

CULTURE of the PAPHIOPEDILUM SUBGENUS PARVISEPHALUM
by Tim Stout

Although our summer meetings can be described as informal, they are by no means any less informative. This mini-article has been researched and written in response to discussions which arose at different times during the summer meetings.

The question, 'How do I get Paphiopedilum armeniacum to flower?' was asked more than once.

Is there a trick to flowering Chinese species or for that matter any other species in the subgenus?

As always, the answer lies in our knowledge of the species. Knowing where the plant comes from usually gives enough clues to its culture to coax the plant into flowering. (Let's face it, we don't typically grow orchids for their foliage, although it does make a good excuse.)

There are five known species in the subgenus Parvisepalum: Paphiopedilum delenatii, P. armeniacum, P. micranthum, P. malipoense, and P. emersonii. All five species are from south-west China and Vietnam. They are said to be found in wooded limestone areas with their roots growing in moss and decaying leaf-matter. There is always good air movement and humidity in their natural habitat.

The Chinese province of Yunnan is the host of three of these exciting species: P. armeniacum, P. micranthum, and P. malipoense. The region is affected by two main seasons. The summer season begins in April with warm temperatures and heavy rains lasting till September. The cool, dry winter season begins in late September and lasts till March, although rainshowers become more frequent starting in December. The yearly rainfall averages 75 inches and the humidity never goes below 60%. The yearly high and low temperatures for the region are 83° and 45°F respectively.

Although quite a distance separates the habitat of P. delenatii from the forementioned, their seasonal and climatic characteristics are nearly identical and may be considered the same.

P. emersonii is the newest introduction to the bunch, and unfortunately not much is known about its distribution. It has been suggested that it was collected in Guizhou Province in South-east China.

By taking this information we can pull out some important cultural requirements which apply to all species in this group. P. delenatii, P. micranthum, P. armeniacum, and P. malipoense all come from a similar region which is governed by two main seasons. Generally speaking, the summer is warm and wet and the winter is cool and drier. Hmm... This fits right in with the requirements of many of our other orchids. Walter Off of Waldor Orchids has had great success in flowering parvisepalum species with this in mind!

A second bit of information comes more specifically from the

location that these species are endemic to. As previously mentioned, the plants in this subgenus grow in moss and leaf-litter in wooded limestone areas (hills, to be more exact) where there is good air movement and humidity. We can easily conclude that air movement, humidity, and shading are important, but what is less obvious here is that they are growing in a perfect medium. The substrate in which these plants grow provides them with the right amounts of air, water, nutrients, and mechanical support so they can grow and flower. Thank goodness for papn. potting mix and Peters fertilizers!

So as you can see, there are no tricks to growing and flowering parvisepalum species. Knowledge is the key to your success.

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