MAROONDAH ORCHID SOCIETY
INCORPORATED

MONTHLY NEWS LETTER

Lycastes are orchids of the
New World Tropics and Subtropics

Lycaste Club Emblem

Volume : 49 - Issue : 01

Next Meeting: **Friday – 20 February 2026**

Venue: **Parkmore Primary School**
38 Jolimont Road, Forest Hill.

ITEM OF THE EVENING: Andre Cleghorn – Orchid Propagation by Seed Raising

Topical Chat: Summer affected plants – please bring any plant that has been affected by direct sun

Supper: Please bring a plate

Special Effort: Tickets at door $1.00 or 3 for $2.00

Sales Table: Pots, stakes, labels and hangers

President's Report

Happy New Year to all our members and your families.

2026 is now upon us and we are looking forward to another great year for the Maroondah Orchid Society. As always, we'll have some great speakers at our monthly meetings throughout the year.

Our Christmas Dinner at Parkmore Primary School was once again a great success with the new caterer proving scrumptious mains and mouth-watering desserts. And, once again, we had some fantastic benched plants.

What started as a fairly temperate summer turned nasty in January with the 40+ degree days and the devastating bushfires. Hopefully, your plants survived the super-heated northerly winds.

I look forward to seeing our members at our February meeting and throughout the year.

Michael Chivell

Please note: If you have changed your contact details such as phone, email address or home address can you please contact Edith Yu-Chan (M) 0411 378 096 so we can update our records.

Thank you!

M.O.S. Inc. Patron: David Cannon

Life Members: The late Frank Date, Jim Foster-Johnson, David Cannon, The late Alan Cockram, Nancy Cockram, Dieter Weise, The late Barry Robinson, Susanne Redpath, The late Max Bomford, Cheryl Luth, G Moffat.

Current M.O.S. Inc. Committee:

President	Michael Chivell (M) 0402 568 217
Vice Presidents:	David Cannon (M) 0418 394 282
	Ron Coleman
Secretary:	Leo Orland (M) 0419 884 492:
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Committee:	Graeme Moffat (H) 9726 5793
	Leanne Le (M) 0416 818 290
	Genny Chivell (M) 0434 995 174
	Jim Foster-Johnson (M) 0412 366 686
	Edith Yu-Chan (M) 0411 378 096
	Heather Coleman
	Claudia Ng

Membership Secretary:	Edith Yu-Chan
Newsletter:	Leo Orland
Floral Art:	Susanne Redpath (M) 0413 138 307
Website Manager	Heather Coleman
MOS Website Address	www.oscov.asn.au /mos
MOS Facebook Address	www.facebook.com/maroondahorchidsociety

Photos from the Christmas Dinner


PARKMOR
PRIMARY
SCHOOL


MAROONDAH
ORCHID SOCIETY
Cultural Certificate
Awarded to
Hanh Truong
for
Dendrobium Stardust
21st Nov 2025

ORCHID SEEDS by Brian Milligan

One of the most characteristic features of orchids is their seeds, which are much smaller and more numerous than those of most (perhaps all) other plants. Orchid seeds usually have a loose, papery coat surrounding a small embryo, and are often spindle-shaped. The orchid embryo is not differentiated into distinct organs, as is the case with many other plants. Only after the seed germinates do the cells begin to differentiate into root cells, leaf cells etc.

Orchid seeds, unlike those of other plants, contain no food source to sustain the growing plants. Therefore, in nature they require the presence of mycorrhizal fungi, usually associated with other plants, to manufacture and provide the nutrients

necessary for the growth of the germinated orchid seed. The chances of a seed encountering both a favourable environment and the appropriate mycorrhizal fungus for it to germinate and grow are very low. Nature evens the balance by endowing orchids with the capacity to produce a large number of seeds; many orchid seed capsules contain at least a thousand seeds, and some contain millions.

For many years the best way known to raise orchid seed was to sprinkle it in the pot containing one of its parent plants, because this potting mix was the best source of the correct mycorrhizal fungus to promote growth of the seedlings. Even then, few seedlings germinated and survived to flowering size, and consequently orchid seedlings were expensive. But in 1922 the American scientist Lewis Knudson developed the method of 'flasking', by which orchid seed was raised in a sterile, nutrient-rich gel without any need for mycorrhizal fungi. This method made it possible to raise orchid seedlings in almost unlimited numbers, and they have consequently been available at reasonable cost ever since.

In Nature, most orchid seed is dispersed by the wind. The flower stems of some terrestrial orchids elongate after pollination, so that the seed capsule is raised above the surrounding grasses, and the seed is therefore capable of being dispersed more widely by the wind. Most seed probably settles only a few metres from the parent plant but some seeds, because they are so small and light, may be blown long distances. Some Australian terrestrial orchids have been found in the wild in New Zealand, and it is very likely that these arose from seed carried there from Australia by the prevailing westerly wind.

Scientific studies on the Indonesian island of Krakatoa provide striking evidence for the aerial transport of orchid seed over long distances. Well over a century ago (in 1883) an enormous volcanic explosion that it was heard in northern Australia and the resultant dust cloud circled the earth! Yet 13 years later three orchid species had re-established themselves, and 50 years later there were 35 destroyed all plant and animal life on Krakatoa. The explosion was so loud different orchid species, despite the fact that the nearest land (the island of Java) was 40 Km away! All 35 species must have arisen from seed blown from Java or even more distant islands.

Have you tried pollinating orchid flowers, and then watched the seed capsules develop? The principle is the same for all orchids but it's easier to carry out with those genera with large flowers. Simply break off the pollen cap with a toothpick, remove the pollinia from the pollen cap and transfer one or more of them to the stigma (the sticky cavity a little below the pollen cap). Experiment with a picked flower until you get the knack. Your chances of getting a seed capsule that will grow to maturity will be improved if you take the pollinia from one plant (the pollen parent) and transfer them to the stigma of another flower of the same genus (the pod parent).
You may need to experiment with a number of different pollen and pod parents before you find a combination that will produce a seed capsule that grows to maturity. If

you're using cymbidiums, prepare for a long wait, as the seed capsules will take about nine months to mature. Don't pollinate the flowers on those plants you intend to exhibit, as orchid judges disqualify inflorescences with pollinated flowers or missing pollen caps.

Disas are more suitable for impatient hybridisers like me. The pollinia are very large, and are attached to a sticky disc (called a viscidium), so it's easy to remove them. Also, the stigma is fully exposed for all to see, unlike that of many other orchids. Best of all, the seed capsules grow at an incredible rate, and mature in only six weeks. The seed capsules of Australian native dendrobiums are intermediate between those of cymbidiums and disas, in that they usually mature in three or four months. Even if you have no intention of raising the resultant seed, it's an interesting experience to watch the seed capsules mature and to marvel at the small size of the resultant seed. Give it a go, it's fun.

RAISING ORCHIDS FROM FLASK by Brian Milligan

Have you tried deflasking orchids and raising the seedlings to flowering size? It's not as difficult as you may think, provided that you follow one of the accepted procedures, and that you begin with one of the hardier genera. Yes, you may have to wait for four years before you see the fruits (flowers) of your labours. But, by buying several flasks each year and patiently sitting out the initial four-year gestation period, you will thereafter always have seedlings flowering for the first time for the show-bench competition. A word of warning here! Don't become too enthusiastic! Ten flasks each year amounts to at least 400 plants after four years, and one must have room to grow them. Australian dendrobiums and masdevallias don't take too much space, but 400 flowering-sized cymbidiums are another matter entirely.

So where do you obtain your flasks? Various commercial nurseries advertise flasks for sale in Orchids Australia and the Australian Orchid Review or you may find that some members of your own orchid society have sent seed to a commercial flasking service and have a flask or two to spare. Unless you're going commercial, I recommend hobby flasks, which contain up to 15 seedlings. Preferably the seedlings should be 40-50 mm tall, but more importantly the plants should have actively growing roots which reach the bottom of the flask. It's not advisable to deflask your seedlings in winter, as they will grow better in spring when the days are longer and warmer.

There are many different ways of deflasking. The one described gives good results with minimal fuss. Carefully remove the seedlings by inverting and gently shaking the flask. Then

wash the roots free of agar gel in a bowl of water at room temperature and allow the plants to dry on a sheet of newspaper for 30-60 minutes. Usually I plant the larger seedlings individually in 2-inch tubes, and the smaller ones in groups of 3-5 plants in tubes of the same size. Watering can be controlled more carefully if pots of the same size are used for all plants.

The choice of potting mix depends on the genus. A mixture of pine bark (5 mm) and river pebbles (4 : 1) is used for dendrobiums and sarcochilus, whereas Sphagnum moss is better for disas and masdevallias. Sieve the bark/pebble mix to remove dust and fine particles, and wash it with boiling water on the day prior to use. Both the bark mix and the moss should be damp, but not excessively wet. Water the newly potted plants to settle the mix. The plants maybe placed in a foam fruit box, which is then covered with a sheet of glass and placed in a cosy location indoors where the seedlings receive good light, but never direct sunlight. Alternatively, put the seedlings in one of those rectangular plastic trays (‘flats’) used by nurserymen and cover them with vented plastic domes, which are available at the larger nurseries. Keep the air vents closed for the first week or two. Spray the inside of the lid (but not the plants) daily to maintain a high level of humidity. After a couple of weeks open the air vents. Water the plants when the surface of the mix appears dry.

After a month, transfer the tray to a cosy location in your shade-house or glass-house, and in another week or two remove the dome. If at any time the seedlings seem to be damping off as the result of a fungus attack, act immediately. You must spray at once with a fungicide such as Benlate®, Fongarid® or Previcur®. Some growers spray their seedlings periodically with a fungicide as a preventative measure, but others fear that regular spraying helps pathogenic fungi to build up resistance to fungicides. Slugs or snails can eat a tray of seedlings overnight, so sprinkle snail bait nearby on a regular basis. Your tiny seedlings will need careful, regular watering for the first few months, but with care most will survive. When they flower, you will experience a real sense of achievement.

LAST THOUGHTS

- How do **cats** toast for 2026? With a **meow-ment of joy**!
- Why did the **pizza** throw a party? It wanted everyone to **have a slice** of fun!
- What did the **owl** say at midnight? Whooo’s ready for 2026?
- How do **ghosts** celebrate? They really know how to **spook the clock**!

If Undeliverable Return to:
The Hon. Secretary,
Maroondah Orchid Society Incorporated
P.O.Box 5076, Ringwood. Vic. 3134

NEWSLETTER

Collectors Corner/Garden World - You can get 10% off some items within the store by showing either your membership badge or membership card.