

# The Backbulb

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The Carmel Orchid Society

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## January Speaker Gavin McDonald

Gavin is a Senior Lecturer and acting Head of Department, in the Department of Nature Conservation at Mangosuthu Technikon, KwaZulu-Natal (Durban), South Africa. Gavin was born in Cape-town in 1963 and moved to the KwaZulu-Natal area in 1968.

In 1968 he completed a Masters Degree on the taxonomy and biogeography of orchids in and around Durban. Gavin studied for a BSC (Honours) in 1985 looking at taxonomy and biogeography of *Disa* and *Eulophia* (the largest genera of geophytes in South Africa). He is currently working on a Doctorate in molecular systematics of the genus *Stenoglottis*.

In 1981 Gavin started collecting orchids and now has a modest collection of orchids, mostly species with a handful of indigenous orchids. "I have plans in place to expand my collection to a commercial scale within the next 3-5 years with a special interest in the *Vanilla* and, to a lesser degree, *Phalaenopsis*."



*Eulophia streptopetala* -Africa

Gavin qualified as a South African Orchid Council Judge in 1989. Has served as President of the Umhlatuzana Orchid Species Club and is on the committee of the Natal Orchid Society.

He has been Chairman of Judges for the KwaZulu-Natal judging region, served two terms as National Vice-Chairman and one term as National Chairman of Judges for the South African Orchid Council. Gavin is involved in the training of judges and was one of the task team instrumental in introducing the new National training programme for judges.

And he has served as a corresponding member of the AOS conservation committee (for Africa) for many years. Gavin is going to speak on "South African Indigenous Orchids" and will have examples of species of most of the South African genera of orchids, with some habitat shots and cultural hints thrown in.

Please join us and welcome Gavin for what should be a most interesting evening.

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## Disa Culture

This culture for the better known Disa species and hybrids which grow in winter rainfall areas around Cape Town, South Africa. The main species of interest are *Disa uniflora*, *D. racemosa*, *D. tripetaloides*, *D. aurata*, *D. cardinalis*, *D. venosa* and *D. caulescens*. These are all terrestrial orchids which are associated with perennial water. Many other Disas are known, though few are commonly cultivated and many grow in drier conditions and have very different cultural requirements (e.g. *D. sagittalis*).

**Media** – Disas need excellent drainage, a neutral to acidic pH and a constantly moist, aerated medium. There are different ways of achieving such conditions. Long fibered New Zealand sphagnum moss is excellent, as is Super-sphag, consisting of NZ sphagnum fines. Both benefit by mixing with some coarse Perlite or shredded Styrofoam to keep the medium buoyant. Coarse sand (not beach sand!), sometimes mixed with peat or fern fiber works well for some growers. Screened fine or medium pumice with a small amount of Super-sphag or chopped sphagnum pieces, and a pinch of charcoal is a useful mix for use in hydroponics.

**Pots** – For mature plants, 7 to 10 cm square plastic pots are fine; for seedlings, smaller pots are ok. Pots should be reasonably deep to conserve moisture and allow room for the roots and tuber. For specimen plants, bigger pots up to 15 cm square can be used. Netting pots with NZ sphagnum as a medium can be used to encourage vegetative multiplication of valuable clones.

**Water** – Water quality is absolutely critical in Disa culture. The water should have a low concentration of dissolved mineral salts and should be low in chloride and fluoride. Some tap water is ok, but most is not. Rainwater or reverse osmosis water is recommended. However, even rainwater can pick up unwelcome salts off a roof, especially the first rain coming off the roof, and if the tiles are made of cement. A slightly acidic pH (4.5 to 6.0) is preferred; unpolluted rainwater has a perfect pH of around 5.6. A dissolved solids tester, reading in ppm (parts per million) or microsiemens/cm is essential for

any serious Disa grower.

**WARNING** – never allow the medium to dry out. Adjust your watering frequency to meet this requirement, which may mean daily watering in extreme cases. Regular watering from above also works well. As with most orchids, watering is best done early in the day so that the leaves can dry out. Disas succumb rapidly when mineral salts accumulate in the medium; thorough watering from above will help to flush away unwelcome residues. It is important to cut back severely on watering during winter, otherwise problems with fungal rot can be expected.



*Disa uniflora*

**Fertilizer** – Use very dilute (about 1/4 to 1/10th strength), balanced fertilizer containing all trace elements every week or two during the spring to fall growth phase. Cut back on fertilizer during winter. Moderate to high nitrogen is recommended; mixtures like 10:5:5, 30:10:10, 20:20:20 and similar have all been used by successful growers. Here again, a dissolved solids tester is useful. Ideally, fertilizer solutions should be kept below about 150 ppm (300 microsiemens/cm), although

some growers use higher concentrations without adverse results. Provided all essential elements are supplied to the Disas.

**Temperature** – Disas like plenty of air movement and relatively cool temperatures, especially in their root zones. They are stressed when the temperature goes above 80°F (27°C); also the humidity should ideally be kept above 50%, especially in hot weather. Shade netting in summer helps keep the temperature down and humidity up. A sharp frost will damage the leaves, and a hard, extended freeze is likely to kill the plants, but they will tolerate winter temperatures just slightly above freezing.

**Lighting** – During the growing season bright, filtered sunlight is important for Disas. My plants stay outdoors, under shade netting from spring to fall. During the colder months they come indoors at night but spend the days outdoors with no protection from the elements, except when temperatures dip below freezing.

(Continued on page 6)



*Christmas 2004 Prize Table*

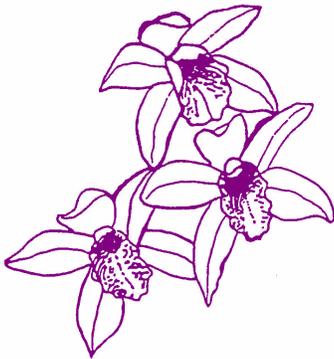


## Treasurer's Report November, 2004



Checkbook Balance on November 1	<b>\$7,103.31</b>
October income	1,496.00
October expense	(1,956.95)
Checkbook Balance on November 30	<b>\$6,642.32</b>
CD balance on November 15 was	<b>\$7,623.45</b>

A Reminder ... If you are enrolling as a new member, or are simply renewing your membership, please make sure that we have your **current** address and telephone number (and email, if you have one). We want to make sure you get your *Backbulb* regularly! Use the form below to make any changes, please.



## Carmel Orchid Society, Inc.

Affiliated with the American Orchid Society

Monthly meetings at 7:30 PM on the first Monday of each month (Except September and December) at the First Presbyterian Church of Monterey, 501 El Dorado, Monterey. Membership **\$ 15.00** for a single or **\$ 20.00** for two at the same address, **\$ 25.00** Vendor membership. Please make checks payable to the Carmel Orchid Society and mail to:

Carmel Orchid Society—Membership  
P. O. Box 2454, Monterey, CA 93942

Application for Membership — Please print

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Member of the  
American Orchid Society?

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Yes  No

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

New Member  Renewal



## Upcoming Events

Check Our Website For More Events

### Carmel Orchid Society Monthly Meeting

Monday, January 3, 2005 at 7:30pm  
The First Presbyterian Church  
510 El Dorado Street, Monterey, CA 93940  
Speaker: Gavin McDonald, Mangosuthu Technikon, KwaZulu-Natal (Durban), South Africa.

### Carmel Orchid Society Board of Directors Meeting—Installation of New Board

Monday, January 17, 2005, at 7:30pm  
The meeting will be held at Ken and Sharon Ashton's home, 26966 Laureles Grade Road, Carmel Valley. 659 7387.

### Monterey Bay Orchid Society Monthly Meeting

Tuesday, January 11, 2005 at 6:30pm (second Tuesday of every month)  
At the Community Bank, Community Room, 6th Floor, 301 Main Street, Salinas, CA. Entrance on Alisal. For more information, call (408) 375 6871.

## Interested in a Greenhouse?

Florian Solar Products will again offer special discounts on their standard lean to and freestanding Geneva greenhouse models to all Orchid Society Members. The sale ends February 28 2005. The Geneva greenhouse comes standard with an extruded aluminum frame and tempered safety glass, with all the glass upgrades available from their sunroom model. They will be happy to provide you a brochure. Please call or email them with any questions. To receive special price quotes, please include your local Orchid Society name and location.

Dave Anderson, Regional Sales Manager  
Florian Solar Products, LLC, 1-800-356-7426 ext. 108  
[www.floriangreenhouse.com](http://www.floriangreenhouse.com)  
E-mail [dave@floriangreenhouse.com](mailto:dave@floriangreenhouse.com)

**Peninsula Orchid Society Show**, January 8-9, Fair Oaks Community Center, 2600 Middlefield Rd., Redwood City, CA. Contact: Rene Biggs, 1051 Riverton Dr., San Carlos, CA 94070; (650) 593-4793.

**Santa Cruz Orchid Society Annual Show and Sale**, February 5-6, Soquel High School, 401 Old San Jose Rd., Soquel, CA. Contact: Cheryl Wagner, 91 Mountain View Rd., Santa Cruz, CA 95065; (831) 457-8393.

## Officers of the Carmel Orchid Society

President	Ken Ashton	659-7387	ashcas@email.msn.com
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Ticket Sales	John Mockett	624-9596	jhmockett@hotmail.com
Past Presidents	William G. Hale	646-8724	bakkehalleorchids@aol.com
	James Nybakken	659-4060	bnybakken@redshift.com



## January Goodies Providers

**Ellie Mamon** will be taking care of the treats for our January meeting to get us off on the right foot.



## Orchid Growing Tips

This time of year we experience a lot of clear cold nights. As we heat our homes we lose so much of that humidity that orchids love. Time to set up those humidity trays. Baking dishes work great with cookie cooling racks to set your pots on. Fill the trays with water and you can add gravel if you wish. This will help keep tender buds on your orchids from blasting.

The sun is very low in the sky now so if your house is like mine, direct sunlight floods through the windows.

That orchid can be 15 feet away from the window, but the bud will blast anyway.

## Note From The Editor

Since we have changed how we mail the Backbulb, we now have the last page available for additional material. This month the Disa Culture article continues on the last page. So, if there is something you would like to see in the Backbulb, please let me know so I can look into it.

Jud

Are you confused by all those abbreviations you see on orchid tags these days? There are so many intergeneric orchids with two or more genera in their breeding. Many times the orchid name sounds entirely different from the genera that go into its makeup. There is a website that lists the hundreds of abbreviations and multi genera it for which it stands. The site is [www.orchids.mu/Glossary/Glossary\\_A.htm](http://www.orchids.mu/Glossary/Glossary_A.htm)

Many of our cymbidiums are beginning to spike. Some begin growing rather sideways when we'd like them to grow upright. The earlier you approach this problem the better. Early on take a wine cork and place it under the young growth. Adjust it so that it begins to force it upwards. You will soon be able to add a second wine cork to continue the process. After that use a strong stake to continue this process. Begin tying it near the bottom first to avoid breaking the spike. Tie it in two or three places as you work your way upwards. You may bring cymbidiums into the house for a little while to enjoy the blooms. Then return them to the outdoors.

**Carolyn Salmon**, [cargie@yahoo.com](mailto:cargie@yahoo.com)



ORCHIDS  
FROM  
CHRISTMAS  
2004





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**Repotting** – Mature Disas need annual repotting since the old plant, tuber and roots die and rot. Repotting is usually done in the fall, after flowering, or whenever there are indications of root problems. Healthy roots are pale and very brittle; dead roots are brown and soggy. These should be removed, and the plant should have a thorough washing before repotting. I also use repotting as an opportunity to give the plants a soaking in a fungicide solution. I disinfect pots and pumice medium before reuse.

**Pests and Diseases** – If you are not prepared to use fungicides and insecticides on a regular basis, I would advise you against taking up Disa growing. Disas are susceptible to a virulent fungal rot, in which the whole plant and root system decomposes into a soggy black pulp. Correct culture and a fresh potting medium reduces the chances of this, but routine fungicide application at least from fall through spring is recommended. Among the fungicides which have been used are Aliette WP, Subdue, Cleary's 3336 WP, Captan WP and Rootshield, a biological fungicide. Bacterial soft rot has been treated with Physan 20. Insect pests and their treatment include aphids (Malathion, Sevin, Orthene), thrips (Cygon, Lebaycid, Orthene), gallmidge fly larvae (Lebaycid) and earwigs, which eat the flowers at night. Thrips are probably the worst of these pests - they do their dirty work largely unseen deep down in the growing tip, cause unsightly disfigurement of leaves and flowers, and can even kill off your plants. Regular removal of dead and dying leaves reduces the risk of disease. As a rule, pesticides in wettable powder form are preferred to liquid formulations which may contain damaging solvents.

### Growth Cycle –

**Winter.** Plants show little or no green growth during the coldest months, but mature plants can have significant underground activity in the way of developing tubers and shoots.

**Spring.** With the advent of warmer weather and longer days, leaf growth begins to accelerate and spikes may start developing.

**Summer.** As the weather warms up, strong growth continues and flowers should open. The hybrids tend to flower early, along with species such as *D. tripetaloides*. On the West Coast of North America, the main flowering season is between May and August. Flowers may last for six weeks.

**Fall.** The plants are genetically programmed to die back after flowering. With good management, other plantlets are already present, and a new tuber has been produced from which a strong new plant will sprout. Even unflowered plants may die back as the weather gets cold, but provided a new tuber has been produced, a healthy new shoot can be expected to grow in the spring.

**Propagation** – Mature Disa plants often produce several new plantlets annually, and these provide a simple way of increasing a collection. These new plantlets can grow from new tubers, as keikis alongside the main growth, or from long underground runners (stolons). Disas can be grown from seed to flowering in 2 to 3 years. Seed can be sown on boiled, damp moss, on peat, or on a sterile nutrient agar medium, which is quicker. One quarter strength Murashige and Skoog formulation, or similar mixes, with added banana pulp or powder, work well for sowing seed and replanting.

## 2004 Christmas Party

We had another successful Christmas Party at the Monterey Beach Resort. Many thanks to Bill and Ida Hale for their usual superb organization of the Christmas Party. The food was magnificent and the extra touches were much appreciated.

Also assisting were Grant Hale, Ken and Sharon Ashton, Susan Segal and Julian Bills, and John Mockett. The plants on the raffle table were gorgeous, we will be showcasing some

of them in this and future issues of the Backbulb. We have pictures of just about everyone who attended the Christmas Party posted on the web site. You can download copies from the web site. Please contact Jud if you do not have access to the web, cannot download, need better quality, or just need help to get a copy.