

Book review: Justin W. Tkatchenko, BEM and Steven Kami. 2006. **Spatulata Orchids - Papua New Guinea**. Orchid Society of Papua New Guinea. 96 pp. ISBN 9980-86-070-7.

This publication deals with *Dendrobium* sect. *Spatulata*, a fascinating group of attractive orchids. The horticulturally very important group is characterised by mostly cane-like stems, erect and frequently twisted petals (giving this group the common name ‘antelope dendrobiums’) and a usually three-lobed, concave lip with a 3-5-ridged callus. The area of distribution of this group is in tropical Asia from Java and the Philippines eastwards as far as the Pacific Islands Fiji, Tonga and Samoa, and southwards as far as Queensland (Australia). However, by far the greatest diversity is found in New Guinea where over half of the altogether ca 50 species of this *Dendrobium* section are found.

The brief preface of this semi-scientific book gives relevant background information on *Dendrobium* sect. *Spatulata*, together with notes on its distribution. In the following main part twenty-eight species plus several varieties, colour forms and suspected new species are described in detail, each of them with a short botanical description and comments on its cultivation requirements. An informative outline map indicates its distribution within Papua New Guinea and the adjacent islands, and in the accompanying text the habitat ecology is briefly described. One or several excellent colour pictures are provided for all taxa, in a high quality of photography and reproduction which is not always found in publications. A chapter on the natural habitat in the end of the book explains the growing conditions of the plants, and also chapters of cultivation, watering and fertilising are given here. Also these chapters are illustrated by magnificent photographs. A short list of references as well as an index conclude the book.

There are very few negative points. I personally feel that a detailed map of the area would have helped, as not all of the readers are familiar with the geography of Papua New Guinea and its offshore islands (particularly those not living in this region).

The very minor errors, like author names italicised (p. 13), species and variety names not italicised (p. 13, 89) or missing authors (p. 13), hardly affect the value of this publication. Neither do the few distribution maps which do not exactly reflect what the text actually says (p. 12, 15, 20, 42). I personally would have liked more detailed notes on the distribution outside Papua New Guinea (however, occasional comments on the occurrence in Irian Jaya and Australia are indeed given in the book); but I know that this

is not always done in publication of this nature. Perhaps it would also look better if the introductory chapters on habitat and cultivation would be in the front section of the book just behind the preface, but, of course, this too is mainly a matter of personal preference.

Those who would like to cite this publication will not find it easy to find out who actually wrote it as only the preface and the biographies on p. 95 says who the authors are; their names should have been indicated on the title page.

This book is a very useful and informative contribution on an attractive plant group in a floristically incompletely known though extremely diverse country, and can, as such, be recommended to everybody who is interested in tropical Asian orchids. The authors, Mr. Justin W. Tkatchenko, BEM and Mr. Steven Kami, president and vice-president (respectively) of the Orchid Society of Papua New Guinea, can be congratulated for their valuable publication.

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