

This brief submission has been written by Alan W. Stephenson, Conservation Director for the **Australian Orchid Council**.

It concerns efforts either already in effect or proposed to control the importation of plants which may become weeds within Australia. As mentioned in the "White List" many already exist and are well entrenched and unfortunately two at least are orchid species. One species *Epidendrum radicans* has been a feature in many gardens throughout Australia for decades but due to its liking for our moderate coastal climate, has in effect become in my opinion a noxious weed and I am surprised it has not to date been listed as such. *E. radicans* is found as a terrestrial orchid in roadside embankments and mixed woods in middle elevations in countries from Veracruz in Mexico to Valle del Cauca in Colombia and these features should explain its preference for its expansion in Australia. Its straggling habit prefers full sun and this feature alone indicates why it is a common garden plant. However in the nature of garden plants and as such unwanted sections are all too readily disposed of by the "over the fence" compost method.

Unfortunately it is a very resilient species and unless burned or composted in a closed facility will readily reproduce. *E. radicans* produces "aerial growths" which are adventitious roots growing in the air, arising on mainly monopodial orchid species. *E. radicans* and other species in the genus have been used in various breeding programs with the progeny mainly used as exhibition plants which pose no threat to the environment, however the species as a garden plant must be considered damaging to our environment. Unlawfully disposed of plants have become populations in native bushland which measure fifty square metres.

I would therefore require all local government bodies to list *E. radicans* as a noxious weed and initiate the required steps to rid our bushland of this weed. My other concern is another terrestrial orchid which is rapidly spreading across southern Australia and this is *Disa (Monadenia) bracteata*. Distribution of this species was once considered to be limited to Western Australia but South Australia is now inundated and a visit to the Bass Coast of Victoria last year noted several plants growing in a nature reserve. I was informed the Department of Environment and Primary Industries are aware of its intrusion but the fact the plants were known to exist and were visible is alarming and I am disappointed the offending plants were not disposed of immediately when first noted shows a lack of concern. *D. bracteata* obviously has a liking for sandy heathland and similar environments and coastal Australia must not be allowed to provide habitat for another rapidly spreading plant. *D. bracteata* obviously was not introduced as a garden plant but this is an opportunity for research to be undertaken in order for staff to recognise such weeds and deny them the opportunity to proliferate before they become a costly eradication exercise.

These are just two orchid species of which I am aware which are an existing problem and only further study will uncover other orchid species which may also prove to be a problem. Consultation with state and federal orchid bodies such as the Australian Orchid Council, Orchid Society of New South Wales and similar state bodies may prove a source of information regarding these problems.

Yours sincerely  
Alan W. Stephenson