

TENTH ANNIVERSARY YEAR

POLLINIA

NEWSLETTER OF THE IRISH ORCHID SOCIETY

Volume 10, Issue 2

An Geimhreadh

January 2012

Cumann Magairlíne na hÉireann



Nollaig Shona agus Athbhliain faoi Mhaise

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Una Breathnach

POLLINIA

(pol-LIN-ee-uh)

The compact packets of pollen found in orchid flowers. Plural of *Pollinium*.

Waxy pollen clumps or grains usually found in the anthers of most orchids; often yellow, distinct, and found under the pollen cap of the column.

Pollinia contain the male reproductive cells.

Latin *pollin-*, stem of pollen "fine flour, dust."



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**Cumann Magairlíní
na hÉireann**

SOME UNUSUAL
TERRESTRIAL
ORCHIDS

NERVILIAS

If you like to grow orchids that do not look anything like an orchid, try growing a selection of Nervilias. They come in various sizes, shades, colour, and texture. They are small and fit very well into 3.5" to 4" pots. When they are resting, you can put stack them up under the bench or in the cellar.

At this point, I'm betting on the smallest being *Nervilia crociformis* based on its eastern origins. However, I think *N. punctata* is also a very strong contender based on the leaf.





Nervila plicata

This is probably one of the more common *Nervilia* in cultivation. It took me some time to figure out how to grow these terrestrial orchids:

1. Pot in a light well draining and aerated mix. Light loam with some peat/humus and perlite/pumice is fine.
2. Water generously during the growing phase when new leaves appear. Stolons and runners will also be produced. Small new white tubers start to form underground.
3. Reduce watering when the leaves start to brown or die back. The underground tubers harden. Interconnecting stolons dry up.
4. Water once a week during dormancy. The mix should be marginally moist. How much moisture can a 1-2 cm diameter tuber holds over 8-12 weeks?
5. With good care, you should be able to double or triple the corms each year.

The leaves are quite variable. The photo above and below are those of the same clone growth in 2008 and 2009 respectively.

It is a very widespread species with a range from Deccan, India all the way east to New Guinea and extends north to southwestern China and south to northern Australia. The recorded localities are concentrated in the tropical monsoon belt. So far, I have not come across it in habitat. It surely blends in with leaf litter in deciduous forest.



Nervilia aragoana



This appears to be another form of *N. aragoana*; it comes from Taminbar Island towards the eastern end of the Indonesian archipelago. The leaves are very close to *N. aragoana* from Thailand . With care and a bit of luck, would expect it to flower in the next growing season.

Below is a lush pot of a Malaysian form three months after I wrote the entry above:



Nervilia aragoana



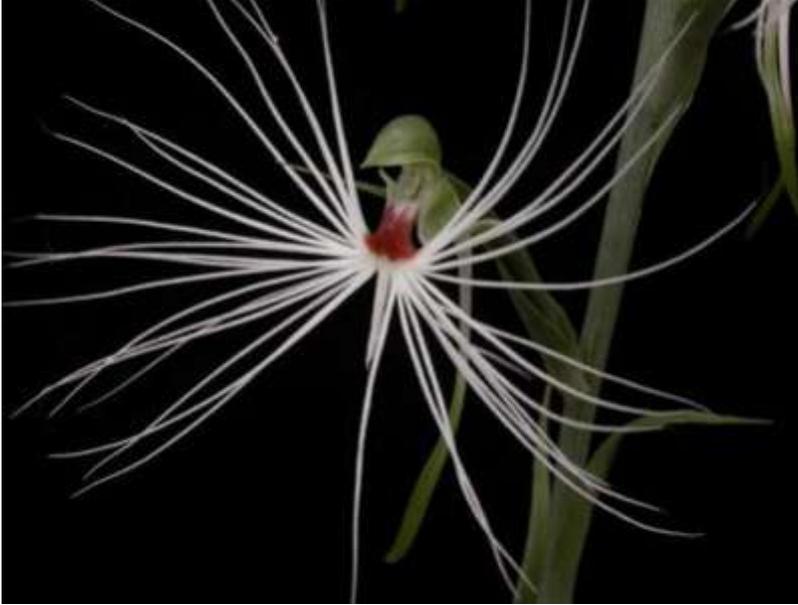
An unfolding leaf

My beautiful *N. aragoana* originates from peninsular Malaysia, which is in between the two extremes of India and Pacific Islands. It is like a miniature Gunnera or Petasites from cool temperate zone contained in a 4" pot. During the growing season a new leaf grow from a underground globular tuber; as the leaf mature and "harden", new-stolon like root runners grow from the base of the leaf stalk into loose humus rich soil to form new tubers.

It is an easy terrestrial orchid that require generous watering and humidity during the vegetative growing season and a bit of a dry-out between watering during the dormant stage. Depending on origins and habitat and general health of the orchid, the leaf can range from 2" to 7" across. The flowers are nothing much to talk about. Since I've only a single clone. it seems to have an ability to self pollinate for the last few terminal flowers to propagate ifself when cross fertilization mechanism is not available.



Nervilia aragoana



Pure Beauty - *Habenaria myriotricha/medusae*

This is a jaw-dropping beauty from Laos or Thailand. I've seen it once in Bangkok and that beautiful memory stayed with me. Recently, I was very lucky to purchase what I suspected is a *H. myriotricha* plant from a local orchid nursery. They had imported some plants from Thailand in preparation for a plant exhibition *cum* trade fair. Keeping my fingers crossed ... and it turned out to be the plant of my dreams.

According to Seidenfaden, there are 3 species - *H. medusae* from northern Sumatra, *H. myriotricha* from Thailand/Laos and *H. beccarii* from Sulawesi.

H. medusae and *H. myriotricha* are almost identical while *H. beccarii* has broader and shorter fringes on the side lobes. Knowing that my plant originated from Thailand I'm sticking to *H. myriotricha*.

The inflorescences is erect and measured 40-50 cm tall from ground. Each flower is about 3 cm across, with long graceful thin fringes on the side lobes and a long spur.



Habenaria myriotricha/medusae

Again this is a deciduous terrestrial from monsoon belt - Indochina, northern Sumatra, Sulawesi, with a very distinct dry/wet season. When the plant is growing, water generously and feed it with dilute fertilizer regularly to promote strong growth and flowers. After flowering, once leaves begin to yellow reduce watering as the plant prepares for dormancy by withdrawing starch from the leaves and stem to form the tuber. Slowly, water less and less. Once the tuber is fully formed, it can be kept dry for about 3-4 months.



Habenaria lindleyana

This is a beautiful *Habenaria lindleyana*. The parent plant featured went into dormancy in December 2007 forming 3 tubers: one large and two small. These second generation tubers have once again grown very nicely and rewarded me with a beautiful crop of flowers!

Due to accidental neglect during a hot spell and an attack of spider mites, the larger plant has aborted flowering and has since gone into dormancy forming a new single tuber.



Oeceoclade calcarata

This is probably one of the more commonly offered *Oeceoclades* species in the orchid market. I got my from Burleigh Park Orchids an Australian nursery by sharing a shipment with other local orchid hobbyists. Once again, the label says it is *O. decaryana*. Many other offers and photos on the web suggest it is *O. calcarata*. This is my first and oldest pot of *Oeceoclades*. And one of the most prolific growers with multiple growing points. Even the bud on top of a old pseudobulb is capable of giving rise to an new offset - bottom right.

It is extremely succulent and drought tolerant with very strong thick roots covered with exceptionally spongy velamen. Unfortunately, it is flower shy; a firm identification will have to wait. Garay & Taylor* mentions that the type specimen is without precise locality, probably again from deciduous forest of northern or western Madagascar.

The Genus *Oeceoclades by L. Garay & P. Taylor in *Botanical Museum Leaflets*, Harvard University, Vol. 24, No. 9



Oeceoclades spathulifera

This is species very closely related to *O. calcarata*. In my view, without flowering this orchid, it would be more appropriate to classify it as different colour variant of *O. calcarata*. The leaves are very thick, the surface is hard and shiny as if coated with clear varnish. The thick, hard pseudobulbs are distinctively 4-angled. I got it when it was a seedling and it came with a label *O. spathulifera*. It would not be wrong to say that it comes from the deciduous-scrub of western Madagascar.



Oeceoclades roseovariegata



I received this beautiful form of *O. roseovariegata* (page 11, bottom) through plant exchange. It is originated from "Berevo", which i presume is a village marker for locality. The cryptic reddish-marbled tessellation is regal. The leaf surface is also rather unusual for an orchid, it seems to be covered with a very fine felt or has minute projections. It is not "hairy". The type species comes from near Diego Suarez, Montague des Francaise.

Leaf margins are not as undulating in comparison.

The flowers are small, odourless and insignificant. My self-pollination attempt was a failure. Given it's locality up in the northern most tip of Madagascar, reckon it should in theory get more rain and therefore can tolerate more water. At this point with only one pot, I'm in no hurry to push it for faster growth.



Oeceoclades roseovariegata



Questioned Species

I received this *Oeceoclades* seedling from Isobyl La Croix when she offered seed-raised orchids for sale at least five years ago. The label suggests *O. ambongensis* which I had assumed to be correct. Only last year did I manage to Xerox a copy of the paper titled **The Genus *Oeceoclades*** by L. Garay & P. Taylor in *Botanical Museum Leaflets*, Harvard University, Vol. 24, No. 9. It is a taxonomic paper that suggests a need to split *Oeceoclades* from *Eulophia*.

A note under *O. ambongensis* = syn *E. ambongense* caught my eye: "related species of *O. maculata* alliance". Looking through a couple of available papers.. it appears that my *O. ambongensis* have more affinities to *O. decaryana*. I cannot rule out *O. ambongensis* because I was not able to get hold of the original description of *E. ambongense* in an old obscure botanical publication!



Oeceoclades peyrotti

I went to the 2007 Johor Orchid Show without expectation; but was really lucky and managed to pick up an unexpected gem *Oeceoclades peyrotti*. The vendor was selling six month old seedlings out of flask. He had purchased this flask of new offering while attending some orchid conference or meeting in France (or somewhere in Europe I do not recall.) This newly described species has been around since 1974, recollected again in the 1990s and was growing in collection of Jardin des Cedres at St Jean Cap Ferrat in Southern France. Again, it is a species from the dry deciduous forest of southwestern Madagascar. **

As I was able to successfully nurse from two to four pseudobulbs, it has paid back my small investment. Cultivation is not different from the other *Oeceoclades*: it does need to dry out between watering. Potting in very coarse free-draining inorganic mix of rocks, lime or charcoal ... basically any coarse filler material, and filling interstitial space with finer sand or humus.

**** Contribution à l'étude des Orchidaceae de Madagascar et des Mascareignes. XXXI. Espèces et combinaisons nouvelles dans les genres *Oeceoclades*, *Eulophia* et *Eulophiella*.** J. Bosser & P. Morat. *Adansonia*, Sér. 3 2001. 23(1): 7-22.

Pectecilis susannae

This is a very famous orchid. It is found in the monsoon belt of Southeast Asia and into S. China, with a very distinct dry and wet season. The natural habitat is seasonal grasslands, in soil pockets named it after his wife in his book *Flora of Ambon*:

“...in memory of her [Susanna] who when alive, was my first companion and helpmate in looking for herbs and plants, and who was also the first one to show it to me.”

Currently it is very rare in the wild and equally rare in cultivation. It is rare in cultivation probably because of its very specific growth/dormancy requirements and growers tend to treat it like most other orchids which require year round watering. Like *H. lindleyana*, after flowering this species dies down to a tuber resting for a few months before a new shoot will emerge from the soil. At this point, watering can be resumed. It likes to be grown in sandy clay enriched with high potash and phosphate. The mix must retain moisture and must be well drained.

The plant grows vigorously for three to four months before flowering developing a tall stem; the stem should be supported if necessary avoid toppling over resulting in unrecoverable damage to basal stem jointed to the tuber. Watering should be slowly reduce as leaves and flowers dries up to prepare for tuber development and dormancy. Some water should still be given to soften the mix and aid tuber development.





Eulophia andamanensis

Chances are you can find pseudobulbs of this species at general herbal, tuber, & bulb store at Bangkok's renowned Chatuchak market. *Eulophia andamanensis* is a widely distributed species throughout Thailand, into Indochina (Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam), Myanmar (Tenasserim) and also Northern Malaysia. My gut feel is that it can adapt and spread on disturbed forest or grasslands just like *Spathoglottis plicata* occupying degraded land in Malaysia and Singapore.

Four or five years ago this guy in my neighbourhood gave me a fistful of pseudo-bulbs from his sad rotting clump. It thrives under general succulent care, i.e., if the plant is in leaf I water, else I don't. Over the course of two years, the pseudo bulbs spread to fill two 12 inch pots. Typically, it stays dormant for about four to five months.

Only recently did it flower under severely underpotted conditions. There appears to be two colour forms (light green and brown) in the clumps.

TULEAR

[An odds & ends collector of small plants for a limited growing space. Someone who is always on the look out for plants in niche and cranny. An Engineer in the Refining Sector based in Singapore.]

DONEGAL WILDLIFE

A REGULARLY UPDATED PICTORIAL NARRATIVE OF
THE WILDLIFE AROUND RAPHOE, CO. DONEGAL



Ants farming aphid for honeydew

The Spotted Orchids are now well advanced, Nearing 1,400 species, with many specimens to be seen. The first is a good 'clean' Common Spotted Orchid:

This second specimen - which was growing very nearby - has features of both Heath Spotted Orchid (the frilly lower lip, with only a hint of a central tooth) and also Northern Marsh Orchid (the dark background colour)



Common spotted orchid

As I was examining the orchids, I spotted an *Eristalis* hoverfly attempting to nectar. I realised I had to work quickly, so I rattled off a few shots, and was rewarded with this fine shot of the hoverfly with the attached pollinia from the orchid:



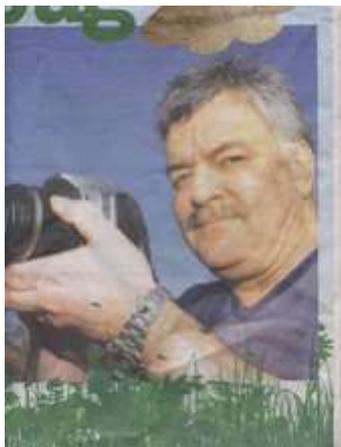
Eristalis hoverfly



Common spotted orchid



Hybrid spotted orchid



Common spotted orchid

At the March 5th meeting, Stuart Dunlop will be our featured lecturer (see **Calendar**.)

Stuart is a passionate naturalist and a skilled photographer so a visual feast is anticipated.

<http://donegal-wildlife.blogspot.com/>

RECENTLY IN FLOWER IN THE NATIONAL BOTANIC GARDENS***Thunia marshalliana***

A native of India, Thailand and S. China, this orchid is found in the ground, on rocks and in tree forks. It is named for an English orchid enthusiast (Marshall) who lived during the 1800's. There are about six members of the genus *Thunia*, but this is probably the most popular species in cultivation.



It is grown in a cool house and, like all other other orchids here at Glasnevin, it is fed a weak solution of seaweed extract regularly during the growing season. It is considered a giant sized erect terrestrial, with tall fleshy, robust canes (pseudobulbs) or jointed stems, that are enveloped by leaf sheaths. The leaves themselves are pale green and drop off in the winter, leaving a bare stem. During the winter months it is watered just enough to keep the stems from shriveling. It can also be lifted out of the pot, cleaned and left on a tray in the dark until the new shoots appear at the base of last years stems. It begins to grow in early spring and can reach up to 60cm (2ft) in height. When you see the new shoots appear it's time to pot the stems.

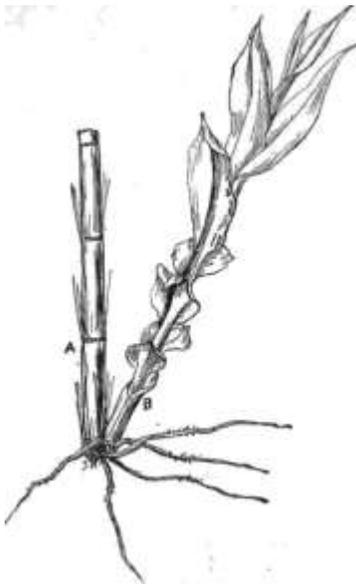
A fine to medium grade compost is used and the plants are kept in medium shade. It flowers in mid-summer on a terminal and drooping inflorescence, it can have up to 12 large, showy, fragrant, short-lived flowers. This year several of our plants produced 1-4 flowers.

This orchid is prone to producing *keikis* (baby plants) which will drop off naturally as the cane matures. These can be grown in the same manner as a mature plant.

It is possible to propagate new plants by cutting the mature stem in to lengths (3-4inches) and placing on a tray of sphagnum moss mixed with sand.

MARIE HOURIGAN

[Editor: *Thunia marshalliana* always blooms around Christmas time in Australia]



A, Old stem showing fibres from joints.

B, Young shoot with roots at base (1/4 natural size).

'WARM SPRING' BRINGS MORE ORCHIDS TO WALES

Orchid increase could be due to the warm weather during the spring.

A nature reserve near Caernarfon has recorded its highest orchid count for 25 years.

Conservation charity Plantlife Cymru counted just under 3,500 butterfly-orchids at Caeau Tan y Bwlch.

The final total was 3,495, more than double the 1,439 orchids in 2010.

The native white orchids were found in eight of the reserve's ten fields. In one field, where no more than ten orchids have ever been recorded, there were an astonishing 304.

Conservation manager Dr Trevor Dines said the "fantastic" fluctuation in orchid numbers could be down to the warm weather during the spring.

"Greater butterfly-orchids are gorgeous with a faint vanilla scent but have disappeared from many sites across the UK," he said.

"Orchid numbers do fluctuate and they will have liked the warm spring but such a huge increase is a real vote of confidence in the management we have introduced here over the last few years with the North Wales Wildlife Trust."

Orchid numbers at the reserve have been increasing steadily with 335 in 2008, 953 in 2009 and 1,439 in 2010.

Although the warm spring weather is said to have contributed to the growth of the orchids, other measures have been introduced to encourage wild flowers to thrive.

Hay-cutting has been reintroduced to suppress vigorous grasses and large areas of gorse are now covered in orchids after being cleared.



WILMA RITTERSHAUSEN, 1939-2011

We are very sad to announce the death of Wilma Rittershausen who passed away peacefully in Torbay Hospital on 26th August, eleven months after her brother Brian.

Wilma was one of the second generation of orchid growers to run our nursery with Brian and their father Percy. She retired from nursery work to concentrate on orchid writing and together with Brian they co-wrote over twenty books on orchids.

There are not many orchid enthusiasts who don't own a book by these most prolific of orchid writers. They were jointly awarded the RHS Westonbirt Medal for Literary Achievements in Horticulture in 2010. Wilma was also well known as the Editor of **The Orchid Review** for many years and was a former RHS judge.

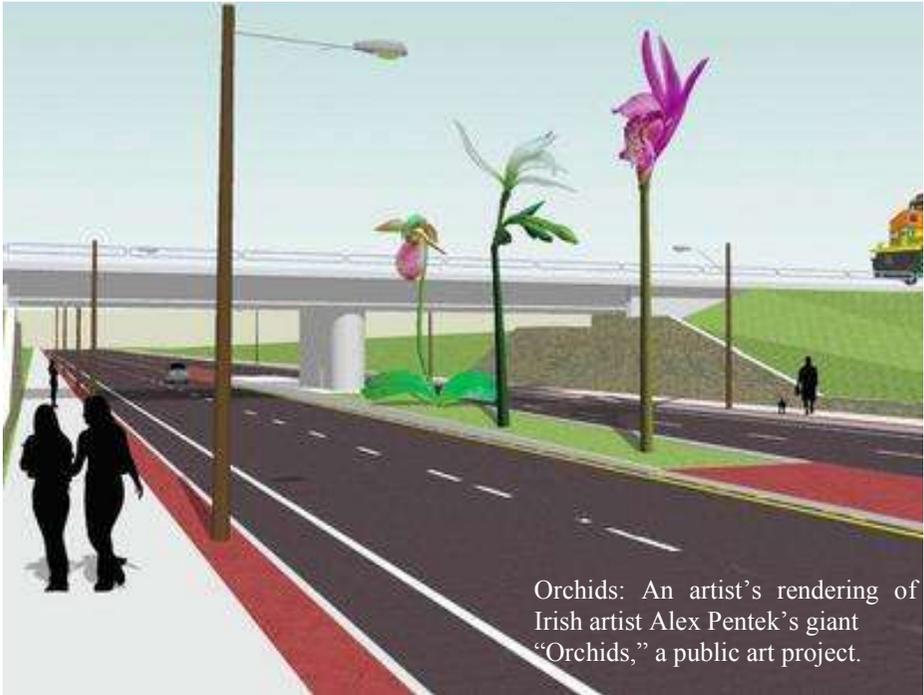
Burnham Nurseries Newsletter, September 2011

Books Authored by Brian and Wilma Rittershausen

- **Orchids for Every Home** - Wilma Rittershausen and Brian Rittershausen
- **Orchids** - Wilma Rittershausen
- **The Complete Book of Orchid Growing** - Peter McKenzie Black, Wolfgang Rysy, and Wilma Rittershausen
- **Complete Book of Orchid Growing** - Peter McKenzie Black and Wilma Rittershausen
- **The Gardener's Guide to Growing Orchids** - Wilma Rittershausen
- **The Gardener's Guide to Growing Your Own Orchids?** - Wilma Rittershausen
- **Growing & Displaying Orchids: A Step-By-Step Guide** - Wilma Rittershausen, Gill Oakey, and David Oakey
- **An Illustrated Guide to Growing Your Own Orchids** - Wilma Rittershausen
- **Introducing Orchids** - Wilma Rittershausen and Brian Rittershausen



Ar dheis Dé go raibh a hanam



Orchids: An artist's rendering of Irish artist Alex Pentek's giant "Orchids," a public art project.

IRISH ARTIST SCULPTING GIANT ORCHIDS FOR NEW UNDERPASS

An Irish artist hopes to provide 'an ant's-eye view' of three giant orchid sculptures he's creating for Burlington.

Alex Pentek is visiting locally to do research for his submission *Orchids*, a public art project for the median near the new Upper Middle Road underpass.

The artwork will consist of three six-metre-high orchids, native to this area, made from bronze and painted stainless steel. Fibre optic and LED lighting elements will also be included in the sculptures.

"They're going to definitely stand out," said Pentek. "I'm hoping the work will contrast with the built-up infrastructure of the site, with its organic form."

He wants to offer an ant-level, forest viewpoint of the orchids.

"It will remind us of our place in the broader picture. I hope it works well," he said.

The C\$100,000 cost for Pentek's Orchids public artwork is accommodated as part of the original project budget for the Upper Middle Road underpass.

Pentek has been searching diligently for live versions of three local orchids that his one-ton sculptures will depict. The varieties are Pink Lady Slipper, Dragon's Mouth and the Three Birds or Three-Headed Orchid.

He met a Royal Botanical Gardens team to view pressed and refrigerated samples of these orchids and plans to obtain photos. He also met with artist Georgian Guenther to view her smaller representations of orchids.

Pentek said the growing season for his orchid varieties is probably over, but he'll also check the Royal Ontario Museum collection.

The County Cork resident is intrigued by the dainty Pink Lady Slipper, with roots that extend a metre in either direction.

"Where does the plant stop and where does the earth begin?" he said. "It's symbolic of our connection to living organisms and the earth."

Pentek said LED and fibre optics will provide points of light on the sculpture flower heads similar to water reflecting or dew drops. "There could be a slight glow."

He said the orchids will have bronze bodies and be anchored similar to streetlights. Pentek's itinerary also included visiting Upper Middle Road, meeting public art managers and engineering department staff.

"Metal is great. You can do anything with it," said Pentek. "It really excites me to work on a sculpture and get engineering and fabrication teams involved and make it happen."

"Visually, they have to have some sort of bearing on the surrounding area for the work to have some sort of meaning for passers-by," he said.

Pentek's works have ranged from a 12-ton steel hedgehog to an 8 x 1.5 metre sheet folded into a seemingly endless series of patterns.

The artist was brought to the island of Tasmania in Australia to exhibit the latter work.

Pentek has returned to Ireland to create scale models and detail technical drawings to start the project.

The finished artwork will be transported here from Cork via Montreal, with final assembly slated for spring 2012. ●

SOME ORCHID (AND OTHER) CHRISTMAS TREE ORNAMENTS



ORCHIDS ON THE INTERNET

Today many of us spend more time using the internet than watching television.

For the orchid hobbyist this amazing communication medium has permitted instant access to an infinite amount of information and opinion that no reference book could ever provide. The emergence of online orchid nurseries allows us to obtain almost any orchid species or hybrid in less than week.

The internet nursery phenomenon coupled with cheap mass-propagation technology has enabled anyone to have the sort of collection that yester year would have taken a lifetime to gather. Just as importantly the websites produced by societies and individuals have united the international community of an estimated 4.5 million “orchidophiles”.

You can even watch videos about orchid topics on You Tube. Our own society website has been viewed thousands of times by people around the globe and we receive many complimentary letters such as that from a school girl from South Carolina in the United States who was using our website as the basis of a school project.

For those new to orchids the two indispensable online gateways to knowledge have to be www.orchidwire.com and www.orchidspecies.com. Amongst many other things, www.orchidwire.com lists the number of orchid websites per country.

From personal experience I can recommend two German online nurseries; www.schwerter-orchideenzucht.de and www.orchideenwloedarczyk.de both of which have given consistently good service for me with reasonable shipping costs to Ireland of about 20 euro.

Ebay also gives tremendous access to plants for sale from individuals. Remember that no importation certificates are required from shipments between EU countries but it is illegal to import plants from outside the EU without the appropriate documentation.

Orchid website presentation is increasingly impressive. I have many favourites but I think Laneside Alpines in the UK (www.lanesidealpines.com) have done an especially fine job even having birdsong in the background while you browse giving the whole experience of being in the countryside.

I think in terms of sheer passion, artistic expression and education value the best orchid website I have seen is that of the lovely Swedish lady Karma Forester with her

individually run site www.orchidkarma.com. She regularly updates photos and information via her blog while in describing the evolution of her jungle vivarium in her two bed roomed apartment in Gothenburg!

Finally, remember to keep up to date with society news in our own websites.



SHANE KERR

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The bright red flowers of the "Christmas Bell" heads some lists of plants called "Christmas Orchids."

Dendrobium lawesii (left) is nicknamed the "Christmas bell" because it produces clusters of bright red to purple flowers which look like bells.

Another Christmas orchid is *Calanthe triplicata*, which is often called the Christmas Lily. This is a very large orchid with pleated leaves which can reach up to 90 cm tall and 18 cm wide. *Calanthe triplicata* produces beautiful white 3 cm flowers.

These flowers cover the inflorescence,

Finally, there is *Artorima erubescens* from Mexico. Flowers are 3.5 cm wide and fragrant.

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JANUARY 2012

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30	31					

January- No Meetings**February 6th 7pm** - "Musings from the Orchid World"

The above talk will be presented by Brendan Sayers and shall be followed by a Pleione sale at bargain prices, all proceeds of which will go to society funds.

March 5th 7pm - "The Bigger Picture: Wildlife on Your Doorstep"

Stuart Dunlop will give a talk on Donegal wildlife including orchids. Stuart is a passionate naturalist and a skilled photographer so a visual feast is anticipated.

You may read more about Stuart and view his stunning photographs on his internet blog:
<http://donegal-wildlife.blogspot.com>

FEBRUARY 2012

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MARCH 2012

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