

NOTES ON ORCHIDS CULTIVATED IN CEYLON

PHALAENOPSIS GRANDIFLORA LINDL.

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PHALAENOPSIS belongs to a fairly extensive genus of epiphytes of the Vanda tribe, and embraces about fifty species mostly confined to Java, the Philippines, Borneo and Sumatra. The majority of its members are very handsome and easy of culture in the tropics:

Phalaenopsis grandiflora is a native of Java and Borneo, and thrives exceedingly well in the wet low-country of Ceylon, which closely resembles its native habitat.

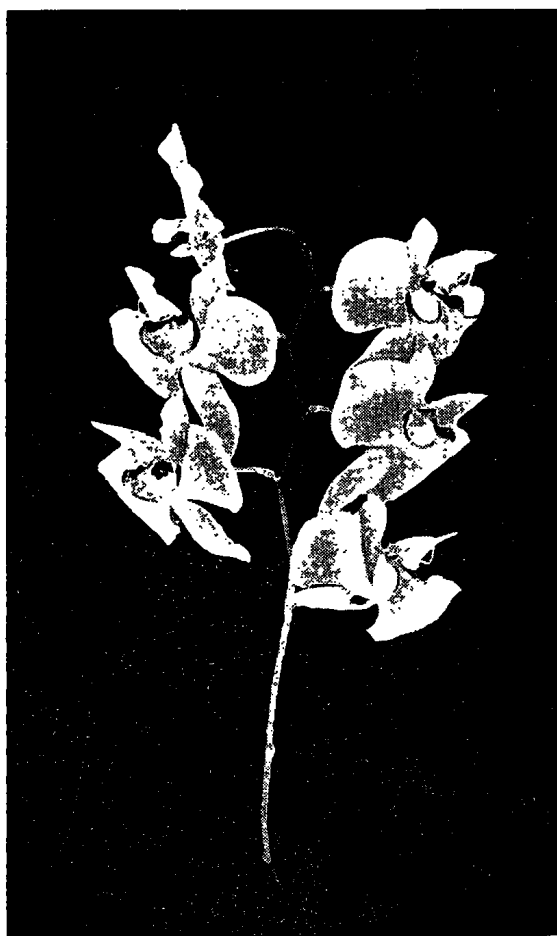
On account of its graceful white flowers the plant has earned great popularity among orchid growers. It has a tuft of fleshy leaves which are elliptic-lanceolate and about ten inches long and three inches broad.

The flowers are borne on a long semi-arched, often branching raceme in opposite rows. The flower is about four inches across with elliptic-ovate sepals and broad and somewhat rhomboidal petals of pure white, while the three-lobed lip is white, beautifully spotted and streaked with rose-pink, with a yellow tinge on the edge of the side lobes. The middle lobe is spear-shaped, the extremity separating into two long and thin filaments which curve upwards. The column is short and white and the gland presents a resemblance to the head of a leopard.

The flowers stay in good condition for as long as three months or more; though the petals and sepals are apt to become spotted if allowed to get wet.

Culture.—The various species of *Phalaenopsis* require, more or less, the same treatment as is given to most tropical orchids. In their native habitat they luxuriate on bare rocks, and on branches of trees under conditions of moist heat.

The most important factor in the cultivation of these plants is a humid atmosphere. They are all of easy culture, and if properly attended to are seldom out of order. However, since they lack pseudo-bulbs for food storage, they need more care and attention than most other orchids if they are to reach perfection.



Phalaenopsis grandiflora Lindl.

Plants of the genus *Phalaenopsis* are cultivated in a variety of ways. They are satisfactorily grown on blocks of wood or sections of the Tree Fern (*Alsophilla crinita* and *Hemitelia Walkerae*), wooden baskets, pots, tiles or in bamboo sections. They will require more moisture at the roots if placed on blocks of wood whilst those grown in pots require better drainage than those grown in baskets. Bamboo sections and tiles have been found very satisfactory in the cultivation of these plants in Ceylon for they not only afford ample drainage but also retain a certain percentage of moisture in the compost. In whatever receptacle they are placed anything approaching dryness is injurious. Syringing overhead should be avoided on dull or cloudy days as a precaution against spotted sepals and petals. Owing to the natural tendency of the leaves to adopt a drooping habit and of the plant to display itself to best advantage when in bloom the best receptacles for them are longitudinal sections of the Giant bamboo, or tiles of similar pattern.

These species that have an upright habit, may be grown in baskets or pots. Whatever the receptacle, the drainage is an important factor and should be carefully considered. A simple method of achieving this is always to place the plant on a mound worked above the rim of the pot.

The best rooting medium for most *Phalaenopsis* is made up of bits of charcoal, bricks, wood and bones. A thin layer of beaten coconut husk or moss placed on the surface will serve to arrest or retain the compost and also prevent any damage to the roots when wiring the plant into position. Repotting may be done every second or third year, and even then it is not advisable to detach the roots adhering to the receptacle but only to shake off the old compost and insert fresh material.

Propagation.—The members of this genus do not afford much opportunity for multiplication of the stock — this can only be done in well-grown and healthy specimens producing basal shoot after several years; but certain species will produce young plants at the tip of the flower scape or on the roots. These plants should be left till well rooted on small blocks of wood, sections of tree fern or balls of coconut fibre before being separated from the parent.