

Orchids, by Menzies, David

Orchids is a comprehensive pictorial guide to some otherworldly rarest and most beautiful flowers. It details their global distribution: the climates and habitats favored by various species in certain areas, along with their structure and general ecology. Methods of cultivation, the aims of hybridizing and the importance of conservation for these delicate plants in today's fragile environment are also discussed.

The Orchid family is considered the largest group of flowering plants, with about 20,000 different species known in 800 or more genera. The Orchidaceae are extraordinary in botanical features and diversity of color and form, factors which often make it difficult to identify individual members as belonging to the same family. They can be found from northern Russia as far south as Tierra del Fuego. The only regions uninhabited by the orchid family are the great deserts of the world.

Members of the Orchid family are abundant in subtropical forests where there is a tendency for growth to be by means of specialized groups attached to tree trunks. Ground rooted species also rely on association with fungi for successful growth. Their methods and means of reproduction have evolved alongside the many species of insects and the occasional bird, which feed from their nectaries and unwittingly assists in the transfer of pollen necessary for the propagation of some species.

Orchids provides clear and concise descriptions of these extraordinarily tenacious and beautiful plants. The author, David Menzies, is an acknowledged authority on the subject, and this informative text, which is accompanied by a wealth of stunning color photographs, makes *Orchids* an exceptional reference book.

David Menzies first became fascinated by orchids as a schoolboy in New Zealand. His professional growing career began at Glasco Botanic Gardens under Gerald Rodway, and has included commercial experience in Germany as well as 12 years as a specialist grower at the Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew. During this time he took part in a botanical expedition to Thailand. Four years ago, he returned to Glasco as Orchid Specialist, in charge of a large mixed collection which is on public show throughout the year. Although hybrids form an important part of that collection, he has never lost his interest in the wild species of the world.

