

## How to grow Hoya (aka wax flower)

Source: [www.helium.com](http://www.helium.com), by Marie-Luise Stromer

I inherited my Hoya, aka Waxflower or Porcelain flower, from my mother, that was ten years ago, I don't know for how long she had had it, I guess that the plant is between 30 and 40 years old. I don't know anyone else who's got such a plant, I've always seen my specimen as singular. When I browsed the net for some background information, I learned to my surprise that nobody can say how many species there are, but an estimated figure is 200 - 300. Why such a vague estimate? Many new species are still being found in Eastern Asia and Australia, and until a find has been categorised, it's not clear if it is indeed new or if it's already in the list. The plant is named after Thomas Hoym, gardener to the Duke of Northumberland at the end of the 18th century. There are a lot of Hoya fan clubs and the net is full of wonderful photos of the different species.

I've learned that I've got a Hoya carnosa, the most widespread [houseplant](#) variety. The leaves of the evergreen plant are thick and succulent, about 12 cm long and 5 cm at their widest point. Once a year in early summer umbels of star shaped, pink-white blossoms flower for about two weeks, please have a look at the piccie at the top of the site (it's life size), in contrast to the specimen you see here the blossoms of my Hoya are threefold, the outer layer is light pink, then comes a smaller, even lighter, layer with the tips between the tips of the outer layer, and in the middle is a dark small layer, its tips also between the ones of the layer underneath. One umbel has about thirty to forty blossoms, they look indeed as if made of wax or porcelain, hence the names Waxflower or Porcelain Flower.

In the evening and at night the flowers give off a sweet fragrance, the theory is that in their natural habitat Hoyas are probably pollinated by night active insects. Near the end of their lives a sticky drop appears in the blossoms which eventually falls down, do the flowers weep before they die? As our [plant stands](#) on the landing in front of the flat on the second floor, they drip onto the steps to the first floor, our staircase is made of wood, I leave the sticky spots there until the last dried up flower has fallen off.

My mother loved her Hoya and was rather unhappy that the plant obviously didn't love her back with the same intensity, it only flowered occasionally. When I researched on the net, I came across a Hoya Forum where a woman cried out to the world at large, "Why doesn't my Hoya flower?" I don't have what the Germans call a green thumb, but what can I say, my Hoya flowers every year. What is my secret? What do I do?

The answer is: next to nothing, in fact I rather neglect it. In the ten years after my mother's death I haven't once changed the soil or put the plant into a bigger pot, I haven't given it any fertiliser and water it irregularly. According to the Hoya specialists this is just the right treatment! Let me quote some sentences: "Hoyas are easy to grow." "These plants are rather forgiving and

undemanding." "It needs well-drained, though not necessarily especially fertile soil." "The biggest reason why Hoyas do not flower is too much fertiliser." Here you've got it, I'm a natural Hoya expert!

If I don't forget it, I water the plant once a week, mostly with water, sometimes with coffee. I'm sure this needs some explanation, I've learnt this from my cousin whose living-room is a veritable jungle thanks to the coffee she feeds to all her plants. I don't drink so much coffee, but when I do, I drink filter coffee and after making a cup for myself, I fill the pot with water again instead of throwing the remains away. Plants just love this weak coffee infusion and it costs me nothing. Twice or three times a year, when I see a layer of dust on them, I spray the leaves with water. Is that all? No, we let the upper flat in front of which the Hoya stands to foreign language assistants who come to one of the secondary grammar schools in our town, and I tell them that it's part of the rent to look at the Hoya in a friendly way whenever they pass it. Once I told an Italian girl to water it, too, after many weeks I discovered that she had forgotten about it, did the Hoya mind? No, it didn't. I can't tell you anything about fighting pests because my Hoya has never been affected up to now.

Because of its twining habit, the Hoya should be supported by a trellis, my Hoya hasn't got one but it has got the railing of the staircase into which it has twined in a way that I wouldn't know how to get it out if I ever had to move. This year's flowering, weeping and dying happened at the end of June / beginning of July, now we can only watch the vines getting longer and twisting around more posts of the railing.



*Hoya lauterbachii*



*Hoya pubicalyx* "Silver Pink"



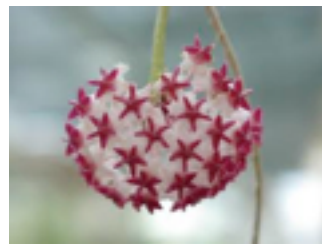
*Hoya Bella*



*Hoya obscura*



*Hoya multiflora*  
"The Shooting Star"



*Hoya carnososa*



*Hoya carnososa* "Kermit"



*Hoya erythrostemma*, Kerr



*Hoya lacunosa*



*Hoya flavida*



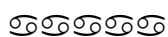
*Hoya caudata*



*Hoya praetorii*



*Hoya cinnamomifolia*



May the miracle of Christmas fill your heart with warmth and love. Christmas is the time of giving and sharing. It is the time of loving and forgiving.

Merry Christmas to Everyone!



Many thanks for bringing tasty food and drink to our Christmas potluck.

**"Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot,  
Nothing is going to get better. It's not!"**  
— Dr. Seuss, from *The Lorax*

**Next Meeting:  
Wednesday, January 5, 2010  
Ikebana Talk and Demo by Beverley-Ann  
Ranney**

Beverley-Ann Beverley-Ann has a deep interest in Ikebana for many years. In 1961, she began studying Ikebana at the Japanese Cultural Centre under the guidance Shizujko Kadoguchi, President of the Ikenobo Society of America-Toronto Chapter. In 1974, she went to Japan for advanced classes at the centuries – old home school of Ikenobo the family name Ikenobo Ikebana which has had direct line of 45 headmasters for life. Over the years, she progressed through the rigorous levels of Ikebana until she was honored this year with the Professor of Ikenobo 1st Grade full professorship in Ikebana. For more information about Ikebana in Vancouver, please visit [www.vancouver-ikebana.ca](http://www.vancouver-ikebana.ca)

The meeting starts at 7 pm, Burnaby Village Museum, Main Building, on 2nd floor. Refreshment is served. All are welcome. Don't forget to bring your own mug to avoid wasting styrofoam cups! Annual membership cost \$12. Members share various gardening interests and enjoy 10% discount of regularly priced items at GardenWorks and by presenting their membership cards.

**Future Speakers**

- **February 2, 2011 New Trends in Gardening by Brian Minter.** Brian's passion for plants was transformed into 32-acre [Minter Gardens](#) which today draws thousands of visitors each year, and has become a favourite destination for weddings. He is 'BC's go-to garden expert' through his experience at both the garden centre and the display gardens. As such, he has hosted countless radio and television shows, is a frequent gardening columnist, and is the author of Canadian Best Seller, [Brian Minter's New Gardening Guide - Fresh Approaches for Canadian Gardeners](#)

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**Out and About**

**October 1 - March 31, 2011, Emotional Geometry** at VanDusen Botanical Garden. an exhibit of works by renowned Mexican sculptor SEBASTIAN, creator of VanDusen's Throne of Nezhahuacoyotl, in honour of the bicentennial of the Republic of Mexico. Displayed on the Great Lawn and curated by noted SEBASTIAN expert Dr. George Drake. Presented in conjunction with the Consulate General of Mexico and the Vancouver Biennale.

**November 27 - January 2, 2011, closed December 24 & 25, Heritage Christmas 2010** at Burnaby Village Museum. Enjoy the boughs, red bows and all the other old-fashioned ornaments and decorations throughout the village and farmhouse. Scenes from seasonal storybooks and songs bring Christmas memories to life at the museum. The season features traditional entertainment, demonstrations, hands-on activities and exhibits from the early 1900s. The craft is a popular with children as is a chat with Father Christmas. Complete each visit with a whirl on the C.W. Parker Carousel.

**December 10 - January 2, 2011, 4:30pm - 9pm, Festival of Lights** at VanDusen Botanical Garden. Every evening except Christmas Day (December 25) when the Garden is closed. A magical experience for the whole family with 1.4 million twinkling lights. Highlights include the Dancing Lights on Livingstone (the lights 'dance' to seasonal music to see a video click <http://vancouver.ca/parks/parks/vandusen/website/events/fol.htm> ), Gingerbread Wood and Candy Cane Lane. Evenings prior to Christmas also feature Community Choirs on the Deck and Santa in his Living Room. Up in the Heather Garden, be sure to support the Make-A-Wish Foundation by lighting a candle at the Candle Shrine. Special prices in effect – click here for ticket prices/details can be found on the Festival of Lights section of the Events Page [www.vandusengarden.org](http://www.vandusengarden.org) Avoid the line-ups and purchase advance tickets at the Garden starting November 1st or call Tickets Tonight at 604.684-2787 to order by phone or on-line at [www.ticketstonight.ca](http://www.ticketstonight.ca). In the case of heavy snow storms or other extraordinary weather conditions: please call the Garden Shop 604-257-8665 to confirm that FOL has not been closed for that one evening.

**December 21, 2010, Tuesday, 6-10pm, Winter Solstice Lantern Festival** at Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden, 578 Carrall Street, Vancouver. Suggested \$5.00/ person donation

**December 22, 2010, Wednesday, 6:30pm, Garden Buds Workshops for Kids: Centrepiece for Christmas** at GardenWorks 6250 Lougheed Highway, Burnaby.

**January 11, 2011, Tuesday 6pm, Certificate in Garden Design at UBC Information Session** at UBC Robson Square. Meet with instructors and program graduates. For more details and to reserve a seat, call 604-822-1433 or visit [www.cstudies.ubc.ca/garden](http://www.cstudies.ubc.ca/garden)

**January 26-30, 2011, Wednesday - Sunday, The 28th Annual Tacoma Home & Garden Show®** at the Tacoma Dome, Tacoma Washington. The largest home and garden event in the state of Washington where more than 1,000 exhibitors showcase the latest in design and décor, plus free seminars! \$10 for adult admission, \$8 for seniors. Two-day passes and coupons available at [www.otshows.com](http://www.otshows.com) or 253-756-2121.

December 2010

URGENT message to all BRAGS Members:

BRAGS is a very successful gardening club that has become recognized in the Burnaby community for its fund-raising activities that have benefitted many charitable and non-profit community organizations and for the benefits to its members through presentation of excellent speakers at our monthly meetings, newsletters, website, and gardening friendships that have developed over the years. This success has been achieved thanks to a core of members who have volunteered to work on the Executive and other ongoing behind-the-scene jobs as well as those who have come forward year after year to work at our regular special events such as the Rhododendron Festival, Garden Tour, Plant Sale, and Garden Contest.

Over the last few years, however, it has become increasingly difficult to find members who are willing to volunteer for positions on our Executive and Coordinators for our special events. In recent years it has even become sometimes necessary to cancel events such as the Garden Contest and the Garden Tour as no one could be found to organize these events.

This situation has now reached a crisis stage. This year, of the four positions on the Executive that are elected each year, only one, the Secretary position, has been filled. The positions of President, Vice-President, and Treasurer remain vacant. Unless these positions are filled quickly, BRAGS cannot continue to function as presently organized. BRAGS is a registered Society under the Societies Act of British Columbia and we are required to have an Executive Committee as provided in our Constitution. Aside from that issue, we simply can't function without leadership.

I encourage all of our members to consider the possibility of volunteering to fill one of these Executive positions or to take on a Co-ordinator role for one of our annual special events. Please give me a call or speak to any one on our current Executive if you would like to talk about volunteering for one of these positions. Don't let the next meeting be our last.

Judy Wellington  
President

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