



15 October 2010

## **Sex and Death in the Australian National Botanic Gardens Display Glasshouse 15 October – 1 February**

Dr Judy West, Executive Director of the Australian National Botanic Gardens will today launch, *Sex and Death in the Glasshouse*, the new exhibition in the Gardens' display glasshouse. *Sex and Death in the Glasshouse* is a diverse display of exotic and native orchids, carnivorous and tropical plants. 11am Friday 15.

With the help of the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney, the exhibition presents the story of the bizarre life of orchids and carnivorous plants.

"The intense beauty and sweet scent of many orchids and carnivorous plants masks unforgiving desire to attract insects with an array of chemical and mechanical traps, for the purpose of pollination or food," Dr West said.

"The orchids and carnivorous plants have sophisticated pollination mechanisms, Whilst most plants attract pollinators with a reward of food (usually nectar or pollen) many orchids instead lure particular male insects to flowers with the promise of sex, by production of female insect pseudo-pheromones. The duped males try and mate with the flowers and in so doing affect pollination.

"The exhibit is a wonderful opportunity to showcase the Gardens' extensive nursery collection of orchids, carnivorous plants and diverse tropical plants," Dr West said.

On public display for the first time and taking up an entire corner of the glasshouse is the Gardens' pride orchid *Grammatophyllum papuanum*, the largest orchid species in the world..

Other features of the exhibition include:

- *Myrmecodia beccarii* (Ant House Plant).
- Carnivorous plants including *Nepenthes*, carnivorous plants from the tropics sometimes known as Monkey Cups, so called as monkeys use the pitchers as cups to drink collected water.
- *Angiopteris evecta* (King Fern) a primitive fern with fronds that are known to grow five metres or more, making it one of the largest ferns on earth.
- Cycads and Australian species of banana

The Australian National Botanic Gardens is the world's most comprehensive display of living Australian native plants. Over 130 species of orchids are held in the Gardens' living collection.

### **Media launch Details:**

**11 am Friday 15 October**

**Display Glasshouse, The Australian National Botanic Gardens, Clunies St Acton, Canberra.**

*Sex and Death in the Glasshouse* open from 10am to 3pm daily except Christmas day. Entry free

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