

Shoalhaven Orchid Society Inc.



The Shoalhaven Orchid Society celebrated its 60th birthday in 2016 and members have enjoyed a further five years of friendship and friendly competition since then.

In 2017 the then president, Jim Purtell, oversaw the society move from the Presbyterian Hall in Nowra to a new venue at the Bomaderry Bowling Club. The Club provided our meeting and show rooms and facilities free of charge until the Covid 19 pandemic caused the Club to close meeting rooms and no meetings were held from April to June 2020. The decision by the Club to introduce steep hire fees saw the 2020 committee, led by President Louise Gannon, undertake an urgent search for a new meeting venue. The Bomaderry Community Centre was the successful outcome and, since meetings resumed in July 2020, this has been our new home for meetings and shows.

The 2019 AGM elections failed to deliver a quorum for committee and, after an unsettled period and the resignation of the president, an extraordinary general meeting was held in April and all vacant positions were filled enabling the society to continue to function. Louise Gannon was elected as president becoming the first ever female president of the society.

Over the last 5 years presidents Jim Purtell and Louise Gannon have been ably assisted by their committee members: Monica Bailey, Mick Bodycott, Teresa Bourke, John Clancy, Alan Coulton (dec.), Leanne Davey, Sandra Ellis, Ron Findlater, Tom Gablonski, John Harriman, Ross & Michelle (dec.) Hahn, Phil Harrington (dec.), Don Hogan, Suzanne Knight, Brian & Lynne Phelan, Sharon Pugh, Min Purtell, Francoise Sikora, Diane Slye, Val Starling, Garry Ware and Julie Williams.

Our newsletter has had a number of editors including: Julie Williams, Lynne Phelan, Eti Asplin and Teresa Bourke and it continues to provide members with up-to-date society news as well as cultural information. Alan Stephenson has contributed many of the excellent photos that enrich its pages.

The Society's website has been in development since 2011 and, after a number of false starts and less than user-friendly iterations, 2020 marked the achievement of a professional looking, attractive and very useful website. The society is indebted to Francoise Sikora who led us to Barbara Simmons. Barbara offered to build our wonderful website and continues to maintain it at no cost to the society. Francoise is also our website liaison person; she keeps it up-to-date and relevant. Francoise, Suzanne Knight and Richard Korber have also moved us further into the social media milieu by setting up and managing a Facebook page for members to share their orchid achievements between meetings.

2017 marked the first of our one-day Sarcocylus and Softcane Dendrobium Shows and this has since become an annual event but is now called the October Orchid Show. Due to Covid 19 we were unable to hold any shows in 2020. In 2021 we will again have our three shows but they will all be one day events due to booking restrictions in our new hall.

Sadly and inevitably, age and infirmity caught up with some of our much respected and valued members over the last five years and they are no longer with us. We miss them.

In 2018 we changed from a formal judging of orchids benched to a popular vote whereby all members present were able to vote for their favourite orchid in each class. This gives members a chance to appreciate the huge variety of orchids grown by our members. The results are tallied and the most successful exhibitors rewarded at the end-of-year presentations.

Membership has remained fairly stable with an average 75 members over the past five years. Our opportunity to attract new members was severely limited in 2020 due to limited meetings and no orchid shows.

There have been a number of changes made to the society's by-laws and constitution to bring them into line with our operating procedures and to more closely align to the Department of Fair Trading's model constitution. A revised constitution was accepted by members at the AGM in 2021.

2020 saw the introduction of two different types of auctions: a member's orchid auction which gives members the opportunity to offer up to 6 orchids to bidders with the society receiving a commission on sales and also a charity auction where members donated orchids and orchid related items and the funds raised were donated to a charity. In 2020 this charity was Ronald Macdonald House. In 2021 the money raised will support a local Womens' Shelter. Both these auctions will be part of each year's calendar of activities.

Many members have supported the Society and in recognition of their contributions, the OSNSW Meritorious Service Award was awarded to Ross and Michelle Hahn in 2018 and to Sandra Ellis in 2020. Annual President's Awards were made to Michael Bodycott and Min Purtell (2017), Min Purtell (2018) and Richard Korber (2020).

Significant changes were introduced regarding the sale and transfer of any Australian native orchids and their hybrids. Our sales table team was able to incorporate the new procedures into their operations. The purchase of an electronic reader in 2021 will further enhance the society's ability to manage plant sales at our shows.

The society did not participate in the biennial 2017 Regional Orchid Show at Albury-Wodonga but under President Louise's leadership the society resumed participation in the South and West Regional Orchid Shows and the society staged a display at the show hosted by Eurobodalla Orchid Society in 2019. A team of 6 members took lots of members' orchids to Moruya and made a display on the theme 'Nature's Way'. Two of our members, Diane Slye and Francoise Sikora, won championships in the Novice classes; a notable achievement considering six orchid clubs from the south and west region of NSW participated. Covid 19 permitting the society hopes to participate in the S&W Regional Show to be hosted by Wagga Wagga in October this year.

Members also participated in the regional workshops that are held each year – pandemic permitting.

Our society is fortunate to have generous sponsors who provide valuable support. These include: Apia, Bakehouse Delights, Bishops, Bunnings, Nowra Zoo and Adventure Centre, Royale Orchids and Southern Business Machines.

NOTE: This update was put together by reference to our club's newsletters. Apologies if any significant events were not recorded and therefore omitted from this summary.