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Mr. Bill Gaff

SUBJECT:

Dendrobium caniculatum

(common name: Tea Tree Orchid)

Description: This plant came into my possession in 1982 and carried three racemes, brownish colour at the tops of the floral segments, white with a slight pink flush near the purple marked labellum and originated from near Mareeba. It has now favourably progressed to a stage where it is now carrying 34 spikes.

The bulbous to elongated pseudo bulbs grow to approx. 15 cm. with up to six stiff narrow channelled leaves and are still growing on its original host of paperbark melaleuca sp.

Natural Habitat: *Den. canaliculatum* prefers melaleuca trees as its host in N.E. Qld, from Rockhampton to Cape York and on to New Guinea. These trees grow in wet to swampy areas during the summer rain period and dry but humid conditions in the winter.

Artificial Culture: This orchid has shown its liking to the north side of my fibreglass covered cold house with a high skillion roof facing north. Ample adjustable ventilation is provided to the north, south and east walls which can control year round ventilation.

The plants are grown high up to maximise winter light and warmth and are out of harm's way when watering other plants. Infrequent watering during the winter is the norm, increasing to every other day during the peak summer months when fertiliser is brought into use.

Cork, hard tree or squat terracotta pots are suitable hosts which provide rapid drying out after watering. Additional shading is provided during the summer.

Pests and Diseases: I have not noticed any fungal problems due, no doubt, to the provision of sufficient light and ample air movement. The only pests encountered so far have been mealy bugs in conjunction with ants travelling to the plants. Both are treated with appropriate insecticide only when observed.

Main points for successful cultivation in Brisbane -

1. good light
2. good ventilation
3. cover during cold and inclement weather
4. withhold water in winter
5. copious water and fertiliser when root activity and growth is evident in summer.

Mr John Mewbury

SUBJECT: Australian Natives and Hybrids

A fascinating future for our orchids

A club has recently been formed in the Brisbane area as an offshoot of the Australasian Native Orchid Society group originally formed in Sydney, where there are 25 clubs. Great interest is being shown in the modern native orchid hybrids and the Brisbane group meets on the second Tuesday of every month at Deception Bay. Other clubs are at Maryborough, Port Douglas, Toowoomba, Townsville, and there are groups in New Zealand, Pacific Islands, New Guinea and Indonesia.

First among the slides were the hybrids having one of the species of *Sarcochilus* as a parent. One such is *Sarcochilus Heidii*, a cross of *Sarcochilus Fitzhart* (from *Sarcochilus fitzgeraldii*) and *S. Harpenii*. *S. Heidii* is crossed with *S. Lois*, which has *S. ceciliae* and *S. hartmanii* in its ancestry, to make *S. Zelli*. *Sarcochilus hartmanii* is also a parent of other outstanding hybrids, such as *S. Southern Cross* and *S. Wiennan* to name two.

Spectacular species found in the north of Australia are *Sarcochilus falcatus*, *Sarcochilus Fitzgeraldii*, *Cymbidium suave*, *Dendrobium caniculatum* var. *sparkesii* from the McPherson Ranges, and *Cadetia taylori* found in cool areas. *Freedia robusta* is an unusual vandaceous type of orchid. Experiments are being made in the hybridisation of *Rhinerrhiza divitiflorus* with *Sarcochilus* species. *Plectorrhiza brevillatus*, *Dendrobium baileyi*, *Bulbophyllum johnsonii* and a yellow form of *Dendrobium rigidum* are to be found in the North. There are many name changes, and there is a possibility that *Dendrobium caniculatum* could be reclassified into 2 species. *Dendrobium trimelatum* was found at Cape Tribulation, growing near *Dendrobium discolor* var. *Broomfeldii*, a very yellow flower, which grows on rocks. By crossing *Dendrobium nindii* with *D. discolor* there is an increased variety of colours possible. Others found in the North were *D. racemosum*, *D. agrostophyllum*, *D. linguiforme* and *D. teretifolium*. *D. luticillum* is a possibility for use in hybridisation. It is found growing on she-oaks and grows and flowers like a soft cane. *D. ruppianum* is a natural hybrid from *D. ruppianum* and *D. speciosum*. A peculiarity about the *D. speciosum* in the North is that it is mostly found growing near a fern, *Drynaria rigidula*. Another unusual orchid found is thought to be a natural hybrid from *D. gracilicaule* and *D. adae*, as it has a reddish pattern on the back of the flower. At Groote Island there is a white form of *D. dicuphum*. The latter purple species has been crossed with *D. bifalce* to make an improved purple flower.

D. tetragonum has many different forms, according to the locality. One from Sydney has pendulous orange brown flowers, and the Gympie form has a different shape and the leaves are not as rippled. Other *Dendrobiums* such as *D. hayesianum* show different forms at Mt. Lewis and Herberton. *D. bigibbum* has many varieties e.g. *compactum*, *phalaenopsis*, and *superbum*. *D. bigibbum* has a little white patch on the lip and has a

rounded shape compared to *D. bigibbum* var. *superbum* which has longer more pointed petals and sepals. A rarer form of *D. bigibbum* is the variety *alba*, a pure white. *D. Mini Pearl* is a lovely pink. *D. Peewee* is a hybrid of *D. bigibbum* and *D. tetragonum*, and is a bright purple flower with an open shape and pointed petals and sepals. *D. Peewee* crosses with *D. ruppianum*, *D. falcorostrum* and *D. Hilda Poxon*, and *D. caniculatum* have produced many interesting hybrids.

D. John's Charm is a hybrid of *D. johannis* and *D. undulatum* and is crossed with *D. caniculatum* and *D. bigibbum*. Others are *D. Caesar* x *D. goldiei*, *D. Plum Jay* x *D. caniculatum*, and *D. Superbiens* x *D. antenatum*. *D. kingianum* x *D. tetragonum* produced years ago the well-known *D. Ellen*, with many flowers shading from white to cream.

D. Graham Hewitt, (*D. Ellen* and *D. speciosum*) has been used as a parent with *D. Hilda Poxon* (*D. speciosum* x *D. tetragonum*), *D. fleckerii*, *D. Tully* and *D. Myara* (*D. Hilda Poxon* x *D. falcorostrum*.) A good flower results from the crossing of *D. kingianum* with *D. Bardo Rose* - *D. King Rose*.

In conclusion, I must say that before I became interested in orchids I used to keep fish, and since growing orchids I can see certain similarities between the maintenance and breeding of fish and the collecting and growing of orchids. For instance the names of fish were constantly being changed, and so I find are the names of orchids. Both fish and orchids have a symbiotic relationship with a fungus in the places where they live. If you don't give fish the right water they soon die, and orchids will too, although orchids take years perhaps to die. In one case where a grower's water supply was changed by his local council, the leaves of his orchids began dropping off. He found after testing the water that the former pH. of 6.5 had jumped to 8.3. A pH of 4.8-5 is found in the medium of orchids growing in a flask, and when they are deflasked a pH of 7-7.2. If you do not think your orchids are thriving, buy a pH test kit from one of the pet stores (used for testing the water in fish tanks.) The nutrients for orchids are best with a pH of 5.5 to 6 - any higher is likely to give pH shock. All orchids have a protective coating over the leaves and pH shocks take it off, making them vulnerable to disease and scorching.

Dendrobium superbiens



Nature's King of the crosses.. *Dendrobium superbiens*.
Dendrobium X *superbiens* (Reichb, 1876, F. Mueller, 1878, Fitzgerald, 1879.,
F.M. Bailey 1902, Pflanzenreich 1910, Rupp and T.E. Hunt 1948, Dockrill 1963,
S.T. Blake 1964 this history from A. Dockrill's great book 1969.
This very outstanding cross found in nature, was apparently first taken as
a species and the various early researchers labelled it as such. The plant
is generally recorded from the tip of Cape York and adjacent islands.
Dockrill states that a number of horticulturists have on raising garden hybrid
of *Dendrobium bigibbum* Ldl, var *bigibbum* X *D. discolor* (syn, *undulatum*) Ldl.
some of the crosses are practically indistinguishable from *D* X *superbiens*.
This lovely cross grows on rocks and flowers from February to June.

GEODORUM PICTUM

GEODORUM - The name means earth dweller.

This is a small genus of terrestrial orchids growing from a fleshy rhizome, having about 12 species native to India and Malaya, with only one occurring in Australia.

Geodorum pictum - painted, so named because the pink flowers are veined or streaked with purple to red. The plant grows one foot or more high, with long pointed leaves notable for a very strong mid rib. The flowers are in a bunched raceme, having the peculiar habit of a first standing erect, then bearing right over as the flowers develop, finally becoming erect again after fertilisation. The flowers are cupped, never opening fully and for most of the time pointing to the ground. They are a little more than half an inch in diameter, sepals and petals about the same size, lightly veined, while veins and markings are much stronger on the labellum. It grows in Queensland and the North coast of N.S.W. It flowers in summer.

ORCHID-FLOWERINGS

The orchid species with which the hybridists started their breeding programs many years ago are very seasonal. They bloom at the same time of the year every year unless there happens some very unusual climatic change. This does not apply to those plants from equatorial regions at sea-level where there is just no seasonal variation at all.

These plants will grow and bloom all through the year unless they hail from an area with a distinct wet and dry climate. Then they bloom at the end of the wet - as our Cooktown orchid does.

Taking the orchid year to start in Spring we find that the local orchids are in bloom.

Dendrobium speciosum, kingianum, teretifolium, lots of our ground orchids including the native phaius and sarochilus are all blooming round about this time of the year.

In the early summer our North Queensland natives such as dendrobium superbiens and discolour.

Late summer finds dendrobium bigibbum 'compactum' in flower. This is the dwarf form of the Cooktown orchid and is a good plant to grow. It is often in flower in January and if the summer is long and the feeding program kept up then a second and even a third batch of spikes can be obtained.

Following on into the Autumn and early Winter the true Cooktown orchid, dendrobium bigibbum in all its varieties.