

Canadian Orchid Congress

Fall 1989

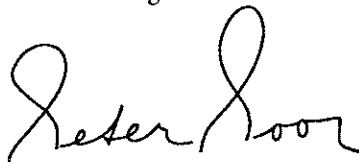
No. 2

The President's Message

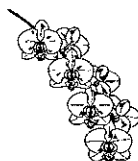
This issue is produced by Laurier Nappert, who has volunteered to be our editor. He has some great ideas and like all editors, he needs a constant flow of fresh material. As this publication's chief purpose is to provide communication between Canadian Orchid Societies, most material will have to come from YOU, the readers. So send him your newsletters, articles, cultural tips, growing area designs, special growing medium and what nots.

The response to my questionnaire sent with the previous newsletter was not overwhelming. The information is still wanted, so please, even if your society does not wish to support the Congress, return the questionnaire to me. Other societies have indicated that they would like to know when and where you meet, and who they might contact if they happen to be in your area. Up to date information on file here can even help get potential new members to you faster.

To date, 12 societies across Canada have paid their \$1.00 per member to support the Congress of Canadian Orchid Societies. That represents approximately half of the orchid societies in Canada and probably more than half of the orchid growers in the country. Your support is encouraging and will allow us to establish a basic level on national communication from which all Canadian Orchid Societies and their members will benefit. Dues are now payable for the period of May 1989 to May 1990. Please send payments to Nancy Tozer, Treasurer, 159 Stillview Rd., Pointe Claire, Qc, H9R 2Y1. I hope we can welcome the support of the remaining societies soon.



Peter Poot, President.



So, you want to have a show?

Sooner or later, most horticultural groups get around to the notion of wanting to show their flowers to others. The motivations are various and range from a desire to attract others to the hobby to a wish for recognition through competition. Most orchid shows accomplish a combination of things including education of both members and the viewing public. Competition is not a necessary element of a show although it certainly helps to bring out the exhibitors and will in time result in improved quality of plant material. If you are going to have competition, you will need persons to act as judges. These knowledgeable persons from your own society provided they do not judge their own plants and are recognized to be knowledgeable. In show judging, they would simply judge the plants for 1st, 2nd or 3rd place within the class into which the owner had entered them.

There is another type of judging called "quality" judging in which the plants are judged on their own individual merit on the basis of whether or not they represent a worthwhile improvement over what has been previously seen. American Orchid Society (AOS) judging for quality for quality awards such as the FCC (First Class Certificate), AM (Award of Merit) and HCC (Highly Commended Certificate) is of this kind. When first starting out, it is probably best to do a small show with as little elaboration as possible, just to get the experience and to build an organization. It is a good idea to visit other show and to talk to the peoples in charge about how they do it. The AOS "HandBook on Judging and Exhibition" contains a substantial section on organizing shows, and the Southern Ontario Orchid Society has put together extensive documentation on its annual AOS judged show. The SOOS information is available through the COC. The AOS handbook is a "must read" if you are intending to ask for AOS judging and can be obtained from the AOS book department. ✻



Editorial

It is my pleasure to provide you with this second issue of our newsletter. As mentioned by Peter in his message, I'll need every thing I can lay my hands on to make up this newsletter. These pages can only be as interesting as the stuff you'll be providing me with. If you know of any thing that you feel can be interesting to your society's members, this stuff can be just as useful to other orchids enthusiasts across Canada. This is YOUR newsletter, I just put it together. If you don't send in your articles, there just won't be anything to print. I hope that every single society will send me their own newsletter so I can extract material from it. Any original material is also welcomed.

Your material can be sent as printed material. It can also be sent via computer disk if you have access to a computer. Computer work would make things that much easier on me by saving me the extra typing. If you use or have access to a Macintosh, I can use your diskette directly whether they are 400 K, 800 K or 1,4 MB. Your documents should be saved as TEXT file. If you use MS Word (any version) or MS Works or MacWrite (any version), you can save your documents in this format. If your document has graphics or pictures, they can be saved in any of these format: PICT, PICT2, TIFF, EPSF or PAINT.

If you use a MS-DOS machine or compatible, the only way I can use your material directly is if you use 3,5" diskettes formatted in either the 720 K or 1,44 MB configuration. Your documents should be saved as ASCII files. My disk drive can handle these formats and I have a file translator to convert you file to Mac files. I must confess that I never had the opportunity to do it yet, but I know it does work and I'm ready to try it out. In any case, your diskette will be sent back to you right away. Your material should be sent to: Laurier Nappert, 200 Jean Gauvin, Ste-Foy, Qc., G2E 3L9.

It is hoped that every society will circulate this newsletter to their members or at least make it accessible through their library or bulletin board. Each society is provided with one original copy in order to enable them to make good photocopies for their members.

The next issue should come to you at around Christmas time. In the meantime, send your dated material before November 1st if at all possible.



Editor.

Show Dates

The following are confirmed dates and locations of shows being held by Canadian Orchid Societies.

September 1989

21-24, Eastern Orchid Congress and International Orchid Show, held at the Montréal Botanical Garden. Registrar: Mme Gisèle Laramée, 3155 Louis Veuillot, Montréal, QC, H1N 2R1, (514) 259-9566.

29-Oct. 1, Fraser Valley Orchid Show held at the White Rock Town Centre Hall, 15150 Russell Ave., White Rock, BC. Chairman: Lynne Cassidy. P.O. Box 3476, Langley, BC, V3A 4R8.

October 1989

21-22, Newfoundland Orchid Society Show, held at the Botanic Garden, St. John's, NF.

November 1989

11-12, Niagara Region Orchid Society Show, St. Catharines, ON. Chairman: Mario Ferrusi, 1129 Cream St. S., R.R. #5, Fenwick ON, L0S 1C0. (416) 892-4187.

March 1990

24-25, Canadian Orchid Congress & Orchid Society of the Royal Botanical Garden, Burlington, ON. Showchair: Bo Scaife, 3376 Tallmast Cr., Mississauga, ON L5L 1H5. (416) 820-5571.

April 1990

14-15, Central Ontario Orchid Society Show, held at the University of Guelph Arboretum, Guelph, ON.

28-29, Ottawa Orchid Society Show, Held at the Carleton University, Ottawa, ON.

May 1990

12-13, Southern Ontario Orchid Society Show. Chairman: Brian Rowe, 215 Glendora Ave., North York, ON, M2N 2W6. (416) 223-3149.

If you want your show information published, please send it to the Editor in plenty of time! ✨



Growing Orchids in Rockwool

(With special reference to fertilizers for the hobby grower).

This is the first part of a running article on this subject. This paper was prepared by Wally & Barb Thomas, Charles Island Gardens, Box 91471, Vancouver, BC, V7V 3P2. It was presented in part by Mr. Thomas at the 2nd Congress of Canadian Orchid Societies held in Ottawa in the Spring of 1989.

During the past ten (10) years, many commercial and a few amateur orchid growers have turned to rockwool as a growing medium. Rockwool is made by melting Diabase rock together with limestone and coke and dropping the molten mix on a spinner. The cooling mix is whirled out and solidifies into fine strands resembling a heavy fiberglass. Rockwool is best known for its use as an insulating material. However, a horticultural grade with fewer impurities is also manufactured specifically as a growing substrate. As a growing material, it is inert, porous, sterile and chemically stable. It cannot bind nutrients and therefore does not have any buffering activity. Thus the nutrient solution supplies all of the nutrients and controls the pH. The following information refers to Grodan Horticultural Rockwool. North American distributors are Agro Dynamics, Building 3, Navy Yard, Brooklyn, New York, U.S.A. (There are other manufacturers of horticultural grade rockwool. One of these is Agriwool, North Lane, Delta, BC, Canada.) For horticulture, the Grodan product is made available as a loose floccular material called Granulate, or as firm structured blocks and cubes. The loose material comes in three (3) grades, fine, medium and coarse (something like bark). Each grade is available in absorbant (wetting agent added) or nonabsorbant state (original). The most valuable cube for the orchid grower is the DM 4 42/40. The dimensions of this firm cube are 7,5 x 7,5 x 6,5 cm. It has a central hole 42 x 40 mm in which to plant the seedling. The sides of each square are individually wrapped with plastic leaving the top open. The blocks are all water absorbant and a groove in the bottom is critical to ensure good drainage and aeration. If there is no groove, the cubes may be placed in an open latticed tray.

Advantages of rockwool:

- * availability of a standardized uniform medium,
- * sterile,
- * permits strict fertilizer control,
- * non degradable, less repotting,
- * ease of potting on.

Disadvantages of rockwool:

- * high initial cost,
- * demands fairly strict fertilizer and pH control,
- * change to pure hydroponic growing, but this is exciting and not all that difficult,
- * difficult to dispose of used material,
- * variable initial pH 7.5 to 8.00 (goes down to the fertilizer pH when in use).

Most of the information on commercial orchid growing relates to *Cymbidium*. However, it is now clear that many orchids will grow very well in rockwool. The following mixes of Grodan granulate are in current and successful use.

- * Medium grade: 75% absorbant & 25% non absorbant, widely used for *Cymbidium* and *Odontoglossum*,
- * Medium grade: 100% absorbant, *Odontoglossum* and others,
- * Fine grade: 80% absorbant, 10% perlite and 10% charcoal, *Phalaenopsis*, *Cattleya* and others,
- * Fine grade: 70% absorbant & 30% Styrofoam beads, *Odontoglossum* and *Masdevallia*.

As with bark mixes, it is a matter of personal preference and success. Trial and careful observation are necessary. Use a few healthy plants to start with, rockwool is a good medium but it is not a panacea for sick plants.

Growing in rockwool requires a marked change in approach for both the grower and the plant. The grower must think in terms of wet hydroponic growing and the plant must develop a new "water tolerant" root system. This change over will take several months for both to adapt. Rockwool is of course only one of the many substrates used in hydroponics. Others include gravel, clay beads and perlite. In the 1930's Eversole (*American Orchid Culture*, E.A. White, 1939, p. 78) successfully grew *Odontoglossum* hydroponically in a sand/gravel mixture.

We have been growing in rockwool for 4 years and still have much to learn. Our personal information is largely from *Odontoglossum* but we have seen many other genera grown successfully in Grodan rockwool. Your local hydroponic store is often a helpful source of information and supplies.

Potting in rockwool

‡ **Out of flask:** this is the most difficult cultural aspect. If at present you have a successful method, we suggest that you use it until the plants are well established in compots. To use rockwool, fill the pot half full of Styrofoam beads mix (we use this mix for all sizes and types of orchids). After washing the seedlings free of agar, they are planted gently into the mix. Press the mix very little and very gently! A thin layer of coarse sand or granite grit may be used on the surface. If left uncovered in the greenhouse, a green algae like coating will first appear, followed by an extensive growth of moss. Although attractive in appearance, the moss makes it increasingly difficult to water evenly and thoroughly.

‡ **Grodan DM 4 squares:** in our experience, the seedlings from compots seem to grow better in these prepackaged squares than in pots of the loose material. They may remain in these squares until they are ready for 125 mm pots. Water the squares with fertilized water, then plant the seedlings in the hole using either the loose wool or AO 36/40 plugs which fit into the hole perfectly. We find that the plants grow better in the plugs. The plugs may be pulled vertically into two (2) pieces and the plant roots placed between the halves, with the base of the plant just below the top of the plug. Holding the halves together, the plug is inserted into the hole, but the top of the plug is left 3 or 4 mm above the top of the block. Since the block must have good drainage, if there is no groove along the bottom, either put some perlite under them on the bench or place them in open latticed trays. The blocks may be placed snugly side by side. Do not remove the outside wrapping until ready to pot on

‡ **Repotting:** when potting into rockwool, remove the other medium and carefully cut away all dead or suspect roots with sterilized clippers. Place about 2.5 cm of your mix in the bottom of the pot and gently work the loose rockwool around the roots being careful not to press into the rockwool. In 100 mm and smaller pots, a small layer of perlite in the bottom will help to maintain moisture as well as keep out un-

wanted pest. The root base or rhizome should now be level with the top of the rockwool. Cover the surface with gravel or sand, if desired, and then thoroughly water. When repotting from rockwool, unless the plant needs attention, simply lift out the plant and place it in the larger pot and gently tuck some fresh rockwool around the new growth, as above. There is some fine dust associated with rockwool. Even though it is said not to be dangerous, it is rather irritating to the lungs and skin. We like to pot with the loose material in the dry state, so we either pot outside or have a fan to one side. It is also easy to dampen down the material. ✽

To be continued...

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