



The Orchid Review

2024

YEARBOOK



**YOUR
ESSENTIAL
ORCHID
ANNUAL**

Including the best
new orchid breeding,
orchid collections,
RHS awards
and shows



Stanhopea springs eternal

Gill Mathers celebrates the exciting orchids being given a new home among the burgeoning collection at The Mathers Foundation

PHOTOGRAPHY: THE MATHERS FOUNDATION

Stanhopea graveolens (left) is one of many species in a National Plant Collection at The Mathers Foundation.

Dick and Denise Hartley (right) have donated most of their extensive orchid collection to The Mathers Foundation.



ORCHID GROWERS DEVOTE a huge part of their lives to developing their collections and nurturing plants in their care. These collections contain unique combinations of genetic material which are the legacy of generations of plant collecting and breeding. With the future of many of these plants in the wild threatened by deforestation and climate change, cultivating and curating these *ex-situ* living collections is becoming ever more important. Without these living libraries, looked after by knowledgeable growers, the enthusiasts of tomorrow will not have access to the fascinating diversity we see today. The Mathers Foundation is committed to helping preserve amazing orchid collections and we have welcomed a major addition to the glasshouses of The Mathers Foundation with the donation of the Hartley collection which was acquired in two stages in October 2022 and June 2023.

Dick and Denise Hartley started growing orchids in 1965. When we first met them in July 2022, after an enjoyable weekend visiting the

Harrogate Orchid Society's annual show at RHS Harlow Carr, we were asked if we could help with the task of finding a new home for their extraordinary *Stanhopea* collection. This completely filled the ceiling space of one of the large greenhouses at Foxdale Orchids where they housed their plants. The collection was recognized as a National Plant Collection and over the years it had grown from a few stanhopeas which had been purchased from the John Keeling Orchid Nursery in Bradford in the 1960s to a comprehensive collection of species and hybrids.

Their breeding work on the collection was remarkable, with 35 of the nearly 200 known hybrids being registered by the Hartleys. The orchids had been exhibited at RHS and International Orchid Shows at Newbury, Peterborough and Malvern, with a highlight of being awarded the Holford Medal in 2000 for a remarkable Gold Medal-winning display at RHS Flower Show Tatton Park.

In 2018 Dick and Denise had generously donated a substantial group of over 2,000

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Collections

stanhopeas and 1,000 lycastes to a young horticulturist, Michael Benedito, who, through crowdfunding, arranged a shipping container to transport them to Madeira. This left a more modest collection of over 600 stanhopeas requiring a new home.

Happy to help

Driving back down the M6 to London we considered how best to help and, after a phone call to Jim Durrant, our head nurseryman, we decided that the best thing to do would be to relocate the entire collection down to Sussex. In October 2022 the stanhopeas were packed and transported and, on arrival in the quarantine area, each was inspected and labelled with a QR code for our database. Each was then repotted into smaller six-inch containers with sphagnum moss, bark and perlite. Stanhopeas are very resilient orchids and by spring 2023, with fresh roots emerging, the first of the plants were ready to be replanted into hanging baskets.

As Christmas approached we then had a pleasant surprise as we were asked to consider rehoming the remaining plants owned by Dick and Denise. This comprised a very large *Bulbophyllum* collection, together with anguloas, lycastes and some paphinias too. Most of the *Anguloa* collection had originated from Dr Henry Oakeley who held a National Plant Collection of *Anguloa*, together with plants sourced from the Jardin du Luxembourg. The *Bulbophyllum* collection had been donated by a Belgian friend of Dick and Denise, Dr Jean-Marie Vanderwinden, and transported back from Brussels to Stoke-on-Trent in 2013. At that point, all these plants fitted into a large family car but, 10 years later, it filled all the remaining space in the 24 × 60ft glasshouse. This was going to prove a challenge: we lacked suitable conditions to house this warm-growing collection and only had six months to organize the move.

Seeking solutions

Optimistic that we could look after this unique collection, we discussed the proposal with our landlord, Peter Verheul of Hortisystems. Building a greenhouse as a separately glazed space inside the cymbidium house seemed to offer a perfect solution and the opportunity to experiment with a new sustainable heating source, an air-source heat pump. The build was completed by early June and the date set after the Malvern Show to start the move. The Barbara Everard Orchid Conservation Trust kindly provided us a grant to fund the hire



Stanhopea Concorde (top) was raised by Dick Hartley and registered in 2022.



Stanhopea whittenii (above) is native to Mexico and Guatemala.

of a large van and acquisition of four Danish trolleys which proved invaluable. The rescue mission took three 400-mile round trips over the course of a week. Everything from sphagnum moss to pots and original photographs for display were included and only a few items left behind including a collection of jars of pickled *Stanhopea* which we simply did not have room for.

Unloading all the 900 new orchids filled the new Hot House and our next mission was to document and label the new additions which were primarily species. With this we were extremely lucky to have had the offer of help from Hendrelien Peters. Hendrelien had recently moved to Sussex from South Africa, where she had >>



The new Hot House at The Mathers Foundation houses the bulbophyllums.



Anguloa cliftonii (above) is one of only nine species in the genus.

Anguloa Tessa (left) was raised by Dick Hartley and registered in 2018.



Hendrelien Peters and Gill Mathers in the Hot House.



Neat lines of stanhopeas hanging in their new home at The Mathers Foundation.

Three important genera at The Mathers Foundation

Stanhopea

The genus was named in 1829 after Philip Henry, Earl of Stanhope. Its distribution ranges from damp forests of Mexico to Argentina and the unusual flowers grow down from the base of the bulbs, necessitating culture in baskets. The flowers are short-lived and highly fragrant, with a heady scent ranging from chocolate to citrus and camphor. They are pollinated by male euglossine bees which collect fragrances from the flowers, often with a highly specific relationship between the two species.

Growing conditions: These are grown in our Cool to Intermediate House with a minimum temperature of 16°C. The compost is 60–70 percent sphagnum, 20–30 percent bark and 10 percent perlite in hanging baskets. Watering is with rainwater two or three times a week, ideally in early morning, but less in winter when the compost should just be slightly damp. Fertilize regularly during active growth.

Bulbophyllum

This is the largest genus in the orchid family, with more than 2,800 species. The name is derived from the Greek *bolbos*, meaning bulb, and *phylon*, a leaf, referring to the pseudobulbs on top of which the leaf grows. The centre of diversity of this species is Papua New Guinea but the genus is widespread and can be found from Southeast Asia to Australia, India, Madagascar, Africa and South America. Many of the species have a distinct unpleasant odour of rotting meat as they are pollinated by flies, but some, such as *B. ambrosia*, have a pleasant floral fragrance.

Growing conditions: These are grown in our Hot House with a temperature range of 18°C to 35°C. The compost is 60–70 percent sphagnum, 20–30 percent bark and 10 percent perlite. Watering is with rainwater two or three times a week, ideally in early morning, but less in winter when the compost should just be slightly damp.

Anguloa

The genus is named after Don Francisco de Angulo, a Peruvian orchid aficionado. Sometimes referred to as tulip orchids or swaddled baby orchids, they are usually found on the forest floor at elevations of 600 to 2,200m in Ecuador, Peru, Colombia and Venezuela. There are 13 species and natural hybrids, and they are closely related to *Lycaste*. The flowers have a waxy appearance and are usually scented with a range of odours such as medicinal, wintergreen, cinnamon and mint.

Growing conditions: These are grown at the warm end of our Cymbidium House with a minimum temperature of 12°C (though this is slightly too cool for this genus). The compost mix is 60–70 percent sphagnum, 20–30 percent bark and 10 percent perlite. Watering is with rainwater two or three times a week, ideally in early morning, but less in winter when the compost should just be slightly damp.



***Bulbophyllum* Sunshine Queen (top)** is a cross between *B. mastersianum* and *B. corolliferum*.

***Bulbophyllum* Jersey (above)** is a cross between *B. lobbii* and *B. echinolabium*.

curated the orchid collection of Durban Botanic Gardens from 2013 to 2023. Other experts also helped us, including Dr André Schuiteman and Dr Phillip Cribb of Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, Mark Turner of Elite Orchids, Dr Benjamin Crain of Humboldt Botanical Gardens, USA, and Dr Henry Oakeley who is an expert on *Anguloa*.

The future looks bright

By October we marked the anniversary of the *Stanhopea* arrival by reapplying to Plant Heritage to reinstate the collection as a National Plant Collection. Given the similarities between the two genera, we expanded the circumscription of the collection to include *Acineta* of which we had already some from Colombia. Being reaccredited as a National Plant Collection in November was testament to the incredible work done by Jim in rehabilitating the plants. In the New Year more than 70 percent of the *Stanhopea* were suspended in new hanging baskets along the windows of the Cool and Intermediate House with a few still in stages of recovery. In the coming year we are expecting many flowers and will then seek new homes for any surplus plants, ensuring we keep a core collection for visitors to admire.

The bulbophyllums have delighted visitors from the UK and overseas this year. As each new orchid opens Hendrelien photographs and researches the names to ensure they are correctly identified, which is always difficult with such a large and complex genus. Some of the highlights include the different variants of *Bulbophyllum falcata*, the delicacy of petite *B. lindleyanum* and the vibrant yellow colouring of *B. amplebracteatum*. Hybrids add interest to the range on display, including *B. Jersey* and *B. Sunshine Queen*. In time the collection is being repotted and sorted and some surplus specimens will be donated to Botanical Gardens in the UK or sold to raise funds for our conservation work.

The *Anguloa* and *Lycaste* are all repotted and we are currently applying for them to be considered as a National Plant Collection. The anguloas include species, such as *A. cliftonii*, and awarded hybrids, such as *A. Tessa AM*, and we are looking forward to seeing the blooms this summer.

It has been a great privilege to be entrusted with this collection and we look forward to keeping Dick and Denise involved as the collection becomes established in its new home in Sussex. ○

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Gill Mathers is an orchid enthusiast and Chair of The Mathers Foundation.