

# THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN ORCHID BULLETIN

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE ORCHID SOCIETY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA  
FOUNDED 1946. A MEMBER OF THE AUSTRALIAN ORCHID COUNCIL.

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NOVEMBER 2021

The next meeting of the Orchid Society of Western Australia (Inc.) will be held at the Manning Senior Citizens Activity Centre, Manning, on **Friday 26 November 2021**.

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## THIS MONTH'S MEETING

HARRY ASHTON  
AUSTRALIAN NATIVE CYMBIDIUMS

## DECEMBER MEETING DATES

OSWA Committee: 7:30 pm Friday 3rd  
General Meeting: 7:30 pm Friday 17th  
(3rd Friday!)

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**We acknowledge assistance from Lotterywest for the printing of this Bulletin**

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## Birthdays

November: 2nd Aishya Ghose; 13th Rosalie McCallum; 18th Trevor Burnett

December: 6th Val Seaman; 22nd Howard Tan; 23rd Cheryl Compagnone; 27th Maxine Godbeer

Best wishes to anyone else celebrating Birthdays or Anniversaries. To any member on the sick list we wish you a speedy recovery & may you soon be well.

## December General Meeting — a week earlier than usual

On account of Christmas, the December General Meeting will be held a week earlier than usual, on the 3rd Friday, 17th December.

## New Members

Welcome to Shirley Briggs (Rivervale), Robyn Noyes (Victoria Park), Paul Kelly (Wellard), Claudia Rowe (Thornlie), Katherine Cooper (Hilton), Audrey Greipl (Kelmscott), and Donna Cardinal (Kingsley). We hope you have many rewarding years ahead with our Society.

New members are eligible to receive three free orchids. If you are a new member, you should receive a letter about how to receive your free orchids. If you have not received your letter, contact Courtney at a meeting or on 0407 049 717.

## Thank you!

Thank you to all members who helped with the Late Flowering Orchid Display. The display attracted many visitors despite having to compete with at least three other gardening-related shows over the weekend. Business at the sales tables was especially brisk on Saturday morning. As usual, this event gave members an opportunity to mingle with members from the Cym Club and ANOS. Special thanks to all who brought soup and other delicacies for sharing on Friday night!

## Membership Subscriptions were due on 1 November!

\$26 double, \$21 single. For your convenience OSWA accepts payment by direct deposit (preferred method), cheque, or cash (paid at a general meeting). Direct deposit can be made via electronic banking or at any Westpac branch using the account information below. *If possible, please use direct deposit or cheque, to lessen stress and chaos at the general meetings.*

### For direct deposit into OSWA's account:

Account name - Orchid Society of Western Australia Inc.

Bank - Westpac Bank, Booragoon, WA

BSB - 036069 Account Number - 457265

Reference - **please use your name or the first 7 digits of your phone number**, to help us identify your payment.

### For payment by cheque:

Make cheques payable to The Orchid Society of WA Inc. and bring them to a general meeting or post them to OSWA, 58 Gladstone Rd, Leeming 6149.

## Neutrog — another bulk order?

There will likely be another bulk order of Neutrog products arranged in the coming weeks, for delivery in January. When the bulk order is arranged, members who have registered with Neutrog will receive an email from Neutrog about how to place their orders. All orders will need to be placed and paid for via Neutrog's online shop ([neutrogshop.com.au](http://neutrogshop.com.au)). If you are reluctant to order stuff online, perhaps you can arrange with another member to place an order on your behalf.

**CYMBIDIUM CULTURAL NOTES (NOV/DEC 2021) - based on notes from Roy Brown**

Normally, most of the dividing and repotting of our Cymbidiums should have been completed by now because as we reach the end of November, the weather pattern will have changed from warm Spring days to hot, dry days with easterly winds. These conditions, of course, are not suited to dividing and repotting our plants. This year has been a bit odd though, with unusually mild weather persisting through November, so the Bulletin Editor will be taking advantage of the unusual weather to catch up on some repotting. Once the hot summer weather arrives, any pots that have not attended to will be better left until next Autumn.

From November on, with the increase in temperatures, we must increase the watering too. Provided the pots have good drainage, the plants will appreciate having the surrounding area nice and damp all through the summer period.

This is the start of the summer culture, and this means added fertilizing: once a week or fortnightly as you prefer, with a product such as Strike Back for Orchids. If you are not too certain as to how much fertilizer you should apply, then always err on the lighter side. It's far better to give the plants two applications of half strength fertilizer than one dose that is too strong. Always remember to give the pots a good watering before you apply the fertilizer, then another good, heavy watering several days later. In the meantime of course, if you have fine misting overhead, then use this to keep the plants' leaves, benches and surrounding areas nice and damp.

During November and December, the sun's rays are increasing and shining more directly overhead each day, and if it should shine through a break in the shade cloth the plants beneath will suffer with badly sunburnt leaves. This will affect the efficiency of the plant in producing the necessary plant sugars. Once plant leaves are burnt, they do not repair themselves and the scar will stay there until the leaf eventually dies.

**CATTLEYA CULTURAL NOTES (NOV/DEC 2021) - based on notes from Henry Eaton.**

Although this year has again seen a mild spring and cooler temperatures well into November, the weather should soon be warmer a little more consistently. It is now getting too late to do much more dividing of your Cattleyas, but you may still pot some on if they are badly in need of it. They will not be too traumatised provided that the roots are not disturbed too much.

As the weather heats up further, you should assess the degree of shade needed to keep your plants protected. The best indication for this is the colour of the leaves. If the leaves are deep green, then it indicates that they are too shaded, whilst reddening of the leaves means that too much light is hitting the plants. The ideal is to have a greenish yellow leaf colour.

At this time of the year liquid fertilising can be carried out once a week, or every fortnight, with a high nitrogen product. Strike Back for Orchids is a suitable fertiliser. Strike Back pellets can be sprinkled over the potting medium as a slow-release fertiliser. If you prefer liquid fertiliser, Strike Back for Orchids liquid is suitable, especially for smaller plants with fine roots. Fertilising is best done the day after the plants have been given a thorough watering to flush out the salts in the mix. Because of the warmth, be on the lookout for caterpillars, scale and mealy bugs that multiply very quickly in these conditions. Treat them as soon as they are identified as this will prevent them causing a big problem.

**PAPHIOPEDILUM CULTURAL NOTES (NOV/DEC 2021) by Trevor Burnett**

The Paphiopedilum growing season will now be fully in progress. The plants should be producing new roots that will support the new growths which should be developing strongly.

As the sun power is increasing towards summer it is time to consider whether you need to increase the shading required to stop any burning. Generally with our hot conditions, plants may appreciate a little additional shading. Passing your hand over the plants on a bright and sunny day can indicate the amount of shading required. The shadow cast should only be faint.

The plants should not be excessively dark green, as this indicates a lack of sufficient light. Bright light produces the best flowering but if too bright, burning will occur and plants will suffer a setback which will be reflected in the flowering results later in the year. It is also very important to keep up good air movement.

As the plants will be growing strongly now, a weekly application of fertiliser at one quarter to one half strength with a high nitrogen base, will promote good development of the new growths. A specialist orchid fertiliser such as Strike Back for Orchids (liquid or pellets) can be used as per the label. With the warmer days, I increase my watering to twice a week. Do not crowd your plants in the growing area as plenty of fresh air movement is essential for the good health of your plants.

Once again, with the warmer weather, check your plants and the surrounding area for mealy bugs, ants and other bugs that may decide to move into the cooler conditions of a shade or glass house where greater moisture content is available. It is much easier to get rid of the pest when there are only a few and not let them multiply, which makes the task harder.

### The Orchid Society of WA (Inc.): Minutes of the General Meeting held on Friday 22nd October 2021

**Welcome: 7:35**

**Presentation:** Norm on Aussie Native Orchids

**Minutes:** Moved Jacqui seconded Margaret R that the minutes of the previous meeting be accepted. Carried.

**New Member Introductions:** Claudia Rowe, Robyn Noyes and Shirley Briggs, Paul Kelly, Audrey Griepel, Ketherine Cooper.

**Correspondence:**

- 26/9 - emailed thank you letter and associated paperwork to Kardinya Shopping Centre for our Spring Show – they loved the show and expressed that they are keen to have us again next year
- 29/9 - received update for Meg Donald sending regards to members and thanking us for the Kardinya Show- and hoping she can be involved next time.
- 30/9 - received Our Gardens magazine advertising from Garden Clubs of Australia
- 30/9 - received Garden Cuttings (from the Horticultural Council of WA) and membership application form
- 11/10 - sent event details to Mundaring Garden Club
- 19/10 - email from OWA re a request from a lady in Fremantle for assistance to repot/clean up ~ 20 orchids. She is happy to pay for help with this and was wondering if anyone would be interested in helping.
- 20/10 - received GCP update contact details request

**Business arising from correspondence** - See general business

Moved Harry, seconded Enid that the correspondence be accepted. Carried.

**Reports:**

- Potting Workshop – big thank you for everyone who supported the event. Members on the roster received a free raffle ticket (and correspondingly some extra raffle prizes this month!)

**Financial report:** Presented by J Bateman

**Business arising from the financial report** - Nil

Moved Jacqui seconded Arnold that the financial report be accepted. Carried.

**General Business:**

- **OSWA Sales Process-** Presentation by Courtney
- **Auction: Orchid Prints**
- **OSWA Christmas Dinner** - Christmas Dinner this year to be at Bentley Pines, Hayman Road, Bentley, on Wed Nov 24<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm. Three-course meal, only \$30 per person, payment due by the October general meeting.
- **Late Flowering Orchid Display** - Joint with the Cymbidium Orchid Club of WA and the Australian Native Orchid Society (ANOS WA). Setup in the evening of Friday 12 Nov, from 5 pm; open to the public over the weekend. Display only, so no plant competition, but there will be plant sales, snacks, and the chance to meet members of other clubs.
- **Trophies:** Trophies discussed at May GM, members in favour of retiring a number of OSWA's older trophies providing we reach our trophy donors and ensure this is okay with them. The current plan is to maintain only four of the trophies: Vera Kennedy Perpetual Trophy for Most Points benched in Novice Division at monthly meetings; George Marshall Trophy for Most Points benched in Open Division at monthly meetings; Tom Dixon Memorial Trophy to be repurposed to Best Cymbidium of the Year; Roy Brown Perpetual Trophy to be repurposed to be Judges Choice of the Year. Everyone we have been in contact with has been okay with the plan, but there were a few people we no longer have contact details for, so if there is any concern over this plan please let us know. Certificates to be provided for Judges Choice of each monthly meeting.
- **Harry : New Grower Incentive Scene Participation** – Info in October Bulletin
- **deGreenhouse** - Just a reminder we now have access to this wholesale outlet - details in the October bulletin.

**Raffle:** Lien, Cheryl, Julia

**Open popular vote:** Courtney Rogasch. **Novice popular vote:** Jacqui Bateman

**Door Prize:** Sheelagh Harman

**Meeting Closed at 9:45**

## MONTHLY PLANT COMPETITION (OCTOBER 2021)

## OPEN

1A	(2)	1 2	Courtney Rogasch Harry Ashton	<i>Cattleya walkeriana forma tipo</i> <i>Cattleya intermedia</i> var. <i>alba</i>
1B	(1)	1	Valerie Cooper	<i>Brassolaeliocattleya</i> Burdekin Dawn x Cheapeake (?)
1F	(1)	1	Harry Ashton	<i>Cattleya</i> Reve Marques (?) x <i>Cattleya amethystoglossa</i>
2D	(1)	1	Courtney Rogash	<i>Cymbidium</i> Ken Gorey 'A Summer Place'
3A	(1)	1	Howard Tan	<i>Paphiopedilum delenatii</i> var. <i>alba</i>
3D	(1)	1	Howard Tan	<i>Paphiopedilum</i> St Swithin x <i>Paphiopedilum anitum</i>
6D	(2)	1 2	Harry Ashton Harry Ashton	<i>Oncidium</i> Jungle Monarch <i>Oncidium</i> Tiger Crow
7B	(1)	1	Tara Peeters	<i>Vanda</i> unknown
8A	(1)	1	Harry Ashton	<i>Sarcochilus celiliae</i>
8B	(3)	1 2 3	Courtney Rogash Tara Peeters Courtney Rogash	<i>Sarcochilus hartmannii</i> 'Yellow snow' x 'Early yellow centre' (?) <i>Sarcochilus falcatii</i> x <i>Sarcochilus</i> (Sweetheart x Heidi) <i>Sarcochilus acqualis</i> x <i>Sarcochilus fitzgeraldii</i>
10B	1	1	Tara Peeters	<i>Coelogyne flaccida</i>
12	1	1	Tara Peeters	<i>Sarcochilus</i> Kulnura Absolute x Maria

## NOVICE

15A	(2)	1 2	Charmaine Tan Margaret Rathbone	<i>Encyclia cordigera</i> <i>Encyclia cordigera</i>
18E	(3)	1	Margaret Rathbone Margaret Rathbone Enid Chelva	<i>Dendrobium</i> Yukasa...? <i>Dendrobium</i> Sailor Boy (nobile hybrid) <i>Dendrobium</i> unknown (nobile hybrid)
19B	(1)	1	Enid Chelva	<i>Phalaenopsis</i> unknown
20D	(1)	1	Jacqui Bateman	<i>Oncidinae</i> unknown
24B	(1)	1	Keng Leow	<i>Bifrenaria harrisoniae</i>

**Schockman Trophy (Best Laeliinae)** *Cattleya walkeriana forma tipo*, grower: Courtney Rogasch.

**Novice Popular Vote Winner***Oncidium* unknown

Grown by Jacqui Bateman.

**Open Popular Vote Winner***Sarcochilus hartmannii*

'Yellow snow' x 'Early yellow centre'

Grown by Courtney Rogasch.



Courtney's *Sarcochilus* gets 1-1.5 hours of morning sun. Courtney isn't afraid to feed his plants. He uses the Strikeback range of products (using the pellets every 4 months and liquid fertilizer when he waters) but also rotates through various other fertilizers. Courtney indicates that he trains his plants to grow like cymbidiums! For potting he uses 1 part blue metal to 6 parts Orchiata bark of the same size - with a couple additives depending on what he's trying out at the time. Jacqui won the novice vote with a beautifully grown oncidium hybrid with large white flowers. Jacqui grows this under shade cloth, so it gets rain all year.

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### **An Interview with Gary Sweikert**

Gary Sweikert is a very experienced grower of Australian native cymbidiums who lives slightly inland on the mid north coast of NSW. In February this year, the Cymbidium Orchid Society of Victoria published an interview with Gary Sweikert in *Cymbidium Chatter*, an online magazine started during peak COVID-19 restrictions in Victoria early last year. The interview is reproduced on the following pages. We acknowledge Gary and COSV for writing it and thank COSV for permission to re-publish the interview in our bulletin. Members can find the original version of the interview, and many other interesting articles, at <https://www.cosv.com.au/publications-and-resources>.

The interview is relevant to this month's general meeting, where Harry will be discussing how to grow Australian native cymbidiums. Harry has found this interview to be very helpful in his own efforts to grow Australian native cymbidiums.

Members who were fortunate enough to see Norm Stockton's talk about Australian native orchids at the last general meeting may remember that there was some discussion about *Cymbidium suave* and how difficult it is to grow. Curiously, Gary finds this orchid easy to grow once it reaches a certain size.



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## An Interview with Gary Sweikert

**Editor:** *It is my hope to feature an interview with a grower, enthusiast, hybridiser or nursery operator in each issue. For this interview, Gary has generously put together a detailed response and cultural information on the Australian species. Photos are Gary's unless otherwise stated.*

Hello readers, my name is Gary Sweikert and Joshua has asked me to do an article for Cymbidium Chatter. I wish Joshua well in taking over the production of the newsletter.

I began in orchids way back – 50 years or so ago – when living at home with my parents in the southern suburbs of Sydney. Dad used to grow Australian Native Orchids back in those days and they were easy to source from some great nurseries, all now gone, and so my passion started with encouragement from Dad all along the way. We grew orchids up till 1980, when I moved out and started a new job further afield. For the next 10 years or so I did not grow an orchid but still subscribed to a couple of Orchid Journals.

In 1990 we moved again to the NSW Central Coast and orchids again became part of my life; we then moved up to the NSW Mid North Coast 10 years ago. I still grow Dendrobium Native Orchids, but I have diversified into the three Aussie Cym species and their hybrids – more on that later in this article.

We have always lived in NSW – seven locations over the years in total. Apart from growing orchids as a hobby only, we also grow heaps of vegetables, fruit trees, have chooks for eggs, I like to walk in the bush, relax and listen to good music and enjoy cooking. Having an Electrical Engineering background, I also play around with building audio amplifiers when I get a spare moment – these are few and far between these days, it always seems to happen when you retire from a permanent job, you are always busier than ever. Living on a couple of acres has allowed me to grow my orchid collection, but I have scaled it back to a manageable size; my wife is happy with that decision. You can't grow every orchid you see for sale; one needs to specialise and channel your time and energy into growing a few genera and species and do that well.



*A specimen of Cymbidium suave in the wild near Gary's place.*

**Editor:** *What got you interested in growing Cymbidiums and how long have you been growing them for?*

As I mentioned above, I have always grown Aussie Native Orchids, now selecting just a couple of the species to concentrate on that also grow well here. My passion for Cymbidium orchids grew instantly from the day we moved to our current location and a few short bushwalks later revealing some magnificent clumps of *Cym. suave* in full flower, all only 10 minutes' drive from home.

The other thing to spur me on was a visit to a long-time friend's nursery, a prominent grower about an hour from here. The visit was perfectly timed, viewing a magnificent display



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of flowering *Cym. canaliculatum* in all its forms and colour combinations. Also, on that visit I was fortunate to see many flowering Cym hybrids using all three great Aussie Cym species in their breeding. From that day I was hooked; I also came away from that visit with many Cym seedlings to start my Cymbidium journey.

So, I have only been growing Cyms for 10 years or so seriously – but I am no expert. I concentrate on the three Aussie species and hybrids containing them. I have also a small collection of “normal” type Cyms – mainly miniature and cascading or pendulous types. I steer away from the intermediate and standard types and leave them to others to grow, but still appreciate their beauty.

**Editor:** *What groups or types of Cymbidiums are your favourite? What do you like about them in particular?*

As I have mentioned, my focus is solely on the three Aussie Cyms. – namely *suave*, *madidum* and *canaliculatum*. I also collect primary hybrids of the three as well as later generation hybrids with other Cym species and hybrids. I am drawn to these types because of the smaller flower size, abundant number of flowers on a raceme, smaller-growing plant size in general, and the fact that many are fragrant and the spikes are gently arching or pendulous.



One of Gary's plants of *Cym. Black Stump*, which puts on a great show.



Two different alba forms of *Cym. canaliculatum* – green (top) and yellow (bottom) – owned by Gary's friend.

These make a great sight in the greenhouse when hung at eye level to view the detail of the individual flowers and to get a whiff of the intoxicating fragrance. I have plenty of hanging space in my three greenhouses and so these types relieve a lot of bench space for growing other orchids (and in the case of my wife, ferns).

**Editor:** *What is the climate like where you live? Have you had to create any special microclimates (such as a heated or cooled greenhouse, use of humidifiers, etc.) in order to grow your preferred Cyms?*

Where we live, slightly inland on the NSW Mid North Coast, is not the ideal climate for growing a diverse range of orchids – one could ask, where is? Our summers can be extremely hot with temps up to 45°C on the odd day, but normally mid 30°s. Our winters can get down to just below zero at night on the odd nights with an occasional light frost thrown in for good measure, winter daytime temps would average around 15°C. When you talk to the old



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timers around here who have lived here all their life, it was not unusual 30 years ago to get 45 days in a row with a good frost (last winter we had 2 days with frost) – this points to global warming and its overall affect, I say.

The spring and autumn months are perfect, mid 20°s average, so we have a dose of all weather during the year. I got the three greenhouses (40 square meters each) built when we moved here (they were finished and ready to go before our house was finished, you need to get your priorities right) and they are covered in good quality 70% knitted shade cloth with the roof also fitted with Solar Weave for winter frost protection. They are fitted with automatic sprinkler systems controlled by timers and with fertiliser injection. I do not have heating or cooling, so the orchids must adapt to the climate.



*Cym. Morris West in Gary's collection.*

I have worked out over the last 10 years what grows well and what does not. I don't waste time and energy in trying to grow exotic orchids that need extra care – again I leave that to others who have the facilities and climate to succeed.

**Editor:** *What challenges (pests, disease, culture, etc.) have you encountered whilst growing your Cyms and how did you overcome them?*



*A seedling of Cym. Son of Sambo, which flowered for the first time for Gary in 2018.*

Living here has raised some challenges over the early years; having enclosed greenhouses has not really seen a pest problem to any great extent, but scale attack raises its ugly head from time to time. One needs to be vigilant and treat it as soon as it is spotted; if not, it can spread through a collection quickly. I have had a few fungal problems over the years, but as I do not like spraying chemicals very often, I bite the bullet and these days dispose of any orchid that shows signs of disease.

Culture of orchids is always an evolving issue – growers say never change a perfect mix, but I am still to find the perfect mix. What suits one grower may not suit another grower. Basically, I use Orchiata bark from NZ; yes, it is dear, but it lasts in the pot. Sometimes I add an ingredient or two depending on the orchid being potted. I have always used Peter's Excel Cal Mag water soluble fertiliser and supplement that with organic based fertilisers every month. I normally fertilise all year round, applying every 2 weeks normally, then increase to every week in the peak growing season mainly to try and get the orchids to flowering size as soon as possible. I also supplement with 9-month Nutricote slow-release fertiliser on many of the orchids, but not all.

**Editor:** *What has been the easiest Cym for you to grow?*

This might seem a funny answer to many, as a lot of growers have struggled with this species. Now I know how to grow *Cym. suave*, I am rewarded with great growth and beautiful flowering in



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November, and I find it easy to grow once the plant gets to a certain size. The fragrance from the small flowers fills the greenhouse in the morning hours. I will add more on its growing later in this article.

A lot of the “common” Cyms are quite easy to grow – hell, they will even grow out in the garden with all the other plants, so it is pleasing to see how well one of the more challenging species grows when you get the conditions right.

**Editor:** *Is there anything you would do differently if you were starting out in the hobby today, but knowing what you know now? Alternatively, if you were giving advice to a newcomer just starting out in the hobby, what key things would you want them to know?*

After growing orchids for 50 years and Cyms for the past decade or so, I most definitely would only grow the species and hybrids that grow well in the wild and concentrate on growing them to emulate how they survive naturally in their native habitat. Of course, I am only talking about the Aussie orchids when I say that.

Advice to newcomers (unfortunately they are few and far between these days) would be to do your research (we did not have the internet or computers when I started out – so it was books, journals and catalogues back then) and decide what will be easy to grow, be readily available and not too expensive to get hold of and be willing to provide the correct conditions required to grow them well and to the best of one’s ability and always appreciate them. It is of no use whatsoever to see a beautiful orchid in a sales catalogue or an online website, pay out top dollar for the orchid and get it home to find you cannot provide the correct conditions or climate for it to survive.



*Cym. suave in cultivation.*



*Cym. Pakkret Sunrise.*

The best thing to do for any newcomer, no matter how old, is to join and actively participate in an orchid society or two (they are always looking for new younger members). Listen, ask questions, read as much as possible, take advice from other members on board and go and visit their collection at their homes to learn and view the tips and tricks of the trade.

**Editor:** *Just for fun, what’s the oddest or most interesting piece of Cymbidium-related trivia you’ve come across?*

This question raises all sorts of scenarios for me in my mind. A lot of things have occurred in the past, mostly trivial and soon forgotten. But I do find it odd for example, when one gets to know certain so-called “experts”, judges and authorities on all matters orchid – only to find out that some of them do



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not actively grow a single orchid. Putting it another way – like students just out of university, they might have all the theory in the world tucked up in their brain, but put that theory into practice and it all comes unstuck quickly.

**Editor:** Gary has also kindly provided his notes on the Australian Cymbidium species, with much of the material drawn from his friend and expert, Mr. Ken Russell. These are reproduced here for the benefit of the reader.

### Some notes on Australian Cymbidiums in Nature

Ken Russell has made an extensive study over the years of these three species where they grow naturally in NSW and QLD. He has found surprising differences in their cultural likes and dislikes, particularly to do with pH of the decayed material surrounding their roots. These results provide especially useful clues as to how these species can be grown more successfully by the hobbyist grower. Ken has done many society talks on this subject; I have been to three of them and he has evoked much discussion on each occasion, with members going away to re-evaluate the growing of these species.



*Cym. canaliculatum* in the bush in northern NSW.

For *Cymbidium canaliculatum*, Ken has studied plants in situ over a 1500km range in NSW and QLD with daily temps in the range from -10°C to +50°C.

pH tests were made around the root system near the surface and well down around the lower root system. The pH near the surface differed markedly from lower down as shown below.

Host	pH Near Surface	pH Lower Down
Live pines	6	9
Pine logs on ground	6.5	9
Other live trees	7	9.5
Other stumps and logs	7.5	9.5

From the results above it can be said that the *Cym canaliculatum* root zone prefers an alkaline condition.

For *Cymbidium suave*, Ken studied plants over a 1000 km range, some near sea level and others up to 700 metres above sea level. Most hosts were various types of Eucalypt trees, with a few occurring on pines and she oaks and a few occurring on rocks as well.



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Host	pH Near Surface	pH Lower Down
Dead stumps	4 to 5	4
Logs and deadwood	4 to 5	4
Live trees	4 to 5	4
Rocks	5	4



*Cym. suave* growing in the bush.

Looking at these results, the root system of this species prefers acidic conditions (totally different to *canaliculatum*). All plants in nature had at least a 25mm layer of good leaf mould from decaying leaves, twigs and bark around their base. This species is renowned for very long root systems penetrating down into the decayed centre of stumps and trees; the decayed matter (known as mudgut) from stumps had a pH level as low as 3.5 in some locations. Ken recommends getting hold of some of this matter when potting up this species at home.

To lower the mix pH for this species, one can use vitamin C tablets, 5ml per litre of pure pineapple juice, Phostrogen Acid Plant Food or coffee grounds which has a natural pH of 4.5. Never apply lime to *Cym. suave* as it hates alkaline conditions and the plant will slowly fail.

*Cymbidium madidum* plants that were studied in north eastern NSW all living in trees and on logs and stumps. The pH around the root zone was typically 6 to 6.5; with this pH requirement, this species is easier to maintain in cultivation.

All three species are very difficult to raise and grow ex flask and this is not recommended for the novice grower, especially when one sees the price of some flasks today. For the average hobbyist and new grower, I advise one to seek out established seedlings or plants; they are available, but one needs to ring around and do some research on availability. Experienced growers working in this field do not advertise but rely on word of mouth advertising these days. The orchid world is still small at times.



*Cym. madidum* growing on a tree stump.

Cymbidium Chatter

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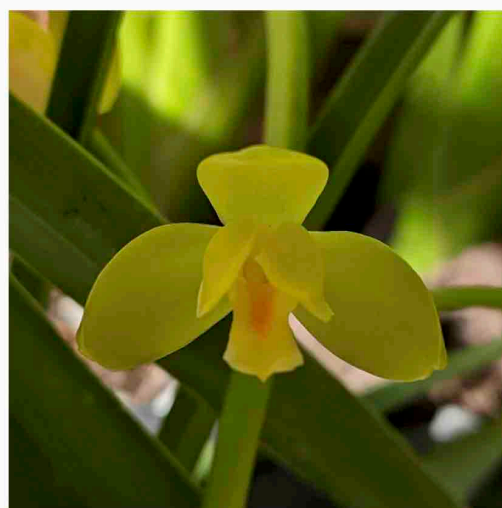
The following is a summary table to help compare the traits of the three different Aussie Cyms:

Trait	<i>Cym. madidum</i>	<i>Cym. suave</i>	<i>Cym. canaliculatum</i>
Growth	large	small	in between
Raceme	300 -900mm	150 – 300mm	200 – 400mm
Flowers	20 – 70	10 – 30	15 – 60
Flower size	small	small	slightly larger
Flowering time	Aug – Feb	Aug – Jan	Sep – Nov
Average rain	lots all year	avg all year	lots summer only
Habitat	moist forest	temp forest	arid woodland
Temps	warm to hot	cool to warm	cool to very hot
Growth cycle	Spring – Autumn	Summer – Winter	Summer – Autumn
Rootzone pH	Neutral 6-6.5	Acidic 4-4.5	Alkaline 9-9.5
Sun/shade in situ	50-70% shade	50% shade	0-30% shade
Cover/shelter	shade cloth	shade cloth/poly	poly
Pot size	big standard	long or stump	normal
Mix	bark	bark/heartwood	bark, gravel, perlite
Fertilizer	OK	acid no lime	OK plus lime
Availability	average	below average	average
Pod/Pollen	can be both	better pod	better pollen
Registered primary hybrids	18+	6+	12+
Ease of culture	easy	difficult	challenging
My overall rating*	2	7 to 8	6 to 7

\* where 1 = no problems and 10 = impossible

Of particular interest these days is the increasing availability of albinistic forms of these species:

- *Cym. canaliculatum* has a definite pure colour green form and a pure colour yellow form in existence.
- *Cym. madidum* has a pure colour yellow-green form that has dark yellow colouring at the back of the labellum. This is known to be a true alba based on breeding behaviour.
- *Cym. suave*, to date, has not had a confirmed alba form found yet, but exciting news is that there is pure green form known to exist (closely guarded I might add). Photos and maybe some pollen will be available later this year (2021) – fingers crossed for that exciting prospect. More on that in the years to come perhaps.



The alba form of *Cym. madidum*  
(Joshua White's photo).

I do hope the reader finds some useful information here and I encourage all to look more closely at our great Aussie Cyms. Even though their flowers might be small, they have found their way into many a great hybrid Cymbidium on the world stage.