

Orchids – One Family’s Passion

An Account of over 50 years of an Orchid Nursery
Wilma and Brian Rittershausen

The number of nurseries in existence today who have been in business for over half a century, and who have recorded their history, is very few indeed. Burnham Nurseries Ltd., the orchid specialists from Newton Abbot have done just this. Founded in 1949 by Mr P R C Rittershausen, this nursery continues to be run by Sara Rittershausen, the third generation of the family.

Brian and Wilma Rittershausen, the second generation, are well known authors who have enjoyed a long association with the Royal Horticultural Society. Both have served, and Brian is currently serving, as a member of the Orchid Committee. Wilma is a past editor of *The Orchid Review*.

This family’s books on orchid culture have been in continuous print for over 50 years. The latest titles are privileged to have been endorsed by the RHS. Last year Brian and Wilma were nominated for the RHS Westonbirt Orchid Medal for 2009 ‘for outstanding literary achievement with orchids’. The award was presented to them by the President of the RHS at the London Flower Show on 15th February 2010.

The last 60 years have been an extremely important time for horticulture and orchids in particular. The second half of the twentieth century witnessed many exciting changes in the cultivation and raising of orchids. New technological advances have allowed some orchids, once the preserve of hot-house exotics, to become the most commonly grown house plant in Europe and elsewhere.

Seen through the eyes of the family, *Orchids – One Family’s Passion* rides on the popularity of their previous titles and chronicles the modest start and slow rise of Burnham Nurseries through the decades, to the world respected position it holds today. It recalls a bygone age, and reflects upon the people and nurseries which are now long gone. The book details the many changes concerning the importation and regulation of species, and laments the loss of the old style private collections. It reflects upon the use of now banned pesticides, early hybrids, classic plants which tell their own tales, and other important historical changes, up to the present day.

This book is an easy read which will appeal to horticulturalists the world over, as well as anyone who has an interest in recent plant history and one nursery’s place in it.

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