



CLUB NEWS



Ben Oliveros

July 5 Meeting

by Janis Croft

Welcome and Thanks.

President Tom Sullivan opened the meeting at 6:50 pm with 53 attendees. He thanked Kym and Dottie for the cookies and coffee while reminding all to remember to Drop a Dollar in the jar to cover supplies.

Club Business. Membership VP Linda Stewart introduced our new members Jeff Milkens and Steven

Parker, along with our guests. She then asked the July birthday people to raise their hands for their 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.

Virtual Show Table - We will continue conducting our Courtney Hackney led Virtual Show Table via Zoom. The next one will be July 13 at 7 pm. Watch for an email invitation. Each month's Virtual Show Table is recorded and posted on our website. We also encourage members to bring plants to the show table for all to view in person.

Orchid Shows in Florida this Month – no shows, we're on summer break.

Repotting Clinics – Join us August 6 at the Southeast Branch Library, 6670 US-1 N, St Aug 32086. Learn how to repot your orchids, or just come to talk and observe. The clinics are held on the first Saturday of the month until next November and run from 10:00 am - 1:00 pm.

Supplies - If you need supplies, email info@staugorchidsociety.org. We have Potting Mixes, New Zealand Sphagnum Moss, Butterfly Clips, Plant Tags, and Fertilizer Baskets.

Library – Librarian Howard Cushnir brought in two books of interest—Understanding Orchids by William Cullina and Dendrobium and Its Relatives by Bill Lavarack, et al. He encouraged all to use the library collection listed on our SAOS website. If you would like a book or magazine, send a request to



info@staugorchidsociety.org and he will bring the item(s) to the next meeting.

SAOS Program. We planned to broadcast our program via Zoom to our online members so the program preceded the Show Table. Courtney introduced our guest speaker, Ben Oliveros, owner of Orchid Eros, his nursery in Mountainview, Hawaii on the “big island.” He grows and hybridizes Cattleyas in the “perfect place to grow orchids” where the high is 85 and the lowest he has ever experienced was 42. He also gets around 250” of rain each year.

Ben's presentation was entitled “Winning AOS Award—Tips and Techniques for Growing and Presenting Awardable Plants.” He is an AOS Judge and the AOS Hawaiian



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Upcoming Orchid Events

July

- 9 Florida North-Central AOS Judging, 1 pm
Clermont Judging Ctr, 849 West Ave.
- 12 JOS Meeting, Orchids Are Hard to Grow
Steve Arthur, Steve Arthur Orchids
- 13 SAOS Virtual Show Table, 7:00 pm
Courtney Zooms into Cyberspace
An Invitation Will be Sent by Email

August

- 2 SAOS Meeting, 6:30 pm
Making Cattleya Hybrids
Courtney Hackney
- 5-6 Phalaenopsis Symposium
Hilton Garden Inn, Apopka
- 6 SAOS Repotting Clinic, 10 am til 1 pm
Southeast Branch Library
6670 US-1 N, 32086
- 9 JOS Meeting, Dendrobiums
Josh Jones, Orchid Den
- 10 SAOS Virtual Show Table, 7:00 pm
Courtney Zooms into Cyberspace
An Invitation Will be Sent by Email
- 13 Florida North-Central AOS Judging, 1 pm
Clermont Judging Ctr, 849 West Ave.

September

- 3 SAOS Repotting Clinic, 10 am til 1 pm
Southeast Branch Library
6670 US-1 N, 32086
- 6 SAOS Meeting, 6:30 pm
Phalaenopsis Intergenerics
Alan Koch, Gold Country Orchids
- 10-11? Fall JOS Orchid Show
Mandarin Garden Club
- 10 Florida North-Central AOS Judging, 1 pm
Clermont Judging Ctr, 849 West Ave.
- 13 JOS Meeting, Topic TBA
Alan Koch, Gold Country Orchids
- 14 SAOS Virtual Show Table, 7:00 pm
Courtney Zooms into Cyberspace
An Invitation Will be Sent by Email

- 17-18 Ridge Orchid Society Show
IFAS Stuart Center, Bartow
- 28-29 Tampa Orchid Club Show
USF Botanical Gardens

October

- 1 SAOS Repotting Clinic, 10 am til 1 pm
Southeast Branch Library
6670 US-1 N, 32086
- 4 SAOS Meeting, Catasetums, 6:30 pm
Fred Clarke, Sunset Valley Orchids
- 7-9 Redland International Orchid Festival
Fruit and Spike Park, Homestead
- 8 Florida North-Central AOS Judging, 1 pm
Clermont Judging Ctr, 849 West Ave.

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State Chair. His first tip on the slide entitled “The Winning Formula” was to become a judge. This allows you to know the competition (both growers and plants) and allows you to acquire superior plants. This happens when you get VIP access before orchid shows open and can shop at your leisure. Other points were to grow one’s plant to its fullest potential; in other words don’t rush in to judging with the first flowering. Practice makes perfect which is true for growing your plants, let them grow and bloom for a few years. Ben showed us several slides comparing early blooms to blooms from subsequent bloomings. It was an amazing difference. Also, groom your plants as needed this includes stake in advance, space buds, clean and remove old sheaths. Also, judges consider how the plant will appear in a photograph because that picture justifies why they gave an award, so be sure your plant is photogenic.

Ben explained that the benefits of being a judge are you get on the fast track to learning about orchids from lots of knowledgeable peers like the other judges who were in our audience. It also helps one understand the process of judging and what constitutes an AOS awardable plant. He encouraged all to use either Orchid Wiz (which will soon cease to be updated) and Orchid Pro. Then you can compare your plant to one that has already received awards so you know if your plant is ready to be judged.

Next he moved on to how to develop your collection with awardable plants. He scouts for exceptional, awarded plants and plants with awarded parents. He uses these in his hybridization. Also, he states that not all seedlings are created equal from one grex. He looks at the foliage and roots which gives him clues to flower outcome. He selects from his flasks and keeps culling until the plant is grown and producing flowers. He doesn’t make his final selection on the first flowering either. It can take years of growing from first bloom to the plant’s full potential.

He ended with cultural tips and recommended reading Bill Rogerson’s article which tells you when to repot Cattleyas. A tabulation of cattleya rooting and blooming timing is available on our website on the Culture by Genus page.

Ben reports when he sees new roots. He often uses a pot mounting method where he fills the pot at least halfway with Styrofoam peanuts, then a thin layer of media around the roots and secures plant at the pot top. He is very careful with the root system because so many species are intolerant of repotting. He often waits until there is at least one growth out of the pot before repotting. He reminded all to observe winter rest periods particularly with the bifoliate. He summed up his talk by showing slides of many beautiful FCC/AOS award winning plants, many of which are named after his family members.



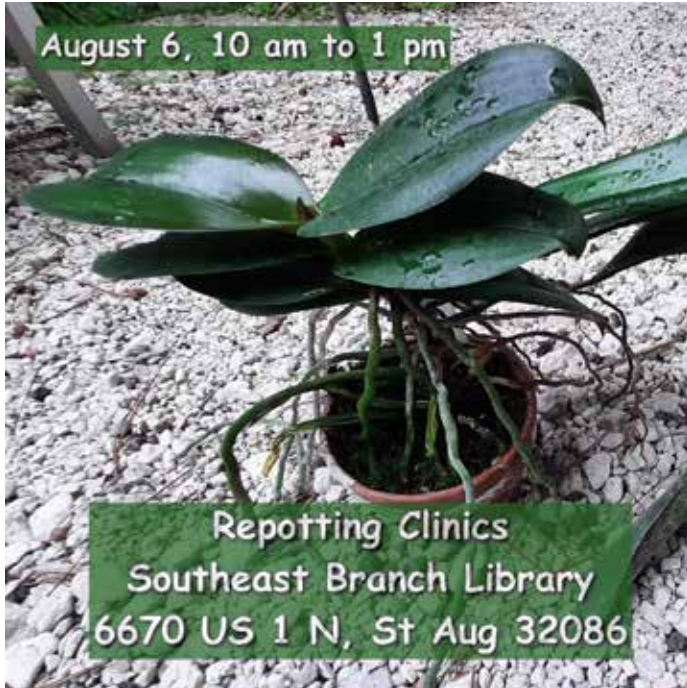
Show Table Review. Courtney discussed the plants on the show table, which were few in number. Remember to start bringing in plants again! Sue had a beautiful summer blooming phal with 12 thick leaves and lots of flowers. We were reminded not to cut off the inflorescences because flowers continue to grow from them. There was one winter phal in bloom, Sogo Flash, and Courtney was asked how do they bloom in the summer. He commented that they are stimulated to produce blooms when they are wheeled into coolers in nurseries for two weeks to trigger flowering. Next there was a large Enc. Cindy that outgrew its first cork mount so Tom Sullivan mounted that onto a much larger cork.

Courtney then auctioned off a Psychopsis Mendenhall donated by long time subscriber Rebecca Storey. After some back and forth, the final bid was for \$100. Thank you Rebecca!

Meeting Conclusion. The evening concluded with the Raffle table. Thanks to the helpful hands that stayed to help clean and store the tables, chairs and room.



CLUB NEWS



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American Orchid Society Corner

Webinars

July 17, 2:30 pm, AOS Members Only
Conserving Orchids of Rwanda – Michael Tibbs
July 19, 8:30 pm, Everyone Invited
Greenhouse Chat - Ron McHatton

Orchids Magazine this Month

Knudson's Orchid Breakthrough - Joseph Arditti
Ornate Neof. falcata Pots – Carol Helen Beule
Summer Orchid Rots – Sue Bottom

Photos of Latest AOS Awards

August 2 Monthly Meeting

My Experiences Making Hybrids

Courtney Hackney, Hackneau Art and Orchids

Courtney will talk about the concepts hybridizers employ when they make hybrids, using some of his own hybrids as examples. Each species imparts certain traits such as color, form or size to its progeny and hybridizers strive to combine these traits to improve on Mother Nature.

Dr. Hackney is Emeritus Professor of Biology and the former Director of Coastal Biology at the University of North Florida in Jacksonville. Courtney began growing orchids in the Florida Keys in 1962, while working for a small orchid nursery and has continued his interest in both orchid hybridizing and orchid culture since then. He grows many different genera, but his favorite is the Cattleya Alliance. In 2004, he published "American Cattleyas", the culmination of a decade of study and interviews, which summarizes in old photographs and print how all of the modern cattleyas came to be. The book also describes what we know about cattleyas and cattleya hybrids, how to grow them, and what to expect from modern hybrids

We will have plants available on the raffle and sales table. Friends and guests are always welcome.

When: Tuesday August 2, 6:30 til 9 pm

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



INSPIRATION



Purpurata Fireworks

© Terry Botto



CULTIVATION



Orchid Questions & Answers

by Sue Bottom,
sbottom15@gmail.com

Q1. We discovered this on Bc. Norman's Bay 'Low'. We had watered three days ago and had not seen this. We are going to remove affected areas, treat cuts with hydrogen peroxide and then with Daconil. Since

this has moved so rapidly, I feel I have to do something.



A1. I don't think that is fungal, I think it is bacterial, particularly with how fast it moved. My guess is on the front lead that is really rotted, water pooled in the cataphyll and caused the rot. Perhaps on the other lead, water just sat on the horizontal section of the leaf and caused the localized rot. For the first one, you'll have to cut away all the rotten tissue and treat with a freshly opened bottle of hydrogen peroxide. For the second, you can just pour peroxide on it but you don't have to cut away the tissue, as long as the discolored area doesn't expand and water isn't pooling, you should be fine. I watch that sheaths on new growths to make sure water can't accumulate. You can gently pull down the cataphyll to eliminate the pocket that traps water. The plant looks nice and healthy and will recover easily from this setback.

Q2. I bought this Schomburgkia at Tamiami from an international vendor and it started having problems several days after I got home. The leaves appear to be turning white (always in the middle never on the edges), then yellow, and finally brown with sunken spots on both sides of the leaves. It is otherwise very healthy with twelve new growths and 17 flower spikes. I would hate to lose this plant!

A2. I think it is either heat damage from the trip home or cold damage from the trip in the jet to get here. The markings are very similar to sunburn, but the burn does not appear on the highest point of the leaf getting the most direct sun, so that would suggest not sunburn, although the plant orientation in the car on the way home might have changed the normal sun angle. More likely it is heat



damage during the 3 hour trip home, perhaps it was stuck in a part of the car that wasn't get much of the A/C. The foreign vendor suggests another possibility, and that is the damage occurred in transit at 35,000 ft where the air is pretty cold. At any rate, the good news is that there's really not much you can do now except for wait for it to outgrow the damage. The plant looks incredibly healthy; this is just a hiccup. You can remove the severely damaged leaves if you don't want to look at them.

Q3. My 10-foot tall Papilionanthe Miss Joaquim has bloomed every summer for me but bringing her into the garage this past winter and/or thrips seems to have caused large yellow breaks in a couple of the canes. I'm thinking I need to cut that out and root what's above the yellow that's green and appears viable. Is that a reasonable plan?



A3. I don't think that's thrips or cold damage, I think the older part of the plant just tires out and starts to die back, and the future of the plant is in the top pieces. I end up cutting up my terete vandae every year, discarding the bottom pieces and resituating them in the pot and tying them off to the basket. They don't seem to miss a beat. I think your plan is totally reasonable.





Summer Orchid Growing

by Dr. Courtney Hackney

Now is the time when many Orchids put on most of their growth. Those with pseudobulbs often have very discrete growth periods when they add new roots and leaves. Many vandaceous Orchids grow anytime there is an adequate amount of heat, light, and water, but

again this happens mostly during summer in the Carolinas. Providing your Orchids with everything they require will maximize the quality and quantity of the flowers you will see later. Fertilize now just about every time you water with a weak solution of a growth-type fertilizer. My favorite is Peters Cal Mag 15-5-15. The Nitrogen is mostly in a useable form and the extra Calcium and Magnesium make hard growths. The ideal strength is 100 ppm Nitrogen. If you use pure water at 0 ppm and the addition of fertilizer raises the soluble solids to around 220 ppm then you have reached your maximum.

It is always better to add less than more when it comes to fertilizers. Too much fertilizer makes soft growth that is susceptible to rots and which is easy to damage. Over-fertilized Orchids do not produce good flowers even though the plant looks great. Well-grown Cattleyas have leaves that are slightly yellow. Phals and Vandas should have light green leaves that are relatively hard and thick. If you are not sure how much fertilizer to add, be cautious and use a quarter of what you think you need. Most fertilizers that recommend ½ to 1 teaspoon per gallon are best at 1/8 to 1/4 teaspoon per gallon.

There are many tricks to adding fertilizer, some of which are useful for the hobbyist and some of which are not. One obvious one is to fertilize after the plant is wet. Dry Orchid roots shed water and any fertilizer it contains. Wet roots have already absorbed water and will not be damaged by fertilizer even if you add too much. How do you get the proportions just right when you fertilize? If you have a few plants a bucket of water or watering can is perfect for mixing fertilizer. Immerse the whole plant in the fertilizer mix. Plants will absorb fertilizer through leaves as well as through roots. When you remove plants be sure that you get all water from the crown of Phals and other soft-tissue Orchids. Soft tissues of Cattleyas and even Vandas can develop rots if fertilized water is left standing anywhere in the plant.

Most hobbyists are surprised at how infrequently many commercial growers fertilize. To fertilize in the ideal manner is a time consuming task so most commercial growers use stronger concentrations once a month or less. Others use Osmocote or some other slow release fertilizer. A new product from Japan, Nutricote, supposedly releases nutrients slowly enough that roots are not damaged. There are several plants in my greenhouse that are now getting this treatment. By next year it will be obvious if this is a product worth recommending. Carter & Holmes sells small amounts of this if you want to try some. Use it on plants that are not your favorites first. Many of my experimental plants never recover from the new, improved whatever.

Several companies make liquid fertilizers that add methanol to the mix, which causes the fertilizer to pass into tissues more quickly. There are many reports of improved growth with these fertilizers. In my experiments, they were no better than Peters Excel Cal Mag and actually seemed to damage seedlings that got too warm before their surfaces dried. Liquid fertilizers also tend to be more concentrated and so a mistake in dilution can have serious consequences. Remember, you are always better adding too little than too much.

Keep your eyes open for insects, snails, and slugs as they also grow quickly in summer's heat. They will slip into plants placed outside and get into the greenhouse without being seen. Keep a close eye on your plants and look for signs of damage. Slime trails on the sides of pots in the morning will tell you they are there. I was surprised at the number of slugs found among the crotch in the bottoms of pots when I repotted this year. Plants that have not been repotted for a few years are the best place to find both slugs and other pests. Systemic pesticides work well when plants are growing. They are much less effective during times of the year when plants are not growing. In an ideal world, you would not use any pesticides, but be ready to recognize these pests early so you have to use them only occasionally.

At the beginning of this month's column, I noted that most Orchids are now in a growth mode. If you have any that are not, it may be time to take action before the growing season is over. Paphs are the ideal candidate to check because they suffer when they lose roots. Every Paph I checked this spring that was not growing well had lost most of their roots. I also repotted several that were doing well and they all had excellent root systems. Poorly growing Paphs and other Orchids repotted now will have a much better chance of surviving if repotted during the growing season rather than waiting until next spring.

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 July 2001.



CULTIVATION

Evolution of Orchids

by Dr. Behar Moises, courtesy of the American Orchid Society

Life started in a turbulent sea about 4,000 million years ago. The first recognizable forms of life were unicellular organisms, which multiply initially by simple division and evolved, therefore, slowly. By about 400 million years ago, however, the large algae had arrived. Since they already have chlorophyll and multiply sexually, gene interchange and thus a more rapid evolution was possible.

The algae represent the more advanced forms of vegetable life that were able to develop in the sea. Some of them advanced onto the land and became mosses and ferns. These first terrestrial plants could not, however, reproduce in a dry environment. The male gametes could reach the female ones only by swimming, so these plants had to be wet at least occasionally to reproduce.

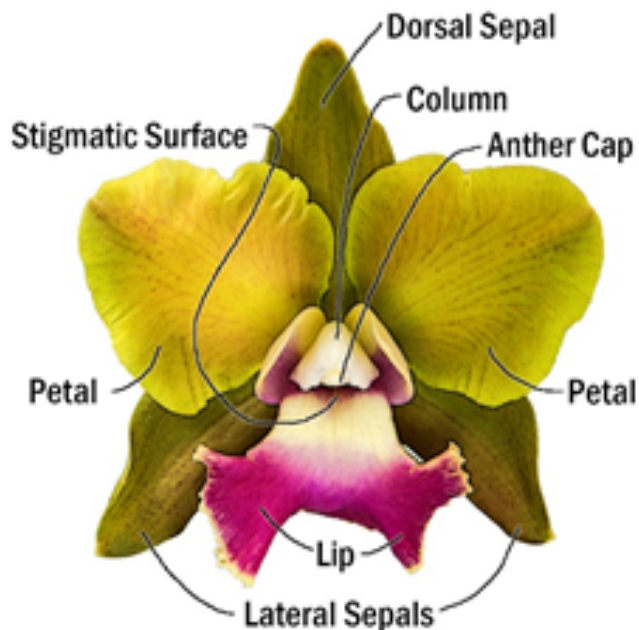


Stamens and pistils in an amaryllis flower are separate, unlike the column in orchids, where they are fused into a single organ.

The next big step in plant evolution was the appearance of seeds in conifers. Thanks to their encapsulated, drought-resistant male gametes - the pollen and their equally resistant embryos - the seed-conifers were among the first plants able to invade the continents and form large forests. Their pollen was dispersed by the wind. They must produce, therefore, copious amounts of pollen to ensure that some will reach the female cones and fecundate the ovules.

The flowering plants appeared 140 million years ago. Their stamens ensured the transport of the pollen, a sticky powder to be carried mainly by insects from one flower to another.

Flowering plants were a great success in evolution. They dominated the land, evolving in partnership with the insects. With their great diversity and more than 250,000 different species, today they constitute more than 80



The column is a tubular, waxy structure at the center of the flower that houses both the male (anther) and female (stigma) parts of the flower. The pollinia are contained in the anther cap.

percent of all green plant species. The transport of pollen is much more efficient than in conifers, but most of the pollen produced by flowers is still wasted or consumed by insects as food for their larvae. Only a small proportion is effectively used for the production of seeds.

Another major evolutionary step is seen in the orchid family. The stamens and pistils are combined in one organ, the column. Orchids are designed for the utilization of all or most of the pollen for seed production, with the pollen packed as pollinia. Insects are forced to take all of it and deposit the whole package - or a large part of it - in the stigma of another flower. Once pollination has been achieved, the pollen tubes start to grow into the column to reach the ovary. At the same time the ovules are formed



Euglossine bees are intoxicated by the fragrance of Stanhopea flowers.

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in response to the amount of pollen deposited. When the capsule is mature, it splits and releases thousands or even millions of tiny seeds to be dispersed by the wind. This major difference between orchids and other flowers is the result of utilizing masses of pollen.

The Role of Pollination. To ensure that insects perform this more difficult job, orchids have to be much more convincing than most other flowers. Pollinators are attracted first by scent - either strong fragrances perceived by insects from far away (stanhopeas) or milder ones reminiscent of coconut (*Maxillaria tenuifolia*), honey (*Encyclia baculus*) or many others. Some orchids, such as *Pleurothallis tribuloide*, have odors that are unpleasant to humans but irresistible to their pollinators, in this case, carrion flies. There are many more orchids with scents than those evident to humans. The capacity of bees and other



Bulb. *Phalaenopsis wmelis* like rotting meat to attract its carrion fly pollinators

insects to perceive and discriminate among odors is much greater.

Once pollinators are within visual contact, they are attracted by color and form. Yellow and purple are common in orchids because they are more easily distinguished against a green background by bees and other common pollinators. Remember, the color vision of bees is quite different from that of humans. Bees do not see red, but they do see ultraviolet, which is invisible to man. There are orchids in all the colors of the rainbow, except black. Red orchids are usually pollinated by butterflies or by birds. Orchids pollinated by nocturnal insects, like moths, are typically white or pale green.

Nectar is also frequently used by orchids to attract their pollinators, but in general very sparingly, more as a bait than as a reward. Usually only a small amount of nectar is available and at the bottom of the spur. To reach it, pollinators must push hard, and in doing so, the pollinia are attached to their heads. The case of *Angraecum sesquipedale*, which was first described by Charles Darwin, exemplifies this situation. Some tiny inconspicuous orchid flowers, like those of *Campylocentrum*, seem to have nectar as the main attraction and reward for their pollinators.

Stingy Rewards. Orchids are in general less generous than other flowers in compensating their pollinators. In many cases, they deceive insects with a great variety of tricks. The petals of some orchids look like pollen (pseudo-pollen). Many draculas have lips that look and smell like fungi; they attract small flies as pollinators. The white appendices of *Pleurothallis schiedei* (syn. *ornata*) are in constant movement and attract pollinating flies. The antenna like formations on the petals of *Myoxanthus reymondii* are osmophores-glands that secrete a scented oil that attracts the pollinators. Male euglossine bees collect the perfume secreted in the slippery underside of the labellum of gongoras. In trying to store it in a special container in their hind legs, they frequently drop into the chute below, taking the pollinia or depositing them in the stigma of another flower with the same operation. By similar attraction, bees visiting species of *Coryanthes* fall into the liquid-filled modified labellum. Escaping by the only exit, a narrow opening, they take or deposit the pollinia. *Pleurothallis amparoana* also seems to be a trap flower. Insects entering its labellum, which is modified into a little bucket, have only one exit without prickles, going out through it they pollinate the orchid.

The Role Lips Play. There are no insectivorous orchids, but some genera have “sensitive” articulated lips that act as real traps. When an insect lands on the lip of a *Porroglossum*, the lip closes. Again, the insect can go out only through a small window, forcing it to carry the pollinia to be deposited in another flower by the same operation. *Mormodes* have a more direct approach. As a flower matures, the elastic stipe of the pollinia is put under tension. When the flower opens, the system is ready. The slightest touch on a trigger placed over the labellum releases the tension, projecting the pollinia onto the intruder, which is usually the pollinating insect.

These are only a few examples of the incredible mechanisms by which orchids attract their pollinators and force them to transfer pollen, frequently without any reward. Orchids are not the only flowers that employ deception to lure pollinators. They are, however, masters in this art. As Darwin wrote: “In my examination of orchids, hardly any

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fact has so much struck me as the endless diversity of structure — the prodigality of resources — for gaining the very same end, namely, the fertilization of one flower by the pollen of another.” And again: “I am sure that many other plants offer, in the means of fertilization, analogous adaptations of high perfection; but it seems that they are really more numerous with orchids than with most other plants.” He concludes, “special and admirable contrivances were necessary for safely placing the pollen-masses on the stigma; and thus we can partially understand why orchids have been more highly endowed in this respect than most other plants.”

Orchids have even used one of the strongest forces of attraction-sex. Case in point: Mediterranean *Ophrys*, which has been carefully studied. Its flowers simulate the female of its pollinator, not only in appearance and texture but also with an aphrodisiac perfume, inducing the male to pseudocopulation. The same mechanism is apparently used by *Haraella odorata* (syn. *retrocalla*). It is probable that some species of *telipogon* and *trichoceros* may simulate the male of a territorial fly; the real fly will then try to repel the intruder. The contacts in this case would be brief and rude. This could explain why the pollinium is provided with a hook, instead of the usual sticky viscidia, to ensure its attachment to a leg or any part of the angry attacker.

It is indeed incredible to realize all the efforts that orchids go through to ensure pollination with the whole pollinia, and, as a rule, between flowers of different plants. All this, it seems, is in order to produce copious quantities of seeds, a large proportion of which will be lost.



Male catasetum flowers have a specialized trigger that forcefully ejects the pollinia from the anther cap to adhere to a visiting bee's body.



Seed pods contain thousands and thousands of tiny seeds.

Seeds Continue the Saga. Since only a small proportion of the seeds produced by orchids end as adult new plants, it can be asked. “Is there a difference between wasting most of the pollen, as is the case in other flowers, and wasting most of the seed, as in the case with orchids?” It seems there is. With a large number of seeds, there is a greater number of combinations of genes and, therefore, a greater diversity, a greater potential for adaptation and for evolution. This seems to be the explanation for the success of orchids. They were among the last of the flowering plants to develop, and today they constitute the largest family, with species wherever there are other green plants. The diversity in the family of orchids seems to indicate that the whole family is still in rapid evolution, with a great capability of adaptation. The fact that they utilize most of the pollen, and produce a very large amount of seed, might be the mechanism underlying this situation.

The orchid family is indeed an extraordinary one. But major habitats - tropical forests-are being rapidly destroyed. The beautiful and rich rainforests are located mainly in poor countries, which are in a struggle for survival. Rarely do these countries have the interest or financial resources to protect their forests. They have many other much more urgent problems to solve. Because of their enormous biodiversity, the rainforests should be considered a patrimony of humanity, and we all should be interested and cooperating in their conservation. In regard to orchids, we should know that if these forests are destroyed, we will not be losing only a number of species. We will be in fact stopping the process of evolution, preventing the development of still unsuspected marvels.

This article appeared in the American Orchid Society Orchids magazine in December 1995 (Vol 64:12, pp.1336-1342).



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Evolution of an Orchid Grower

by Sue Bottom

I planted my first garden at the age of 10 in the woods next door to our house. My Dad said he'd plow up a section of the yard for my vegetable garden if I could justify the cost, so I sold tomatoes 3 for a quarter that summer and my Dad thought he was raising a good capitalist. Mom was always playing in the dirt and as time went by we developed a Saturday morning routine where we visited as many nurseries as possible, sometimes followed by an afternoon wine tasting, though that's a different story. Terry and I have spent many Saturday mornings continuing the tradition.

One fateful day in Houston Terry said he was going to build the greenhouse I had wanted for 20 years, at which point, I thought OK, guess I better learn to grow orchids. The latest edition of Rebecca Northen's Home Orchid Growing had just been released and I still think that is the best orchid book for the hobbyist although William Cullina's Understanding Orchids is another great source of information.



Terry built my first greenhouse in Houston from a redwood kit.

There are many steps in the evolution of an orchid grower. The first seems to be that you'll go anywhere and spend anything to have more orchids. You buy half dead plants from the marked off table, you know what day the bag babies from Better-Gro arrive at the big box stores, you pick out orchids from other people's garbage, you pot up any back bulbs you can find, and road trips always involve stops at orchid nurseries. All you know is you need more...

Somewhere along the line you start hunting for specific types of orchids. My first hunt was for nodosa hybrids. That was the year we got a Mazda MX6 and promptly drove from Houston to Austin to San Antonio buying every nodosa hybrid we could find along the way, all in the name of breaking in the car.



The first greenhouse inhabitants

Invasion of the phalaenopsis!

You find that you are attracted to certain types of orchids. I've always been drawn to primary hybrids, even before I knew what a primary hybrid was, perhaps it was the hybrid vigor. Except for some of the incredibly lovely species like *Laelia* (now *Cattleya*, ugh!) *purpurata* I usually prefer the primary hybrid to either of the parent species.

Of course, you fill up your allotted space very quickly so you have to keep expanding your growing area. You find you need more space, and if your significant other is as handy as Terry, new growing areas are created for your orchids to inhabit even if you experience a little overcrowding problem before the new home is ready.

Then one day you become a bit more selective. You start giving away backbulbs rather than potting them up and having them take up valuable bench space. You decide you don't want to run an infirmary for sick orchids so you discard those genetic weaklings or disease prone plants. You become more selective in your purchases. And, you turn a critical eye to the plants you are growing, asking



We built the greenhouse before we built our house.

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CULTIVATION

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yourself if there are enough blooms to justify the bench space or if the bloom has a pleasing enough color or shape or would you prefer a different cultivar. Once you learn how to evict plants from your growing area, you have learned the fine art of culling your collection, and have earned an advanced degree in orchid growing.

I'm not sure quite how I got so obsessed with orchids, but the obsession doesn't have any signs of abating. In the beginning it was phalaenopsis. It was an exciting time for phalaenopsis, the hybridizing for yellows was in its heyday and the harlequin phals had just been introduced. How can you not love phals with their long lived graceful



Lots of bench space, for a while...



A potting shed and pergola added. Now, what are we going to build in that old vegetable garden?



How about a big shade structure to summer orchids outdoors, with lots of air movement?

blooms? Then I heard a presentation about catasetums, so naturally I started growing them. What is easier than a plant that requires no winter care during its dormancy but grows like mad in the summer? Next, there was the vanda phase, so many colors, sizes and shapes! After that it was the ephemeral stanhopeas. That addiction started with a Stanhopea grandiflora that bloomed 8 times in one year, can you spell hooked? It took a bit of observing how others succeeded with theirs and some trial and error until I could reliably rebloom them and by then I had almost two dozen different varieties. After that came the African angraecoids in their white and green glory, dendrochilums with their chains of miniature flowers, bulbophyllums with their wild shapes and articulated lips, habenarias with their exotic flowers and variegated foliage, and... well, you get the idea.



The hoop houses started showing their age.



Time for a new greenhouse!

Cattleyas will always be my true love, though when I see an unusual this or that I start a flirtation with other genera. Who knows what tomorrow's obsession will be, although several paraphalaenopsis have followed me home recently. At the end of the day, you have to ask yourself what you're trying to achieve. For me, it's being the best orchid grower I can possibly be, having fun talking about orchids and finding new friends along the way.



SHOW TABLE



Morel Hunter Steve Dorsey
Corrallophiza ssp



Grower Suz Susko
Bulb. purpurascens



Grower Sue Bottom
Menziesara (Pps. laycockii x Van. Pine Rivers)



Grower Mary Ann Bell
Tsubotaara Melinda Marie



Grower Suz Susko
Neof. falcata var. Manjushage



Grower Leslie Brickell
Bulb. bicolor



Grower Janis Croft
Ascda. (Thai Spots x Tubtim Velvet)



SHOW TABLE



Grower Steve Dorsey
Comparietta speciosa



Grower Allen Black
L. purpurata 'Brazilian Thunder' AM/AOS



Grower Courtney Hackney
C. leopoldii 4N



Grower Walter Muller
L. Pacavia



Grower Leslie Brickell
L. lobata (var. alba x 'Jeni')



Grower Sue Bottom
Epi. oerstedii

Link to all Submissions: <https://flic.kr/s/aHBqjzX8P6>

