

ORCHIDS OF ZIMBABWE

Issued 12th October 1993

(Extracted from Philatelic Bureau Bulletin No 4 of 1993)²

The Orchid family is one of the largest in the plant kingdom with over 20000 species distributed throughout the temperate and tropical regions of the world. Many of these plants are epiphytes which simply means that they are free growing usually from trees and rocks and do not have their roots in the ground, they are not parasitic and use their hosts as a means of support only. They are usually found in out of the way places in mountainous regions and many of the species in Zimbabwe are located in the Eastern Highlands. In this first series I have depicted four out of the twenty-six different genera of epiphytic orchids in Southern Africa.

35c: *Polystachya dendrobiflora*

Flowers: August to November *Location:*

The plant can be found in moist sandy areas often very rocky and under *Brachystegia* and *Uapaca* woodlands in the Eastern Highlands and the Great Dyke areas of Zimbabwe. *General:* The leaves come out during the rainy season but are shed during the flowering season. The tall straw-like inflorescence that arises from a short pseudobulb is surrounded by old paper-like leaf sheaths and consists of several short lateral clusters of flowers that branch off the main stem with only one or two flowers opening at a time



\$1.00: *Diaphananthe subsimplex*

Flowers: January to February *Location:* This type of orchid has only been recorded as being seen in dense forest in the mountainous regions of eastern Zimbabwe. *General:* The trailing plant can be found clinging in loose tangles from tree trunks. The roots are aerial, pale green/white and grow alternately along the stem along with the alternating rows of leaves. The stems can reach up to 600mm in length with the bright glossy olive/green leaves attaining a length of 60mm. The inflorescence also arises alternately along the stem nestling in the leaves and bear six or seven tiny flowers no bigger than 6 mm in diameter.

\$1.50: *Ansellia gigantea*

Flowers: September to February *Location:* Found throughout Zimbabwe in hot dry areas. Can be found in the forks and on the branches of large trees. *General:* Four to six leaves rise from each cane-like pseudobulb which can grow up to 800mm long. The inflorescence is branched and 750mm in length, containing from 25 to 60 flowers, each flower is approximately 30mm in diameter and can range in colour from yellow, orange tipped, to purple-brown spotted.



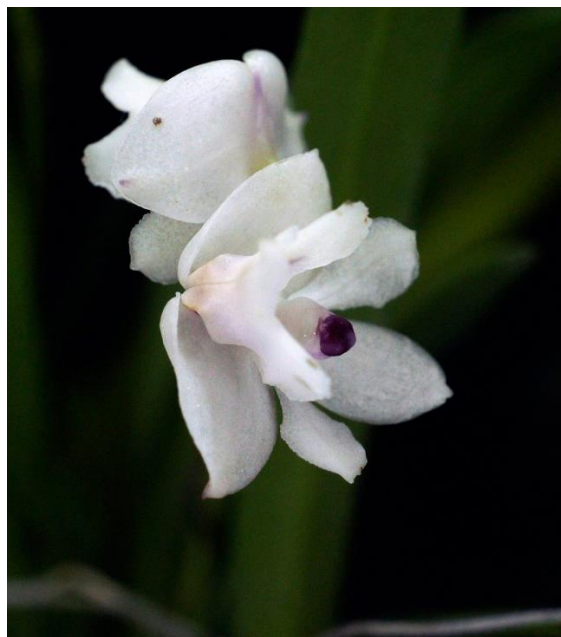
\$1.95: *Vanilla polyepis*



Flowers: November *Location:* This the largest of the Orchids in Zimbabwe is found mostly in ravines and rocky outcrops in altitudes above 1300m in the Eastern Districts. *General:* The strong dark green climbing stems are fixed firmly in the ground and grow up the trunks and branches of trees. The aerial roots and thick pointed leaves alternate up the stem which can grow up to nine metres. The inflorescence is usually located at the end of a stem and consists of up to 24 buds with large flowers opening one after the other over a couple of weeks. The flower is faintly scented of vanilla.



Polystachya modesta
(Pictured on Bulletin No 4 of 1993)



Polystachya caerspitifica
(Pictured on First day Cover)

The Stamps



Catalogue listings

SG	ZSC ¹	Value	Description
860	287	35c	Polystachya dendrobiflora
861	288	\$1.00	Diaphanathe subsimplex
862	289	\$1.50	Ansellia gigantea
863	290	\$1.95	Vanilla polyepis

Technical details

Stamp size:	All values	28 x 42 mm
Sheet Size:	50 stamps (5 rows of 10 stamps), two panes per printed sheet	
Artist:	Paula Ware	
Paper:	ZSC paper type D – HS8, fluorescent front and back, with cream PVA gum.	
Print colours:	Black, magenta, cyan & yellow	
Perforations:	SG 14½, ZSC 14¼	
	Right margin:	Perforated through.
	Other margins:	Imperforate
Printer:	NatPrint, Harare, Zimbabwe	
Printer's Imprint:	Bottom Margin, below Row 5 Columns 5 & 6. Imprint printed in black	
Cylinder numbers:	Bottom margin below R5/1. Colours from left – cyan, magenta, yellow, black	
Colour register:	Type TL 4– round boxed – left margin opposite R5/1. Colours reading down – cyan, magenta, yellow, black	

Sheet Value:	Bottom margin, below R5/10, printed in black.			
Sheet Number:	Type SN 4a with 'PTC' prefix, right margin opposite R5/10, reading down			
Print numbers:	35c	1,000,000	\$1.00	200,000
	\$1.50	200,000	\$1.95	200,000
Issue date:	12 th October, 1993			
Withdrawal from sale:				
Demonetisation:	15 th July, 1997			

Listed varieties

No listed varieties have been noted

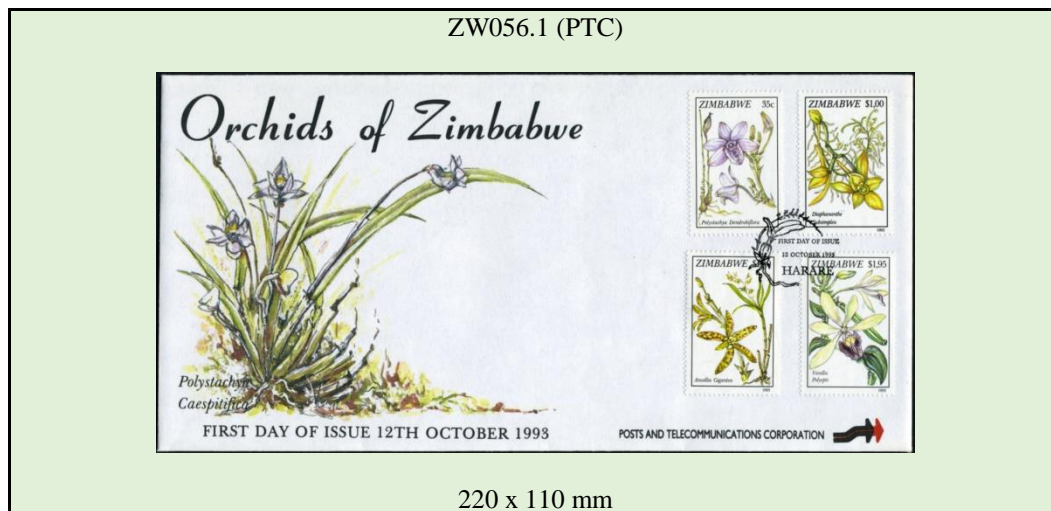
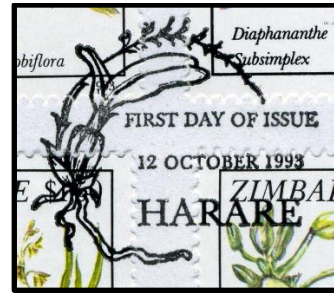
Unlisted Varieties

There are numerous small dots and specks in the printing of these stamps, particularly in the backgrounds. Some dots and specks shown below are a bit more distinctive, some may be constant. No significant varieties have been recorded

First Day Cover

The cover numbering comes from the catalogue produced by Geoff Brakspear.

A pictorial first day of issue canceller was produced for this issued and was used by the Philatelic Bureau. Other first day cover cancellers continued to be used at main post offices.



Bibliography:

1. "The Zimbabwean Concise Postage Stamp Catalogue", published by Harare Stamp Company, edited by Ken Allanson, Mike Amos and Geoff Brakspear. The catalogue continues to be updated and expanded by Geoff Brakspear
2. PTC Philatelic Bureau Bulletin No 4 of 1993.