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PRESIDENTS REPORT:

Our September meeting proved to be a very successful meeting indeed. Ray Edwards quickly took our attention with an absorbing insight into his innovative methods of producing ferns from spore.

Slide Bank.

Peter Goshnik has volunteered to act as Slide Bank Manager. We hope to soon have a collection of slides covering many species of ferns and fern growing techniques available for members to borrow. These will assist any members wishing to fulfill the numerous speaking engagements required of our society. Peter's first undertaking will be to purchase a copy of Ray Edwards slides. If any members have slides suitable we would appreciate a brief loan to have a copy made.

Ripponlea.

Oliver Frost informs us that the tentative date to open the Ripponlea fernery is Sunday October 27th. Final details next newsletter.

Newsletter.

Mac Gregory of Rosanna has agreed to take over as editor of our newsletter. I appreciate this immensely as I have found trying to fulfill both positions very difficult.

Fern Sales.

All members may bring ferns for sale to our meetings. If not wishing to set up a sale table ferns can be booked in at the stage on a check-in list and payment received at close of meeting. Our society receives 15% commission.

Unclaimed Prize from Ripponlea Special Effort.

Blue ticket 72 KKKK will be held over until next meeting. If not claimed it will be included in next meetings special effort. Special Effort Winners (Six Ferns and two Maxicrop)

1. Neville Grove4. Bernadette Blastock7. Bob Lees2. Mac Gregory5. Mavis Potter8. Joy Horman3. Beulah Powell6. John HodgesCongradulations to all winners.

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OCTOBER MEETING

CHRIS GOUDEY "MAIDENHAIRS"

BE SURE TO ATTEND THIS HIGHLIGHT.

A questionnaire will be enclosed with our newsletter. Our Committee would appreciate a thoughtful response.

With Kind Regards, KEITH HUTCHINSON.

SEPTEMBER MEETING.

Spore Propagation by Ray Edwards.

Whilst visiting a friend in Adelaide Ray was asked about the availability of ferns native to the Otway Ranges. As Ray lived in this area and could not suggest a supplier he decided to return home and try to grow them from spore.

After reading all the subject matter available he then went out to collect spore. As Cyathea cunninghamii will not set fertile spore until at least forty feet high, Ray found the only possible method was to shoot a frond down with his .22 rifle. His first effort used a full box of bullets, had almost denuded the fern but finally he arrived home ready to try his primitive methods. To this day Ray feels that the first batch of Cyathea cunninghamii were his best. Where possible he prefers to collect his own spore. At first his sterilization equipment, an old copper did not eliminate the problem of fungus and algae, but during conversation with a friend Ray was told that no living organism can survive in a microwave, so he went out and bought one. His timing is still experimental, but six minutes seems effective and any longer dries out the medium too much. The medium, Smiths Kiwi Peat has been most successful with the spore being sown by means of a plastic hand sprayer in just a small amount of water with careful sterilization between sowings essential to ensure spore varieties are not mixed.

The trays are now placed inside plastic bags, stapled up to stop small flies etc. entering to breed, then stored approximately two to three months in a converted shearing shed with good lighting above until the prothallus is well formed. Now the trays are taken out of the bags and watered overhead.

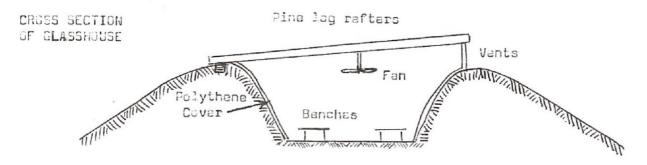
At first disease was a problem and Ray learned the hard way, losing many ferns, but after bringing samples down to Burnley was able to control Botrytis with "Roval" and damping off which can run through a complete tray of ferns in one day was best prevented with "Previcure".

An old cast iron stove which is kept alight day and night right through the winter keeps the shed at approximately 20°Cel. daily and 10°Cel. nightly. Ray feels it is important not to overheat the ferns as they are native to a cold area.

As soon as the prothallus shows its first frond it is pricked out into polystyrene trays of one hundred and ten sections with greatest success at this early stage. A slide showing a tray of Asplenium flaccidum gave us an idea of the thought Ray gives his work. Finding Asplenium flaccidum would not germinate he referred back to nature and noticed that germination always seemed to be on a bank or tree trunk so he placed the tray of spore on an angle and success was almost immediate. Even after pricking off these ferns give maximum growth if placed on a fairly steep angle.

Ray said it was hard to describe the satisfaction he receives when he succeeds in growing difficult species such as Sticherus or Asplenium flaccidum.

Rays slides revealed the unique hot house he had built by dozing through a hill and then roofing over with giant pine logs (planted by Ray many years before). He felt sure that by being below ground level it would be well insulated against cold. The roof covering of polythene has a 70% cover of shadecloth.



With present capacity of twelve hundred trays it is two hundred feet long with provision to extend another one hundred feet possibly within the coming year. The top right section has vents which Ray opens daily in summer only. Even with 70% shade cloth the summer sun can be too harsh for ferns so Ray has lined the house with "Marix ", an excellent insulator with very pleasing results.

Finally Ray showed slides of most of the ferns he grows with particular interest in two New Zealand species which germinated in the Kiwi Peat even after sterilization. Paesia scaberula and Hypolepis distan. He was delighted as he feels they are both tremendous ferns. Others we enjoyed were Todea barbara, Rumohra adiantiformis, Microsorium diversifolium, Gleichenia mycrophylla, Lastreopsis hispida, Blechnums: nudum, wattsii, discolour, minus, and penna-marina, Cyatheas medullaris, cooperii, dealbata, brownii, australis and smithii, and Dicksonias: antartica and squarrosa and fibrose.

Ian Broughton then thanked Ray for his extremely interesting presentation of the subject.

P.S. We were indeed indeted to Ray as the round trip he made to be our guest speaker was over 400 Kilometers. 1

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" HAVE YOU HEARD ?"

A certain man, who was in the doghouse, decided to get sweet with his wife and buy some of her favourite flowers. He wandered into a florist shop and asked for two dozen anenomies, but all the florist could offer was a large boston fern. "It's a lovely fern" said the florist, "and with fronds like these, who needs anenomies?"

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The following article was written by Ralph H. Hughes. Platycerium hobbyist, Florida, U.S.A. We thank Ralph for his offer to publish it in our newsletter.

A NEW VARIETY OF MICROSORIUM PUNCTATUM (L.) COPEL.

Ralph H. Hughes, 1546 Del Rio Drive, Fort Myers, Florida 33901 U.S.A.

A striking new, distinctive and attractive polypod form from the Philippines added diversity to our large collection of staghorn ferns when imported into the humid, semi-tropical climate of southwest Florida about five years ago. Jack E. Craig, plant collectorexplorer of the far east, labelled the varient 'Monstrosum' to distinguish one leaf form from another on arrival in this country. While some ferns are known to be highly variable, as noted by Richard Rush in the 1983 Bulletin, it turns out that one highly developed variant proved through spore-grown progeny to be distinct. It is described in cultivation as follows:-

Microsorium punctatum 'Craig's Monstrosum'. A large form with narrow lateral lobes. Fronds up to 75 cm long and 12 cm broad, including the lobes. Lobes up to 30 on each side, 2.5 to 10 cm long, 0.6 to 2.5 cm broad at base; the larger ones caudate-acuminate and ascending; somewhat irregular. Sinuses between lobes narrowly rounded at base. Venation typical except that each lobe is entered by a main lateral vein reaching virtually to the apex. Fronds and lobes not forked. (See photograph)

Earlier Copeland (1960) working in the Philippines, referred to the species as Microsorium longissimum (J. Smith) Fee, a synonym of Polypodium microsorium. He noted that the leaves of the type were variable in length, width and details of venation. He alluded to the specimen as 'a monstrosity, with long segments excurrent from the sides', hence the name 'Monstorsum'.

The spore grown offspring were conspicuously different in leaf size, changes in margins, and overall size of plant, hence, as outlined by Hoshizaki (1975), obtaining plants with qualities of the parent requires culling to remove undesirable forms. Conversely, it is too early to speculate on any likelihood of finding a superior offspring. All individuals were however, identifiable with the parent.

Growing sporelings was relatively easy when compared with those of the genus Platycerium growing side by side in the same garden. Even so, both survival and growth were twice as great for other polypods from the Philippines propogated similarly. This does not come as too much of a surprise, because Craig had reported that under shadehouse conditions the other polypods volunteered profusely, whereas the somewhat less robust 'Monstrosum' self-propagated only sparingly.

When grown on treefern slabs or in medium-to-large pots or baskets and displayed in elevated or hanging containers to show off their long, wide-arching fronds, the short creeping rhizomes branch sufficiently to form an attractive large cluster. Plants are terrestrial in that when cultivated in pots with a loose soil mix, it is not necessary to provide moss-lined baskets for downward growth. No insect or disease problems were encountered in southwest Florida when grown beneath shadecloth varying from 30 to 80% density. Adult plants with high humidity withstood occasional cold snaps to 32 F (0°C). Losses occurred at 28°F (-2°C) of 3-4 hours duration.

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Figure 1. Microsorium punctatum 'Craig's Monstrosum'. Mature plant. The ruler is 90cm (3 feet) long.



Figure 2. Microsorium punctatum 'Craig's Monstrosum'. Juvenile plant. The ruler is 30cm (12inches) long.

Acknowledgements.

My thanks are extended to Jack E. Craig for live plants, to Barbara Joe Hoshizaki and Michael G. Price for identification, to Phyllis Bates for preparation of the manuscript, and to my wife, Elizabeth, for raising the sporelings.

References.

COPELAND, E.B., 1960. Fern flora of the Philippines, Vol.2 Natl. Inst. Tech., Manila. HOSHIZAKI, B.J., 1975. The Fern Growers Manual. Alfred Knopf, New York.

DIARY DATES.

Thursday October 10th Chris Goudey "Maidenhairs"

Thursday November 14th Barry Stagoll Kew Gardens Fern Collection

Thursday December 12th Fern Forum and Christmas meeting

Burnley Horticultural College Hall, Swan Street, Burnley, 8.00 pm.

NOTE: In the event of a power strike on the evening of any meeting, we regret that the meeting must be cancelled.

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