

ANTHURIUM



GARDEN

Appropriate Technology Services

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Srimati Fernando

GARDENS ARE THEIR OWN REWARD

The dividends your garden pays you are in direct ratio to what you put into it. The actual harvest of flowers, fruits and vegetables may well be the least of these. Even more fruitful is the constant unfolding of new delights, whether your garden is limited to a few potted anthuriums on a window sill or you paint a larger picture on a canvas of green lawns framed by spreading trees. To the first-time gardener, everything is new. Like Adam in Eden, he lives in a world freshly created for his special pleasure. To the established gardener, the rewards lie in coming closer to perfection of growing and design, and discovering the improvements in varieties of plants introduced each year. But to amateur and expert alike, a garden is an opportunity for self expression, the satisfaction that comes from working with your hands and nurturing living things. Take your troubles to a garden and they recede before its serenity. Relax or rest in a garden and you will probably live longer and be better able to face the vexing problems of human existence with equanimity. Here are the rewards of gardening, yours for the taking, as great or as small as the work and devotion you choose to give from year to year.

A GARDEN

A garden is a lovesome thing,
God wot!
Rose plot,
Fringed pool,
Ferned grot—
The veriest school
of peace; and yet the fool
Contentends that God is not—
Not God! in gardens!
When the eve is cool?
Nay, but I have a sign;
'Tis very sure God walks in mine.

THOMAS EDWARD BROWN

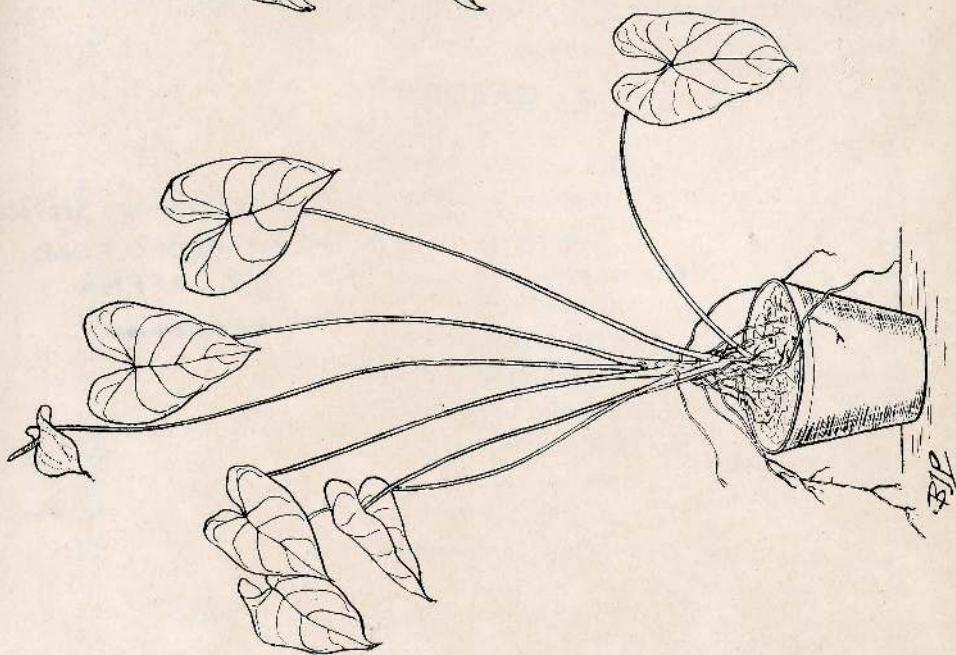


FIG. 1

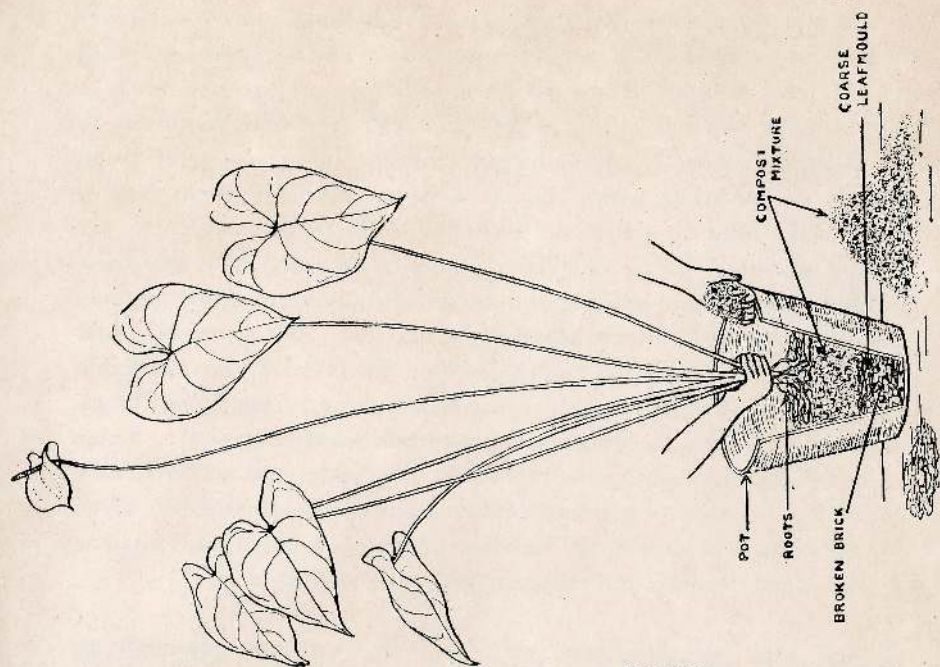


FIG. 2

CULTURE AND PROPAGATION OF ANTHURIUMS

(*Flamingo Plant: Tail Flower*)

By D. M. A. JAYAWERNA

Superintendent of Botanical Gardens, Peradeniya.

Anthurium is one of the most popular ornamental plants in any home in Ceylon owing to its shade loving habit, its large ornamental foliage and brilliant spathes and the ease with which it could be cultivated. The name Anthurium is derived from the Greek—*Anthos*—a flower, and *oura*—a tail. It is a native of Tropical America and the genus includes about 500 species. Of these the commonly cultivated species is *A. andreanum*, valuable as a cut flower owing to the colouration of the spathe ranging from white, various shades of pink, orange, red, crimson to reddish-brown. The inflorescence is referred to as the flower by the amateur but actually it consists of numerous bisexual flowers, closely packed together in a spadix or tail and the brilliant outer sheath forming the spathe. It belongs to the Arum family (Araceae).

Habit

Anthuriums are moisture-loving plants which would grow under humid conditions in partial shade. They flourish in porous soils rich in humus and good aeration. Some of the roots are aerial, arising from the bases of leaves with their tips growing into the soil. The stout stems grow out producing leaves and flowers roughly at the rate of about one to every two months.

Repotting

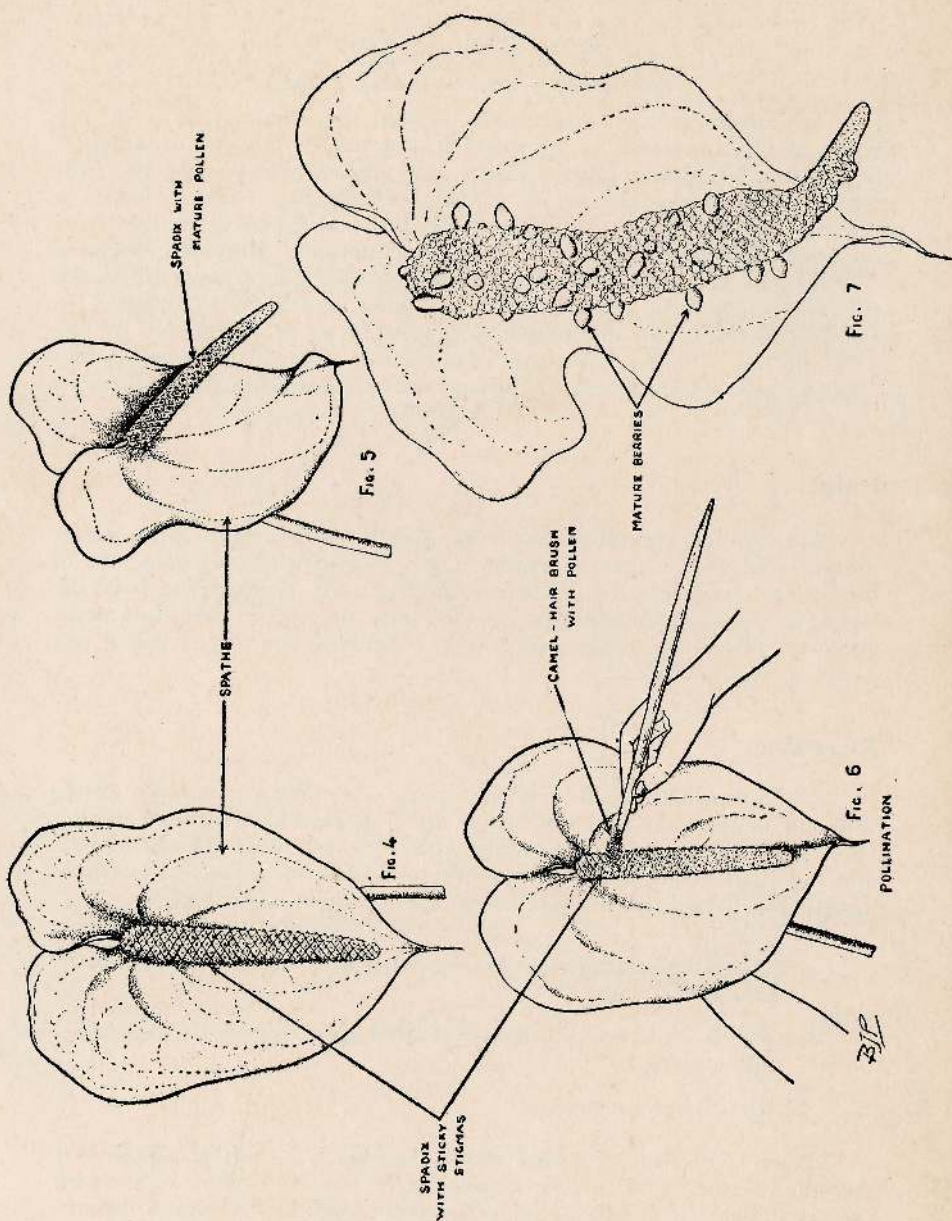
All anthurium plants need repotting when the stems have grown well out of the pots and the leaves and inflorescences become smaller (Fig. 1). The top portion together with a few roots may be cut off, the cut end disinfected with a very dilute solution of potassium permanganate and potted up in a mixture of the following composition:—

$1\frac{1}{2}$ parts coarse compost or (1 part leaf mould and $\frac{1}{2}$ part cattle manure).

1 part loam fibre consisting of matted grass roots with some of the soil attached.

$\frac{1}{2}$ part Sphgnum moss.

Sharp river sand, charcoal and broken brick are added sufficient to give the mixture a fairly loose consistency. The consistency of the mixture is judged by holding the well mixed, slightly moistened mixture tight in ones palm and releasing it suddenly. If the mixture breaks up, then it is satisfactory, but if it remains in the form of a ball, more sand



and brick pieces should be added. To each bushel of this mixture the following fertilizers are incorporated and mixed well:—3 ozs. muriate or sulphate of potash, $1\frac{1}{2}$ ozs. bone meal, $1\frac{1}{2}$ ozs. Hoof and Horn and $\frac{1}{2}$ oz, superphosphate.

A broken piece of a pot is placed over the aeration holes at the bottom of the pot with its curve facing downwards, then a few pieces of broken brick and some decaying leaves to prevent blockage of the holes. Now the above mixture is added until the pot is $\frac{1}{3}$ full and firmed. The plant is then placed with the roots spread out (Fig. 2) and the mixture is worked in between the roots with the fingers and firmed at the top by the addition of more of the mixture. It is then watered and kept in a shady place.

Propagation

Anthuriums can be propagated vegetatively as well as by seed. The number of plants that can be raised vegetatively is limited by the lengths of the back-stem cut off when they are repotted. These pieces are chopped up into sections each containing at least one dormant bud, washed in a dilute solution of potassium permanganate and partially buried in a mixture of leafmould and sand in the ground or in a seed box and kept watered in the shade (Fig. 3). All sections may not produce plants, but some would and in due course they can be potted up individually.

Propagation by seed is much more interesting and exciting owing to the complex nature of the parents, the large range of colours of the flowers the progeny would yield. Flowers are protogynous so that the stigmas would mature earlier and would be ready to receive the pollen about 12-15 days after the inflorescence has opened (Fig. 4). The exact time could be judged by running one's finger gently over the stigmas. If a slimy exudation adheres to the finger, it could then be assumed that the flowers are ready to receive the pollen. Pollen from another, older flower may be brought in and gently rubbed over the stigmas by means of a small camel hair brush (Fig. 6). If fertilization has occurred the spadix will begin to thicken often turning green. After about 5-6 months it would turn yellow and the yellow berries would protrude out (Fig. 7). The berries are now ready to be picked and germinated.

The ripe berries are gently pressed until the seeds emerge after the rupture of the pericarp. The seeds are then washed in water several times so as to get rid of the slimy sap. Then they are washed again in a dilute solution of potassium permanganate before being sown in seed pans.

Care should be taken to prepare the seed pan correctly to ensure maximum germination. The bottom of the seed pan is crocked up to about $1\frac{1}{2}$ " over which a layer of decaying leaves and about $2\frac{1}{2}$ " of typical anthurium mixture are placed and firmed. On this, about $\frac{1}{2}$ " layer of small pieces of brick and charcoal is spread (Fig. 8). Now the seed is

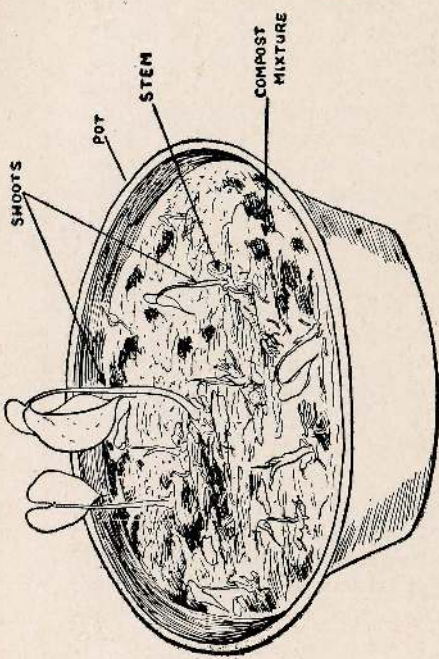


FIG. 3

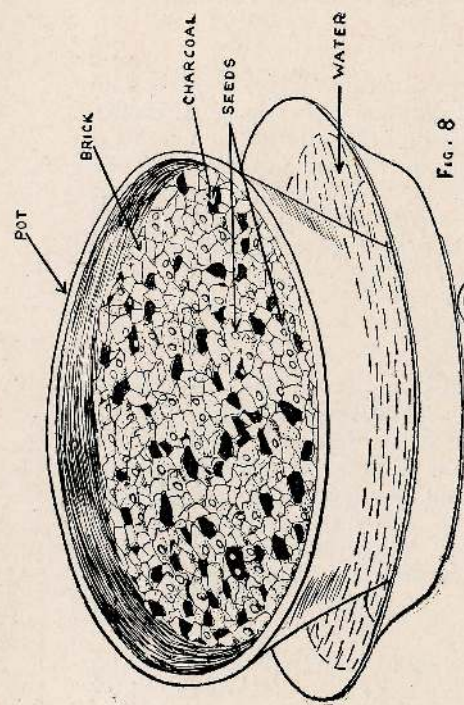


FIG. 8

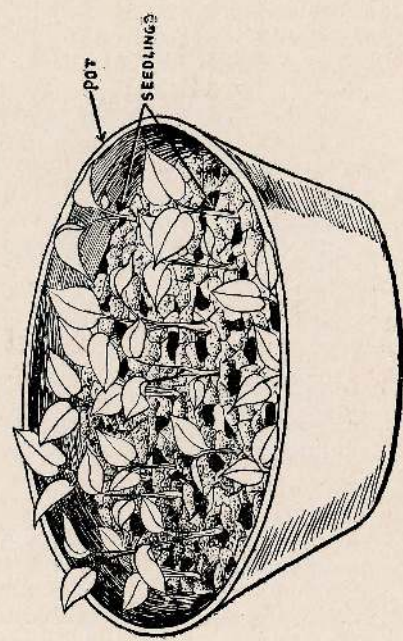


FIG. 9

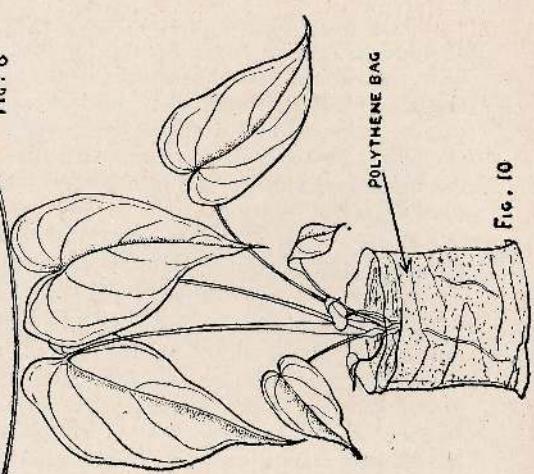


FIG. 10

sown on the pieces of brick and charcoal and watered. The pot is then placed in a pan of water and kept in a shady place until the seeds germinate. When the seedlings are about 2 high (Fig. 9) they are pricked out singly into polythene slips containing the usual anthurium mixture (Fig. 10) and kept in the shade until fully established. After they have produced the first flowers they can be potted up into clay pots as indicated earlier.

Shade and Watering

These are very important factors in the culture of anthuriums. The shade necessary may be provided by lath or coir mesh so that the plant receives about 60-70 per cent of the normal sun light. It is the normal practice to cut off leaves and use them in floral arrangements but it has to be borne in mind that a minimum of at least 4 leaves should be left on the plant lest the number of flowers produced per year is affected.

Anthuriums welcome liberal watering provided good drainage is maintained. However they dislike wet feet. Water logged conditions are unfavourable for the healthy growth of plants.

Pests and Diseases

Slugs and snails: These are very troublesome pests specially when plants are in the seedling stage. They come out during the night and feed on the tender portions of the root and the young leaves and get back into the compost for the day. They can however be controlled by the use of Meta-aldehyde as a bait. $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. of the meta is crushed into a fine powder and mixed with 1 lb. bran. This is moistened by the addition of about $1\frac{1}{4}$ pints of water and placed in heaps 10-15 feet apart.

Leaf-eating caterpillars: These larvae feed on the tender leaves and could be controlled by spraying the plants with an aqueous solution of lead arsenate made up by dissolving 1 oz. of lead arsenate in a gallon of water.

Scales and mealy bug: These insects escape the attention of the grower in that they live on the under surface of the leaves feeding on the cell sap. They may be observed as brown or blackish spots or white wooly patches. They can be controlled by spraying the under surface of the leaves with an aqueous solution of "Basudin 60" made up by dissolving 1 teaspoonful of the insecticide in a gallon of water.

White ants: Since leaf mould is used in the compost mixture, white ants may occasionally appear and feed on the tender roots. These can be controlled by watering the pot or bed with an aqueous solution of "Intox 8" made up by dissolving 1 oz. of the insecticide in $12\frac{1}{2}$ gallons of water.

There are hardly any diseases in Anthuriums. Over exposure to the sun sometimes causes leaf scorching which would appear as brown patches on a yellowing leaf.



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AN INTRODUCTION TO ORCHID GROWING

By

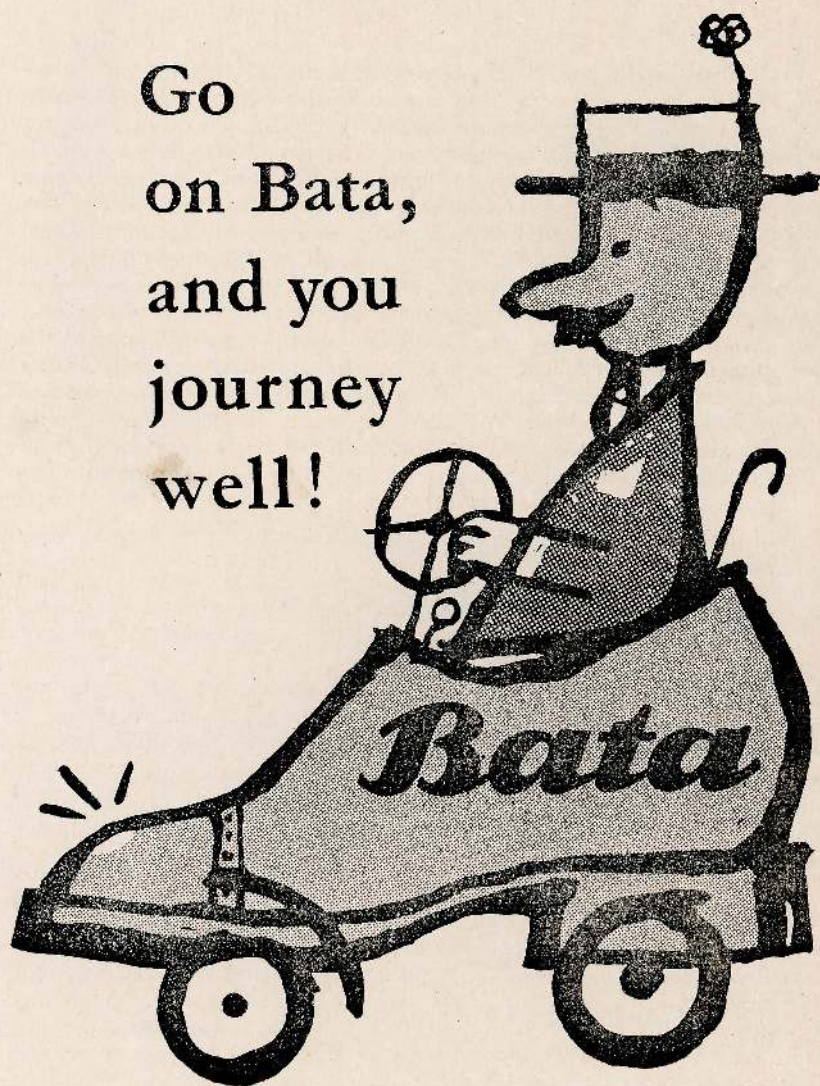
MERLE E. DALPETHADO

You probably have been an admirer of my "Lady Orchid" for some time. It is from admiration that association is born. You may also have been envious of the owners of these beautiful flowers that you may have seen at the shows and in collections of friends. You may also have wondered what magical arts were required to grow these orchids or whether your fingers were green enough to grow them successfully. What other flowers could compare with orchids, for longevity of the blooms, the floral excellence and the hardiness of growth, *etc.* You may have been keen to start on orchids but hesitant to take the first steps for probably your only venture at horticulture was a feeble attempt at growing Zinnias! Your hesitancy may have increased when you heard about all those things connected with orchid culture, relative humidity, glass houses, controlled watering, *etc.* You probably were sincere in your attempts but got mixed up with Dendrobiums, Ondotoglossums, Miltonias, Cymbidiums, Zygopetalums, *etc.*, and did not know which grew in your climate and which did not.

This brief note is therefore being written to serve as an introduction to orchid culture and to be a prop to you in the first faltering steps you intend taking. This is also a welcome to you to share in the joy and the pleasure of good fellowship of orchid enthusiasts for an interest in orchids is an open sesame to the hearts of many orchidists. It is however essential that you should know at least the fundamentals when you make your first purchases of an orchid plant. If you don't, you might make the sacrilegious mistake of planting a dendrobe in an excellent mixture of red earth and cattle manure. Before you join in a game of cricket you should know what functions the bat, the stumps and the fielders perform in the game. It is just so with orchids, unless you know the rudiments of orchid culture. You will soon be back in the woods and hateful of the hobby called Orchid Culture.

The growing of and the choice of plants are primarily dependent on *your* climatic conditions. You have undoubtedly heard of cattleyas, dendrobiums, vandas, phalaenopses, *etc.* They represent various genera of orchids and in their natural state are found in the jungle. They are the handiwork of the Creator and often manifest a standard of beauty which the efforts of man can hardly equal. Each of these genera require particular climatic conditions for it to thrive. It is a truism that there is no one jungle in the world where all the genera of orchids are found growing together. Hence the necessity that for successful growing of any one genera and to get optimum results one has to simulate the natural conditions in which that particular type is to be found.

Go
on Bata,
and you
journey
well!



An important thing to remember is that cabbages do not grow in Colombo nor coconuts in Nuwara Eliya. This applies to orchids as well. Hence the principle, grow only those that are suitable to your climate. It is certainly easier to find the orchid to suit your climate than to provide the climate to suit your orchid.

Dendrobiums

Broadly there are two distinct types of dendrobiums that are popularly grown. The *Phalaenopsis* and the Cane type. The latter are the beginners' ideal choice providing a lot of latitude for mishandling. The species forms of these are *D. Undulatum*, *Veratrifolium*, *Schulleri*, *Stratiotes Gouldi* etc. These species plants have given rise to a wide variety and range of hybrids, all of which are surprisingly easy to grow, thriving in the full sun and are extremely floriferous. The pseudo bulbs of this type grow large and resemble Sugar Cane, hence the name by which they are popularly known. These hybrids bear long sprays of flowers which have excellent keeping qualities. In Hawaii, these hybrids luxuriate with such abandon that comparatively they find grass harder to grow! The general principle in potting all dendrobies is that small pots are the best. Let the plant outgrow the pot. When it has the appearance that the plant should have been potted two years back, then you could consider that you are growing the plant well. The type species and hybrids can stand heat so let them have the full effect of the Ceylon sun. No lath houses or 'tree protection' is required for these hybrids. Water the plants when they are dry, you won't kill them if you don't for a couple of days or even more. Fertilize these plants regularly as they have no marked testing period and they generally bloom all the year round.

As against the cane types are the *Dendrobium Phalaenopsis* type and what are popularly called 'Polyploid dendrobies'. These have to be treated deferentially, not full sun but filtered light under lath or under large trees. As much sun as it would not burn the leaves. Fertilize and water when only in active growth. When the pseudo bulbs have stopped growing dry the plant off slightly to induce flowering. The danger period is immediately after flowering for these plants go into a long rest. When there is no growth activity, no fertilizing and watering, just enough of water to keep the bulbs from shrivelling. Grow these plants well and you are on the way to winning awards and carrying away trophies. Hybrids in this section produce long arching sprays with dark round flowers. These plants are said to be seasonal for flowering, but in Ceylon these plants bloom practically every month of the year with a marked flush of bloom during September to December. Potting could be done in the age-old brick and charcoal mixture or in bark or tree fern. Whatever the potting medium, fertilize regularly and watch the growth cycle of the plants. You would have then mastered the technique of growing dendrobiums which are the best buy for all those living in the coastal belt of Ceylon.

Vandas, Renantheras

In the *Vanda* genera, we shall only endeavour to deal with terete and strap—terete hybrids as we feel they are the best for beginners. It is not

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COLOMBO 2

easy to kill these hardy Vandas. It requires effort. They can be subject to much abuse but still they will grow and bloom satisfactorily. Most orchid growers the world over are now concentrating on the strap terete hybrids. Fortunately breeders are rolling out excellent hybrids from their breeding benches and it is now possible to obtain plants bearing flowers of all shapes, sizes and hues in this type of orchids. The names of V. Nellie Morley, Tan Chay Yan, T. M. A., T. S. Kuah, Walter Oumae, Colorsan and a host of others come easily into one's mind as representing the cream of hybrids in this section. Much thought into the chromosomal make-up of hybrids has gone into these plants. The beginners are assured that purchase of orchids in this section is an excellent investment and also a safe bet if one is also having an eye for awards and prizes.

Chunks of tree fern, rough bark, charcoal, broken brick all provide excellent potting material for this type of plants. Vandas are heavy feeders and they must be fed regularly. They also require more water than dendrobies. These Vandas revel in the sun, hence give them all the light you can.

Terete Vandas are those pencil like growths which apparently are leafless, *e.g.* V. Agnes Joaquim. All that these plants require is a place in the sun and an occasional application of cattle manure. Given this frugal attention they will grow vigorously and bloom profusely.

Renantheras are tall, hardy growers producing flowers of brilliant red tones. These are excellent garden plants. The care and attention for these plants are the same as for vandas.

Arandas

Here is another type of orchid for the 'lazybones', hardy, vigorous, free flowering. Most of the hybrids in this section originate from Singapore and are first rate garden plants. You can landscape your garden with these plants as they come in all hues and shades. The only fault is that they are lanky growers. In fact these hybrids could be grown by the rawest tyro. Many of them could be grown in good garden compost but as a rule the potting mixture suitable for vandas would be safe and adequate for these plants too. Chunks of well dried coconut husks could be added into the potting mixture. Most of these hybrids originate from three main plants. A. Maggie Oei, A. Hookeriana and A. Ishbel. They are all 'scorpion shaped' and very floriferous. These orchids have been bred for the sun. Don't pamper them.

Palaenopses

These plants generally produce long spikes with round white flowers, representing butterflies in flight. They also do come in various shades of pink. Phalaenopses are not and should not be beginners' first choice. This genera is being included here for with a little 'know how' excellent

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results could be obtained in the coastal belts. If you are the lax, careless type, then these orchids definitely are not for you. They require about 50% shade and the drip from over hanging objects should be shunned. They can take as much water as you can give them but not after 3 p.m. Fertilize often. The easiest method of growing is by attaching the plants to sections of tree fern. Look after these plants well and you will be thrilled by lively white blooms that last for months.

Cattleyas

We have left them out for the last because we are uncertain how these plants will behave in your hands, the hands of a beginner. For the best flowering of cattleyas a marked difference between the day and night temperature is essential. In Colombo and in the coastal belt round Ceylon the difference between the day and night temperature is hardly noticeable. The cultural requirements briefly are morning sun and filtered light thereafter. Watering has to be handled carefully. Plants should only be watered when they have completely dried out. These resent wet feet. Cattleyas are slow growers and require fertilizer only occasionally. Each one has his favourite potting mixture which is considered better than the best. Tree fern, bark, osmunda all are excellent. The age-old brick and charcoal combination is also good and should be the choice of the beginner. You can change over when you have gained familiarity with your plants.

Fertilizers

This is an essential requirement in the modern treatment of orchids. The plants *have* to be fertilized and that regularly. There are various fertilizers in the market, try one or more. We however feel that for best results you should use an organic and inorganic fertilizer alternatively.

Pests and Fungus Diseases

These are two things that you would have to watch out for. Fortunately there is a wide range of insecticides and fungicides available in the market which should provide the solution to your particular problem. Identification is necessary before you medicate. Hence get some one who knows about pests and diseases, to help you out.

General

Every plant in bloom that you may have admired was once an insignificant little seedling. This should be remembered when it is desired to start a collection. Those adult plants with exquisite flowers are expensive, buy them if the cost does not count with you. Those unpretentious little seedlings will do just as well. You would have to nurse them through their 'infancy' and watch them grow into adults. They will make an orchid

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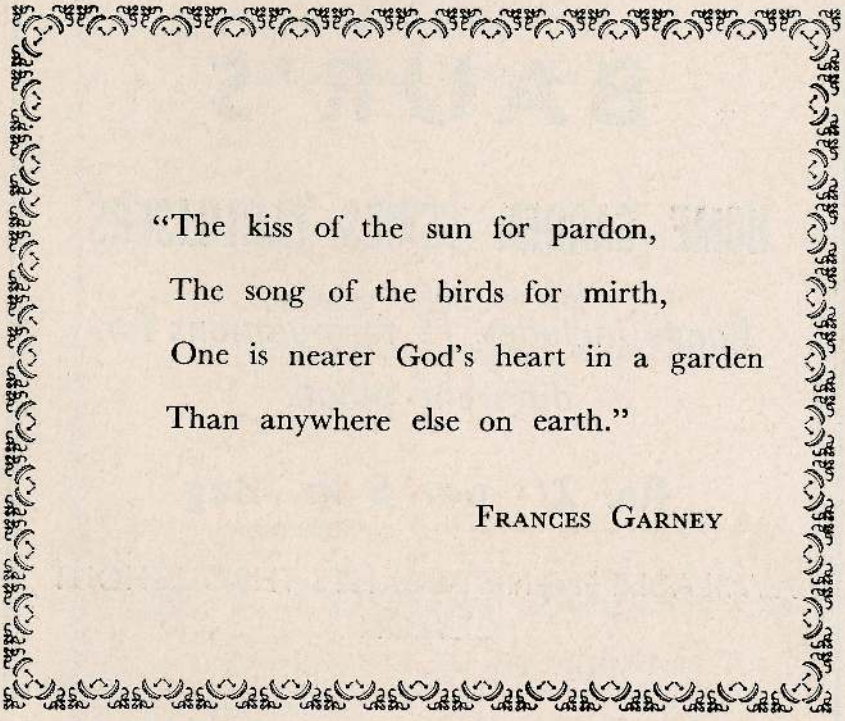
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grower out of you! There is also the possibility that the rupee you spent for them would be worth a thousand.

All the above has been written only as a guide to the uninitiated, to light up the journey into the wonderful absorbing hobby of orchid culture. There are no secret or magical recipes to success in orchid growing. Nothing is beyond you but get started.

Gardening has been described as "the purest of human pleasures" and once you have become an 'orchidophile' you will unhesitatingly declare that in the realm of gardening the care and growing of orchids stand supreme.



"The kiss of the sun for pardon,
The song of the birds for mirth,
One is nearer God's heart in a garden
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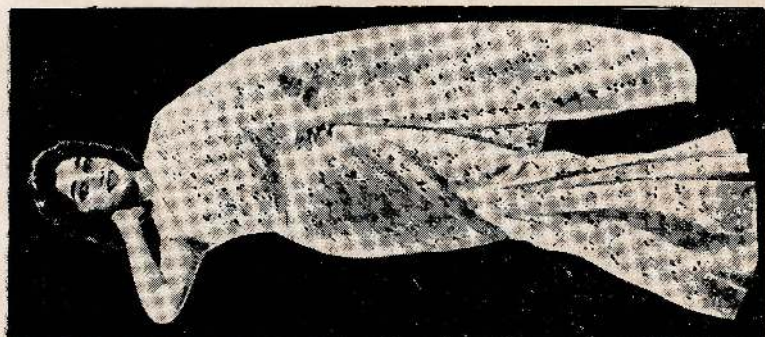
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