

ARTICLE No: 4

From Letters to the Editor, Orchids Australia

Dear Sir,

Red spotted *Den. speciosum*

I was surprised to read the article (Dec.94) on spotted *Den. speciosum* by Neil and Meg Finch as published in your magazine. A magazines editor has the right to exercise editorial decisions and I am disappointed that you chose to print such a controversial article.

My plant *Den. speciosum* 'Pacific Red Spot' in no way fits the description as published, ie. it has never been subject to fungus attack; has a normal flower habit; and fine flowers. It would be a desirable clone even if it were not spotted. Likewise the clones used by Dennis Lynch and I in breeding - not one exhibit the characteristics he mentions. In fact I have yet to hear of one that does.

Don Gowanlock of the University of Queensland, who is currently researching virus in orchids, has inspected my nursery and several samples were taken for analysis. *Den. speciosum* 'Pacific Red Spot' tested free of any abnormality. I understand that Sid Batchelor (Yondi Orchids) has some *Den. speciosum* 'Margaret Healy' and some seedlings tested, with the same result; similar results were recorded for samples from John Woolf (Florafest).

Some 12 years ago Phil Spence (Orchid Productions) discussed with me his theory that at some time in the distant past, all, or some, *Den. speciosum* (particularly var. *pedunculatum*) were red, or at least coloured, and have evolved over time to the white or yellow form we know today - a theory I consider more plausible than that of Finch.

At the Gosford Orchid Spectacular this year I met a fellow who grew up in the Bega area. He said all the many *Den. speciosum* he saw on their large (800 acre?) property were heavily marked - some almost solid red - and it was not until he went outside the area that he discovered *Den. speciosum* were not all of similar colouring. That they were all virused seems unlikely.

Several years ago I (and others) marketed seedlings bred by Phil Spence ('Red Spot' x Red Factor') and a percentage of these are now flowering with much colour. All I have seen are fine plants, one in particular with red/brown peduncle, peach colour to the back of the flowers, and heavily marked - a plant anyone would be proud to own and one I would suggest shows the result of breeding for colour.

Ironically, some time ago Neil Finch telephoned my colleague Ross Wirth, with an inquiry for divisions of plants we had used in breeding!

M.J. Symmons, Ormeau, Qld

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