



## CLUB NEWS



**Bill Thoms**

### March 3 Meeting

by Janis Croft

#### Welcome and Thanks.

President Tom Sullivan opened the meeting at 7:03 pm with over 93 attendees. He immediately introduced Art from Jacksonville Orchid Society who invited all to attend their show, March 21-22 and also encouraged our club to participate in the society exhibits. Next, Membership VP, Linda Stewart announced our

eight new members, Verna and Hank Plona, Sarah Gledhill, Susan and Eric Milstrey, Marie Vastano, Ann Davis and Wendy Stieglitz. Linda also welcomed our five visitors and members with birthdays this month, rewarding them with a free raffle ticket. As our Sunshine Coordinator also, Linda announced that if you know of anyone in need of a cheering up or a get well card, let her know by emailing her at [info@staugorchidsociety.org](mailto:info@staugorchidsociety.org).

Tom thanked Joey, Dianne and Daisy for bringing in the refreshment goodies and reminded all to drop a dollar in the basket while enjoying their refreshments. He encouraged all to vote for their favorite orchid on the Show Table. Tom finished by reminding all that it's time to renew your annual membership with Linda at the back table or you can renew online at our website.

Sue Bottom then thanked the Show Table Volunteers – Courtney, Terry, Glo and Mary Anne – for their hard work in getting the plants positioned, photographed and discussed as well as collecting the ballots after the break.

**Club Business.** Exhibit Chair Janis Croft named the volunteers that have offered to help put up and break down our exhibit at the Jacksonville Orchid show. She stated that we now needed everyone to start prepping and staking their plants for the show. The plans are to have the members bring their orchids to either Bob and Yvonne Schimmel's home (702 Wilkes Court) or Janis Croft's home (8311 County Road

208) on either Tuesday afternoon, March 17 or Wednesday morning, March 18. Please call Janis (904-436-5085) or email her at [info@staugorchidsociety.org](mailto:info@staugorchidsociety.org) if you plan on adding your plants to our club exhibit. We have such a spectacular show table every month that we should have plenty of plants from our members to put up an equally spectacular show exhibit. Please consider submitting your plants for the show.

Ace Repotting Clinic started up Feb. 1 and had a steady flow of plants that six volunteers helped repot. The next clinic will be on March 7 from 9 - noon at Ace Hardware, 3050 US 1 South. The Beginners Culture classes are held at 6:15 before the main meeting each month in a separate side room. This meeting's topic was on Staking your Plants for Display by Linda Stewart. We bring potting mix, slotted clay pots, durable plant tags, etc. for sale at the meeting and usually sell out. If you want to ensure you get your supplies, email [info@staugorchidsociety.org](mailto:info@staugorchidsociety.org) and we will have it ready for you at the next meeting.

Our new librarian Howard Cushnir brought in several books including our speaker's popular book on Bulbophyllums. He also noted that The Orchid Thief was returned and immediately checked out again. He encouraged all to use the library collection listed on our [SAOS website](http://SAOS website). If you would like a book, send a request to [librarian@staugorchidsociety.org](mailto:librarian@staugorchidsociety.org) and Howard will bring the item(s) to the next meeting.

**Show Table.** Courtney stated that the show table had quite a variety this month and he was surprised not to see as many spring blooming dendrobiums as he had expected. There were three Cymbidiums which were wonderfully displayed. Geno's Gem 'Emerald Fire' and Dorothy Stockdale 'Forbidden Fruit' have inflorescences that flow downward and the intense Cym. Mimi 'Lucifer' has upward growing inflorescences. Then there was the unusual Laelia crispata which grows on rocks and also has yellow flowers on inflorescences that grow straight up. The Lysudamuola Red Jewel was a rarity on the table with its unusual flowers. We had several orchids boasting beautiful orange yellow flowers including Lc. Caribbean 'Orange Bowl', L. Coronet, Slc. Yellow Button 'Kiss of Red' and the Chichiriviche Sunset from Venezuela.

Phalaenopsis were well represented as can be expected this time of year. There were two Big Lip varieties with their



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# CLUB NEWS



## Upcoming Orchid Events

### March

- 6-8 Martin County Orchid Society Show  
Martin County Fairgrounds
- 7 SAOS at Ace Hardware, 9 am til noon  
3050 US 1 South in St. Augustine 32086
- 7-8 Tampa Bay Orchid Society Show  
Tampa Scottish Rite Masonic Center
- 10 JOS Meeting, Show Update, 7 pm  
Eric Cavin, JOS Show Committee
- 13-15 Orchid Society of Coral Gables Show  
Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden
- 13-14 Englewood Area Orchid Society Show  
Englewood Methodist Church
- 14 FL North-Central Judging, 1 pm  
Clermont Garden Center, 849 West Ave
- 17 Pan American Orchid Society Show  
Pinecrest Gardens, Miami
- 20-22 Gulf Coast Orchid Alliance Show  
North Collier Regional Park, Naples
- 21-22 Jacksonville Orchid Society Show  
The Garden Center of Jacksonville
- 28-29 Central Florida Orchid Society Show  
National Guard Armory, Orlando
- 28-29 Deep South Orchid Society Show  
Coastal Georgia Gardens, Savannah
- 28-29 EPIC Celebration of Spring  
Annual Flower and Garden Expo  
St. Johns County Agricultural Center
- 28-29 Nature Coast Orchid Society Show  
VFW Post, 18940 Drayton St, Spring Hill

### April

- 4 Repotting & Plant Clinic, 9 am til noon  
Ace at 3050 US 1 South, St. Aug 32086
- 7 SAOS Meeting, 6:30 pm  
Potting and Mounting Orchids  
Tony Millet, Bonnet House
- 11 FL North-Central Judging, 1 pm  
Clermont Garden Center  
849 West Ave
- 11-12 Flamingo Gardens Orchid Society Show  
Flamingo Gardens, Davie

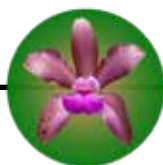
- 14 JOS Meeting - Topic TBA, 7 pm  
Harry McElroy
- 18-19 Tallahassee Orchid Society Show  
Doyle Conner Agriculture Bldg
- 19 SAOS Picnic and Orchid Sale, 4 to 6 pm  
Memorial Lutheran Church  
3375 US 1 South, St. Aug 32086
- 24-25 Vero Beach Orchid Society Show  
Riverside Park

### May

- 1-3 Platinum Coast Orchid Society Show  
Kiwanis Island Park Gym, Merritt Island
- 2 Repotting & Plant Clinic, 9 am til noon  
Ace at 3050 US 1 South, St. Augustine 32086
- 3 JOS Picnic, 12 pm  
3611 Richmond Street, Jax 32205

## St. Augustine Orchid Society Organization

President	Tom Sullivan <a href="mailto:tomjs91@gmail.com">tomjs91@gmail.com</a>
Vice President Communications	Janis Croft <a href="mailto:croftie1984@gmail.com">croftie1984@gmail.com</a>
Vice President Events	Dianne Batchelder <a href="mailto:ladydi9907@aol.com">ladydi9907@aol.com</a>
Vice President Membership	Linda Stewart <a href="mailto:lindstew@hotmail.com">lindstew@hotmail.com</a>
Vice President Programs	Sue Bottom <a href="mailto:sbottom15@gmail.com">sbottom15@gmail.com</a>
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Directors at Large	Debra Brandt, 2020 <a href="mailto:dbb@cfl.rr.com">dbb@cfl.rr.com</a> Cathy Mayo, 2020 <a href="mailto:allatoonalady@gmail.com">allatoonalady@gmail.com</a> Bob Schimmel, 2019 <a href="mailto:schimmelr55@bellsouth.net">schimmelr55@bellsouth.net</a>
Exhibit Committee Chair	Janis Croft <a href="mailto:croftie1984@gmail.com">croftie1984@gmail.com</a>
Librarian	Howard Cushnir <a href="mailto:hscushnir@gmail.com">hscushnir@gmail.com</a>
Newsletter Editors Webmasters	Sue and Terry Bottom <a href="mailto:sbottom15@gmail.com">sbottom15@gmail.com</a> <a href="mailto:bottom406@gmail.com">bottom406@gmail.com</a>



# CLUB NEWS

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huge white flat flowers. One displayed a perfect, beautiful waterfall and the other displayed upright with multiple branching. Courtney explained that this happens with careful staking using bendable wire. There was also a pink no name phal, a color which Courtney favors. The Clowesia Grace Dunn 'Chadds Ford' resembled a big fluffy snow ball. Check out the photos of our show table examples at the end of the newsletter and on the SAOS website.

**SAOS Program.** Sue Bottom announced our guest



speaker, Bill Thoms, whose topic was Growing Specimen Plants. Bill Thoms and his wife, Doris Dukes, have been growing orchids around Central Florida for 40 years and have received almost every award granted by the AOS as well as more Awards for Culture than anyone else in the world. He was a very lively speaker with many helpful notes of advice based on his waffle house "waffle house" technique. He started by showing us the basic shelving setup in his own greenhouse which had flat large paving stones as a walk way on top of ground cloth covering the entire floor of the house. He then had two tiered tables with flat surface made of wire mesh and edged with 2" high borders to prevent plants from falling off the tables. The next slide showed the tables filled with plants and space above used for hanging plants. His point was to show how many plants he can place in his green house. He then showed a hanging column made out of 8' of wire screen. Its diameter is less than 2' giving him 8' of hanging space within 2' of physical space. He uses Aluminet top shade his house along with two 24" circulation fans to move fresh air.

Then he began to explain what the letters in "waffle house" mean. To begin he advised all to "water thoroughly and to water on all sides if possible. If not, then you should definitely water twice. He also uses plastic container lids, e.g. cottage cheese container lid, under each plant that keeps a small amount of water available for the plant to continue to use after you are done watering. The more water, the larger flowers. Next, it is important to have plenty of "air"; good air flow morning, noon and night is crucial to healthy

plant growth. So one is to water first, and then "feed your plants. He uses the principal of water weekly/weakly which means cut your fertilizer quantity to half strength and add a drop of Palmolive liquid soap. The soap helps the fertilizer penetrate the plant's cell membranes. Bill was selling his own formula of fertilizer, but whatever you use, he strongly advised adding Epsom salts once a month. This provides the plant cells with much needed Magnesium. Bill also uses Neem Oil as his insecticide fungicide, miticide and basically for everything else.

The "L" in his waffle house acronym stands for "light and he showed us how to judge our light conditions where we grow our plants. One wants bright shade and he showed us how to judge this by using our hand held about one foot away from surface. If the edge of our hand is sharp, that is Vanda light conditions; if the edge is defined by not as sharp, that's Cattleya light conditions; if the edge is vague, then you have Phalaenopsis light conditions. The next step is to keep your "house clean and pretty. Here he was referring to the plants potting condition. Bill advises using styrofoam in the center of the potting mix which eliminates excessive moisture in the center of the roots and is especially helpful with very big potted plants. The other trick is to use lemon juice for cleaning your plant's leaves. He uses a nubby cloth or the toe of a sock and scrubs to clean up the leaves to a nice shine. Real lemon juice with a small bit of water works best. Finally, the "S" which represents "staking and grooming your plants for display early. Stake close to the base of the inflorescence, use wire to separate out the inflorescences so they are not all clumped together or on one side. He again stated that one should do this early on because once the flowers open, it is too late to reorient them in a different direction.

He also reminded all of us to remember our POO. After some chuckles, he revealed this acronym to mean "Powers of Observation". He commended Doris, his wife, for having this skill set naturally however he had to learn the skill. He did this by having a friend place 10 pennies anywhere in his plants in the greenhouse. For each penny that he did not find, he had to pay his friend \$10. Bill then showed a slide of his plant table with five pennies hidden and we all had to look closely to find all five—a wonderful method of making one observe each plant's condition. To end his presentation, he showed slides of his many award winning orchids along with a list of his 105 rewards, 21 of which were Culture Awards—quite a remarkable accomplishment.

**Meeting Conclusion.** Tom Sullivan announced the Member's Choice Award as Harry and Celia McElroy's Cymbidium Mimi 'Lucifer'. The evening concluded with a great Raffle table. Thanks to the helpful hands that stayed to reset the tables and chairs and clean up the room.





# CLUB NEWS

## Time to Pay Your 2020 Dues

This is the final month for renewing your membership. Dues are \$20 for an individual and \$30 for a family. You can mail your membership check to SAOS c/o Linda Stewart, 1812 Diana Drive, Palatka 32177. If you prefer to renew your membership online, you can use the PayPal link on our [website](#). After the March meeting we will be updating our membership and newsletter distribution lists.

## March Keiki Club

Road Trip – Jacksonville Orchid Society Show

Have you ever gone to an Orchid Society show and seen all the beautiful exhibits or shopped from 10 orchid vendors side by side? Orchid vendors include EFG Orchids, Mac's Orchids, Tropic 1 Tropicals, So Orchids, Krull Smith Orchids, Quest Orchids, Springwater Orchids, Palmer Orchids and Florida SunCoast Orchids.

Where: Garden Club of Jacksonville  
[1005 Riverside Drive, Jax 32204](#)

When: March 21 and 22, 10 am - 5 pm

## Catasetinae Competition Grow

Sometime this month, you should see the new green growth emerging at the base of the bulb. If it needs to be repotted, this is the time to do it, but if the mix is fresh, you can leave it in it for another year. Don't water until the new growth is about 5 inches tall.



## American Orchid Society Corner

### [Webinars](#)

*March 19, 8:30-9:30 pm, Everyone Invited  
Greenhouse Chat Orchid, Q&A - Ron McHatton  
March 31, 8:30-9:30 pm, AOS Members Only  
Junior Orchid Show, Barbara Schmidt*

### [Orchids Magazine this month:](#)

*Small Phalaenopsis - Coghill-Behrends  
Nutrition – Roy Barkalow  
Caularthron and Its Hybrids – Jean Allen-Ikeson  
Being a Judging Team Captain – Bill Thoms*

### [Photos of Latest AOS Awards](#)



## Beginners Culture Classes

We have been enjoying the culture class for beginners, now starting at 6:15 before the meeting. In April, we'll talk about how to make different wire products for your orchids, such as rhizome clips, plant stakes, etc. Send your suggestions for future topics to [info@staugorchidsociety.org](mailto:info@staugorchidsociety.org).

## SAOS Exhibit in Jacksonville

Want to Join the Team?

We need your plants and your help! We'll be putting in an exhibit at the JOS Show on March 20 and breaking it down on March 22. We will design the exhibit on Wednesday the 18th at Janis and Alan's home. If you want to participate, bring your groomed plant to the Wednesday meeting at 1 pm, [8311 County Road 208 32092](#). Contact Exhibit Chair [Janis Croft](#) if you would like to help. You can drop off plants at Bob Schimmel's ([702 Wilkes Court, 32086](#)) before Wednesday at 11 am. Janis will be available to receive plants on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Here are the [SAOS Exhibit Guidelines](#) along with some guidelines for [preparing your plant](#) for the show. Send [Sue](#) a list of the plants you'd like to enter into the show no later than Wednesday March 18 noon.

## April 7 Monthly Meeting

Potting and Mounting Orchids  
Tony Millet, The Bonnet House

Tony will be showing us his special methods of mounting and repotting orchids, with emphasis on techniques and the use of different materials including cork, driftwood, plaques, baskets and mounts. Proper sterilization of tools will also be discussed in order to limit spread of virus to your collection. He breeds and grows unusual hybrids in the large Cattleya alliance, and also performs all hybridizing and flasking activities. Many of Tony's hybrids have been AOS awarded.

Bring your flowering orchids to exhibit on the Show Table. We will have our normal raffle at the end of the meeting. Friends and guests are always welcome!

**When:** Tuesday, April 7, 6:30 til 9 pm

**Where:** Memorial Lutheran Church  
3375 US 1 South, St. Aug 32086



# INSPIRATION



2020 Tamiami Orchid Festival  
Grand Champion  
*C. trianae* 'A. C. Burrage' AM/AOS CCE/AOS

© Terry Botto





# CULTIVATION



## Orchid Questions & Answers

by Sue Bottom, sbottom15@gmail.com

**Q1.** I have a small potted Vanda that I hung on the east side gutter outside in a basket about 2 months ago. When I watered her this morning, I noticed all of these tiny black spots all over her leaves.

She's been getting rain water and lots of breeze. Is this fungal, bacteria, virus, or something else?



**A1.** Those spots are pigmentation from the vanda getting nice bright light, sort of like freckles from being in the sun. The spots should be reddish purple rather than black, and they should not be raised or sunken. I think it looks great, and should be a very interesting hybrid whenever it blooms!

**Q2.** I have recently bought a ground orchid online which came in a small plastic pot, which I transferred into a bigger pot. Is it absolutely necessary to plant a ground orchid in the ground only and not in the pot?

**A2.** I don't think terrestrials have to be planted in the ground, but I think they should be potted in a peat based mix rather the coarse mix you would put an epiphyte in.



**Q3.** My phal has fungus gnats so I removed some of the media and found a bunch of mushy gunk inside the pot. There was a sort of pod filled with coco coir which seems to be contributing to the mushy gunk. What should I do?



**A3.** When the bark rots like that, it will also rot the roots. If it were my plant, I would get a hose end sprayer and set it on jet, turn the pot upside holding the phal in and jet away as much of the potting mix as possible, all the mix that comes away without too much pressure. Jill wrote back that she jetted all the material away and found the 'pod'. Apparently, when the growers first potted up the phal, they put the seedling in a little plastic pot filled with oasis or coconut and when the plant got larger, they just slip potted it by dropping it into a bigger pot and backfilled with bark. The inside pot will always stay too wet if you water the bark the way bark should be watered, and root rot is the inevitable result. After Jill removed it and jetted away the rest of the potting mix, she added fresh mix with a minimum of disruption to the roots.



# CULTIVATION

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## Media – Size Matters

by Courtney Hackney

Size really does matter... at least with respect to orchid growing. The size of the medium in which you place your orchids, the size of the pot, and even the size of a greenhouse all determine some aspect of your cultural practices.

Most novice growers do not consider that the medium magnifies the effective pot size for their orchid. Consider that an orchid mounted on a 1' x 1' flat board has one square foot from which to potentially absorb water, fertilizer, etc. A similar size piece of cork with its very irregular surface not only increases the effective surface area, but also creates small crevices and areas where water can sit or where temperature can vary so that orchid roots have more surface area from which to draw.

Potting media accomplish the same effect to a greater degree. Potting media, usually sold as coarse, medium, and fine, allows a grower to greatly expand the surface area from which an orchid can draw water and nutrients. Far more water and nutrients are held by a fine medium than by coarse medium in the same size pot. There is also correspondingly less air space. Most media that contain mixtures of ingredients, e.g. bark and charcoal, try to use similar size ingredients so that the ratio of material to air is high. While fine bark mixed with coarse bark increases the surface area it also lowers the air space by filling in gaps between coarse bark with fine bark. Avoid mixes that combine different sized products.

The more surface area, the more water and fertilizer that is potentially available to an orchid. Bacteria and fungi quickly cover the surface of an organic medium, enhancing its roughness and ability to hold water. They also enhance the nutrition of an orchid by converting the urea in many fertilizers to forms of nitrogen that orchids can use. In the process, though, they cause the medium surface to decay. The smaller the size of the medium the faster the process leads to a medium that will not support the growth of orchid roots. In fine media, there is little air space and the bacteria and fungi compete with plant roots for oxygen. When a medium is said to be "sour" that is the time when there is no oxygen present in the medium for extended periods of time; a condition that leads to the death of orchid roots.

Coarse media have small surface to volume ratios and provide less water and nutrients and more oxygen, but last

longer, while small media are the opposite. The ultimate small medium is ground peat. Plants, including orchids, grow quickly in media dominated by ground peat, but can also lose their roots when the media "sours". There are a number of commercial media, including ProMix, which utilize peat as a major component. Often called "soiless", these media attempt to compensate by adding Perlite to soften and aerate the medium. While this lengthens the time plants can remain in the medium, it does not change the basic relationship of decay to particle size.

Pot size matters as well. As the pot size increases the same relationship of surface to volume changes with respect to the pot itself. Small pots have large surface area to volume ratios compared to big pots. This is especially important for clay or other porous surface pots as oxygen is exchanged through the clay and water lost to the atmosphere. Plastic pots do not exchange either water or oxygen through the pot, only through the surface medium and any holes in the pot bottom or side. The same type and size medium in clay pots tend to last longer than in plastic pots. Remember that decay is dependent on bacteria and fungi that grow more quickly on wet versus dry surfaces.

One other facet needs to be considered and that is roughness of the medium surface. Brick chunks are relatively smooth compared to the same size lava rock but hold relatively little water and fertilizer relative to lava rock. Nonorganic media do not harbor bacteria and fungi that decompose them and roughen the surface. They will eventually provide living space for bacteria that use excess fertilizer or decaying plant materials. This makes similar sized media of organic versus inorganic act very differently with respect to their role in both plant nutrition and water holding capacity.

The same basic concept applies to growing space as well. Large greenhouses take longer to change humidity and temperature and so are less vulnerable to rapid environmental change. Because they may also contain more plants, pots, media, etc. that release water and store heat, large greenhouses also buffer rapid changes. Growing on a small windowsill versus a large greenhouse requires very different techniques and materials.

Finally, size does matter when it comes to flowers. Small orchid plants have limited ability to absorb and store light energy. Large, mature orchids are able to store all the energy required to produce the maximum number and size flowers possible for that individual clone. Until an orchid is mature, it can be difficult to know what the potential for the plant may be.

*Note: Dr. Courtney Hackney wrote a monthly column of his orchid growing tips for about 20 years; we are reprinting some you might have missed, this one from December 2003.*





# CULTIVATION

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## Grown-Up Orchids

Beginning with Mature Orchids Offers Advantages  
by Ken Slump

It's ironic that most of us acquire our orchid plants at an immature stage, often waiting patiently for years for that first flower. Once they reach blooming size and begin to thrive, we all too frequently spend the rest of our days struggling to confine their mass to a volume we can manage. Few of us have the facilities that would allow us to grow all of our orchids to specimen size, and most would prefer to maintain several different blooming-size plants in the space it could take to grow one monstrous example. That may be good for the divisions table at your local orchid society, but not so good for those, like myself, who thrill to see large, mature orchid plants in the glory of full bloom.

Certainly those hybrids and species classified as miniatures are more manageable, and the orchids with monopodial growth habit may be a bit easier to keep as the years go by. Still, I'd wager that most orchid hobbyists (who live in temperate climates) have collections that are grown primarily in pots of 6 inches (15 cm) in diameter or less, and a remarkably small percentage of plants grown in pots with diameters of eight inches or more. Grown-up orchids,

however, often seem to have vim, vigor and vitality that is unmatched by their smaller divisions, and it is unfortunate that few such specimens are seen.

**CULTURAL AWARDS** It is safe to say that among the AOS awards that require the greatest effort are the CCM (Certificate of Cultural Merit, 80 to 89 points) and its companion award for higher scoring specimens, the CCE. These awards are a testament to the grower's ability and do not reflect on the quality of the orchid flowers per se. Photographs and slides of these winners often elicit oohs and aahs when viewed, and in some cases, one cannot help but think the exhibitor deserved an award simply for wrestling the large plant to a site where it could be judged.

If you are considering growing some of the plants in your orchid collection to specimen size, it is wise to put a bit of thought into your selections. Vigorous growers that produce multiple leads are logical candidates. It is also smart to choose a species or hybrid that produces rather long-lasting flowers, and lots of them. For sheer impact, you may be happier with a specimen that opens its flowers simultaneously rather than sequentially. Mature orchid size varies considerably, so give some thought to how large the orchid plant you choose may eventually become.

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# CULTIVATION

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*Two hundred eleven flowers topped this Anguloa xacostae 'Marsh Hollow', CCE/AOS (hohenloii x eburnea), which scored 96 points at the Toronto Judging Center. The 44-inch (110-cm) specimen had 36 leafless pseudobulbs and 17 immature growths when it was judged. Grower: Glen and Heather Aim. (Certificate of Cultural Excellence, 90 to 100 points). Photo: Michael MacConnail.*

One such plant in my collection is an example of Brassocattleya Maikai 'Mayumi', HCC/AOS (Brassavola nodosa x Cattleya bowringiana). Like many B. nodosa hybrids, it grows rather quickly into a specimen plant of manageable size. The flowers, for a Cattleya Alliance hybrid, are also comparatively long lasting. Mine is currently growing in a 10-inch (25-cm) pot.

Consider the growing medium and container for your specimen orchids. You do not want to have to repot such plants often, if ever. I've seen some beautiful specimen orchids grown in baskets, both wooden and wire, sometimes without any growing medium at all. When media is used, it should be one that deteriorates slowly. Coconut husk and tree fern outlast bark. Inert materials such as expanded clay (Aliflor) and charcoal may last years but have no nutritional value so fertilization practices must be adjusted accordingly. Smaller-scale orchid specimens can be grown on cork or tree-fern slabs. I know one grower who has produced handsome specimens in wire baskets with coir or fiber liners that were filled with rather coarse bark.

**CONTAINERS** If pots are used, clay has an advantage over plastic in this application because it is important that the large volume of growing medium often needed does not become soggy or stale. Even if large clay pots are used, some thought should be given to providing a mechanism for allowing the growing medium in the center of the pot to have an opportunity to dry out between waterings, or the roots in that area will surely rot. I solved the problem for my Bc. Maikai by inverting a small clay pot in the center of a 10-inch (25-cm) azalea pot before filling the larger clay pot

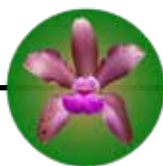
with growing mix. The little pot provides a permanent air space that eliminates the soggy zone.

There usually comes a day when even the best-cultivated and -managed orchid specimen must be divided and repotted. Fortunately, such plants often produce large vigorous divisions that will reestablish quickly. Always remember that this is a great time to share divisions with your fellow orchid society members and friends. Regrettably, the award for the best-grown plant in various categories at many orchid shows is seldom much of a contest. Where are all those plants with multiple leads and inflorescences? Like many show hopefuls, I suspect some specimen plants are among those that finish flowering just before show time or open right after the event. Nevertheless, I hope everyone has a few plants selected from their collections that they are trying to grow to specimen size. With a little forethought, it is a pursuit worth the extra effort.



*Six inflorescences displayed 48 flowers and 10 buds on this specimen of Phaius schlechterii 'Haley Suzanne', CCM/AOS. The 22-1/2-inch- (56-cm-) tall plant earned 83 points at the Deep Cut Orchid Society Show. Grower: Glen F. Decker, Photo: Charles Marsden Fitch.*

*This article appeared in the American Orchid Society Orchids magazine in January 2004 (Vol. 73:01, pp. 10-12), reprinted with permission*



# CULTIVATION

## Good Grooming

How to Make Your Collection Work for You  
by Ken Slump

Before you pack up your flowering orchids and head off to your orchid society's show table or AOS judging center, or to enter the nearest orchid show, take a few minutes to make sure each of your plants looks its best. First, carefully inspect every plant for insects or disease. Be sure to check the undersides of leaf surfaces and axils and even the backs and interiors of the flowers, where pests can often go unnoticed. A cotton swab dipped in rubbing alcohol may be all that is required to eradicate them. A buggy plant may be regarded as a pariah at an orchid society show table, so you should expect infested plants discovered at orchid shows and AOS judging centers to be disqualified by the judges or show committee.

Do not be afraid to remove fading or unattractive foliage as well as old blossoms from your plants. The same goes for any remaining dried stems from past inflorescences. Dead canes or pseudobulbs, as well as dead aerial roots, should also be removed. Remember that a leafless pseudobulb, such as those on some dendrobiums, is not necessarily dead.

Dried leaf tips can be cut off with a sterilized cutting tool, and if so desired, the dried sheaths on canes or pseudobulbs can be carefully peeled away. Try wetting those with a spray of water to make them easier to remove. If they are stubbornly attached, you may have to wait for them to mature a bit more before you can remove them successfully.

Some exhibitors prefer to detach the dried sheath from any inflorescence that has one, but this must be accomplished with great care or you may unintentionally break or cut off the flowers. Orchid foliage that is badly spotted by fertilizer sprays or mineral deposits from the water should be cleaned. Do not use commercial leaf polish or leaf shine. These leave an oily, overly glossy appearance that is both unnatural and unattractive. Milk is my personal favorite for cleaning plant foliage. A milk-dampened paper towel that is gently rubbed over the leaves will often clean them in a single application, but the process may need to be repeated to remove stubborn stains. Milk also leaves the foliage with a natural, healthy looking luster. Other growers favor lemon juice for a similar result.

Finally, study each plant individually and determine if staking or wiring could enhance its symmetry or floral presentation. Plants frequently grow in odd directions or produce their flowers in less than ideal postures, both of which might be easily improved with judicious staking. Such mechanics should be as unobtrusive as possible but can frequently impart stature and beauty to an otherwise ordinary looking specimen. Keep in mind that good staking

and wiring leaves the plant with a natural appearance and does not produce rigid results where the subject appears lashed to the stake. Good staking can truly turn a plant that appears rather ordinary into a winner.

Also be certain that each plant is able to stand firmly without falling over. Since many orchids are grown in lightweight plastic pots of a relatively small size in relation to the plant, they are frequently top-heavy, and are susceptible to considerable damage when they topple. It is not uncommon for the other plants on a shelf or bench to help prop up each other, so when you pull one for display, you may need to place its container inside a heavier pot or cachepot to help ensure stability.

Orchid plants cultivated in hanging baskets and on mounts present special problems when the need arises to display them individually. If growth habit and root development allow, hanging plants may be placed on a sturdy base that elevates them a bit above table height. It is a good idea to secure the plant's container to its support, if possible, to avoid a calamity if the plant is nudged or moved by an unsuspecting onlooker. Tape, wire or cable ties may suffice, depending on the materials of the container and its support. Be sure to remove the wire hanger if you are not hanging the plant.

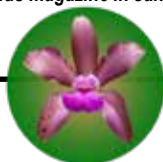
However, often the only way to effectively display hanging or mounted plants is to suspend them, and this is the time to tap into your creativity. The best solution to the problem will be portable, lightweight, unobtrusive and yet stable. Brackets that fasten to the tabletop, wire mesh stands, old lamp bases and small pedestals all offer possibilities. Do not expect your orchid society, judging center or orchid show committee to solve this problem for you.

It's a good idea to water every plant thoroughly and allow them sufficient time to drain before transporting them for display or competition. Once they are entered in an orchid show, you probably will not be able to provide them with more than an occasional misting once the exhibit opens to the public. The plants you take to the orchid society show table or orchid show should be respectable examples of their type and a credit to you as their grower. A few minutes of attention to grooming and preparing them ahead of time will help ensure that they are both.



*Proper grooming ensures the best presentation of orchids, such as with this Neostylis Pinky 'Orchidgrove', HCC/AOS (Neof. falcata x Rhy. gigantea). Photo: Charles Marsden Fitch, Grower: David L. Grove, PhD*

*This article appeared in the American Orchid Society Orchids magazine in January 2005 (Vol. 74:01, pp. 14-15). Reprinted with permission.*





# CULTIVATION

## Styrofoam

by Sue Bottom

The woke may hate Styrofoam due to its persistence in the environment, but it can be repurposed by orchid growers in many different ways. Most commonly, Styrofoam packing peanuts are placed in the bottom third or quarter of the pot for drainage. It is sort of the opposite of semihydroponics, where the Styrofoam provides an air filled space in the bottom of the pot while the potting media holding water and nutrients is in the upper part of the pot. When you repot several years later, you find the happy orchid roots growing through and around these Styrofoam peanuts.

Styrofoam is the trade name used in the United States and Canada for expanded polystyrene foam, registered by Dow Chemical for its insulation and craft products. Styrofoam peanuts are widely available as packing materials. Some caution against using the colored peanuts although I have never suffered any ill effects from using them. The green ones indicate they have been made with recycled materials, the pink ones are treated to be anti-static, but sometimes the white and green ones are treated to be antistatic too. Do avoid the starch based biodegradable peanuts that dissolve in water. Styrofoam is often custom molded to be used as packing for electronics and other



*After only a short while, vigorous root systems can be established. Note the absence of any necrotic root tissue. Photo by Phil Spence.*

products, although this type of foam is sometimes too thick and rigid to be easily used when repotting. Better to find the sheets of insulation that can easily be broken up into chunks appropriate for the pot size you are using.

When using Styrofoam packing materials as drainage in the bottom of the pot, don't just put a big slab in the bottom of the pot. You want to break up the pieces into angular chunks to maximize the air space between them. The bottom middle of the pot is the area of the pot that retains moisture for the longest period of time, and if you fill the entire pot with potting media, this is where the root rot will begin, particularly if you use organic components like bark in your potting mix. The Styrofoam does facilitate water draining from the pot, but more importantly, it provides a reservoir of air at the bottom of the pots that orchid roots can tap into.

Styrofoam can be used in potting mixes in addition to or in lieu of sponge rock, providing porosity and airiness to the potting mix without worry about it decomposing like bark. It does not hold moisture or absorb salts, so Styrofoam is a good counterbalance to sphagnum and peat based mixtures that tend to be water and salt retentive. The major disadvantages are that the light particles are easily windblown and spent mixes cannot be easily reused in the garden.



*Here very healthy roots are actively growing into the mixture of sphagnum moss and Styrofoam prepared as described. Photo by Phil Spence.*

**Continued on page 12**





# CULTIVATION

Continued from page 11

Phil Spence wrote a letter to the AOS Orchids magazine editor in June of 2016 about his experience with Styrofoam. Of particular interest is how he uses it with small seedlings:

*At first, I used to just rub pieces of a sheet of polystyrene over a 0.5-inch (1.25cm) sieve and use the particles that went through the sieve... I now use a byproduct of architectural mock-ups and formations that is kibbled into small beads and sold as packing. These small pieces are about 0.19–0.25 inch (5–6 mm) in size and have a rough surface from where the little beads were torn apart.*

*I sieve out the pieces larger than 0.25 inch (6 mm) and use them with New Zealand pine bark and a small amount of charcoal for my larger plants. The smaller polystyrene pieces are best for deflasking and my seedling losses are minimal.*

*I mix it dry at the following ratio: sieve dry, compressed (not super-compressed) sphagnum moss (use a mask to prevent breathing the dust) through a 0.5-inch (12-mm) sieve and place this sieved sphagnum in a storage container. Then mix nine parts of the small polystyrene to one part of sphagnum moss...*

*When I pot deflasked seedlings, I dip the seedlings in an antifungal mix with added iron chelates to help with the loss of chlorophyll, and then I allow the seedlings to dry on newsprint. Once dry, I pot them in flats with the above*



*A compost of vigorous Cymbidium seedlings growing in a mixture of sphagnum moss, white Styrofoam particles and charcoal impregnated Styrofoam. Photo by Phil Spence.*

*dry mix. Then I lightly mist spray with a rooting hormone. I place three labels in the seedling flat so as I can take one out to use as a copy for writing more labels when repotting. This flat is placed on a heating mat or a bed of jumbo-sized sponge rock. Roots do not venture into the sponge rock as they prefer the above mix. I mist the seedlings for 60 seconds twice a day, first misting around daybreak and then about an hour before dark. Feed the seedlings in the normal way.*

Styrofoam is a recyclable material. If you flip over the Styrofoam from egg cartons, meat trays, etc., you will see the recycling symbol with the letter 6. You cannot add it to your curbside recycling, but Publix and presumably other grocery stores will accept the foam products in their recycle bins. Styrofoam peanuts can generally be brought to UPS or a pack and ship location where they will be reused as packing materials. Electronics and appliance packing Styrofoam is more difficult to recycle with few [drop off locations](#), the closest to us being [DART Container Corporation](#) in Plant City. Friends bring me their Styrofoam, and I happily use it when repotting orchids.

Citations

Spence, Phil. 2016. Letter to the Editor, *Orchids*. 88:6, pp. 410-411.



*Here a mature Latouria Dendrobium is happily growing in a medium containing Styrofoam chunks. Photo by Phil Spence.*





# SHOW TABLE



**Grower Steve Hawkins**  
*Stenosarcos Vanguard*



**Grower Bob & Yvonne Schimmel**  
*C. intermedia*



**Grower Leslie Brickell**  
*Den. farmeri*



**Grower Penny Halyburton & Michael Rourke**  
*Den. amethystoglossum*



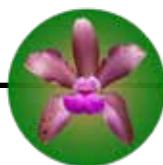
**Grower Harry & Celia McElroy**  
*Cym. Geno's Gem 'Emerald Fire' HCC/AOS*



**Grower Sue Bottom**  
*Clowesia Grace Dunn 'Chadds Ford' AM/AOS*



**Grower Linda Stewart**  
*Ascofinetia A. F. Buckman*



# SHOW TABLE



**Grower Tom & Dottie Sullivan**  
***Onc. maculatum 'Paulo' AM/AOS***



**Grower Harry & Celia McElroy**  
***Cym. Mimi 'Lucifer'***



**Grower Joshua Jones**  
***Den. Nestor***



**Grower Sue Bottom**  
***Blc. Memoria Grant Eichler 'Lenette' HCC/AOS***



**Grower Karen Ford**  
***Lc. Caribbean 'Orange Bowl' HCC/AOS***



**Grower Penny Halyburton & Michael Rourke**  
***Lysudamuloa Red Jewel***

Link to all Pictures. <https://flic.kr/s/aHsmLLZ4qp>

