

PERISTERIA ELATA HOOK

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THIS interesting epiphyte is indigenous to Central America and is known there by the name 'El Spirito Santo', the "Holy Ghost", or "Dove Orchid", by reason of the resemblance of the column of the flower with its beaked anther and side wings to the form of a dove.

It is a strong growing handsome orchid with striated green-coloured large fleshy pseudobulbs of the size of turkeys' eggs. The plant bears three to five lanceolate strongly ribbed plicate leaves, which often attain a height of three feet or more, and a width of about six inches.

The flower stalk rises from the base of the mature pseudobulb, sometimes to a height of five or six feet. The flowers are borne on the upper portion of this stalk, and are almost globular, about an inch and a half across, waxy-white with lilac specks on the base of the lip and inner side of the wings, and strongly scented.

Culture.—Though the plant is an epiphyte it requires a certain amount of the treatment given to terrestrial species. It resents disturbance unless the plant has overgrown its receptacle or the compost has become quite impoverished or sour. Small divisions of the plant or back leafless pseudobulbs with a few roots to each are carefully removed and used for the purpose of propagation.

Young healthy plants are produced on the uppermost leaf scars of the leafless pseudobulbs when severed from the main clump and potted. These small plants or the pseudobulbs themselves should be inserted in six inch pots first in a porous mixture made up of equal parts of flaky leaf soil or turfy soil, well-decomposed farmyard manure, and coarse sand. In the course of potting a handful of crushed charcoal may be added to ensure porosity. The young plant should not be buried too deeply. It only requires the root system to be properly spread

out in the pot, then covered and given a layer of fine compost, up to about an inch from the top of the pot, which should eventually be filled in with pieces of crushed bone, brick and charcoal to enable free access of air and light into the pot. This layer will also serve as a good rooting medium and prevent the soil from being washed away during heavy rain when placed out of doors.

The plant requires a decided rest after flowering, without this it is almost impossible to get it to bloom regularly. To secure this after the flowers are over very little water should be given, only sufficient to prevent the pseudobulbs from shrinking. During the growing season the plant requires a liberal supply of water and should be placed under the shade of tall trees.

A warm, moist atmosphere is very desirable while the plant is in active growth, but avoid placing it in direct sun as the fleshy pseudobulbs are liable to be scorched.