

Cultivation at Wisley

PART TWO

SARAH BROOKS continues a new practical series. Which plants should be mounted, and how to do it



Angraecum germinyanum
'Clare' in a pot, with
the equipment needed
to mount it onto bark

MANY ORCHIDS grow much better on a mount than in a pot. If you have grown a *Bulbophyllum* in a pot, you will know how quickly it starts straggling around, trying to crawl out. Orchids like this with creeping, climbing or pendent rhizomes are ideal to grow on a mount as it suits their growth habit perfectly.

A second group of orchids that grow better on mounts are those that are prone to rotting, such as *Tolumnia* species, or others with fleshy leaves or roots. The drainage is greatly increased on a mount, so this method of growing is far more successful.

Leafless orchids, such as species of

Microcoelia and *Chiloschista*, must be grown on a mount so that their roots can photosynthesise. Other orchids suitable for growing on mounts are those with flowers on long, pendent inflorescences, such as *Aerangis* species. They grow perfectly well in a pot, but the flowers are much better presented when the plant is grown on a mount.

The best time for mounting plants is when the roots are actively growing, particularly when there are new roots growing above the potting mix.

Tree fern is the traditional material for mounts, but many species are now endangered. Cork bark is the usual alternative, although the harvesting

MOUNTING



Choose a suitable size piece of mount. Take the plant out of its pot and line it up on the mount so the roots and shoots will have room to grow.



Make a simple hook by pushing a piece of galvanised wire through the top of the mount then bending the wire to shape with a pair of pliers.

of this is now becoming uneconomic. Orchid growers have successfully tested other materials, including pieces of branch from gorse, apple trees or buddleja, or a new recycled material, Epiweb (see right).

To tie the orchid to the mount use either fishing line, string, or strips cut from stockings, tights or knee-high socks, as the usual brown colour is not too obvious. Once a plant's roots have become attached to the mount, the ties can be removed. Whatever you use, make sure to tie it firmly. If the roots can move, for example when they are sprayed, they will never become attached to the mount. ■



Pack pieces of damp sphagnum moss around the roots to create a cushion. This will keep the roots humid to begin with and give them a good start.



Use either strips of old stockings (3a) or fishing line (3b) to tie the plant securely to the mount. Fishing line has the advantage of being unobtrusive, but it can be difficult to handle, and can cut into the roots. Tie the plant firmly because if it can move (eg when being watered) the roots will not get a chance to cling on.



Hang the plant up in a suitable position. Keep it well misted. Mounted plants need a more humid atmosphere and more frequent spraying than plants in a pot. When the roots are attached to the mount, the stocking strip (5a) or fishing line (5b) can be removed.



When the orchid outgrows its mount, to prevent disturbing all its roots, simply attach the old mount to a larger one using plastic coated wire.

ALTERNATIVE METHODS FOR MOUNTING ORCHIDS



Orchids can be grown on a horizontal mount, rather than a vertical one, such as this *Dendrobium speciosum* var. *pedunculatum*



An eco-friendly alternative to traditional tree fern or bark mounts is Epiweb (left). Made from 70 percent recycled plastics, it can be sterilised and re-used. Available online from Dart Frog: www.dartfrog.co.uk/epiweb or tel: 07796 174437