

Change by Stuart Heyden

Women - can change their minds, it's their prerogative

Some Men - change their women for the sake of change

Mel - I just change bush houses

Heaven - Perched on my favourite rock headland like a seagull with no soul in sight, the fishing pole pointing to Cuba and being alert to any oncoming big wave and searching for any fish activity, otherwise the mind is in neutral.

Habitat destruction - Access roads, bridges, people, board riders, its ruination and time to go bush and so it came to pass I made my entry into the orchid scene.

To create my initial growing area I built a glass wall at right angles to the house' southern end' and using the `L' section of the house I built what is termed today as a 'florida room'. Here Cattleyas and Dendrobiums grew well, Cymbidiums grew but did not flower. The paved floor grew quality fungi and mould which got traipsed through the house, this with the loss of the handy positioned Hills Hoist forsaken to the orchids, meant someone was not happy.

Time for a change - I now built a steel framed greenhouse on the southern side of the glass wall, the stepped roof allowed for a full length controlled vent opening, the side walls were made of single clear panels of silky oak framed windows.

Dispensing with Cymbidiums I now sought to obtain and grow Phalaenopsis, a Genera which those days was not stocked by local Nurseries. 'Yuhmad' I was told many times, however I proceeded to import stock (no CITES then) and began to breed my own hybrids.



Stuart studying a benching of Dendrobiums

This Phalaenopsis addition necessitated further green house modification e.g. under bench misting, provision for heating, additional shading and cooling systems. As the Phalaenopsis collection grew it was necessary to cut back on the Cattleyas and Dendrobiums within the controlled green house.

Another change was pending, a decision was made to build another small shade house to cater for these displaced plants, during the era in question, a hardboard Manufacturer in Ipswich sold used sections of stainless steel mesh, it was half the size of mosquito net. This all steel house was virtually indestructible and if it had been in the right location should have worked well. However hidden away in the only space available, its tiny mesh restricted air

flow and neighbours trees did not

help.

A big change was looming - and 'Yuhmad' was still ringing in my ears. In hindsight maybe a Headshrink would have advised me to buy an off shore tinny and rejoin the seagulls. However after selecting an acre of bushland, I proceeded to design and build another house and greenhouse. 'Room to swing a cat' this time. A full glass wall facing north, heavy masonry brick wall facing south, a non discolouring Humes Tuflite roof was hail protected and cooled by shade cloth positioned 400mm above. Plenty of vents positioned around the whole perimeter plus vents at its highest point to give a chimney effect. Fitted with under bench misting, evaporative cooler and fans all combined to allow control of daily and seasonal changes. A further addition, built at an angle to the glass house created a shaded area for hanging plants.

It was an enjoyable experience, however after 13 Years it was the body clock that bought about the next change. Moving house back to suburbia is fraught with obstacles, finding an acceptable block of ground of about a quarter of an acre that would allow a reasonable size bush house facing north, think again, we had to settle for a 800 sm. comer block. This allowed for a house, large shed and a green house of only 7 x 4.5 metres which faced east. Until the contracted house was finalised. I could not commence work on the out buildings. Corner blocks give elbow room but my greenhouse plans submitted to Council attracted extra charges for them to relax a small measurement to the road alignment, plus non objection letters from 3 Neighbours were required.

Preparing a collection of Phalaenopsis for a move to a growing area one quarter the original size meant reducing the number of plants and big plants had to go while maintaining as many as possible of small young breeders. As the move would occur before the new green house could be built it was planned to move benches and plants into the garage of the new house for the time being. As my time would be devoted to outbuilding construction, little time would be available to caring for the garaged plants. Therefore the plant preparation included repotting the Phalaenopsis into spagnum moss as a holding medium.

Although satisfied with the function of the previous green house where there was plenty of room and drainage was no problem, the new green house would be only 4 metres from and parallel to the house so in addition to its functions it has to ascetically blend in with the surroundings.

Framing of the new greenhouse was with oversize timber to produce a substantial look, the roof framing 13ft at its high point was linked to a lower roof connected to the house forming a breezeway between both constructions. The step between these rooflines carried the top controlled air vents. The roof material was ' Solar grade Polygal' a twin walled flat polycarbonate sheet 8mm thick has special aluminum joiners linking the sheets together and supposedly impact resistance (light hail). guaranteed for 10 Years. I saw four advantages in using this roof material (a) the flat sheets sealed well, (b) no need for above roof shade cloth to give hail protection (c) this in itself eliminated dirt build up previously experienced (d) the twin wall factor saves double insulation (on previous occasions I used Agtuf sheeting to reduce winter heating costs.)

The house looks straight into the high glass wall of the green house, 150mm high vents are located at the base of all 4 walls between the support posts, the remaining 3 walls were sheeted to mid height with a material used to construct cold rooms, it is 30mm polystyrene

sandwiched between 2 sheets of colour bond steel made in full lengths (no joins) 1200mm wide. From the top of the side wall to the roof I have used cream coloured polycarbonate sheeting which gives plenty of light but no direct sun. Due to the proximity of the green house to the house the floor was concreted and formed to converge to a grid covered drain which piped all water from green house to storm water drainage. The same systems as previously employed e.g. under bench misting, evaporative cooler, drying fans, heating control are in operation.

After repotting away from the holding medium it was another 18 months before I decided on what fine tuning was required. (a) the plants were growing too dry and (b) the plants were growing with too much light.

My new locality at the top of the ridge is very windy compared to the previously heavily treed area I moved from so a more moisture retaining medium is under experimentation , the excessive light is indicated by leaf colour but better growth can be had once the light factor is corrected. This correction was achieved by suspending additional shading 2400 mm (or normal ceiling height) above the floor. The material used was 60% Aluminet which is a knitted thermo reflective screen which has the properties of reflecting heat from the roof away from the plants, or if heating during winter below the screen reflects the heat back down to plant level.

Currently I am satisfied with the green house operation, the chimney effect works well (no need for any fans being driven during the summer period). My only maintenance is to regularly clean the floor from algae build up.

With my next change - If St.Peter suggests that with my experience that I took after a vast amount of orchids in the sky, I will just have to say ` look Pete I am sick of potting bloody orchids find me a perch with the seagulls, point my fishing rod to Cuba and my mind will go back into neutral and only then will I know I am back in heaven'.