

## Brassovola nodosa

By Roy Krueger

Most of us started our orchid collections with a Phalaenopsis that was given to us as a gift or purchased at one of the box stores. After we discovered the beauty and allure of orchids we began to search out other types.

There is one orchid that should be in every collection and it is the second orchid we should own. That is Brassovola nodosa, commonly known as Lady of the Night for its delightful fragrance.

Brassovola nodosa territory ranges from Mexico to Columbia, typically along both coasts at altitudes that are seldom above 500m (1500ft). It grows as a lithophyte or epiphyte often on rock faces or the base of mangrove trees.

The plant is grower tolerant, surviving most of our bad habits such as forgetting to water it or neglecting to fertilize. It thrives in our warm seaside climate with high humidity. Nodosa has a semi-tetrate leaf structure so it will tolerate quite high light, though not as bright as your vandas. Temperatures should range to 90 degrees in summer to lows of 60-65 at night in winter though they will tolerate warmer days and temperatures down to the low 40s in winter.

The plant should be potted in a basket for best growth although it can be grown in a pot or mounted with desirable results. Mix should be fairly coarse and open for good drainage. Like many orchids, it thrives on a wet/dry seasonal pattern. In winter it should be kept relatively dry. I water mine every week to 10 days. With the commencement of new growth in spring, increase water up to 2 to 3 times a week in the warm dry part of spring. Typical rainfall in summer is usually sufficient if you grow outdoors. Otherwise water several times a week after the lower mix becomes dry.

Plants are usually relatively disease free. Scale can be a problem as well as thrips, particularly in spring if you have an early flowering variety.

Flowers are typically 8cm in width (approximately 3"). Petals are narrow and elongated. The lip is spade or heart shaped. The color is white to creamy green. Typical of many white flowers, nodosa is highly scented, giving off a strong aroma like Lilly of the Valley, and is pollinated by night flying moths.

There is also a tetraploid variety (4 sets of chromosomes instead of 2) that is significantly larger. Shown is a tetraploid specimen that has flowers 5 1/2 " in spread. Tetraploids typically produce larger flowers and more vigorous plants but are much slower to mature.

Nodosa is also a wonderful parent to hybridize with. It has been crossed with other Brassovola to produce hybrids such as David Sanders, Little stars, and many other popular varieties.

It can also be crossed with cattleyas to produce hybrids such as Richard Muller, Binosa, and Yellow Bird.

I do not recommend splitting the plant unless it is necessary because a growth formed downward or sideways. The plant grows quickly to a nice specimen size.

Typical flower season is summer, but a well grown plant may boom several times a year throughout the year.