



British Orchid Council

....promoting orchid growing...

So, a rather belated happy New Year to everyone. First of all my apologies, as this newsletter was intended to have gone out last week, but was delayed when my computer finally packed up on me. So after a reinstall of the operating system, it is at least 'functioning within normal parameters' even if some programs are still being temperamental— it just took ages to find out what was wrong and then HOW to fix it, short of buying a new one!

While we are all feeling fed up at the moment, it is good to be able to start off the orchid year with a high.

Thank you so much to everyone who submitted photos in the 2020 Photographic competition. We have had more entries than ever (about 120) and the quality and variety of the pictures were amazing. I am currently working on the next newsletter, and this will include all the winners with a selection of the pictures—it should be a treat for everyone, so do make sure it is distributed to all the members in your society so they can all enjoy some of the lovely pictures that were entered.

In case you are wondering how the judging was carried out this time:

All the judges and trainees were invited to pick their top 10 images and the votes for each image were counted. The image with the most votes was the winner. This seemed the simplest and fairest way and many thanks to Chris for organising this. All the voting was completely anonymous, I didn't vote as I had uploaded everything to the website and therefore knew who had submitted which image. So, thank you, to the 48+ judges who voted. As many of them said, they had a really difficult time choosing and they could so easily have picked an additional ten, as the pictures were so good. In addition, a big thank you to John and Trish who sorted out the voting results, as my computer had gone down at this point. Also to Ian, who did a sterling job making sure the website ran smoothly; enabling us to run the competition differently this year. But most of all a great thank you to everyone who took part, and for taking the time and trouble to send in your beautiful pictures. We are going to get the results out as quickly as possible, so be on the look out for the next newsletter with all the pictures in it!

Other news:

As shows are not being held in the foreseeable months ahead, the BOC yearbook has been published online for this year. Please notice that we are no longer including telephone numbers or private addresses in the yearbook. For anyone wishing to consult this, it is available on the BOC website, follow the following -

Home page → menu → services → BOC yearbooks

Please Note: Information in this edition of the Yearbook may be affected by the Covid-19 virus pandemic.

Please do not take anything for granted. You are advised to visit the website of the organising society or contact the organisers before setting out to visit any orchid event. The Diary of Events on the BOC website may be out of date due to events having been cancelled. Hopefully as the year progresses, new events will be organised. Please will BOC societies and organisations make sure that they enter any new information into their society section as soon as they know of any changes.

Can you help?

Many of you may know Gary and Maria Firth from West Sussex and who have both been BOC judges for a long time. Gary does a lot of work with the Sussex Plant Heritage Group and he and Maria hold several National Collections.

One of these is the National Orchid Collection of Gongora species, one of these species is shown below.

Very sadly Gary's greenhouse was recently invaded by rats and many of his specimen and rarer species were destroyed. Some of these plants were well over 30 years old.

As we are now in a post Brexit position importing orchid species may now be very difficult.

So can anyone help with divisions of Gongora species, so that this National Collection can be rebuilt ?

It is essential that we all do our best to help maintain and conserve what is left of our orchid collections, and the number of National Orchid Collections has dwindled in the last few years.

In case you are not aware, all the National Collections holders are required to hold open days when their collections may be visited to be seen and enjoyed by everyone.

Any offers of help, no matter how small, will be very welcome.

If anyone can offer any help, email me and I will forward your message to Gary.

My contact email is : chairman@british-orchid-council.info



Gongora ecornuta from the National Collection of Gongora spp. Held by Drs. Gary and Maria Firth

'The best way to save plants is to successfully cultivate and propagate them, then share them with others'

The Plant Heritage website

For more details about Plant Heritage and National Plant Collections visit - www.plantheritage.org.uk

There will be more information going forward about Plant Heritage and how we can all get involved coming in future Newsletters

Electronic rat repellants.



Some work from batteries and some are mains plug in, -like this one.
Many different version may be found online

The three pin plug on this model, indicates the small size of these devices



Possibly you have pets, such as dogs or cats and grandchildren or others who visit from time to time and come into your greenhouse. Putting down bait to poison such things as rats may not be an option - there are alternatives and they will work for mice as well.

Nothing is foolproof with these rodents and there are recorded instances where they appear to have become immune to various poisons and adept at evading traps. But at least it might give you something else to try.

There are humane traps which trap the creature but don't harm it - the problem you then have, is what to do with it? BUT - just remember that rat bites and scratches are very dangerous as they carry all kind of diseases - Weils disease, Salmonellosis, Rat-bite fever and Tularemia amongst others (Rentokil website, rentokil.co.uk). Other pests vectors for diseases include mice and squirrels.

One other method which is supposed to deter rats and mice (don't know about squirrels) are the ultra-sonic devices - see photographs. They emit a high pitched ultra-sonic sound which we can't hear but repels rodents. These depend on the batteries being replaced regularly and the gadget may not be as affective over time. DON'T use them if you have (or are looking after) pet hamsters or gerbils!! For them, it would be like living in a constant noise of nails scraping down a chalkboard - poor things!

When the weather is very cold at night, many small animals are in search warmth and shelter. These might include such things as sheds, garages, any wood piles or compost heaps. So this is a plea to keep your eyes open for any of these animals whatever they are, especially if they are attracted by the warmth of a greenhouse, where some of them may cause such a lot of damage. Stray cats, might creep into a shed or garage and get trapped, so its well worth while always checking. Many animals are quite heartlessly abandoned at this time of year.



The strangest visitors we had, popped up about two years ago. Suddenly piles of soil appeared under the greenhouse benches—we never got to actually see the moles themselves. But I am still mystified as we don't have a garden as such and they would have had to burrow under all our slabs for quite a distance to get there! They must have ended up with headaches if they tried to pop up under the slabs!! Never seen any mole hills since, think they have passed us by after that fruitless effort.

While we're on the subject of greenhouse pests - does anyone know what this beastie is?

Its at least 2cm long (I wasn't going anywhere near it, to get any more accurate measurements!) and I found it dead in one of my greenhouse trays. And I will own up, it scared me to death. I really thought I had managed to import some rare, horrible plant chomping creature. The one thing that worried me most was in case it was a cockroach (it wasn't, before someone tells me).

I had never seen one of these before - so does anyone know what it was??



Are there any more stories of strange greenhouse and garden visitors? Just email me, I would love to include any snippets or funny stories.

We would love to read any strange tales of visitors you may have to tell.

Other than alien invasion of course as we all know that's not true - er, don't we.....

Useful BOC Contacts

Dr Helen Millner *chairman@british-orchid-council.info*

John Rigby and Tricia King *secretary@british-orchid-council.info*

Tjin Ong: *treasurer@british-orchid-council.info*

Sam Bridge *minutes-secretary@british-orchid-council.info*

Year book editors: Chris Barker: *cjbandjb@ntlworld.com*

Iain Wright: *iaincwright@windmill.me.uk*

A few trade contacts (others may be found in the current online Yearbook)

Burnham Nurseries *www.orchids.uk.com*

Elite Orchids *info@eliteorchids.co.uk www.eliteorchids.co.uk*

Laneside Hardy Orchid Nursery *jcrhutch@aol.com*

www.lanesidehardyorchids.com

Laurence Hobbs Orchids Ltd *lhorchids1@btinternet.com*

www.laurencehobbsorchids.co.uk

Orchid Botanics *www.orchidbotanics.co.uk*



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