These Shoes Were Made For Growing  

(And one of these days...)

The memory of the Great Depression was the cause of my parents’ early mindset which became so much of an influence on me. I was born early during WW2, (yes I am that old) and those unpleasant memories must have been very fresh in their minds, which they passed on to me by osmosis. Throwing stuff away, (any stuff) was frowned on in the extreme. In this day and age, modern folk could learn a lot from the old folk. Shoes, for instance were made to last. Strong leather uppers and soles, hob nail boots. Modern shoes however are made for fashion, which is always short term. Imelda Marcos knew the value of modern shoes and made a world famous collection of her favourite rubbish.

I on the other hand, (as do most folks these days) tend to change shoes only slightly less often that those other unmentionables, which leaves all those lost and unloved footwear nowhere to go except to the tip. (Not recyclable in our modern world. Forget the shoe leather, only rubber and plastic these days)

So, What’s to do with all these unwanted flatfoots?? Never fear, the answer is here!!

Can you plant your favourite orchids in them?? Think of all the wonderful, lingering, odoriferous substances contained therein. Years, (Months? Weeks?) of the scent of your personal footprint infused into the lining!! This means less fertiliser required!! Money saved!! (And don’t we all need to do that??)

But?? I hear you cry!! Is it possible?? Would that orchid that is my pride and joy survive being confined in my smelly footwear throw outs?

Well I don’t know about yours, but mine are doing quite nicely thank you. Not to mention making my existence that much more interesting. After all, if we can’t get some joy by of thinking outside the box, (shoe? shoe box?) then we have to question what our lives are all about. (Don’t go there folks!!)

So here are a few pictures from my shoe collection. (Imelda eat your heart out)

WHAT?? I hear you say!!

Is that hardcane *Dendrobium* growing in that (well past it’s use by date) shoe??

Yes indeed it is. And note the new spike on the left hand cane.

The orchid is *Dendrobium* Pompadour ‘Splash’ bought at the World Orchid Conference in Malaysia 2002 and still going fine. I have a few clones of this and they tend to keiki over the years so I have had this one a long time

This is a flower from another clone.
Note; This orchid’s name is
* Dendrobium Pompadour.
That is, it’s registered name.
Not Den. Pompadour!!
Not Den. Madam Pompadour
& Not Den. Madam Pompadour
This is also an Australian native hybrid
So how does it work??

Most of mine hang from the heel, which means that you have first to screw a hook into the heel of the shoe. This should be reasonably easy in most modern plastic/rubber shoes as they are quite soft.

Then you need to drill some holes around the toe area for the excess water to drain out.

Some shoe manufacturers are kind enough to have inbuilt draining points. (Thinking of you all the time)

Or if your shoe will stand up for itself, you will need to drill holes in the sole of the shoe.

All that is needed now is some media down in the shoe and plant your orchid in.
Some shoes come with a nice, well placed strap to hold the plant name tag such as these.

Others, such as the one below, have handy shoe laces which serve the same purpose.

Some shoes just cannot take the constant wet conditions. The ones with Claytons leather, (the leather you have when you are not having leather) are perhaps the worst in this regard.
Rubber shoes seem to last much longer and they often have nice in-built ventilation too.

I have, in the past, planted hardcane *Dendrobiums* in ladies boots with some great success. Old ones that is, (the boots not the ladies) but they were sold (soled?) long ago. Perhaps old rubber boots would be ideal for hardcanes as they would tend to give some stability to the plant. Hardcanes can get quite top heavy when in flower and need a base with some weight to it.

This is *Dendrobium* Physan Princess which has been in this shoe for around three years. It has flowered for two of those years and will do so again this year.
Dendrobium Physan Princess in her younger days, right, and today, below

And for those who prefer the minimalist approach....
A Tolumnia on a thong.

The thong belonged to my youngest grandson. The dog ate the other one!!

(The thong that is, not the grandson)
This *Phalaenopsis* grew quite well for some years. Alas, the sandshoe went to god. (Which makes a nice change from the orchid)
The sandshoe was made of a canvas-like cloth, and disintegrated.
No inner fortitude
The *Phalie* was made of sterner stuff and survives nicely.

*Dendrobium* Pompador ‘Splash’ in situ
So dig out your old Doc Martens, Birkenstock, Adidas, Skechers, Sneakers, Fergies and Blundstones and get potting. (Shoeing? Booting?)

The End

Tony Watkinson