

MAROONDAH ORCHID SOCIETY

INCORPORATED

MONTHLY NEWS LETTER

Lycastes are orchids of the
New World Tropics and Subtropics



Lycaste Club Emblem

Volume : 49 - Issue : 9

Next Meeting: Friday – 16 October 2026

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

ITEM OF THE EVENING:

Terry Poulton – Cultivation of Cymbidiums

Topical Chat: AGM

Time: 8.00PM

Supper: Please bring a plate

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

Sales Table: Pots, stakes, labels and hangers – Leanne Le

President's Report

Once again, our Spring Show was a great success.

The quality of plants was excellent and the plant offered for sale were in great condition. Congratulations to all our winners and a very big thank you to the members who exhibited orchids. Also, thank you to the members (and their "other halves") who gave up their time to work at the Show - setting up on Thursday, providing food, entrance and raffle ticket sales, plant sales, managing movement through the venue, and cleaning up on Sunday afternoon. Without your help, we wouldn't have a show.

As some members are aware, I have completed my term as president and will be stepping down from that role and from the Society's Executive Committee. I have enjoyed being your president over the last three years and would encourage members to consider joining the Committee and perhaps taking on an Executive role.

Michael Chivell

REMINDER: Membership Renewal NOW DUE

Fees were due 1st July 2026 Fees: Adult (single) \$20.00, Family \$25.00, Junior (16 years and under) \$5.00

You can pay in person to Edith Yu-Chan

Or you can pay via direct debit to the following bank account – **BSB: 063167 Account number: 10107735**

Please remember to fill in the reference field with your name.

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: email leoorland@totalfundraising.com.au
Treasurer:	Ron Coleman (M) 0477 311 188
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
Website Manager	Heather Coleman
MOS Website Address	www.oscov.asn.au /mos
MOS Facebook Address	www.facebook.com/maroondahorchidsociety

Please Note: All prizes from the Spring Show, both major and minor, will be presented to winners at the October meeting.

MOS 2026 Spring Show



Club Stand



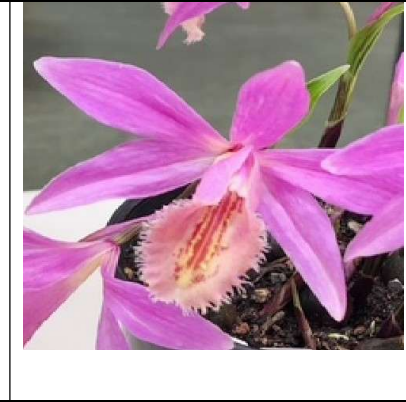
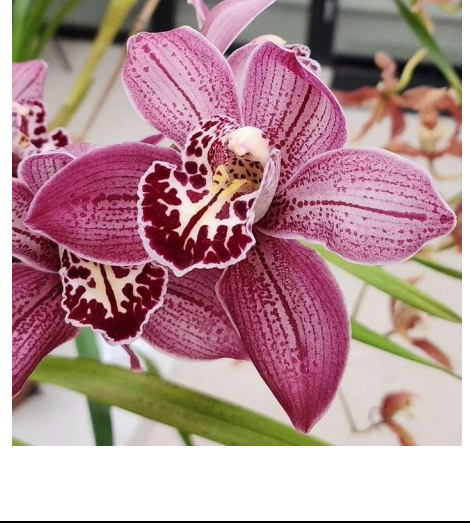
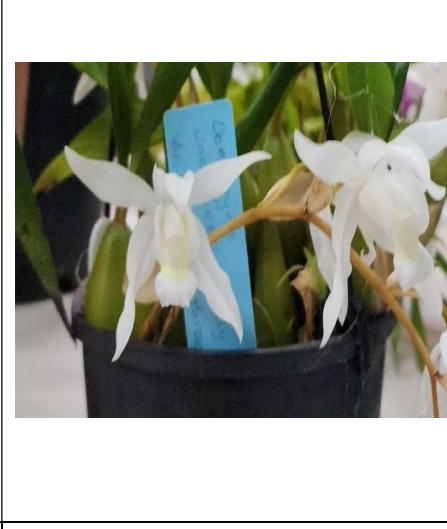
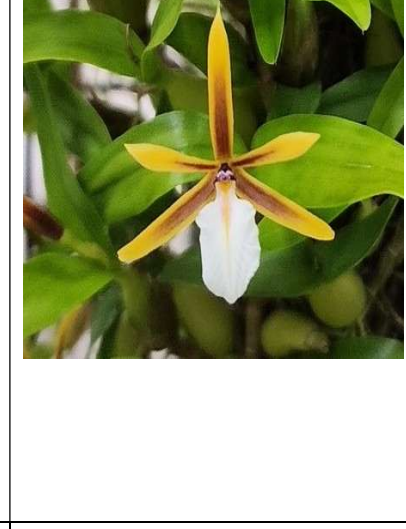


Congratulations to the 2026 Maroondah Orchid Society Spring Show Major Winners

PART 1 - MAJOR PRIZES	WINNERS
PRE- EMINENT ORCHID OF THE SHOW All sections & all classes	* K. Keily
GRAND CHAMPION ORCHID OF THE SHOW All sections & all classes	• G. McCully
RESERVE GRAND CHAMPION ORCHID OF THE SHOW All sections & all classes	* T. Poulton
CHAMPION CYMBIDIUM OF THE SHOW Hybrid/Specie All sections & all classes	* T. Poulton
CHAMPION AUSTRALIAN NATIVE and or Terete Style Dendrobium Orchid OF THE SHOW (Species or Hybrid) Excluding Sarcochilus All sections & Classes	• J. Wong
CHAMPION AUSTRALIAN NATIVE Sarcochilus Orchid Hybrid/Specie All sections & Classes	* G. McCully
Champion Coelogyne Hybrid/Species	* C. Gunawan
Champion Masdevallia Hybrid/Species	* J. Foster-Johnson
Champion Laelilnae Hybrid	* * C. Luth
Champion Oncidiinae Hybrid	* * D. Cannon
Champion Any Other Hybrid Orchid	* K. Keily

Champion Specimen Overall	* G. McCully
Champion Species Orchid Overall Excluding Australian Natives All sections	* K. Keily
Champion Seedling of Show All sections & all classes	* K. Keily
Champion Orchid by an INTERMEDIATE GROWER Intermediate section growers only	* Tu Le
Champion Orchid by a NOVICE GROWER Novice section growers only	* T. Pham
CYMBIDIUM ORCHID SOCIETY OF VICTORIA AWARD. The award is for an outstanding Cymbidium exhibit Which does not win a major prize. All sections & all classes	* L. Orland

Interesting Plants From the September Meeting

		
J. Wong's Cymbidium Little Sarah	J. Wong's Dendrobium falcorostrum	J. Foster-Johnson's Dendrobium Australian Rhubarb Pie
		
B. Clemson's Cymbidium Vogel's Magic	B. Clemson's Dendrobium tetragonum	J. Foster-Johnson's Plioene Ratata Sulphureum
		
S. Liu's Cymbidium Lady Angela 'Kedale'	S. Liu's Coelogyne Unchained Melody var. Alba	C. Gunawan's polybulbon

Points tally – 2026

Open	Points
J Foster-Johnson	116
S. Kappl	37
C Luth	28
D. Cannon	19
C. Gunawan	41
A. Baker	4
D. Weise	25
L. Le	11
G. Chivell	14
G. & M. Moffat	19
L. Orland	33
B. Clemson	23
J. Harnetty	42
J. Wong	4
R. Kasman	4
K. Keily	21
Intermediate	
Tu Le	30
Jenny Wong	23
R. & H. Coleman	8
Novice	Points
S. Liu	18
Y. & P. Lock	10
W. Han	13
R. Solowiej	4

GROWING SARCOCHILUS ORCHIDS IN THE MELBOURNE AREA

by Ted Elgood

Introduction. *Sarcochilus* species and hybrids provide an exquisite floral display, from the miniature flowers of *Sarcochilus hillii* to the very much larger flowers of hybrids such as *S. Melba* and *S. Judith*. The colour range, greatly extended in the last five years, now includes white, pastel pink to full red, yellow and orange, as well as flowers with beautifully patterned spots, splashes and bands. Shapes vary from the round, filled-in flowers of *S. hartmannii* to the round, open shape of *S. fitzgeraldii* flowers, the elongated flowers of *S. olivaceous* and *S. spathulatus*, and the starry or spider-shaped flowers of *Rhinerrhiza divitiflora* and its hybrids with *Sarcochilus*, adding to the beauty of this alliance. The primary purpose of this paper is to discuss the cultural conditions necessary to grow these orchids to their full glory.

Climatic Conditions in the Melbourne Area. The climatic conditions in the Melbourne area and particularly the Yarra Valley to the north of the city (where I live) can be summarised as follows :

January, February and March – hot days and warm nights; the days are long and bright, and the humidity generally low, particularly on days with strong northeasterly winds.

April and May – temperatures moderating, days becoming shorter, light intensity decreasing, humidity increasing.

June and July – cold days and night, occasional frosts, some mornings below freezing, humidity generally high, short days, dull light.

August and September – days warm, nights cool to cold, days longer, humidity generally high.

October, November and December – increasing day and night temperatures, increasing day length and light intensity; usually the wettest season.

My Main Orchid Growing Area is 15m long, 7m wide and 2.5-3m high. The long side faces east, while a work shed forms a large part of the western wall. The house is built using water pipe and fibre-glass for the walls and roof. This type of construction provides protection from rains and frost in winter and from the dry northeast winds in summer. No shade cloth is used between early May and early October, when maximum light is required. Doors in the north and south walls are kept open during the day to provide natural air movement. Fans, which run continuously, assist air circulation.

In the warmer months (October until May) sandstone shade cloth (70% shade factor) is used to moderate the light and heat entering the house. The southern wall is also removed then to improve airflow and to allow heat to escape. The floor of the house, which is covered with scoria, is kept wet to increase humidity and assist cooling. To maintain good airflow around the orchids, they are grown on wire mesh benches at a height of 0.9m above the floor.

Optimising Conditions for Growing *Sarcochilus*. Having established the basic housing for *sarcochilus* orchids, we can now look at some of the factors that influence their growth and flowering.

Light. Various *sarcochilus* species and hybrids have differing light requirements and this must be taken into account for successful culture. In my shade house there are four zones

with significantly different light levels.

Zone 1 – Plants at bench height near the eastern wall, where they receive bright light, particularly during the morning. This zone is most suitable for *Sarcochilus ceciliae* and many of its hybrids.

Zone 2 – Plants at bench height in the middle of the shade house, well protected from the western sun in the afternoon. This zone provides dappled light and is suitable for *S. hartmannii* and many of its hybrids.

Zone 3 – Plants hung below benches facing north, well protected from strong sunlight throughout the day. This zone provides plants with high humidity and low light levels and is suitable for *S. falcatus*, *S. fitzgeraldii*, *S. olivaceous*, *S. serrulatus*, *S. spatulatus*, *S. weinthalii*, *Plectorrhiza tridentata*, *Rhinerrhiza divitiflora* and selected hybrids.

Zone 4 – Plants hung below benches facing south. Plants receive only indirect light. This zone provides high humidity and lowest light levels. *Sarcochilus hillii*, young *sarcochilus* seedlings and plants showing stress are grown here.

S. dilatatus and *S. hirticalcar* are grown in a heated glasshouse maintained at temperatures above 9°C and at light levels approximating those of Zone 1.

Sarcochilus species are placed in the various zones on the basis of conditions in their natural environment, although some trial and error has been necessary to determine optimal conditions of growth and flowering for some. As might be expected, hybrids are more tolerant of their growing conditions and may do equally well in two zones. In some cases, however, one parent may dominate and thus influence the choice of the most suitable zone. For example, hybrids bred from *Rhinerrhiza divitiflora* grow much better in the lower light levels of zone 3 than they do in zones 1 or 2. A certain amount of trial and error is needed to determine the best zone for some hybrids.

Air Movement. Good air movement is vital to the successful growth of all orchids and every opportunity should be taken to use the natural airflow within the shade house. Fresh air is needed to maintain photosynthesis at maximum levels and to keep the root systems healthy. Good air movement also reduces problems caused by scale infestations and fungal infections. The most desirable level of airflow should result in gentle movement of the leaves, rather than violent disturbance.

Potting Mixes and Mounts. Those *sarcochilus* species that grow naturally as epiphytes are best grown on slabs. Under my conditions I find that tree-fern blocks or lengths of cork oak limbs (80-100 mm in diameter) give best results. These substrates retain some moisture over the course of a day and are preferable to hardwood panels and cork bark, which tend to dry out too rapidly on hot days. Some hybrids with vigorous root development also benefit from slab culture. For example hybrids bred from *Plectorrhiza tridentata* and *Sarcochilus hillii* have such massive roots that they are difficult to contain in pots.

For the lithophytes, such as *Sarcochilus hartmannii*, *S. fitzgeraldii*, *S. ceciliae* and most of their hybrids, pot culture is the best option. The potting medium must be open, allowing air circulation around the roots and providing excellent drainage. The medium should retain some moisture and not break down too rapidly. Experiments using 100% treated pine bark,

100% stones or pebbles, and various mixtures of the two have been performed. All mixes provided satisfactory results, provided the watering conditions were adjusted to suit each type of medium. However, best results overall were obtained with 50:50 blends of bark and stone.

The following table indicates the optimal combination of pot size and potting mix:

Pot Size Composition of Mix

50mm tubes up to 100mm squat pots equal parts of treated pine bark and pebbles (5-10 mm)

125-200mm squat pots equal parts of bark (12-15 mm) and pebbles of similar size

250mm pots and above 40 parts of bark and 60 parts of pebbles (both 20 mm)

A range of stones and pebbles has been tried over a number of years. These included scoria, heat-expanded basalt, expanded clay nodules, Versa Rock® and (recently) Absorba-Ston®. Versa Rock®, expanded clay nodules and Absorba-Stone® are all low-density, porous materials that absorb moisture. They all tend to keep the mix moist and provide a suitable environment for healthy root growth.

The scoria tended to decompose, eventually forming a mud-like sludge in the bottom of the pot, and its use was therefore discontinued. Heat-expanded basalt is a low-density material consisting of spherical balls. It absorbs water, keeping the mix moist but not wet. The results were excellent but unfortunately it became unavailable.

Versa Rock® has been used for three years with excellent results; its only disadvantage is that lumps larger than 5-10 mm are unavailable. Trials using Versa Rock® as the sole medium for growing *Sarcochilus ceciliae* have given excellent results. Root development has been very good, with little or no root loss, a problem often encountered in mixes containing bark.

Expanded clay nodules (a product used in hydroponics) have been tested for a year; they provide excellent root development and top growth.

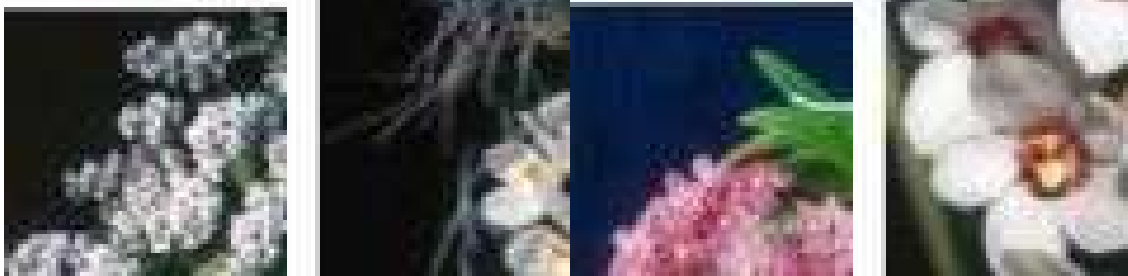
Absorba-Stone® has been introduced to the trial only recently. It is available in five grades, ranging from fine (suitable for seedlings) up to 25 mm lumps (suitable for large specimen plants). Initial results are promising but prolonged trials are needed to see if there are adverse effects from long-term use of any or all of these porous materials.

The main season of growth for *Sarcochilus* is autumn, although growth also continues through winter into spring. Growth perceptibly slows during summer. The best time to repot is in autumn and through the cooler months.

Watering And Feeding. Watering is a critical part of *sarcochilus* culture. As the plants do not have pseudobulbs to store water, it is necessary to water throughout the year. The aim should be to keep the plants moist at all times, but not wet. Under my conditions I water early in the morning three or four times each week in summer, once or twice a week in autumn and spring and once a fortnight or even less frequently in winter. Keeping the humidity high during summer by misting under the benches is important to reduce plant stress.

Feeding orchids is always a good topic for lively discussion. I believe that regular feeding is important to grow and flower *sarcochilus* orchids to their full potential. I use Peters Excel Hi K® at the rate of 300 ppm at each watering throughout the year. The pots are flushed with water every fifth watering to reduce the build-up of salts in the potting media. When I repot I sprinkle a small quantity of Zest® (treated chicken manure) just below the surface of the mix to encourage new growth.

Summary. *Sarcochilus* species and hybrids are fascinating orchids to grow. They produce masses of flowers in a range of shapes and colours. I hope that this article stimulates growers to investigate ways of optimising their growing conditions.



SPHAGNUM MOSS as a POTTING MEDIUM by Brian Milligan

Pine bark is undoubtedly the most common ingredient of orchid potting mixes, especially for cymbidiums, Australian native dendrobiums and *sarcochilus* but Sphagnum moss is gaining popularity as a potting mix for many other genera.

Sphagnum moss grows in swamps or bogs, where it may form layers many feet deep. It is widely distributed in the northern hemisphere but grows only in sub-alpine zones in Australia and New Zealand. The most common species, and the only one harvested commercially, is *Sphagnum cristatum*. It is found in mountain bogs in Victoria, New South Wales, the ACT and Tasmania. The growth rate varies between 4 and 42 mm per annum in Tasmania.

Dehydrated Sphagnum moss can absorb 10-20 times its weight of water. The moss is relatively sterile and for this reason it was used as a dressing for burns and other wounds during the first World War. It's believed to contain anti-fungal substances, and it is therefore a useful medium for newly de-flasked orchid seedlings. It dries out much more slowly than other potting media, and consequently doesn't need watering as often as other potting mixes.

The moss is usually supplied commercially either as dehydrated material or as living material straight from the bog. Dehydrated moss takes several days to reconstitute. To avoid breaking the strands, squirt the moss with water occasionally over a day or two before unravelling them. The moss is best stored in foam boxes kept in good light, and watered occasionally, preferably with rainwater. Material straight from the bog is ready to use immediately.

Any orchid that requires a fairly constant level of moisture seems to do well planted in moss. Masdevallias, odontoglossums and Colombian miltonias (Miltoniopsis species and their hybrids) grow better for me in potting mixes containing moss than they formerly did in pine bark. Disas, especially, grow better in moss than in other mixes.

Many growers prefer to use a mix containing both Sphagnum moss and crumbed polystyrene foam, generally in the ratio 2:1 or 1:1 by volume. It leads to improved drainage and also saves money. It's usual to cut the moss into 10 mm lengths before mixing it with the foam. I use 'straight' uncut moss for my disas but prefer a moss/foam mix for most other orchids. Squeeze as much moisture as possible from the moss before use. Then it doesn't need to be packed so tightly in the pot, because it swells when the plant is subsequently watered.

Moss is an effective potting medium only when alive. It's important not to apply high concentrations of liquid fertilisers, as these will kill moss. I suggest no more than a quarter of the manufacturer's recommendation (150-200 ppm). Heavily chlorinated water and water containing high levels of salt also kill Sphagnum moss. Melbourne tap water is satisfactory but rainwater is better. For best results plants should be re-potted annually. Otherwise the lower levels of moss gradually die and become soggy, causing the mix to drain too slowly.

Sphagnum moss is an effective medium for striking cymbidium back-bulbs and those of many other orchids. It can also be used to encourage root growth in Australian native dendrobium keikis. Another use is to revive sick orchids. Plants that have lost their roots should be repotted in moss in as small a pot as possible. After watering, the pot can be sealed in a plastic bag to conserve moisture, in which case no further watering is necessary. This treatment often leads to the growth of new roots. But not always – Sphagnum moss is a great potting medium but it can't work miracles!

ORCHID SHOWS 2026

Show	Date/Time	Venue
Ringwood/Yarra Valley	Sat 10 Oct 9-4, Sun 11 Oct 9-4	Public Hall, 590 Warburton Highway, Seville
Gippsland	Fri 2 Oct. Sat 3 Oct. Centre Hours	Mid-Valley Shopping Centre, Princess Highway
Bendigo	Fri 2 Oct 1-4, Sat 4 Oct. 10-3	Truscott Reserve 18 Murdock St California Gully
St Arnaud	Sat 10 Oct 9-4, Sun 11 Oct 9-4	Town Hall Napier St. St Arnaud
Colac	Sat 10 Oct 9-4, Sun 11 Oct 10-4	Colac Show Grounds Cnr. Bruce St & Princess Hwy
Cobden	Sat 16 Oct 10-4, Sun 17 Oct 10-4	Civic Hall, Victoria Street

Ballarat	Fri 16 Oct 12-5, Sat 17 10 – 4 Sun 20 10-3	Cooinda Community Centre 10 Learthmonth Rd Wendouree
MPOS	Fri. 17 Oct- 19 Oct, Bunnings Hours	Bunnings Mornington 1100 Nepean Highway Mornington
Bayside	Sat 24 Oct 9 - 5 Sun 25 Oct 9 - 4	Cranbourne Public Hall, 166-168 South Gippsland Hwy
Ringwood / Yarra Valley Orchid Society	Sat 31 Oct, 9-4, Sun 1 Nov 9-3	Public Hall, 590 Warburton Highway, Seville
Gippsland Sarc Show	Sat 7 Nov 9-4, Sun 8 Nov 10-3.30	Sale Agricultural Society Dawson Street Sale
Stawell	Sat 7 Nov 10-5, Sun 8 Nov 10-4.00	Senior Citizens Centre, Victoria St., Stawell
MPOS	Fri 13 Nov, Sun 15 Nov. Bunnings Hour	Bunnings Mornington, 1100 Nepean Highway, Mornington

LAST THOUGHTS

- Did you hear about the cashew and the walnut that threw a party when spring arrived? It was nuts.
- Did you hear about the girl that ate a frog? They say she's going to croak.
- How do birds know how to fly north in the spring? They wing it.
- Why did the cloud stay home from school? It was feeling under the weather.
- What did the ocean say when spring arrived? Nothing. It just waved.

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.

DISCLAIMER

Maroondah Orchid Society Incorporated, Executive and Committee will not take any responsibility for the results of any action taken on advice given or views expressed by any member or invited speaker at any meeting or show. Views and opinions in this Newsletter by authors of articles do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of Maroondah Orchid Society Incorporated or its Executive or Committee.