surfaces should be sealed, either with Steri-Prune® (or similar sealing paste) or by leaving the bulb lying in the shade for a few days for the cut surfaces to form a scab or callus. Alternatively the cut surfaces can be dusted with a fungicide. Leaving the back-bulbs to dry for a few days is the

simplest option.

There are many different ways of striking back-bulbs. I've used several different methods, each with a fair measure of success. The simplest method, involving least effort, is simply to bury the back-bulb to two thirds of its depth in the same potting medium that you use for the rest of your collection. If you use a 4-in pot then no attention will be needed for two years except regular watering and the addition of a little slow release fertiliser in spring.

Some back-bulbs strike more rapidly than others. If a leaf growth appears within three months you're doing well, while six months would be average. If there's no sign of growth within twelve months all but the super-optimist should give up (there are always a few back-bulbs each year that fail to strike). Generally, roots do not appear until the leaf growth is several inches tall, and there is no point in applying slow-release fertiliser until this stage is reached. If you're keen, there may be some benefit in applying liquid fertiliser to the foliage at an earlier stage as liquid fertilisers are absorbed by leaves as well as by roots.



Cymbidium Do Wop 'Woopie' HCC/OSCOV

In recent years I've struck back-bulbs of my more highly valued cymbidiums using *Sphagnum* moss as the potting medium. This method seems to produce more rapid growth, but that's probably because I place the pots in my heated glass-house during winter. After about a year the moss is removed and replaced with conventional cymbidium mix. A modified version of this method has been used by some growers for many years. The back-bulbs are placed in a plastic bag with a little very wet *Sphagnum* moss and the bag is then sealed and hung in the shade-house. The struck back-bulbs are potted in cymbidium mix when the leaves and roots are a few inches long.

The old back-bulb eventually rots and it should be removed from the new plant as soon as rot is detected. While the bulb is in good condition it provides the plant with nutrients, so it's best to leave it attached as long as possible. However, some growers remove the old back-bulb as soon as the new plant appears able to support itself and then attempt to make it strike a second time. This often works, particularly with large back-bulbs, although the chances of the bulb rotting during its second year are much greater, of course.

So, novice grower, now you know how to increase your cymbidium collection. But be warned - it takes four years on average for the new plant to reach flowering size and if you strike all your back-bulbs you will soon have to move to larger premises!