

Growing Miniature Orchids

This is an extract from an informative and highly entertaining talk given by Hendrik Venter on “Mighty Miniatures” which he condensed from his 29 articles which appeared in the SAOC journals over a period of 12 years. A miniature is a plant under 15cm tall and a micro miniature is a plant below 5cm tall.

Chaemangis hariotiana is from the *Angraecum* alliance, has small lightly scented flowers and grows best mounted under intermediate conditions. *Aerangis citrata* from Madagascar likes very warm and humid conditions. *Angraecum distichum* grows under intermediate conditions and flowers year round but more prolifically in summer.

Microcoelia guyoniana is a leafless epiphyte that likes warmer conditions. The dark green roots provide the plant with chlorophyll. *Ancistrochilus rothschildiana* needs very humid conditions and produces a large flower (10cm). *Angraecum cultriforme* grows mounted in warm conditions and even full sun and produces apricot to greenish-yellow flowers.

Bolusiella maudiae is a micro miniature with sword-shaped leaves borne in a fan, bearing white long, dense flowers. It looks like lichen on the trees. *Cynorkis compacta* is also a micro miniature and easy to grow in a shallow pot. It is spring flowering and bears flowers with a 3-5 lobed lip with a prominent spur. *Mystacidium capense* is one of the most widely grown indigenous orchids and is easy to grow, rewarding you with a display resembling a white shower of flowers that are heavily scented at night. *Mystacidium millarii* requires year round watering and warm conditions. Forms compact clusters of flowers at base of leaves during summer. *Mystacidium brayboniae* is an easy to grow twig epiphyte. It has extremely short stems with a mass of flowers in spring.

Phalaenopsis parishii requires moisture year round. Grow mounted over a pad of moss. It has a beautiful bright wine-coloured lip. *Phalaenopsis lobii* must be grown under intermediate conditions. *Phalaenopsis venosa* bears an inflorescence with densely packed yellow to brown flowers with a slightly unpleasant smell. *Phalaenopsis tetraspis* has very short flower spikes. *Phalaenopsis stuartiana* flowers very compact on a branched spike with lots of flowers. Requires heat, humidity and good air flow. *Phalaenopsis pallens* (pale) is warm growing bearing a few flowers with reddish-brown barring. *Phalaenopsis lueddemanniana* var *delicata* produces a few fragrant, long-lived flowers on short spikes. *Phalaenopsis equestris* has beautiful arching spikes with densely packed flowers and is used extensively in breeding. There are several colour forms. *Phalaenopsis bellatulum* is very difficult to grow but stunning with spotted flowers. (If they are unhappy, they don't cry like babies – they just die!) *Phalaenopsis barbigerum* is cooler growing. It bears numerous flowers and makes a beautiful display when grown as a specimen plant.

Cymbidium pumilum (syn *floribundum*) grows as an epiphyte or lithophyte and bears between 30-40 flowers per spike. The *alba* form is really beautiful. *Cymbidium sinense* is short in stature with a single scented flower on a short spike. The flower colour is diverse.

Sophronitis coccinea is a cooler grower with giant flowers in colour ranges from scarlet to orange to yellow borne on a tiny plant. (Hendrik challenged everyone to try and grow one.) *Sophronitis cernua* is easier to grow under intermediate conditions. It has a single leaf and an inflorescence with 2-6 flowers.

Cattleya luteola grows easily under intermediate conditions. There are 3-4 bright yellow flowers per spike. *Laelia pumila* is a very charming plant. Pseudobulbs are close together with large, fragrant, long lasting single flowers. *Laelia reginae* is a rock growing plant. It bears 1-2 flowers per spike. *Laelia lundii* is an easy, quick-growing creeping plant. Grow mounted in a sunny position. It does well in gardens in P.E.

Encyclia bracteata is a hardy plant that can tolerate full sun. Very long lasting flowers (2 months). *Encyclia tripunctata* (three dots) grows easily under intermediate conditions. Flowers have a striking colour. *Broughtonia sanguinea* has short, squat pseudobulbs and bears bunches of pink, red or apricot flowers on tall spikes. *Oerstedella centradenia* needs to be mounted. It forms numerous 'keikis' which makes the plant look large when in fact it is a mass of plants. *Dinema polybulbon* is cattleya related. Grow mounted under intermediate conditions. It bears a single flower per spike and flowers year-round. *Isabelia virginalis* is really tiny with needle-like leaves and it's pseudobulbs are surrounded by a fibrous mesh. Grow mounted under hot, humid conditions. The flowers do not open fully nor do they last long.

Epidendrum porpax (again!) grows mounted, 'at a glance', into a creeping mass bearing insect-like flowers. *Paphinia aristata* and *Paphinia herrerae* form their flowers from the bottom like *Stanhopeas*. They require intermediate conditions with brisk and good air movement. *Zygostates lunata* is fan-shaped and may lack pseudobulbs. An arching inflorescence carries many small flowers during spring and summer. *Capanemia micromeria* is a micro-miniature with pseudobulbs 2-3mm long resulting in a very petite plant. It needs lots of sun and water. *Ornithocephalus grandiflorus* is similar to *Ornithophora radicans*, but with bigger leaves and no pseudobulbs. Easy to grow, requiring moisture year-round. Flowers are highly scented.

Maxillaria sophronitis is a creeping epiphyte bearing a bright red flower. Requires cooler conditions with lots of moisture and is quite difficult to grow. *Maxillaria juergensii* requires lots of sun. The dark brown, almost black flowers are similar to those of *M tenuifolia*. *Maxillaria variabilis* is a creeping epiphyte which does well in a basket under intermediate conditions. It is easy to grow and flowers almost permanently in colour ranges from yellow to red. *Macrolinium bicolor* is a warm growing micro-miniature with umbels of flowers hanging down. *Mormolyca ringens* is an ideal beginner's plant as it grows like a weed and is always in flower. Grow mounted under intermediate conditions. *Clowesia rosea* grows under intermediate conditions with long-lasting, wonderfully fragrant flowers from summer to autumn. *Stenia pallida* (pale) needs intermediate conditions with high humidity and heavy shade. The large flowers form at the base with the lip deeply pouch-shaped.

Coelogyne fimbriata is an easy fast grower suited to baskets. Requires lots of light and feeding. Produces 2-5 flowers per spike, which open consecutively year-round. *Dendrochilum uncatum* is really striking with its many-flowered, scented, arching inflorescences longer than the leaves. *Dendrochilum edentulum* is similar, but the inflorescence is spiralling. *Haraella retrocalla*'s flowers are only 2cm big. Grow cooler with daily watering. *Ceratichilus biglandulosus* is really tiny and warm growing. Flowers appear from each bract, lasting up to 4 months. Unfortunately it is easy to kill!

Rhynchonanthus plumatus is a bulbophyllum alliance with plume-like flowers. *Chilochista lunifera* is a leafless orchid. Grow mounted under intermediate conditions with frequent watering. It flowers in spring, bearing numerous spikes. *Chilochista usneoides* is similar. *Sedirea japonica* is cooler growing. It produces 5-7 lemon-scented, long-lasting flowers on short stems during summer. *Neofinetia*

falcate is a hardy, very charming epiphyte requiring intermediate conditions. *Stereochilus brevirachis* bears almost vandaceous flowers under bright light with good air movement and year-round moisture. *Smitinandia micrantha* has slender stems with a few strap-like leaves. Flowers are small and fleshy, borne on a long slender inflorescence with 3 months of consequential flowering.

Ascocentrums are charming plants requiring intermediate to warm conditions. Best in small slatted baskets. Water and feed regularly year-round. They also need high humidity and good air movement. *A. garayi* bears small orange flowers. *A. miniatum* is a sweet specimen plant with orange flowers. *A. curvifolium* has red flowers in spring. *A. ampullaceum* has brightly coloured pink through to orange flowers. *Eria bicolor* is a rather obscure looking plant, but attractive when in flower. Easy to grow mounted under cool conditions. *Dendrobium cyanocentrum* is a charming orchid requiring cool conditions with lots of light. *Dendrobium cuthbertsonii* prefers intermediate conditions. The flowers come in various colours such as yellow, orange and purple combinations with red being the most common. *Pleione formosana* needs a cold winter when the plant is dormant and regular watering during the growing season. It is spring-flowering.

Oncidium pumilum has small but numerous flowers. *Oncidium longipes* bears 3-5 long lasting flowers per inflorescence during spring. *Oncidium croesus* is a creeping epiphyte with vibrant yellow and chocolate-brown flowers. *Rodriguezia venusta* must be grown mounted under humid, intermediate conditions. It bears beautiful cascades of flowers. *Cischweinfia dasyandra* produces lime green and pink flowers.

Hendrik concluded that he will always have a soft spot for the mighty miniatures.