

Dendrobium canaliculatum and its Hybrids



An important characteristic of *Den canaliculatum* is its short thick pseudobulb which gives this species the common name the "Onion Orchid". This characteristic is passed onto its progeny. *Den canaliculatum* is often mistaken with *Den carronii*. With *Den canaliculatum* all dorsals, sepals and petals are the same length, whereas with *Den carronii* all dorsals are longer than the petals and sepals.

Den canaliculatum comes in a wide range of colours from white, pinks, violets, yellows and browns to almost black. Thus when used in hybridising they give us a very wide range of colours. Another bonus is the number of flower spikes that are produced on each bulb, anywhere from five to eight spikes on each bulb. This creates a very spectacular specimen in a very short time. Another advantage of these hybrids is that they bloom more than once a year.

Den canaliculatum likes plenty of water during the growing season of the summer months. They like good drainage so they can dry out quickly. They also like good air movement and high light. This can be obtained by hanging plants high under a fibreglass roof. The heat from the fibreglass helps the plants to dry out quickly between waterings. When plants begin to spike, lower them to about two metres so as not to burn off the developing inflorescences.

Some growers grow them on slabs of cork, *Callistemon* and *Melaleuca* branches while most growers use pots with a bark and charcoal mix. They are best repotted every two years. These plants grow and flower best when fertilised each week with a low nitrogen fertiliser such as aqua-k, phostagen etc. The most common disease and pests are usually crown rot from not being allowed to dry out and aphids which like to get among the flower buds.

By Mel Wheeler

These notes have been used at our Cultural and New Grower's Meetings. They are from various sources and we thank the authors. All articles are supplied in good faith and the Bribie Island Orchid Society and its members will not be held responsible for any loss or damage.