

## **GROWING DISA'S BY KEN SUTTON**

The genus Disa consists of about 125 species and is found in great concentrations in south central Africa and South Africa. Only six species were amenable to cultivation and these were used to obtain all the various hybrids that we have today.

### **HOW TO GROW YOUR DISA ORCHID**

#### **MEDIA**

Disa's need excellent drainage and a constantly moist aerated medium. Sphagnum moss is the most widely used medium in which to grow your Disa. Some growers use Styrofoam chips throughout the Sphagnum to create more aeration. Perlite, vermiculite and peat in a 1:1:1 mix is also another convenient and good growing medium.

#### **POTS**

For mature plants, 4" light coloured plastic pots are ideal. Depth of pot should be at least 4 inches. (Sphagnum grows and keeps better in lighter coloured pots.)

#### **WATER**

Water quality is very important in Disa culture. A pH of 4.5 – 6.0 is ideal. Some Tap water may be OK but most is not. The water should have a low concentration of dissolved mineral salts and should be low in chlorine. Rainwater is excellent and recommended. Tap water is improved if stored in large open bins and used in a week's time. The medium should **NEVER BE ALLOWED TO DRY OUT**. Water 3 to 5 times a week in summer and 1 or 2 times a week in Winter. Watering is best done in the morning so that the leaves can dry out. It is important to cut back severely on watering during Winter.

#### **FEEDING**

Fertilizer during the spring to autumn growth phase and dilute to about 1/20 strength. Fish emulsion and Seaweed fertilizers are ideal in very diluted doses and will not kill the sphagnum moss.

#### **SUMMER**

As the weather warms up, strong growth continues until the flowering takes place. Flowers may last up to six weeks.

#### **AUTUMN**

After flowering, the stem dies back. With good management, other plantlets are already present and 1 to 3 new tubers have 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**

Disa plants can produce several new plantlets each year after flowering. These can be tubers already described, or as keikis alongside the dying growth, or underground runner, called stolons. In April/May carefully tip out the plant and you will be able to see these new young plants, with tuber and roots attached. With care, wrap these small plants in damp sphagnum moss and plant in light coloured pots. With proper care, these plants will grow on with the largest to flower in Spring/Summer.

#### **GENERAL**

Despite trying to follow the above culture notes, you may have setbacks. Experiment to find the best growing medium, watering routine, fertilizers, lighting etc for your specific conditions. Disas enjoy good light, (NOT DIRECT SUN) and air movement. Protect from frosts.

Happy growing.

Ken Sutton

27 Latrobe Road

RAILTON TASMANIA 7305

Phone 03 64961318