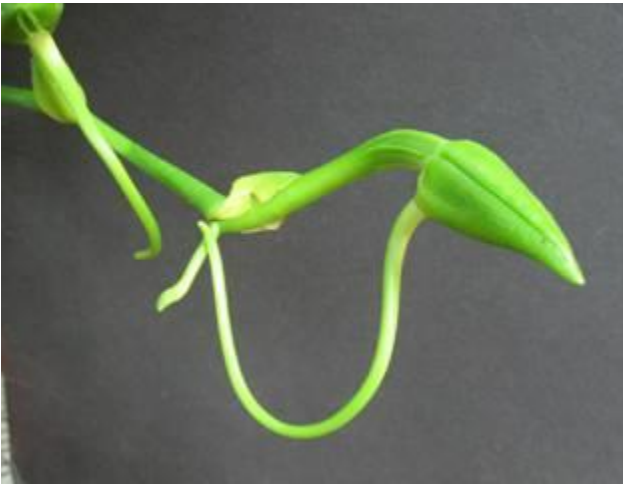


Featured Plant



December 4, 2006



December 12, 2006



December 18, 2006

Angraecum sesquipedale

Several years ago we obtained a plant of *Angraecum sesquipedale*. In the fall of 2004, it produced a flower spike which grew to perhaps a foot long and the bud blasted. In the fall of 2005, same thing. Last fall it produced another spike and we decided it perhaps needed more humidity. We moved the plant from the south shelf perhaps 4 feet to the north shelf in the greenhouse, but directly under the misting nozzles. Whether that was the difference or not we were excited to have the spike produce 2 buds that continued to develop and open. The photos show the first bud on Dec. 4, 2006 while the spur was still caught up; the second was on Dec. 12 after the spur was growing downward (note the second bud in the background); the third (note second bud) and fourth are on Dec. 18 after the first flower had completely opened. It changed from the green color shown here into a bright white as it matured.

By the time the second flower opened on Dec. 22 the tips of the sepals, petals, and lip had started to discolor on the first flower. The flowers lasted about a month. Called "Star of Bethlehem" or sometimes "Christmas Orchid" as blooms during Christmas season. First flowered in Europe in 1857. Has the 18 in. spur of Darwin and moth fame.



December 18, 2006

Gary Yong Gee in the September Bulletin of the Brisbane Species Society had the following information on the species:

The French explorer and botanist Aubert de Petit-Thouars named *Ang. sesquipedale* in 1822 in *Orchidees des Iles Australes de l'Afrique* from the Latin *sesqui* (one and a half) and *pedalis* (foot long) in reference to the length of the flower. It comes from the lowlands of east coast Madagascar at altitudes below 100 meters (about 300 ft.). It is found on trees and rarely on rocks in light shade at the edges of forests often in the crotches of trees or on sloping trunks so the roots attach to the bark or hang in the air. Constant rainfall is heavy (150 inches per year) without a dry season. In addition temperatures are consistently warm so it has a constant growing season. Generally produces 2 to 4 flowers which produce a very strong spicy scent at night. Hillerman and Holst say that cultivation under warm or intermediate conditions is not difficult provided several basic rules are observed. Upon reaching flowering size the plant's roots should be disturbed as little as possible otherwise plants may sulk for 2-4 years. Potting in a coarse medium can avoid frequent disturbance. Plenty of light short of burning the leaves during spring is recommended as well as regular fertilizing and plenty of water during summer. It thrives with good air movement and fairly high humidity. Plants take many years to reach a large size. Blooming begins when the plant is small with one flower on one inflorescence. The number of both flowers and inflorescences increases over the years.

Richard Vanderlip