

NOTES ON ORCHIDS CULTIVATED IN CEYLON

VANDA SPATHULATA SPRENG.

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THIS orchid is an epiphyte and belongs to the magnificent genus *Vanda*, which counts more than twenty species, most of which attain a considerable size and are among the largest of tropical Asiatic Orchids.

Vanda spathulata Spreng. is indigenous to Ceylon and the South-Western region of India. In its wild state it grows on scrubby bushes and among rocks almost from sea level to an altitude of about 2,000 feet.

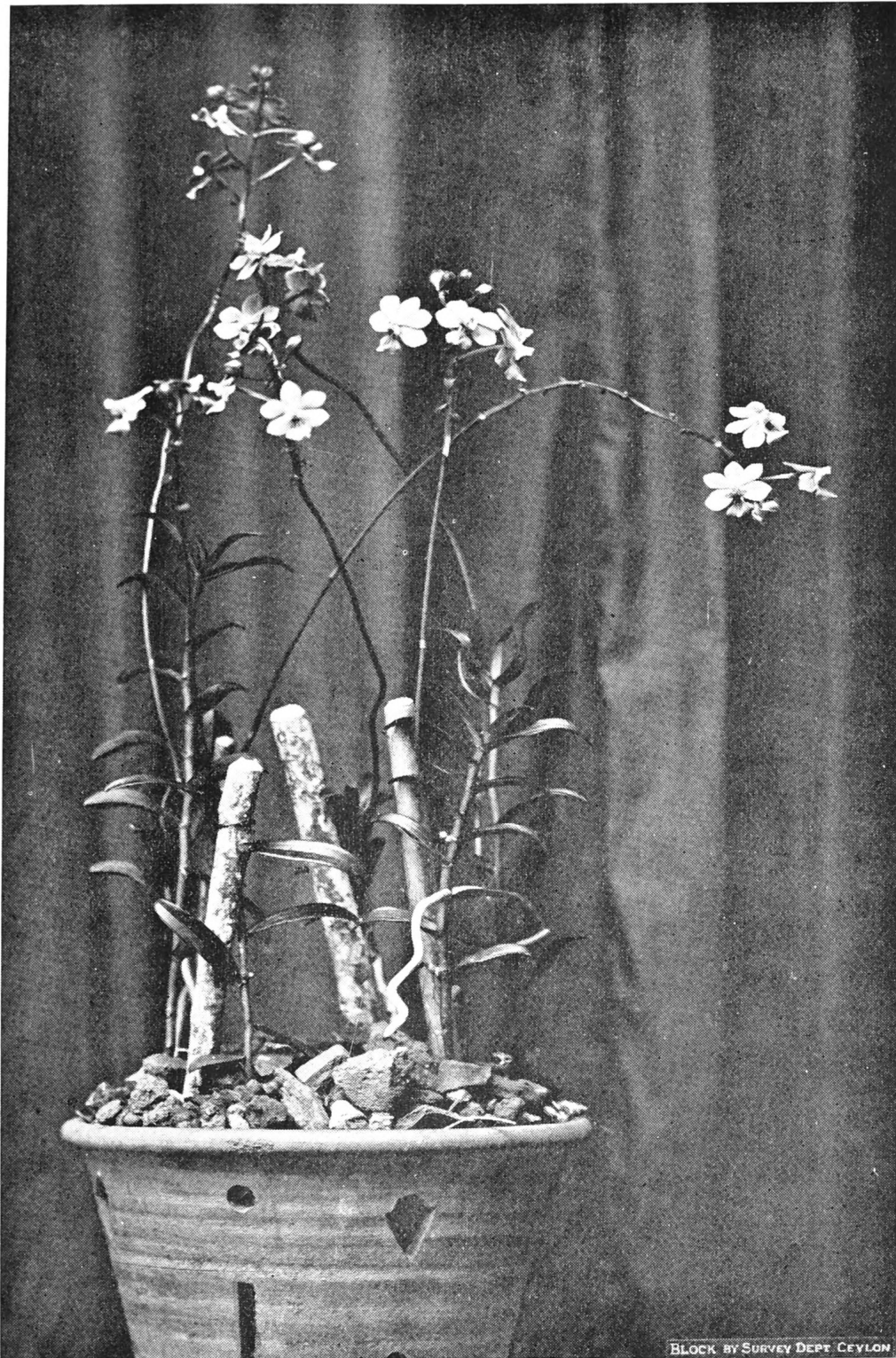
Its semi-straggling climbing habit makes the stem long, ten to fifteen feet being not unusual. Only the distal parts of the stem bear leaves.

The leaves are not of uniform size or colour even in plants growing side by side. It often happens that one has green leaves while those on another are speckled with pink or entirely reddish. A similar variation occurs in plants of different elevations. In the dry districts they are clothed with thicker and shorter leaves more closely set, than in a humid atmosphere.

The stem, which is more or less mottled with pink, cylindrical, and slightly thinner than a lead pencil, has the peculiar habit of throwing out roots upwards. These latter are fairly stout, fleshy and long.

The flower stalk, which is about twelve to eighteen inches high, rises from a node close on the terminal shoot, carrying a raceme of mildly scented bright yellow flowers.

The flower is about one and a half inches across. The sepals and petals are obovate-oblong, the tips being rounded and the lip longer than the sepals.



Vanda spathulata Spreng.

Culture.—This is a sun-loving plant that does not respond readily to pot cultivation. The bare and rather “leggy” stems should be cut off at a point immediately below a good root so that when potted the leaves at the bottom of the stem may rest on the top of the compost. About half a dozen cuttings, each a foot high, may be planted in a ten-inch pot with about the same number of stout durable stakes for them to root on.

The compost may be made up of equal parts of bits of old wood, bark, and coconut husk with a few pieces of charcoal being added when potting to maintain aeration and sweetness of the mixture. A good soaking of water may be given on the day of potting but subsequent waterings should be done only on alternate days or on every third day.

The newly potted plants must be placed in a cool atmosphere for a month or more. When new roots appear, the plants may be transferred to a more open place, preferably under the shade of tall trees.

Cuttings placed in hedges or in closely set bushes have been found to do well and to flower freely.