

Presentation format: Oral

**An Introduction to Australian *Sarcochilus* “gems of the orchid world”**

**Nette I. Meggetto**

Australian Orchid Council, Australia

The genus *Sarcochilus* was formally described in 1810 by Scottish botanist Robert Brown in the publication ‘*Prodromus Florae Novae Hollandiae et Insulae Van Diemen*’. This publication was the first attempt at a survey of the Australian flora. The original description was of the type species *Sarcochilus falcatus*. There are currently 25 species recognised which occur naturally from New Caledonia through to New Guinea and along the east coast of Australia to the southern island of Tasmania. Although resembling other miniature vandaceous orchids, horticulturally they have not received the attention they deserve, until very recently. During the past 40 years the breeding qualities of *Sarcochilus hartmannii*, *S. fitzgeraldii*, *S. hirticalcar*, *S. falcatus* and *S. ceciliae* as well as those of several less prominent species, have been explored and established. Over 1,300 intrageneric hybrids and numerous intergenerics have been registered. The attractive flowers in colourful and bold shades of red, pink, yellow, orange, and white, often produced in great abundance, make for wonderfully eye-catching specimens that deserve attention in the garden, orchid house and indoors. They are easy to grow, tolerate hot and cold conditions, and are amenable to growing indoors under artificial light in the coldest climates. The potential of this genus to produce colourful new hues and patterns is eagerly anticipated.

Keywords: horticultural interest, colourful flowers, ornamental plants, hybridisation potential, sub-tropical orchids, beginner orchids