

Growing Orchids with Margaret Tierney

My interest in orchids started when I was a kid in the Ipswich area. I was an avid reader. There were not many children around where I lived so I learnt to read a lot. A couple of books I came across had orchids in them. One was "The World of Children", a series of 4 books that my mother had bought for me. It had a section on the English Garden and so I knew all the English flowers including the orchids, orchis etc. The second book was "The Limberlost Trail" by Jean Stretton-Porter which was set in the Everglades, she mentioned the orchids growing there.

Then I went down to Sydney where my uncle grew *Cymbidiums*. He gave me some back-bulbs which I killed of course as I didn't have any idea of how to manage them. That's what started me off.

Mum worked so I used to do the gardening. I knew I needed a bush-house to grow orchids and so I promised myself that when I got married I would have a bush-house and grow orchids. A couple of years after I got married Dennis built my first orchid house, it was a 19ft x 8ft weldmesh frame. When it was finished I looked up the paper and went with Dennis, and my child endowment for that month, and bought myself some orchids from a bloke over at Cavendish Road. I bought a couple of *Paphiopedilums* and a couple of *Cattleyas*. That was the best part of thirty eight years ago.

I now grow *Paphiopedilums*, *Cattleyas Phalaenopsis* as well as some Australian *Dendrobiums*, not too many, *Sarcochilis*, and intergenerics. Most of my *Paphiopedilums* come from Robertson Orchids, Paphanatics Florafest, some from Woolf Orchid Culture and other growers. I have brought back flasks from overseas and at times we have had visiting nurserymen that have had flasks available. I have overcome most of my problems associated with deflasking. This was mainly die-back taking hold shortly after taking them from the flask. I'm using Ban-Rot as a control at the moment, it's expensive but seem to be effective. I also use cinnamon & Mancozeb as well as mercurochrome. I paint the spots with mercurochrome then spray with the cinnamon and Mancozeb, anything to try and combat the damn thing. I've known about cinnamon for some time but recently Reg Illingworth mentioned it so I thought I'd give it a try. I think a fan would help, I've thought about it at times.

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During winter I water once a week but during the warmer months the overhead sprinklers come on twice a week then I fertilise once with a fertigator and on one of

the days that the overhead watering sprinklers come on I go over everything with a hand held hose to give all the plants a good soaking. During winter I still fertilise. At present I am trying a new fertiliser developed by Wal Rhodes and Wolfgang. It has different formulas for winter and summer. It seems to be quite good. Before this I was just using what ever I had available. Some of it I had won some I had for other purposes.

I've decided it's time I started cutting down some where so I'm slowly disposing of my standards *Cattleyas*. I won't be buying much in the way of *Cattleyas* in the future, perhaps some miniatures.

Botrytis is not a real problem for me so I believe I must have enough air movement throughout my bush house. At times I do get bacterial soft-rots in my *Sarcochilis* and *Paphs*. This starts at the base of the leaves and spreads right through the plant. David Woolf suggested Guardex and gave me some to try. This did help quite a bit but when I went to buy it I was told that it was not being produced anymore. I don't know of a replacement so I have my fingers crossed that I don't have the same problem next summer.



Paph. [(Lyxel x sukhakulii) x Maudiae] x