

The next Meeting of the
Cymbidium Orchid Club of South Australia Inc.
will be held on
Wednesday 22 April 2009
at the
Burnside Community Centre
401 Greenhill Road Tasmore SA

**Meetings are held on the 4th Wednesday
of each month February to November**

Visitors Welcome

Program

- 7.00 pm Auditorium opens, benching of plants and trading table
- 7.15 pm Beginners Class. Note early start time (All Welcome)
- 7.45 pm Viewing of Plants and Popular Vote
- 8.00 pm Official Opening and Presidents Report
- 8.15 pm Seedlings on the Show-bench
- 8.20 pm Workshop
- 9.00 pm Plant Raffle Draw
- 9.15 pm Popular Vote and Judging Results

THE NEW

CYMBIDIUM NEWS

Published by the Cymbidium Orchid Club of South
Australia Inc.

<http://www.cymorchids.com.au>

Print Post Approved PP 531637/00030



**JUDGES CHOICE—BEST OVERALL / BEST IN
FIRST DIVISION**

One Tree Hill 'Doris'
Grown by Peter and Jeanne Hall

Volume 10 Number 3 April 2009

The New Cymbidium News Vol 10 No 3—April 2009

The New Cymbidium News is published monthly – February to November inclusive and is the Official Newsletter of the Cymbidium Orchid Club of South Australia Inc

Contact: Peter Hall (Editor): pejeh@optusnet.com.au

President

Ray Brady
Locked Bag 1
Smithfield SA 5114
Phone 8252 3812

Treasurer

John & Yvonne Longbottom
12 Joanne Terrace
Parafield Gardens SA 5107
Phone 8258 3435

Secretary

Jeanne Hall
18 Coorilla Avenue
Glenelg North SA 5045
Phone 8294 5562

PATRON:
Leon van Rijn

Registrar of Judges

Ben Knobben
10 Carlo Street
Kidman Park 5025
Phone 8356 0215

Email: pejeh@optusnet.com.au

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Wayne Baylis	(08) 8235 0340	Senior Vice President
Graham Morris	(08) 8327 3955	Junior Vice President
Murray Weston	(08) 8337 6471	(1 Year Term)
Hazel Alsop		(1 Year Term)
Des Alsop		(1 Year Term)
Peter Hall	(08) 8294 5562	(1 Year Term)
Glenn Stearnes	(08) 8266 0471	(1 Year Term)

CONTENTS

President's Report -----	1
Bus Trip -----	2
Danger in Promoting Orchid—Mid Air Scare -----	3
Chuckie—Blog Archive-----	4
April Meeting—Workshop-----	15
Notice Board -----	16
Program for 2009-----	17

Advertisers Index

Valley Orchids -----	8
Pauline's Laboratory Service -----	8
Tom Burian Orchids-----	9

COPYRIGHT

All contributions in the New Cymbidium News, which have acknowledged authors, are automatically covered by copyright. We believe that most authors would be willing to allow free use of articles for publishing elsewhere if written approval is sought through the Secretary of this Club

SUPPER ROSTER 2009

Wednesday 25 March	Rosemary and Raelene
Wednesday 22 April	Rosemary and Raelene
Wednesday 27 May	Carmel and June
Wednesday 24 June	Glenn Stearnes
Wednesday 22 July	Pam Leske and Rosemary
Wednesday 26 August	Coralie Hime
Wednesday 23 September	Vacant
Wednesday 28 October	Vacant
Wednesday 25 November	Vacant

Please see Yvonne or Mary Heddle to include your name on the roster. All help appreciated—Thank you

PROGRAM 2009

Wednesday 22 April	Workshop (see page 15)
Wednesday 27 May	Charles Mausteller—early awards
Wednesday 24 June	John Norton—Nutri-Tech Organics
Wednesday 22 July	Judges Forum and Showbench
Wednesday 26 August	Kevin McLean—hybridizing and lab work <i>to be confirmed</i>
Wednesday 23 September	National Show Report
Wednesday 28 October	Kevin Hipkins—Tracyanum <i>to be confirmed</i>
Wednesday 25 November	Roger Herraman—canaliculatum—and Christmas Breakup

NEW MEMBERS

The Cymbidium Orchid Club of South Australia Inc
extend a warm welcome to:

Elizabeth Thomas—SA
Nathalie Ashwood—SA

NOTICE BOARD

WINTER / SPRING / NATIONAL SHOWS

Winter Show—Munno Para Shopping Centre

Sunday 12 July 2009 to Saturday 18 July 2009
Put-in—Saturday 11 July 2009 after 5.00pm

Spring Show—Westfield—West Lakes

Sunday 23 August 2009 to Saturday 29 August 2009
Put-in—Saturday 22 August 2009 after 5.00pm

National Cymbidium Orchid Show

Springvale—Victoria
Friday 4 September 2009 to Sunday 6 September 2009
Please see page 2 for proposed mini bus trip.

MONTHLY COMPETITION RESULTS AND PLANT WRITE-UP

Due to only one plant being shown at the March meeting there is no competition results or plant write-up in the issue of the New Cymbidium News.

The photograph of that orchid is on the front cover of this issue.

PLEASE NOTE HYPERLINKS

When the New Cymbidium News is viewed online through our website, the hyperlinks (in blue and underlined) are a direct link to either a website featured in an article (as in Chuckie's Blog) or to an email address. Just control-click on the link.

WANTED / FOUND

Don't forget our Wanted Section

Please contact: Peter Hall—pejeh@optusnet.com.au

Telephone: 08 8294 5562 or 0416 179 019



NEUTROG PRODUCTS

- *Strike Back for orchids 20 Kg bag* \$22
- *Sudden Impact for Roses 10 Kg pail* \$23
- *Sudden Impact for Roses 20 Kg bag* \$22
- *Seamungus 20 Kg bag* \$14.50
- *Sudden Impact for Lawns 20 Kg bag* \$24.50
- *Rapid Raiser 20 Kg bag* \$13.50

Please place your orders and payment with John and Yvonne Longbottom—(cheques to be made out to COCSA)

NB: product to be picked up from Graham Morris at Valley Orchids



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

March 2009

At the April workshop meeting, Wayne Baylis will chair the meeting, as I will be away on the Eyre Peninsula.

It was a disappointment to some members that the bus trip to Springvale failed to get sufficient people to partake and therefore had to be cancelled. However, Peter Hall is currently trying to organise an alternative type of trip and will advise members at the next meeting.

We have, in the past, asked members if they have any problems to approach a committee member so it can be sorted out without new members having to sit through it. This club is supposed to be a fun club with a common interest in growing and enjoying orchids, not having to sit through arguments, causing unrest.

The meeting workshop should suit all new members and learners, as there is no better way than to actually be doing something for oneself.

This year the financial situation has put shopping complexes under a great deal of stress and they are looking for different ideas to get people to buy. This may impact on the trading tables on our shows also, so we must try to make them as appealing to the public as possible. Most other clubs membership is decreasing; fortunately we are able to say we are not. A lot of work is being done, by the committee, to hold members interest and should you not like your program please let us know so that we can do something about it. We have had a little feedback and this has led to some changes to help all members. Our secretary, Jeanne Hall, continually updates our web site, so that members can keep abreast of everything that is happening.

To all members, enjoy the next meeting and support your club.

Ray Brady—President

BUS TRIP

The bad news is that we didn't have sufficient members for a 46 seater bus. The good news is that I have investigated the cost of hiring a mini bus. On average, it's about \$130 per day to hire a 12 seater mini bus. I chose the 12 seater bus because you only need a car licence to drive one, it also means that the driving duties can be shared.

The only thing that worries me is that if the bus / buses left on the Friday night it would mean driving all night. I would not like to see that. I would prefer the bus / buses to leave on Friday morning. It would mean an extra night's accommodation but I would feel a lot happier with that.

The committee have agreed that the club pay for the hire of the bus / buses which means the members would have to pay for the fuel, accommodation and the dinner only.

These suggestions by me are only suggestions. It really is up to you the members to decide if mini buses are the way to go and to decide on the timing—departure and return.

Peter Hall—pejeh@optusnet.com.au



DANGER IN PROMOTING ORCHIDS—MID AIR SCARE

Thought our members might like to share a scary moment or two, which I experienced on Friday 3 April.

I was travelling to Launceston, Tasmania, to present an Orchid Workshop, for the Devonport Orchid Society, on Saturday 4 April. I flew out of Adelaide, stopped off in Melbourne, and then flew on to Launceston. There was very bad weather in Melbourne, and the flight left Adelaide late.

We left Melbourne about one and a half hours late, after a very scary flight into Melbourne (more later). About twenty minutes or so into the Launceston flight, there was two loudish noises, about 5 or 6 seconds apart. They sounded similar to the noise often heard, when the wheels are retracted and knock into their final, flying position – no cause for worry. Five or 6 minutes later, the pilot announced that we were to return to Melbourne, because we had been hit by lightning. After turning, we were hit again, this time, a lot louder, but still without hardly disturbing the aeroplane. Five minutes later, we were hit again, this time even louder, and this time with a strong light

APRIL MEETING WORKSHOP

After many requests, we have programmed a workshop for the meeting on 22 April. We are very conscious that older members will have seen many sections of the workshop. However, newer growers need lots of basic information if they are to progress in the club. With this in mind, we have changed many of the presentations and included some new ones, which even the most experienced growers should find very interesting and useful

Topic	Presented by	What to expect
Deflasking	Moss Bray	How to plant out a tissue culture flask
Dividing a plant	Geoff Spear	Demonstrations of dividing a large plant
Judging	Ben Knobben	Explanation of our judging system
Hybridizing	Pauline Hockey	How to pollinate a cymbidium. Tips and information on her program
Tissue Culture	Kevin Western	How new plants are produced using amazing procedures
Private collections	Wayne Baylis	Photos of some of our members growing & building types houses and construction methods
Virus Testing	Graham Morris	How to use a virus test kit. What to do to ensure virus free plants

Members will be asked to form small groups to watch each demonstration. Each demonstration will take about 7 or 8 minutes and will be repeated 6 times, so everyone can see each demonstration. Questions will be encouraged.

Members can bring a part of a leaf to be tested for virus. The piece of leaf needs to be at least the size of a 10c piece. Ensure you remove it with clean cutting instrument. There will be a charge of \$10 per test. A limited number of test kits will be available to members at the meeting. A special price of \$10 will apply to kits purchased at the meeting. Future kits, will cost at least \$12.50 (depends on the Australian dollar). Limit of 5 per member initially. More available at completion of meeting if some are unsold. It is intended to purchase more if required, later.

Don't miss this meeting. We expect lots of newcomers to attend. Pass the word around to anyone looking to learn the orchid growing basics (and more)



Cymbidium Jean Brummitt
(devonianum x eburneum)




Cymbidium Miss Muffett
(devonianum x floribundum)



Cymbidium Langleyense
(devonianum x lowianum)



Cymbidium (not yet named)
(devonianum x faberi)

Posted by Chuckie at [7:17 PM](#) [1 comment](#) 
Saturday, September 27, 2008

Permission given by Charles Mausteller to reprint his article posted on his website. Charles will be guest speaker at our May club meeting. Don't forget to go to our website and check out these photographs in colour. <http://www.cymorchids.com.au>

flash. The plane continued on, with no apparent damage. We landed safely in Melbourne, with a minimum of fuss. However, the press were there to interview passengers, and the TV reported that there was an emergency landing. Reports were that several passengers were injured. In reality, everyone was very calm. I can not imagine that anyone was even slightly injured. The old lady sitting just one seat from me (age 94), thought when she got off the plane, she was in Launceston. She had not heard the announcement of the plane returning to Melbourne, and certainly had not felt any significant flight problems.

**It was amazing that the press reported (Australia wide), an emergency landing, which was really, nothing.
However – there is more.
No-one obviously told them about the flight into Melbourne.**

As I said earlier, it was late leaving Adelaide. When we attempted landing in Melbourne, we could see that there had been lots of rain recently. Paddocks were badly flooded. It was then announced that landing would be delayed and we would have to circle Melbourne for a while. We ended up circling for about one hour, and conditions were horrible. The plane went up and down violently. If we were not strapped in, we would all have hit the ceiling many times. It also shook very violently from side to side. It was just like the footage of some of the doomed flights we see in the TV series, Air Crash Investigation. It was very scary. We did land safely after an hours delay, and on landing most of the passengers, spontaneously clapped the Captain for a long time. I guess they were very happy to be safely on the ground.

I thought it amazing. There were no press reports. I guess the press were not told. It was a lot worse situation to be in, than the next flight which was struck by lightning. We eventually did arrive safely at Launceston, but over 5 hours late. There was a drive to Devonport of about one and a quarter hours. We had our evening meal at midnight.

At Melbourne Airport, on the way back, I met another passenger who had travelled to Launceston from Adelaide (via Melbourne). He had it even worse. He sat alongside a young lady, who had a very upset stomach, during the rough entry to Melbourne. She filled her paper bag, and could not get another, because the cabin attendants could not leave their seats. Don't think it would have been nice around those seats.

I guess I was lucky!

Graham Morris—April 2009



Chuckie Blog Archive

- [▼ 2008](#) (8)
- o [▼ October](#) (2)
- ✦ [Cymbidium Alexanderi 'Westonbirt'](#)
[Cymbidium devonianum primary hybrids](#)

[Cymbidium Alexanderi 'Westonbirt'](#)

Some plants are just steeped in mystery and romance. There is the legendary [Rafflesia arnoldii](#) that purportedly has the largest flower in the world. This giant flower, up to 1 m across and weighing in at 10 k grows in the deepest darkest rainforests of Malaysia, Sumatra and Indonesia. *Rafflesia* adds to its mystery as it is parasitic, living its life inside the stems of the grape relative *Tetrastigma*. The flowers burst through the sides of the plant stems in the same manner as the alien emerged from the humans in the movie *Alien*. As if this plant did not have enough weirdness about it the flowers just had to smell of rotting meat and be pollinated by blowflies.

The orchid world is resplendent with stories of fantastic plants that have been found once in some far-flung jungle and never to be seen again. [Paphiopedilum sanderianum](#) was found in 1885 in Borneo but the specific location was never recorded. This bizarre flower has twisted hairy petals that grow up to a metre in length. Imagine a flower stem with 6 flowers with long, flowing hairy tresses. The plant equivalent of Medusa! Some plant freaks go so far as to suggest that these long hairy petals are ladders, up which the insect pollinators climb. It was not until 1978 that it was rediscovered. The only proof that this plant existed was a beautiful drawing. Some botanists went so far as to think and, God-forbid, say that it may have been a hoax. The plant still grows in a highly protected national park in Borneo. Oh, you can also buy a 2.25 inch pot for \$125.00

The genus *Cymbidium* is not immune from both real and imagined mysterious plants. *Cymbidium sanderae*, or *Cymbidium parishii* var *sanderae* as it is more widely known, is a classic. It is not really clear where the plant actually comes from. The location on the original label does not exist. The specimen sheet that represents the type specimen is a mixture of flowers from different plants, giving the impression of a hybrid swarm. *Cymbidium sanderae* was lost to cultivation and in the wild until it was discovered in a greenhouse in California. That original plant was propagated and colchicine treated to convert some of the progeny into tetraploids. The diploid and tetraploid forms are now grown widely throughout the world but have still not been relocated in the wild. The plant freaks starting to question the validity of *C. sanderae* as a species as they are wont to do with long 'extinct' plants.

My pictures have a way to go before they have the finesse of hers but I am getting better at it. My task this weekend was to take pictures of the many *Cymbidium*s that are flowering at the moment. I like to keep a record of all my plants.



Cymbidium Vogelsang
(devonianum x insigne)

My collection, as I have mentioned before, is of the 'not the usual' type of *Cymbidium*. Although beauty does come into the equation when selecting plants for the collection, my interest is heavily focussed on species and primary hybrids. I actually find the species, primary hybrids and less complex hybrids much more interesting than the highly bred types



Cymbidium Devon Parish
(devonianum x sanderae)

that are much of a muchness. I am fascinated how character traits are passed on in primary hybrids. Below are a few of *Cymbidium devonianum* primary hybrids (hybrids between two wild species). All of the pictures below have been taken by myself this weekend except for the picture of *Cym. Tiny Tiger* that was provided by my



Cymbidium Tiny Tiger (photo by Julian Coker)
(devonianum x tigrinum)

friend Julian. If you click on the picture it should bring it up to a much larger size. Notice that the cell structure is clearly visible on some of the flowers. The speckling of *C. devonianum* flowers and pendulous flower spikes are pretty dominant as well. I hope you enjoy!

spikes. That is \$130 - \$180 per year per plant and she had dozens of plants! This was big money in 1970. I was lucky enough to inherit the *Cymbidiums* and other orchids that Florence had and luckily by then I had my own greenhouse to put them in.

So what has this got to do with *Cymbidium devonianum*? Hanging in the corner of the cool greenhouse were several redwood slatted baskets filled with a *Cymbidium* much different to the others sitting firmly on the ground in their terracotta pots. These hanging *cymbidiums* had leaves about 4-5cm wide and about 30cm long shaped like long bent spatulas. The upper half of the leaf was broad and rounded on the end, flopping over slightly. This wide section tapered abruptly into a narrow petiole-like section that was bolt upright and held the broad section well above the basket giving an impression of a bunch of green banners on sticks. Even stranger, the flowers did not rise up above the foliage like their terrestrial relatives growing on the benches under them, but plunged through the osmunda fibre in which the plants were growing and out through the slats at the bottom of the basket. The flowers were not very pretty to a 12-year-old but held a strange somewhat creepy fascination. There were basically green, spotted with brown on the sepals and petals with two purplish-red spots on the sides of the lip. I am not sure if it was the flowers or the particular spot where these plants were growing but I distinctly remember the not overly pleasant smell. This smell could of course have been the deposits of one of the numerous cats that would spend their time in various spots in the greenhouse, especially this shady corner with a thick growth of Holly Fern (*Crytomium falcatum*).

Many years later I learned that this hanging *Cymbidium* was indeed *C. devonianum* a relatively rare, highly distinctive *Cymbidium*.

Unlike many of its relatives it primarily grows on rocks (lithophytic) and only occasionally on trees. It sends its unusually thick roots through the thick covering of moss on the rocks and spreads its flowers spikes along the top of the moss. It grows in mountain areas in Nepal, north-east India, through to Thailand, Vietnam and the very western parts of China (Yunnan).

Unfortunately, my plants are not in flower at the moment, it will be a month or so before they open. You can easily find pictures of *Cymbidium devonianum* on the net. It almost seems as if there is a competition on the web to get a picture of a plant with as many flower spikes as possible. It is a habit of this plant to flower its little head off.

What got me started on the subject of this post is that my friend Sue is giving me lessons on how to photograph plants properly. You can see her pictures of my plants [here](#).

Anyone that has had even a passing fancy for *Cymbidium* hybrids and their parents would know that *C. Alexanderi* 'Westonbirt' is by far the most famous stud plant, having sired or carried literally hundreds of progeny. Most of the large-flowered *Cymbidium* hybrids and an increasing number of the more modest-sized hybrids can trace back to *C. Alexanderi* 'Westonbirt'. I won't go into the history of this plant as this plant is probably the most written about *Cymbidium*. Suffice to say it has it all, beauty, fertility, fame, fortune, bred on the estate of a famous aristocrat and awarded a First Class Certificate by none other than the Royal Horticultural Society. No story is complete without a bit of skulduggery and a few questions about breeding!

So let's get to the parents of *C. Alexanderi*. The listed parents are *C. eburneo-lowianum* x *insigne* but things are never as straightforward as what they seem. Getting more specific we find out that the parents are *C. eburneo-lowianum* 'concolour' x *insigne*. Now you ask, 'Why does the insertion of 'concolour' make a difference?'. Well, you see, *C. eburneo-lowianum* 'concolour' is a hybrid between the species *C. eburneum* and *C. lowianum* 'concolour'. 'So?', you ask. This is where the dodgy breeding comes in. *Cymbidium lowianum* 'concolour' is a freak wildling that has a problem. It has faulty chromosomes that don't go through meiosis properly. What this means is that some of the progeny may have twice as many chromosomes. This is what has happened with *C. Alexanderi* 'Westonbirt'. While most of the *C. Alexanderi* grex were diploids, several turned out to be tetraploids. Tetraploids tend to be larger overall compared with their diploid siblings. *C. Alexanderi* 'Westonbirt' created an absolute sensation when exhibited at the Royal Horticulture Societies orchid committee and was immediately awarded. But let's back up a bit here. The grex *C. Alexanderi* was made many times using slightly different parents. Siblings were also crossed with each other. All this breeding resulted in a wide range of colours from pure white albinos through yellows, pinks and murky reddish browns all using the same 'species' in the same proportions.

Several of these alternative *C. Alexanderi* were also awarded. All went quiet on creating *C. Alexanderi* until recently when Andy Easton tried to repeat the cross using improved parents. His results are spectacular but nothing has resulted that approaches *C. Alexanderi* 'Westonbirt'.

Why would anyone want to re-create *C. Alexanderi* 'Westonbirt'? Put quite simply, the original plants were held quite tightly by the original owner in England. Unfortunately, most of these original plants became infected with virus and had to be destroyed. Now I am not one to look for the benefits of war, but the Second World War may have saved the life of *C. Alexanderi* 'Westonbirt'. With the likelihood of the destruction of London and the rationing of all things during the war, some of the large estates sent their prized plants to friends in far-flung regions of the British Empire. *C. Alexanderi* 'Westonbirt' was one of these plants. Thankfully, some of these pre-war plants were virus free.

A few of these plants went to a grower in Canada. From there, divisions were sent to Australia and found their way into the collection of a very wealthy and very private gentleman. His gardeners were very meticulous and kept this man's collection of awarded plants in very good condition. Near the end of this man's life, he passed on divisions of his prized plants on to another wealthy and, interestingly enough, very private man. Neither of these men had the slightest interest in the commercial orchid trade having made their fortunes through business for the former and by being a surgeon for the latter. The surgeon, a good friend of mine, called me up last year and asked me to come over. Normally, it is me that rings him! This got my mind thinking he had gotten a new lot of plants that he wanted me to see. The truth was much more exciting.

When I arrived at my surgeon friend's house we had the obligatory cup of tea, chocolate biscuits and chat. He then started to talk to me about his health. He is well past his seventieth birthday. He mentioned that his heart had been playing up and that the doctors had to 'zap' him a few times to get the beat regular again. This had encouraged him to think of his future, his much younger wife's future and what was going to happen to his plants. He was kind enough to say that he had written me into his will. I was to have first dibs on his collection of species. This was a very nice gesture and I must admit, slightly overwhelming to be told this before someone's death. I felt honoured that he would trust me to carry on his legacy. I had seen his plants many times and his collection of species contains almost all awarded clones. The greenhouse is meticulously clean and the plants are well grown and virus-free. Any new plants are quarantined and tested before they are allowed into the main greenhouses.

What happened next shook me. Did I mention this surgeon is a very private person? He keeps a lot of secrets and the one he was about to reveal was a stunner. He took me to a greenhouse way down the back of the property that I had never been to. Actually, I did not even know it was there. He unlocked and opened the door. What was inside was amazing. There were three long benches running the length of the greenhouse, the one in the middle double-wide. It contained only Cymbidiums, all grown to specimen size except for a small group of a few dozen smaller pots on one of the side benches. It was like going back in time. The plants were all grown in terracotta pots and meticulously groomed. The floor was covered in clean algae-free concrete creating an almost surgical cleanliness.

As we walked down the edge of one of the benches, I asked him what these Cymbidiums were. FCC's he said. Yep, he had made a collection of only FCC Cymbidiums. and had been doing so since he was a young man.

One particular plant caught my eye, a plant I had only seen in pictures. Yes, it

Cymbidium devonianum primary hybrids

People grow plants for all sorts of reasons. When just a teenager I had the pleasure to work for a nursery woman named Florence Bertermann. She was an eccentric old cuss. In 1936 she graduated from Bryn Mawr college near Philadelphia where she had majored in horticulture. Shortly afterward she met a nice serviceman and planned to get married. A Bryn Mawr graduate getting married at that time was a highly unusual occurrence due to the politics of the day. Did I mention that Bryn Mawr College was a women's only college? Thankfully, or maybe not, Florence's fate intervened and she did not get married. The war took her servicemen. She was so 'broken-hearted' (her words) that she never again even dated a man. Interestingly, she kept a picture of her serviceman, I never did know his name, on the wall above her television.

Florence, being a woman of means, did however hire an African-American man-servant named Lee who took care of her until the day she died in 1976. There was an uncanny resemblance to the story portrayed in Driving Miss Daisy going on between these two. Florence and Lee set up a nursery business together near to Bryn Mawr in the then rural Newtown Square. She grew and hybridized a great many hardy shrubs and trees and maintained some beautiful glasshouses full of exotic plants. By the time I met Florence most of her outdoor nursery was overgrown and more like a jungle. She did still sell plants though. My job was to look after the greenhouses.

The greenhouses were just magnificent for a 12 year old boy. On either end and along the back of one of the 'tropical' greenhouses were exotic creepers that she harvested the flowers from to sell to florist shops. Most of the back wall was covered in the amazingly fragrant Stephanotis (*Stephanotis floribunda*), a beautiful pure white Hoya-like flower 4cm wide with a long floral tube, the flowers being produced in clusters of 20 more. Stephanotis is a classic, or at least was a classic, flower for wedding bouquets. At the far end of the greenhouse, climbing all the way to the gables, was an intermingled mass of Scarlet Passionflower (*Passiflora racemosa*) and Bleeding Heart Vine (*Clerodendron thompsoniae*).

The cooler greenhouses were less interesting, basically used to house plants that were just outside their range of hardiness and of course for the seasonal bulbs that would be hoisted out of the cold frames just in time to flower for Easter or Mothers Day. One bench of the greenhouse contained a large number of Cymbidiums, again used for cut flowers. It is interesting that even to this day I can remember the name of one that I particularly loved. This stunner of a Cymbidium was Lowell Swisher, a clear buff colour with red spots on the lip. Florence taught me the value of Cymbidiums with this plant. Even in 1970 she was getting \$1.50 apiece for the flowers. Lowell Swisher commonly produced 15+ flowers per spike and her bigger plants had 6-8



C. Alexanderi 'Westonbirt'

was C. Alexanderi 'Westonbirt' . I asked him where he had gotten it. He told me the out of England to Canada to Tasmania story. He had inherited his older plants from the Tasmanian man in the 1960's. Then he mentioned that Dr. Don Wimber had seen the plants in the 1960's or 70's and had confirmed its identity. This shocked me as I didn't think he was social enough to have known many people in the orchid world. This helped me to believe him that this C. Alexanderi 'Westonbirt' was the real deal.

More recently, my friend has had another turn. Unsurprisingly his first priority was to ensure that his wife will be well looked after. More surprising is that he is almost equally concerned about his collection of awarded Cymbidiums. I visited him this weekend to catch up. Again he rang me not the other way around. No Tea and biscuits today. He was in the mood for a good chat. He even berated me for being fifteen minutes late. A quick pass through the species house and straight to the Cymbidium house. Door unlocks and in we go. This time bypassing the specimen plants and right to the smaller plants. There it is, C. Alexanderi 'Westonbirt' in full bloom in an 8" pot. He reaches down, picks it up and hands it to me. He repeated this with half a dozen other famous plants. I still have not come down from the excitement. I ask him if he was trying to give me a heart attack.

Now I have a dilemma. I have to build a greenhouse like his. I would like something with a concrete floor, brick base and aluminium and glass top. Oh, and a lockable door. My finances are nothing like my friend's. For the moment, my new plants are locked in my potting shed.

When I got home I had to quickly get a photo of C. Alexanderi 'Westonbirt'; partly to prove it was real and partly to capture it for posterity. I had never seen a real plant and I could touch and look at this one to my hearts content. Most, if not all of the pictures I had seen, looked nothing like the original painting done on the day it was awarded at Greycoat St. London, SW1.

The first photo below is reproduced courtesy of the Royal Horticultural Society, London (Orchid Committee) . It shows a painting of a single flower of C. Alexanderi 'Westonbirt' on the day it was awarded, 14th march 1922. The other three are photos of plant in my potting shed. Have a look at the upper flower in the photo with two flowers. Remarkably similar to the drawing from the RHS. Even the petals are folding in just the same way. I wonder how long it will take me to settle down?

See page 10 for photographs.

Posted by Chuckie at [10:23 PM](#) [2 comments](#) 

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2008



PAULINE'S LABORATORY SERVICE

FOR ALL ASPECT OF CYMBIDIUM
TISSUE CULTURE

CONTACT PAULINE OR KEV McLEAN

PHONE... (08) 8386 0430

POSTAL ADDRESS... 13 WENTWORTH ST.
MOANA
S.A. 5169

EMAIL.... pkmclean@arcom.com.au

**Valley Orchids Lot 8 Wheaton
Road McLaren Vale South Australia**
Phone 08 8327 3955 Fax 08 8327 3966
Mobile 0419 823 724

**** New Postal Address ****

P.O. Box 143, McLaren Vale, Sth. Aust 5171
**Open by appointment and Saturday morning
during flowering season**

Lots of new releases and seedlings now available

Including mericlones of National Show Champion 2004 -

Valley Olympic 'Pink Perfection'

Email – graham@valleyorchids.com.au

Homepage – valleyorchids.com.au

Tom Burian Orchids

**RSD 87 Lot 25 Heinjus Road
STRATHALBYN 5255**

**NURSERY OPEN WEEKENDS ALL
YEAR ROUND**

**OTHER TIMES BY APPOINTMENT
ONLY.**

LOTS OF NEW RELEASES

**CONTACT TOM BURIAN
ON 0412 391 989**

FOR FURTHER DETAILS.