

# Orchid Society Of Mauritius

July—Sept. 2017

Issue No 2 / 2017

*The Orchid Society of Mauritius is affiliated to American Orchid Society*

## From the Editor's Desk

Dear Member,

The second half of 2017 was as eventful as our first. It was indeed pleasing to note the high attendance of members for all the events. The three main ones were: the celebration of the 37th Anniversary of the Society, the Annual Show and the End of Year gathering.

During the past semester, the Society also prospected ways and means to facilitate new plants acquisition by our members with satisfactory results.

Prompted by the AOS Affiliated Societies Committee, we initiated our first 'Kids Corner' at our annual orchid show, with the objective of sparking interest for orchids among children. It was a good start with a lot of promises.

We very much look forward each year to welcome international guest-speakers for the benefit of our members. We had in November last the opportunity of hosting a talk by Dr. Michael Duncan on Australian indigenous orchids.

## 37th Anniversary Celebration

Members of the Orchid Society of Mauritius congregate every year towards the end of August to celebrate the Society's anniversary. This year, the latter was held at La Nouvelle Potinière Restaurant, Curepipe. Around sixty members and guests attended the function. The plants displayed that evening had very beautiful blooms and were extremely eye-catching.



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The Orchid Society of Mauritius was founded in August 1980

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Some of the members and guests who attended



Prize winners: S.Catherine, P. de Robillard, and D. Isari. The President M S. L'Ecluse is on the right.



A few of the beautiful orchids on display

## 37th Annual Show

The 37th Annual Orchid Show was held on the 7th and 8th October 2017 at the Audi Zentrum in Réduit, . One hundred and twenty attractive specimens from members' collections were on display. Every year several members of the Orchid Society team together to promote orchids by bringing out their best plants in bloom at that time of the year. Members also provided the visiting public with free lectures and advice to increase knowledge about orchid culture.

Traditionally, the Orchid Society organizes a competition among exhibitors to stimulate their participation. A panel of judges then have the delicate task of selecting the best from each of the genus of orchids exhibited. Prizes offered by our sponsors are afterwards remitted to the winners during the opening ceremony.

This year, for the first time, we operated a 'Kids Corner' during the show, whereby children aged between 5 and 12 voluntarily participated in an orchid initiation workshop. The latter was animated by a dedicated team of orchid enthusiasts, who are themselves members of the Society. 24 children attended the four sessions held over the two days duration of the show. They were introduced to a selection of common orchid species and given basic knowledge of where and how they grow in nature. They learnt how to pot an orchid and they all took home their potted orchid, with a certificate of attendance. The feedback from their parents were very positive and encouraging.

It was also an opportunity for those visiting the show to acquire orchid plants from commercial growers and to receive advice from knowledgeable members. Visitors had also the opportunity to attend lectures on the basics of orchid growing.

# 37th Annual Orchid Show



Opening ceremony - G. Bax (MC ), S. L'Ecluse (President), James Ngan Chief guest.



Guests at the opening ceremony



A view of the display area



Another view of the orchids on show



S. L'Ecluse - *Ren. Philippinensis*



G. Fayolle - *Guarianthe skinneri*

The Orchid Society was pleased to have Mr James Ngdan, the Director of Allied Motors, as chief guest for the opening ceremony.

Nine challenge shields were awarded for the best of each orchid group and 24 prizes were remitted for the best of each orchid class. John Davy led the team of judges who were: Francis Montocchio, Cedric Affouye, Gerard Leung For Sang.



C. Bellouard— *Den. Black Beauty*



S. Devasagayaum — *Miltoniopsis Princess Diana*



G. Leung For Sang — *Bulb. Corolliferum*



J. Ramma — *Phal. Han Ben's Girl*



P. de Robillard — *Gomesa recurva*



D. Isari — *Dtps. Minho Princess*



J. Nieva — *Paph. Delenatii*



M. Bellouard — *Cym. Sarah Jane White*

## Kids Corner activities at the annual orchid show



A big thank you to Chantal Chung and Brigitte Perrin for their valuable collaboration and enthusiasm in the design and running of the kids corner. They were assisted brilliantly by Josiane Félix, Marie-Claire Foo Kune, Anastasia Hosanee, Jacqueline Novel and John Davy. It was a most enjoyable experience for all of them and for all the participants.

# End of Year Dinner and Talk by Dr. Michael Duncan

The end of year dinner of the Orchid Society took place at Le Jardin de Beau Vallon, Mahebourg, on Friday 24th November. The timing and venue of this event were planned so as to coincide with the short visit of Dr. Michael Duncan, who offered to make a presentation on Australian indigenous orchids.

The event was well attended and the talk was most interesting. We are very grateful to Dr. Duncan for sharing his knowledge with members of the Orchid Society.

On that occasion, the shield for Orchid Member of the Year 2017 was awarded to Jay Ramma in recognition for his valuable contribution through out the year.

The challenge shield for the Champion of the 2017 Show , which was also remitted that night, went to both Sandhya Devasagayam and Jay Ramma, ex-æquo.



# Members' Expression Corner

## Article 2

Dear readers, in our last edition we came across a series of questions pertaining to our cherished plant, the orchid. We shall start off this second article by answering the first two of these questions:

*How does the number of species of orchids compare to those of other organisms?*

*What distinguishes orchid flowers from those of other flowering plants?*

### How does the number of species of orchids compare to those of other organisms?

Before answering that question, it will be appropriate to distinguish between an *orchid species* and an *orchid hybrid*. Broadly speaking, *species* are native orchids that grow in nature somewhere in the world. The natural habitat might be forest canopies and floors, tree branches, cliffs, swamps etc. A hybrid, on the other hand, is the result of breeding one orchid with a different orchid. The process is usually referred to as hybridising or 'crossing'. Although, an infinite number of hybrids can be made in the lab, there are a definite number of species existing in nature. The *Phalaenopsis* hybrid sitting in your shade-house or veranda has a family tree that can be traced all the way back to the original species from which they were bred.

One should note however, that Nature too can produce hybrids when different species of orchids produce an offspring.

As mentioned in our last article, there are currently more than 25,000 species of orchids!

To put this number in proper perspective, consider the fact that it equals the number of bony fish species, it is more than twice the number of bird species and it is nearly four times the number of mammal species.

By all accounts, that is a huge amount!

The largest orchid genera in decreasing order are: *Bulbophyllum* (2000 species), *Epidendrum* (1,500 species), *Dendrobium* (1400 species) and *Dendrobiums* (1200 species). Compare these orchids to other common genera like *Phalaenopsis* (about 50 species only) and *Oncidium*s (around 330 species).

### What distinguishes orchid flowers from those of other flowering plants?

So what is so special about the orchid flowers? What property of these flowers makes them instantly recognizable?

Firstly, unlike most other flowers, orchids are *zygomorphic*. "What on earth does that mean?" I can hear you ask. Well, if you look at Figure 1 below, you can see that the *Phalaenopsis* has only one vertical axis of symmetry (see the black dotted line). The parts of the orchid on the left of the line matches nearly exactly the parts on the right of it: they mirror each other about the black line. Easy!

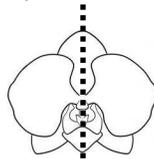


Figure 1: Orchids exhibit only one vertical axis of symmetry

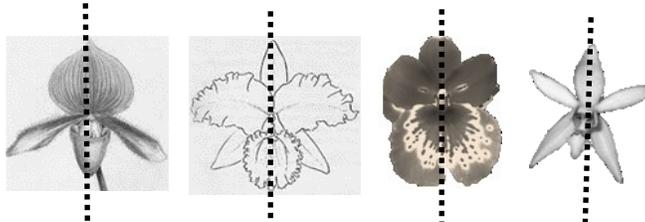


Figure 2: Overwhelming majority of orchids have only one vertical axis of symmetry

You are welcomed to have some fun and check this property with all of your other beloved orchids. As an additional exercise, you can try to identify the orchids from the flowers below. Answers will be given in our next edition of the Newsletter.



3a

3b

3c

3d

3e

3f

*Figure 3*

The fact that a large majority of orchid flowers exhibits zygomorphism can have far-reaching consequences. These will be explored in my next article. Stay tuned and happy orchid-growing!

**Jay Ramma**  
December 2017

## Culture Notes

### **Wet summer threats**

We have experienced a very wet season lately. These conditions are ideal for the development and spread of several infectious diseases in our growing area. The best thing to do is to spray our plants preventatively with a suitable fungicide, e.g. Funguran.

One should ensure that susceptible species, e.g. Phalaenopsis are kept dry at night and also that there is a good ventilation in the growing area.

Remove already affected plants and quarantine them, after a suitable curative treatment.

There is nothing more frustrating than losing a cherished orchid plant. Good Luck to you all !