

THE SMELL OF SUMMER - *DENDROBIUM ANOSMUM*



Dendrobium anosmum is one most inappropriately named orchids that occurs in the Philippines. The reason for this is that the Latin word *anosmum* means without smell, and we all know that this is not true of this wonderful species, as frequently the perfume is noticeable well before the actual flowers are seen. The Tagalog name of “sanggamay” describes this species perfectly: overwhelmingly strong odour.

This species is also found in India, Myanmar (Burma), Peninsular Malaysia, Laos, Vietnam, Thailand, Sumatra, Borneo, Sulawesi, the smaller Indonesian islands, and New Guinea. It usually grows on the branches and trunks of trees, and has also been observed growing on limestone, and sandstone rocks. In the Philippines it is found throughout the islands, and is even known to occur in the mountains of central Luzon. It is normally a plant that is found at low elevations, but I have seen

plants at elevations of about 1,200 metres in the forests of Nueva Vizcaya.

As would be expected for such a widely spread species, there is considerable variation in the colouration of the flowers, and a number of these variations have been named over the years. *D. anosmum* var. *dearei* is the pure white form of the species; *D. anosmum* var. *huttonii* refers to the form of the species with white sepals and petals, and two large purple blotches on the interior of the white labellum; there is also a variety called *D. anosmum* var. *coerulescens* where the purple blotches of the previous variety take on a somewhat bluish tinge. It should be noted that the colouration of the blotches found in the labellum varies considerably between individual plants, as does the intensity of the colouration of the sepals and the petals, which in the nominate form of the species can vary from pale pink to pale purple. There is also a variety called *D. anosmum* var. *giganteum*, alluding to the larger than usual blooms of this form.

D. anosmum and its numerous colour varieties flower regularly in the summer season, and it should be noted that the first orchid show of the Philippine Orchid Society each year, is centred around the blooming of this species. The second show of the year is centred (hopefully) in conjunction with the flowering season of the magnificent *Vanda sanderiana* (also known as Waling-waling in the Phillipines,)

The growth habit of the plant is pendulous, and well-grown plants can reach several metres in length, but usually the plants are about one metre long. Flowering buds appear after the leaves have fallen. Several blooms appear from each node of the pseudobulb, and if the length of the pseudobulb is covered with flowers it is a most spectacular sight.



In the highly regarded book entitled **Dendrobium of Borneo** by J.J. Wood (Natural History Publications, Borneo, 2014) the author notes that there are fruit-flies which visit the flowers of *D. anosmum*, and they go there to lick the chemicals on the floral segments, which are thought to assist the insects to reach sexual maturity. The chemical reward from the flowers is thought to convert into sex pheromones, to supposedly attract the fruit-fly of the opposite sex.

Plants of *D. anosmum*, and its colour varieties, will often produce small plants from along the pseudobulbs, which be exact replicas of the mother plant.

This is one of the most desirable of all Dendrobium species to be found in the Philippines, and if one has a place where a plant can be attached to a tree it is not too difficult to grow. *D. anosmum* is worthy of a place in any orchid collection. ■

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Manilla Bulletin



GERMAN NATIVE ORCHID OF THE YEAR

The **Orchid of the Year** is a yearly honour given since 1989 to an orchid species native to Germany by the **Arbeitskreis Heimische Orchideen** (Native Orchid Research Group, AHO), a German orchid conservation federation. The choice of orchids follows the endangerment of the species or its habitat due to human pressure.

1989	Western marsh orchid	<i>Dactylorhiza majalis</i>	2003	Fly orchid	<i>Ophrys insectifera</i>
1990	Pyramidal orchid	<i>Anacamptis pyramidalis</i>	2004	Frog orchid	<i>Coeloglossum viride</i>
1991	Green-winged orchid	<i>Orchis morio</i>	2005	Burnt orchid	<i>Orchis ustulata</i>
1992	European common twayblade	<i>Neottia ovata</i>	2006	Broadleaf helleborine	<i>Epipactis helleborine</i>
1993	Military orchid	<i>Orchis militaris</i>	2007	<i>Nigritella nigra</i> subsp. <i>rhellicani</i>	
1994	Fen orchid	<i>Liparis loeselii</i>	2008	Southern marsh-orchid	<i>Dactylorhiza praetermissa</i>
1995	Bee orchid	<i>Ophrys apifera</i>	2009	Early purple orchid	<i>Orchis mascula</i>
1996	Frauenschuh	<i>Cypripedium calceolus</i>	2010	Ladyslipper	<i>Cypripedium calceolus</i>
1997	Bug orchid	<i>Orchis coriophora</i>	2011	Lesser butterfly orchid	<i>Platanthera bifolia</i>
1998	Marsh helleborine	<i>Epipactis palustris</i>	2012	<i>Orchis pallens</i>	
1999	Lizard orchid	<i>Himantoglossum hircinum</i>	2013	Lady orchid	<i>Orchis purpurea</i>
2000	Red helleborine	<i>Cephalanthera rubra</i>	2014	Ghost orchid	<i>Epipogium aphyllum</i>
2001	Autumn ladies'-tresses	<i>Spiranthes spiralis</i>	2015	Early marsh orchid	<i>Dactylorhiza incarnata</i>
2002	Bird's-nest orchid	<i>Neottia nidus-avis</i>	2016	Summer lady's-tresses	<i>Spiranthes aestivalis</i>