

Plant of the Month - February

by Allan Carr

Geodorum densiflorum

shepherd's crook orchid

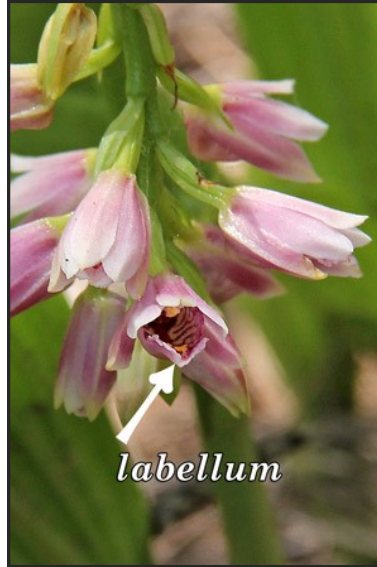
Pronunciation: jee-oh-DOR-um dense-ee-FLOR-um

ORCHIDACEAE

Derivation: *Geodorum*, from the Greek, *ge* – earth and *doron* – a gift (“a gift of the Earth”, referring to its terrestrial habit); *densiflorum*, from the Latin, *densus* – thick, *flos* – flower (a reference to crowded flowers in the inflorescence).



Raceme of flowers



Flower showing labellum



Ribbed fruits

Geodorum is a genus of about 16 species distributed through Asia, South-east Asia and Polynesia with this one species in Australia from northern WA, through NT and down through coastal Qld to northern NSW.

Description: *G. densiflorum* is a terrestrial orchid with a fleshy rhizome, rounded pseudo-bulbs and several broad leaves. It is one of the most visible and widespread ground orchids of south-east Qld.

Leaves to 350 mm x 90 mm are lime-green on a stem to 150 mm and are pleated longitudinally. There are usually 3 to 5 of these lily-like leaves, the uppermost being the longest. In the cooler months the leaves of the dormant plant stand out in the understory.

Flowers in an upside-down, crowded *raceme of 8 to 20 are pale pink and 20 mm across on a spike to 30 cm from November to February. These arise from a new *pseudo-bulb separate from the leaf-bearing stem. The flowers being upside-down places the *labellum in position to perform its function of attracting pollinators.

Fruits are rugby football-shaped capsules to 50 mm long with longitudinal ribs. These contain 6 to 8 kidney-shaped seeds.

*raceme = an unbranched flower stem with flowers on stalks

*pseudo-bulb = false bulb

*labellum = a lip, the distinctive median petal that serves as a landing platform for pollinating insects



Habit