Abstract

The main aim of this academic exercise is to enable readers to have a clearer idea and better knowledge of the history, present development, problems facing and the future prospect of the orchid industry in Singapore. Though orchid industry was started few decades back in Singapore and its cut flowers have gained great reputation all over the world for a long period, complete information about the orchid industry in Singapore can not be found. It is then hoped that this academic exercise will serve as a help, to the understanding of the orchid industry in Singapore.

In order to achieve the aim, in addition to just referring to articles from books, magazines and newspaper cuttings, orchid farmers were interviewed. Out of the 700 registered orchid farmers, 175 of them were interviewed. A few orchid retailers and exporters were also interviewed.

From history, it is noted that orchid industry in Singapore was started back in the 19th century as jungle orchid species collections. With its distinctive beauty and lasting quality, it gained its reputation rapidly. With the help from the Singapore Botanic Gardens and the founding of the Malaya Orchid Society in 1929, orchid loving and growing started booming in Singapore. Unfortunately, the spur and interest were completely pushed down into drain when the Second World War broke out. When peace resumed, it regained its footing in Singapore with the great effort put in by the Singapore Botanic Gardens. New orchid hybrids were successfully bred and flowered. It was from then that the orchid industry slowly put smoothly established its present favourable position. The climatic condition in Singapore is the main factor which causes the speeding up of orchid industry in Singapore. The whole year round sunlight, high humidity and temperature contribute greatly to the growing of sparkling, beautiful and lasting orchid flowers. In addition to that, Singapore's favourable geographical position as an international airport and trading center has in one way help to promote the industry too.
From farm interviewing, we get to know that growing of orchid in Singapore is still largely done on a small scale and treated as a secondary profession. More than half of the farms interviewed are less than one acre in area and are started not more than five years ago. There are a few exceptions; for example the Daisy Orchid, Sun Kee Orchid and Singapore Orchid have more than ten acres each and a history of more than eight to fifteen years. Though there are thousands of varieties, the most popular orchids that are planted in Singapore are the Dendrobium, Arachnics Maggie-Oei, Aranthera James Stories, Oncidium Golden Shower, Aranda Weddy Scott, and Vanda Tan Chay Yen.

The demand for orchid cut flowers in domestic market increases as Singaporeans become more westernized. They prefer orchid cut flowers to other presents on many functions and festivals. From the year 1961, Singapore started exporting cut flowers in great amount to foreign countries. The demand in the world market increases as years go by. At present, the total orchid cut flower export value has reached the million dollars mark and it is expected to rise higher than that in the coming years. The Republic of Germany, Holland, Hong Kong imported almost 80% of the total orchid cut flowers exported from Singapore in 1972.

The most outstanding problem encountered by the Singapore's orchid industry is the shortage of land. The limited land available for orchid cultivation is the greatest barrier to the further development of orchid industry in Singapore. The rapid urbanization and industrialization have aggravated the situation. No spare land can be afforded to be utilised for horticultural purposes. Orchid farming has to fade off from the role of increasing Singapore's national income when it is compared with urbanization, industrialization and the effort in developing Singapore as an Asian financial center. The second major challenge faced by Singapore's orchid industry is the great competition in the world market put up by Thailand, Malaysia, Hawaii and Australia. Thailand has developed her
orchid farming tremendously recently. The number of new orchid hybrids bred have attracted more attention than those bred in Singapore. It will really be difficult for Singapore to maintain her leading position in world orchid market in the coming future.

In conclusion, the orchid industry itself has bright prospect. But in a small country like Singapore which has to concentrate more on industrialization, urbanization and international trade in order to compensate for the shortage of land, it is very difficult for orchid farming in Singapore to be developed on a larger scale and so will be for the orchid industry.