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.
The Stamps

Catalogue listings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SG</th>
<th>ZSC¹</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>860</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>35c</td>
<td>Polystachya dendrobiflora</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>861</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>$1.00</td>
<td>Diaphananthe subsimplex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>862</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>$1.50</td>
<td>Ansellia gigantea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>863</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>$1.95</td>
<td>Vanilla polyepis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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:** 12th October, 1993

**Withdrawal from sale:**

**Demonetarisation:** 15th 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: