

## The 21<sup>st</sup> World Orchid Conference & Show

Johannesburg South Africa  
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The 21<sup>st</sup> World Orchid Conference and Show was held between 10<sup>th</sup> & 14<sup>th</sup> September 2014 at the Sandton Convention Centre, Johannesburg South Africa. Over five hundred delegates from around the world came to take part in the judging, admire the show and listen to the erudite lectures. There also was the chance to buy orchids; the sales village satisfied this need with vendors from the four corners of the globe bringing some fabulous orchids to sell.

The exhibits in the show captivated the almost 12, 000 visitors, a spectacular exhibit from Thailand created a dramatic entrance using cut-flower Dendrobiums and Vandas, mounted on enormous trees that overhung the pools with flowers and dripping moss, it gained the Grand Champion Exhibit Trophy. Another large exhibit was a collaborative creation by the three hosting orchid societies and interpreted the shows' theme 'Orchids: Gold in the Green Age' by tracing the history of the discovery of gold in the Johannesburg area and used some small scale railway wagons as handy plant containers. The best Educational and Reserve Champion Exhibit was won by the Exotic Plant Company and told the stories of all the twenty-one WOC's, together with the history of the different international orchid societies involved in WOC's plus the oldest South African society the Cape Orchid Society founded in 1957. It contained a lot of fascinating memorabilia including some original paintings, WOC trophies, some of the original artwork for WOC posters and past WOC's medals. Apart from the tropical orchid plants on the displays there were also a few of the South African terrestrial orchids but they had pride of place in a 200m<sup>2</sup> wetland display. This was built by Wild Orchids Southern Africa to show case the diversity of the wetland habitats which are home to the iconic national bird the Blue Crane as well as many species of orchids; it also highlighted the threats to this unique type of habitat and aimed to increase the public's awareness.

If one got tired of orchid plants there were other things to see such as the WOC International Photographic Competition together with the WOC Orchid Botanical Art competition and even some decorated cakes with an orchid theme. The latter were exhibited by the South African Cake Decorators Guild and ranged from the dubiously tasteful to the sublime with a flowering plant of *Calanthe vestita* in a pot that was so realistic one had to re-check that it really was made of sugar. The orchids were the true stars of the show, a large specimen plant of *Angulocaste Olympus* 'Honey' with over thirty-four sparkling yellow flowers won the Grand Champion Trophy. It was owned by Francois Vorster and was on the Wolkberg Orchid Society's stand, a small society that is situated in the northern part of the country. Nearby was a large stand had been created by Anthony Grohovaz and was completely filled with many different colour forms of *Ansellia africana* including a large plant with darker coloured flowers owned by Jolisa & Lourens Grobler of Afri-Orchids that won the Reserve Champion Trophy.

Away from the hustle and bustle of the show were the lectures, spread over four days the topics ranged from the latest in *Paphiopedilum* and *Vanda* breeding, the indigenous orchids of South Africa, pollination biology, conservation, trade in orchids and botanical gardens. They were varied enough to interest both the specialist and generalist. The other important aspect of a WOC is meeting up with friends from around the world and this was helped by an African themed evening and a Grand Gala dinner. Many people having travelled such great distances to come to the 21<sup>st</sup> WOC then took the opportunity to go on to see the wonderful flora in Cape Town or the animals and birds of the Kruger National Park, their next opportunity for some sightseeing combined with a WOC will be in Ecuador in 2017 when the 22<sup>nd</sup> WOC will be held in Guayaquil. Taipei and the Taiwan Orchid Growers Association was selected to hold the 2020 WOC.