



Message from the President

At its last meeting in June, the MCG was privileged to be addressed by Dr Keith Hammett, an eminent plant breeder from New Zealand. Keith was the inaugural chairperson of the NZ Clivia Club when it commenced in 2003, but Clivia are just one of his many plant interests which include sweet peas, dahlias, carnations and numerous others. Participants at the meeting had the opportunity to ask Keith many questions, as well as give replies to some of the questions posed by the speaker himself. I expect that Keith's rich experience in plants and breeding meant that those of us who attended learned a lot from him and hopefully were also challenged in various ways as well.

The MCG will again mount a small display of Clivia at the ABC garden Expo (1-3 October), to be held at the Caulfield racetrack. Similar to last year, we require the assistance of 12 people to assist for half a day each and invite members to be part of this "Expo" team. Many of us enjoyed the opportunity to participate last year in this event and I hope that more members will do so this year.

Julie Milligan kindly offered to become the group's librarian. We open our "library" with three very useful references:

- Swanevelder S. & Fisher R., 2009, Clivia: nature and nurture. South Africa: Briza.
- Duncan, G., 2008, Grow Clivias, 2nd ed. South Africa: SANBI.
- Clivia Society, 2006, Clivia 8.

We thank Yvonne Hargreaves for the donation of the second item. Julie will provide more details about the availability of these resources at the next meeting.

It seems that the provision of speakers on Clivia to other garden clubs is becoming an important activity for us. Thanks to Gary Reale for his cooperation last month, and to Irene Broadbent for agreeing to assist in October.

At its last committee meeting, it was decided to hold the next AGM at our first meeting in 2011 and we also hope to organise some kind of display in September 2011, perhaps as a part of another garden show or at a nursery or other suitable location. Detailed planning will take place a little later on.

Our display bench looked a little sad in June, though Ken Russell's magnificent poster of Clivia photos provided an excellent alternative. We also thank Ken for his donation of two seedlings for the raffle, and Huxley Althaus for his donation of seeds of *C. nobilis* and 'Chubb Peach' crosses, which were sold on the Trading Table. The raffle of *C. gardenii* was won by Dot Girdlestone, with Yvonne Hargreaves and Stephen Wright winning the seedlings.

By the time of our next meeting, *C. gardenii* will probably be finished flowering but interspecifics, which can provide flowers throughout the full year, should be in good form, with the main months of flowering in Melbourne being June to August, in my experience. Some early *C. miniata* will probably also be in flower. I do hope that owners of flowering plants will bring some pots along for display so that others can see the enormous range of variation that characterises these plants. We also hope that anyone who has spare seeds, seedlings or plants will bring them to sell on the Trading Table.

The main topic of the next meeting on 20 August is "Fertilising" to be led by Di Mathews, and this will be followed by a discussion on the crossing of interspecifics by interspecifics. Both topics should be of interest to many members. I look forward to seeing you there.

Helen Marriott



Editor's Message

We would love to hear from you!

We need and welcome your input. Please write to us with any clivia experiences, photos, articles, or questions.

This is your newsletter, and it needs your participation to reflect your questions and interests. Thank you to Lisa Fox and Yvonne Hargreaves who have contributed to this newsletter. Thank you also to Steve Wright for being this month's Member Profile participant.

Di Mathews

WINTER IN THE GARDEN

We are having a very cool and wet winter, so be careful not to over-water your plants - remember Dr Hammett's words - "more clivias are killed by kindness than by neglect."

There are still a few mealybugs around, and of course snails and slugs, so be on the lookout for these.

If your clivias are in pots and are outside, ensure they are planted in a very free-draining mix to prevent problems with root-rot when subjected to heavy rain.

CHECKING THE MCG RECORDS

We are aware that in a few cases there may be misspellings of members' names or addresses in our MCG records. Could you please assist us by letting us know if we are regularly misspelling your name or address? Please email the secretary or ring one of the committee members with the correct information please.



For quality clivias for the discerning buyer and collector, from seed to advanced plants, visit www.pinemountainnursery.com.au

FEATURE FLOWER



This beautiful variegated interspecific is owned by Jeanne Marten

From The Trading Table

If you have any spare seeds, seedlings or plants that you would like to sell, just bring them to the meeting so I can try to sell them for you. Seeds can be in lots of 5 in small bags or any other way you like, but these must be labelled. Seedlings and plants need to be labelled as well. If you don't have a TT-form, I will have plenty of spares on the night.
George

Classifieds

2 Year old C.miniata seedlings for sale. Seeds are from NZ and South Africa. Interested people please email me - george-oz@hotmail.com

Events & Contacts

NEXT MEETING

Friday 20 August 2010
7.30 pm
Uniting Church,
Cnr Burwood Hwy & Blackburn Rd,
Burwood

Fertilising - Di Mathews

Interspecific X Interspecific

Bring a plate for supper

17 Sep 2010 - General Meeting
Peaches - TBC
Seeds: Group Discussion

15 Oct 2010 - General Meeting
Creams/Yellows - Helen Marriott & Laurens Rijke

15 Nov 2010 - Christmas Get-together

CONTACTS

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Please let us know if you have any other news or items of interest to share. Deadline for next issue -10 September 2010

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Member's Introduction – Steve Wright

Diary Dates

How long have you been interested in clivia?

When I bought my house in Camberwell 20 years ago, there were already orange miniatas and cyrtanthiflora growing in the garden.

How did you first become interested in clivia?

Every year the orange miniata flowers would bloom, and the neighbours would comment how lovely they looked. So in 2007 I decided to plant some more. When I said to my wife how expensive they were at the nursery, she said to try Ebay. Well, thinking there were only orange ones, when I saw all the other colours I was hooked.

How has your interest developed since you became interested?

I still buy plants off Ebay and the specialist nurseries in Australia. Also, now I buy seeds from South Africa, Japan, New Zealand and America.

Do you have a favourite colour?

I love the peaches, pinks, greens, bronzes, appleblossoms and the 4 Mary's. I could go on and on.

Have you had any interesting experiences relating to clivia?

Having just started germinating seeds in 2008, not knowing anything, I planted the seeds in normal garden soil (under the soil). I lost about 60% of them. Now, knowing more and with advice from other clivia friends, I only lose about 3%.

Do you specialise in any particular type of clivia?

I'm trying to build up my stock of the pendulous species. (caulescens, gardenii, robusta and mirabilis.)



Do you have clivias in pots or in the ground?

My older plants are all in the ground. Since 2007 everything goes into pots under shade all round the house.

What are your hopes for the future Clivia-wise?

I would like to self pollinate and cross pollinate my own plants to flowering stage. I have never done this before and it is my goal.

Do you have any more comments?

Over the years I have made great friends with overseas growers and the local ones as well. Since joining the M.C.G. I have learnt so much from the experts and enjoy talking about clivias in general.

Carnival of Flowers Festival
Toowoomba

Friday 17 September – Sunday 26
September 2010



Anderson Peach Offspring at Toowoomba Clivia Show 2009



Toowoomba Club Clivia Show 2009



Kevin Walter's Green Throat Cream at Toowoomba Clivia Show 2009

ABC Expo 2010

Caulfield Racecourse

1 October – 3 October 2010

Volunteers will be needed to assist with the display table – all help will be gratefully accepted.



A VASE OF PODS

In January this year I had two broken peduncles with little green baby pods not much bigger than the size of a small marble. One was from a plant that had flowered 3 months earlier, and one from a plant that had flowered 4 months earlier and had since died.

Every other year I would have thrown both peduncles out as the pods were so small, but I had heard that you can keep the pods growing by standing the peduncle in water. I decided to try it.

I placed both stalks in a vase with only enough water to cover the bottom of the peduncle. Every 10 days or so, I cut off the bottom off the peduncle and refreshed the water. This went on for a few months until there was no stalk left to cut off. By then, both stalks had good sized pods. I left both out of the water for another month and then peeled the seeds. By this time, the pods were even colouring up a little. I was pleasantly surprised that the seeds seemed to be normal looking slightly smallish seeds.

I have since germinated both lots of seeds with approximately a 75% success rate. Possibly this rate will climb higher as some seeds may be slower to germinate than normal and they are still on the germinating trays.

This germination rate may seem low, but 75% is a lot higher than the 0% it would have been any other year had I thrown the broken peduncles out. These little seedlings are important to me as one was from special parents, and the other is from a mother plant that died. I am sure there are better methods that other members can report, but this is a simple method that worked for me, and I thought I would share.

Lisa Fox

The use of Coffee as a defence against Scales and Mealy Bugs

Photo copy of this item was handed to me recently by a fellow keen gardener and had also been sent to Ken Russell, of Dungog, N.S.W., who attended the Melbourne Clivia Groups' June meeting.

After discussion with Ken I have elected to pass the information on to the group. I had not had time to trial it myself but Ken has, and recommends it to be a very good and inexpensive method of controlling one of a clivia growers worst pests. He reported excellent and very quick results when he trialed it in his nursery.

An article "Coffee, Cycads' New Best Friend" by Tom Broome, published in The Cycad Newsletter, December 2007 pp44046, describes how the author discovered the benefits of the use of coffee and tea wastes to rid his collection of palms and cycads of scale insects and mealy bugs.

He describes how a massive infestation of scale invaded the U.S.A. and devastated the palms and cycads of nursery growers. Chemical treatment was having little effect.



As we all know chemical treatments are expensive, complicated and time consuming to use and many growers were against the use of chemicals. They were not available to home growers. People were giving up on growing cycads and palms because of these problems.

By chance a nurseryman discovered the benefits of the use of coffee grounds. He had added coffee grounds to enrich sandy soil, and as a mulch

His seedlings came up with none of the problems others had had, even though he was growing them very closely together, which normally would have exacerbated the problems. The author says that coffee and tea plants produce alkaloids that ward off the insect predators, and when the leaves drop on the ground they act as an emergent herbicide. He also points out that information on caffeine and other alkaloids that are in coffee and tea plants is very sketchy, so he decided to do some experiments himself.

He experimented by added 10% coffee grounds to his potting mix. He also mixed the used coffee grounds with water and poured it over infested plants.

Within one day the bugs were dead. By applying a mulch of coffee grounds around a potted plant, each time it was watered the alkaloids leach into the potting medium and kill the mealy bugs in the pots. Some scale insects will crawl down into the roots system in winter and will return up the stem when the weather warms up again.

He also recommends making "SUN TEA" by soaking a bag of coffee grounds in a container of water and leaving it in the sun for a number of days until it goes a dark brown. The resultant 'tea' can be strained and applied with a pump sprayer. He reports that when using this method, the next day mealy bugs and aphids were dead.

Scale insects were mainly all dead with in two weeks. At the time of writing he had been using the coffee grounds for 16 months and had done away with all chemicals. He points out the "Sun Tea" is only good for 3-4 months and suggests that only make up small amounts at one time.

Once the coffee grounds are mouldy they are ineffective, but as supplies are easy to come by—if you are not an avid coffee consumer yourself ---ask at your local coffee shop as this is a waste product that they have to dispose of.

He believes that treatment twice a year is a good idea and suggests firstly when the weather is warming up after winter, and the second time in the middle of summer when the bugs are usually rampant. This method is a treatment and not a cure.

You will need to treat infestations for outside.

The use of coffee grounds and tea leaves to kill insects is a revolutionary concept in horticulture.

Another benefit is they are free and organic!!

Yvonne Hargreaves



The Melbourne Clivia Group was delighted, and also very fortunate, to enjoy the company of Dr Keith Hammett at their June meeting. Dr Hammett was kind enough to give a presentation to the lucky members who attended on June 18, and the following is an overview of the talk that he gave.

The nature of his presentation was not necessarily in any particular order, and this article seeks to reflect that – it is presented in the order that Dr Hammett gave.

Dr Hammett opened his address by saying “it’s a thrill to talk to a group with a similar interest” and congratulated the Melbourne Clivia Group, stating that we have a very exciting opportunity to start from scratch, explaining that clubs such as the Dahlia Society are over 100 years old, they have state-wide protocols, and because of this, they inevitably carry a lot of baggage and history.

He believes that we have the opportunity of starting from scratch to take the club where we want it to go.

He asked the members some questions, commencing with –

What do we want and expect from clivia?
Why are we here for one flower?
What attracts us to these plants?

Some of the answers to these questions were –

The flowers
The diversity of the plant
They tolerate dry shade
They have attractive foliage

He emphasised that more clivias are killed by kindness than neglect. He suggested that the plant is popular as it suits our current lifestyle – people are looking for low maintenance plants.

Dr Hammett likened plant breeders to musicians and other artists, who create something of beauty. In the case of the plant breeders, the plant is the creative medium.

He explained that specialist societies have arisen where the plant is seen as exotic, and South Africa is unusual in having a Clivia Society, in the sense that the clivia is a native of this country.

Millions of years of evolution have produced the clivia, and he regards it as an enormous privilege to use it, and other plant material. He is firmly of the belief that “they are a legacy to us and our children, and should be passed on intact.”

It is OK to play with them, but most assuredly not to leave what he called a “hybrid swarm” for our descendents.

In the pursuit of ornamental horticulture, it’s the beauty that attracts us, but it’s the one thing that we don’t really discuss - there is never any meaningful critique of plants.





How do we define the best? Do we have competitions?

He referred to the “Gor Blimey” factor and the people’s choice when competing at plant shows.

The genesis of plant showing began in the 1750’s, after the Industrial Revolution in England.

People wished to show what they had, and it began as ‘florist societies’, and then gradually grew to incorporate enthusiasts.

Florist flowers were all circular at that time – that was the aesthetic of the day eg; carnations, daylilies, pinks. Sweet peas, for example, were never accepted as they are not circular.

This has continued to dominate our thinking when it comes to display flowers.

It is this thinking that has led to the development of “footballs on sticks” – they have become the people’s choice.

The insistence on this type of flower form has, in his opinion, led to a loss of diversity.

The pleasure of a clivia show should be to put things side by side and discuss them – to look at the diversity of their form.

He is also concerned that competitions can limit development as people strive for the same results, and this reduces the diversity of the plant – what he terms “developmental cul-de-sacs.”

Dr Hammett first came across clivias at university in the Botany Department, and then he discovered them again when he moved to New Zealand. At this time, he wrote to Kevin Walters in Toowoomba, who kindly sent him some seed of yellow Clivia.

Yellow clivias were not so long ago very expensive – Sir John Thouron, a yellow American clivia, sold for \$1000USD as little as ten years ago. This phase moved on, and everyone wanted dark red clivias.

He confessed that he likes to delve deeply into things, and look at all the different sources of genetic material from England, the USA, and Japan, particularly that of Yoshi Nakamura. He views things with a scientist’s mind. Colleagues at Auckland University identified the Swamp Clivia as *C. robusta* through chromosome staining – he likened it to putting “footy jumpers” on them – putting them “in teams.”

He discussed the issue of plant inheritance in terms of female vs male, and says it is a minefield of speculation.

Very importantly, Dr Hammett said there is absolutely “no evidence for Group 2 peaches.”

It is pure speculation, there is no decent data, and he pointed out that if speculation is repeated often enough, people see it as fact.

There is very little published research that we can rely upon. For example, what is the importance of the mitochondria in the maternal side, and what is the pollen influence of the paternal side in relation to variegated clivia.

These sorts of questions need to be quantified and precise data developed.

The present peaches have arisen from mutations in the wild.

He presented a hypothesis regarding the breeding of peaches.

If an orange is crossed with a pale yellow, some of the offspring will be pastel –if we continue this process sequentially, ie; by breeding that pastel flower to a pale yellow, and then a pale offspring of that cross to another pale yellow, we may end up with peach. He believes it is possible to do this from pigment analysis.

Peach clivias have greatly reduced anthocyanins - we are looking at a yellow background through that.

Theoretically, we can create a peach with enough generations starting from an orange.

This has not been done yet.

Most breeders do not keep good records. Dr Hammett keeps good records, but can’t always evaluate “whole populations.” He acknowledged that critical experimentation can be difficult to do by growers, as growers are



growing to sell. Scientific research to uncover mechanisms is a very different operation to practical plant breeding.

When breeding, breeders use two parents to give them offspring closest to their goal.

This was demonstrated using the example of the bell curve, where the majority of the offspring will fall into a middle range, and there will be a few offspring at either end of that spectrum; eg; for breeding plants with large white throats, there will be a majority of plants with an average size throat, but also a few plants with a large white throat, and a few with a smaller white throat.

This is the essence of line breeding, which is not inbreeding, but is breeding things which superficially look similar using different backgrounds.

He emphasises that inbreeding reduces diversity, and usually results in deleterious outcomes.

In the case of colour of clivias, he believes that the darkest reds have very dark pigmentation at the base of the seedling.

There are three pigment systems – anthocyanin (red) and carotenoid (yellow) and chlorophyll (green).

He likes interspecific clivias, especially from a breeder's point of view.

To sum up the evening, he stated that too much emphasis is put on novelty without any discernment. There should be aesthetic considerations as well.

“Do not destroy something that is inherently beautiful – use some discernment.”

*I would like to thank Dr Hammett for proof reading these notes and correcting any errors I may have made.
Di Mathews.*



MINUTES OF GENERAL MEETING – 18 June 2010

Venue	Uniting Church, Cnr Burwood Hwy & Blackburn Roads, Burwood
Meeting commenced	7:35 pm
Committee	Helen Marriott, Erika van der Spuy, Rae Begg, Di Mathews, George Simmler, Brenda Girdlestone.
Apologies	Pam Dryden, Rosalind Simmons, Judith and Neil Greenway
Introduction	Helen Marriott welcomed all the members of the MCG and visitors. There was an announcement on 3AW informing listeners of the meeting tonight.
Minutes of the previous meeting	Corrections : No corrections Accepted by : Lyn Rawson Seconded by : Brenda Girdlestone
New Business	Next year's AGM in February 2011 instead of the meeting in April.

The ABC Expo is being held from the 1-3 October 2010. Volunteers are required for half a day. George Simmler will do the setup of the stall. Might need some standby plants for the stall.

Small display planned for September 2011.
The MCG is planning to have a small display of Clivia plants next year.

We received seed donations from Huxley Althaus, Toowoomba, for the Trading Table:

- C nobilis seeds (10 per pack) x 10 packs
- C. miniata (6 seeds per pack) x 2 packs (Chubb peach x Yellow) x (Chubb Peach) x Vico Yellow

Presentation at
garden groups

Thank you to Gary Reale and Irene Broadbent for making time available to address the Essendon garden group (15 June 2010) and the Langwarren garden group (15 October 2010).

Treasurer's Report

Opening Balance (Bank)	\$2705.06
• Income – Memberships	\$ 60.00
Raffle	\$ 85.00
Trading Table	\$ 7.00
• Expenses – Hall Hire	\$ 75.00
Newsletter printing	\$ 44.00
Consumer Affairs Vic	\$ 40.00
Expertise Events	\$ 120.00
	(ABC Garden Expo)
• Petty Cash Opening Balance	\$ 87.55
Stamps	\$ 5.50
• Balance (including petty cash)	\$2,659.21

Accepted by : Lynn Rawson

Seconded by : Yvonne Hargreaves

Main presentation

Whither?

By Dr Keith Hammett

Raffle

Donated by : Ken Russell and Helen Marriott

Raffle winner/s : Multiple winners

Display Table

Helen Marriott announced that Ian Anderson has seed for sale at \$8.00 each. Any one interested should contact him.

Questions and
Answers

Questions were asked during the presentation.

Next Meeting

Our next meeting will be the 20 August 2010
Presentations : Fertilising by Di Mathews

Crossing Interspecific x interspecific by Laurens
Rijke and Helen Marriott

Trading table

Multiple plants and seeds were available.

END