

## **Singapore Botanic Gardens: intertwining orchids and people**

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Orchids have a long history with the Singapore Botanic Gardens (SBG). Orchids were one of the Gardens' earliest living collections, and their popularity and importance have grown exponentially, most notably after 1928, when the Gardens' Director Eric Holttum refined Lewis Knudson's tissue culture method for orchids, revolutionising orchid breeding in Singapore and founding a new regional orchid industry. Today, the National Orchid Garden, with its curated displays and diverse collection of over 1500 species and 3000 hybrids, is a major attraction within SBG, bringing in more than 1 million visitors a year. The Gardens also engages the public through orchid competitions, shows, tours, and various programmes such as species recovery. SBG's orchid hybridization program has grown too, with the Gardens' staff having bred and registered more than 630 new hybrids, over 200 of which have been named after visiting Heads of State as a gesture of goodwill (a practice known as Orchid Diplomacy). This presentation will showcase the work of SBG with orchids, which, over decades, has influenced the public sphere to the point where now orchids are deeply associated with Singapore and the Singaporean identity.