

Pollinating, Flasking, De-Flasking and Community Pots

POLLINATING

The photo shows the breeding parts of Cattleya Orchid Flowers. The top one is a side on view of the Column and Ovary. The flower has been removed.



The middle one, is the Anther Cap and carries the pollen. It has been removed from the front of the column and is ready to pollenate the flower. Do not touch the pollen with your hands as this will contaminate it. I use a sterile needle to remove it and pollenate the flower. Some people use a tooth-pick, tweezers etc. The bottom one, is the column with the pollen inserted in the Stigma. This is the sticky area underneath.

SEED PODS



The two seed pods shown here are six months old since the flowers were pollinated. The smaller pod on the left is from two mini Cattleyas, the larger one is from two larger Cattleyas. Each one will have thousands of seeds, finer than pepper and hopefully fertile.

FLASKING

I send my seed pods away to a commercial flasker. They have everything set up to do the job. Germinating and Replating mixtures and bottles. Autoclave for sterilising flasks with mixtures inside, also a Laminar-Flow Unit (Sterilising Area) to put the seed in the Germinating Flasks and to transfer the plants into growing flasks.



Laminar-Flow Unit

This machine creates a sterile area, so that the flasking of the seed from the pod can be carried out without fear of contamination. It is also a safe way to transfer the plants from the mother flask to the growing flask safely. There are some unusual methods used by hobby growers, plastic bags, cardboard boxes etc and most are successful, but the unit is the best way.



DEFLASKING

De-flasking is done when the plants have a good root system and have grown into strong healthy plants. This usually takes about eighteen months, from when the seed was first put in the flask to germinate. Some take longer, some a little less.

To de-flask the plants, I remove the lid and put in about 50mls of water, rotate it around in the bottle, the agar usually falls apart and the plants can be removed. (GENTLY). Wash and remove the agar from the plants, they are then put in a weak condys-crystal water solution, then removed and let dry off. I then dip them in a solution of Envy and water to stop the seedlings from dehydrating.

COMMUNITY POTS

There are various methods of putting the seedlings into various types of community pots. I will describe three different ways to do this.

1. Using a 100mm pot, potting material of No3 bark, 10mm charcoal and perlite, mixed at 1/3 of each. A few pebbles on the bottom of the pot for weight, then fill to about half-way, insert ten plants and gently put potting mix between them, over the roots only.

2. Using two pots, 140mm and 100mm, put the 100mm pot upside-down in the 140mm pot, put some pebbles in the gap inside, for weight, then insert some wet sphagnum moss to half-way up the pot, put some sphagnum around each plant and insert them on top and fill any gaps with sphagnum.

3. Using the same potting materials as before, a 1/3 bark, charcoal and perlite, a tissue paper, some damp sphagnum and a piece of PVC pipe,(50mm). Fold the tissue into a strip about 60mm wide, apply some damp sphagnum on the top 30mm, place the plant roots on the sphagnum, cover with some more sphagnum, fold the tissue over it like a sandwich. Then roll the sandwich around the PVC pipe and stand it upright in the pot, add potting material up to plant level, put potting material inside the PVC pipe and then carefully remove it.

THREE COMMUNITY POTS



No 3 is the one with standard potting material, 1/3 Bark, Charcoal, and Perlite. The plants have been potted for six weeks. The other plants have been potted for six months.