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Angraecum sesquipedale

[Synonyms : *Aeranthes sesquipedalis*, *Angorchis sesquipedale*, *Macroplectrum sesquipedale*, *Mystacidium sesquipedale*]

STAR-OF-BETHLEHEM ORCHID is an evergreen orchid. Native to Madagascar it has fragrant ivory-white flowers.

It is also known as Comet orchid, Star-of-Madagascar, and Waxflower.

Nectar lies at the bottom of the flower's long greenish spur. Flowers last for months and open at night when they are pollinated by a special hawkmoth.

Sesquipedale is derived from Latin *sesqui* (one and a half) meaning '1½ ft. in height or length' in this case length with reference to the very long spur.

Star-of-Bethlehem orchid was the cause of considerable ridicule for Charles Darwin (1809-1882) the famous English naturalist. When first discovered nobody knew how the orchid was pollinated. However Darwin contended in 1862 that this function would be found to be provided by a moth with a suitably long tongue but unfortunately he died before confirmation of the existence of this elusive insect was achieved. It took about 40 years to confirm the validity of the prediction when at the turn of the 19th and 20th Centuries a species of short-lived hawkmoth (that only appears at night) was eventually identified – and proved to have a tongue of the correct length.