St. Augustine Orchid Society NEWSLETTER
September 2025
Volume 20 Issue #9

Club News

September 2 Meeting

by Janis Croft

Welcome and Thanks. Tom Sullivan opened the meeting at 6:55 pm with 61 attendees. He thanked Charlie, Dottie, Laura, Rachel, Julie and Paul for the treats and reminded all to remember to "Drop a Dollar" if you enjoyed them. The dollar helps us pay for the coffee and paper good supplies. Tom reminded all to bring to bring their plants to the next repotting clinic of the year at SE Branch Library on September 6th. Tom then reminded all of the upcoming Jacksonville Fall Orchid Show running September 13 and 14 at the Mandarin Garden Club. Also, on September 25th, the Flagler County Orchid Society auction will be held at the Trinity Presbyterian Church, 156 Florida Park Drive, Palm Coast.

Club Business. Linda Stewart welcomed our visitors and new member Wayne McCormick. 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. Linda announced that since we didn't have a raffle table last month, all August and September birthday people will be included in this month's free raffle ticket

Volunteers. Sue showed two handouts left on everyone's table. One was an organizational chart showing the administrative structure of our club. The other was a responsibilities list with a space for people to add their names if they wanted to become more involved in helping out the club.

Supplies - Potting mix and fertilizer were available on the back table. Email info@staugorchidsociety.org if you need supplies. We also had new SAOS T shirts available.

Virtual Show Table - Courtney Hackney will conduct the Virtual Show Table starting at 7 pm on Wednesday, September 10. An email invitation will be sent with link and details.

Show Table Voting. Christine reminded all to vote for Members Choice during the break. Winners are announced at the end of the presentation.

Library – Howard brought in Moth Orchids: The Complete Guide to Phalaenopsis by Steve Frowine. If you would like a book from the Library list on the website, send Howard a request to info@staugorchidsociety.org and he will bring the item(s) to the next meeting.

Show Table. Courtney started with a semi alba cross of Schomburgkia thomsoniana var. albopurpurea and C. violacea stating that one might mistake it for a Cattleya but the horn shaped pseudobulbs give it away. Next was an easy to grow green Pcv. Key Lime Stars, which led Courtney to say everyone should have a nodosa of some type. Brassavola nodosa 'Breckinridge' had very long inflorescences and a flat heart shaped flower. There were two mounted, purplish Den. Hibiki plants that were very floriferous and small in size. Someone asked how to best get them to grow in a circular fashion around the mount. Courtney advised getting a swivel hook so as they twist in the wind the plant will grow around the mount towards the light.

Next he discussed the increasing number of Catasetum hybrids in the marketplace using the example of the Ctsm. Red Dragon which is a cross of Susan Fuchs and Dragon's Teeth. In the past, hybridizers didn't like the female flowers so they didn't try hybridizing. That's all changed now. He then held up a mount containing Trichoglottis brachiata, which likes lower light than most vandaceous orchids and had beautiful deep purple sepals with a bright pink/white lip. Courtney then held up one of his pants Jess Sai

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Club News

Upcoming Orchid Events

September

6 SAOS Repotting Clinic, 10 am til noon
Southeast Branch Library
6670 US-1 N, 32086
9 JOS Meeting, Pleurothallids
Luis Ortiz
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, 10 am
Clermont Judging Ctr, 849 West Ave.
13-14 Fall JOS Orchid Festival
Mandarin Garden Club, Jax 32223
13-14 Ridge Orchid Society Show
United Women's Club of Lakeland

October

4 SAOS Repotting Clinic, 10 am til noon
Southeast Branch Library
6670 US-1 N, 32086
4-5 Tampa Orchid Club Expo
Northdale Recreation Center
7 SAOS Meeting, Growing Cattleyas, 6:30
Courtney Hackney, Hackneau's Orchids
11 Florida North-Central AOS Judging, 10 am
Clermont Judging Ctr, 849 West Ave
14 JOS Meeting, Phrag kovachii & its Hybrids
James Arnold, JOS Member
15 SAOS Virtual Show Table, 7:00 pm
Courtney Zooms into Cyberspace
An Invitation Will be Sent by Email
17-19 Redland International Orchid Festival
Fruit and Spice Park, Homestead
25 Gainesville Orchid Society Show
Kanapaha Gardens
25-26 Delray Beach Orchid Society Show
Fieldhouse at Old School Square
31-2 Fall Orchid Festival
Krull Smith Orchids, Apopka

November

31-2 Fall Orchid Festival
Krull Smith Orchids, Apopka
4 SAOS Mtg, 80 Percentile Growing, 6:30
Fred Clarke, Sunset Valley Orchids
8 Florida North-Central AOS Judging, 10 am
Clermont Judging Ctr, 849 West Ave.
11 JOS Meeting, Topic TBA
Speaker TBA
15-16 Deerfield Beach Orchid Society Show
Safe Schools Institute

December

2 SAOS Christmas Auction, 6:30 pm
Memorial Lutheran Church

St. Augustine Orchid Society Organization

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Neau, which was an unusual alba form. There were two Miltonia plants, Hwuluduen Violet and Golden Fleece. These plants do grow well in warmer climates as compared to Miltoniopsis. Then Courtney held up a striking Cym. Chen's Ruby with numerous inflorescences showing off the yellowish orange flowers with beautiful spotted lips.

SAOS Program. Sue announced our guest speaker, Phillip Hamilton of Breden Orchids and also acknowledged his father, SAOS Member Claude Hamilton, in the audience. Phillip started his talk by saying he has been enthralled with Phalaenopsis since he was 8 years old and now due to the big box store proliferation of standard size Phalaenopsis, he focuses on the novelty varieties. First, he went through the history. The white Phal. amabilis was the first described and established type of Phalaenopsis (by Blume in 1825). The word comes from the Greek phaluna = moth and –opsis = resembling, hence the nickname "Moth Orchid". Phalaenopsis are in the Vanda tribe and are a genus of about 60 species. They are found in Southeast Asia, Philippines and northern Australia. They are epiphytic and in nature, growing upside down on trees.

Phillip said they endure the usual pests, Mealybugs, Thrips, Mites and Scale. He then listed what he used to combat these pests: Imidaclopid or Safari for Scale and Mealybugs; Orthene, Conserve or Botanigard for Thrips; and Abamectin and Tetrasan for mites. Systemic drenches work best and are needed every 7-10 days for eradication.

Phalaenopsis like medium light, moist media, and balanced fertilizer every other watering. The ideal temperature range is 75-85 in the day and 60-75 in the night, although they endure our higher summer temperatures. The standard phals need a temperature below 78 in order to form spikes for flowering. The novelty varieties tend to bloom in the summer where the standard varieties bloom in winter/spring. After the standard ones bloom and the flowers die off, he advises cutting the spikes down but don't do that on the novelty Phalaenopsis because they will continue to form flowers on the old spikes.

He likes to pot in Sphagnum moss because it cuts down on the need to water frequently but also suggested growers can use pine bark or peat moss depending on their watering habits. What is important is to provide a lot of air to the roots so don't pack down your media when you are repotting. He usually uses no larger than 6" pots but stated that the root mass should determine your pot size rather than the top growth. It is important to cut off the dead roots and keep the hard, whitish and green roots intact. To stimulate root growth, you can apply Superthrive after repotting and then water with a high phosphorus fertilizer for a couple of weeks, such as 5-40-17 (aka bloom booster.) He also drenches with a broad spectrum fungicide like Banrot to help prevent infection after disturbing the root mass.

He talked about some of the species, starting with the pink Phalaenopsis equestris, which is often used in novelty hybridizing due to its multifloral nature and smaller size. Some novelty Phalaenopsis have fragrances, Phal. violacea has a spice fragrance and Phal. bellina has a sweet fragrance. He showed a slide of Phal. tetraspis, his favorite, that produces flowers with red markings that show up randomly on various sections of the flowers on the same plant. Then he showed numerous slides of his beautiful hybrids many of which have won many awards. Phillip likes to breed for color and enjoys envisioning what might happen when his hybrid seedlings start to bloom. The successful ones are the joy of hybridizing. Phillip produced a remake of Jiaho Blueberry using highly awarded forms of Phal. equestris and Phal. Samera to produce a consistently blooming coerulea flower, which earned him one of several Awards of Quality from the AOS. Phillip ended his talk by taking questions and advised us to buy unbloomed seedlings so we can be the first person to see that plant bloom.

Meeting Conclusion. Christine announced that the Members Choice went to Harry McElroy for his Cym. Chen's Ruby and Eric Milstrey for his Trichoglottis brachiata. Thanks to the helpful hands that stayed to help clean and store the tables, chairs and room.

September Culture Notes

The welcome transition to fall is upon us. Once the temperature and humidity mediate, you'll notice many of your plants putting on a second growth spurt. Reward them by watering a little more frequently with dilute fertilizer. You can expect the emergence of buds on many orchids from the cattleyas, evergreen dendrobiums and vandas to cycnoches, catasetums and miltonias. Select the ideal spot for the plant and place pendulous bloomers atop an inverted pot. Support the inflorescence as it emerges and open the sheath to prevent the accumulation of moisture around the developing buds.

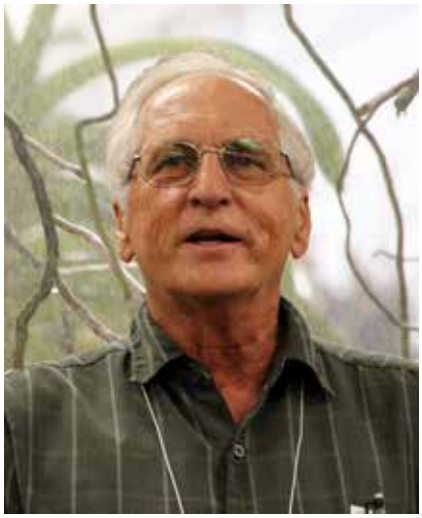
American Orchid Society Corner

Webinars
September 11, 8:30 pm, AOS Members Only
Indoor Pest Management – Ron McHatton
September 23, 5:30 pm, AOS Members Only
Growing Specimen Pants - Sandra Svoboda

Orchids Magazine this Month
Dyakia hendersoniana - Charles Wilson
Platantheras - Mary Ruden
Edema – Orchid Blisters – Sue Bottom

October 7 Meeting

Growing and Flowering Better Cattleyas
Courtney Hackney, Hackneau Art & Orchids



Courtney will talk about growing and flowering your cattleyas to perfection. Cattleyas are Courtney's favorite orchid, and he has been creating better hybrids for years. He'll talk about how to grow your cattleyas to get the best blooms.

Dr. Hackney is Emeritus Professor of Biology and the former Director of Coastal Biology at the University of North Florida. He wrote a Growing Tips column for 20 years that appeared in newsletters around the country. He has also published in the Orchid Digest and American Orchid Society. In 2004, he published "American Cattleyas", the culmination of a decade of study and interviews, which summarizes in old photographs and prints 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.

When: Tuesday, October 7, 6:30 til 9 pm
Where: Memorial Lutheran Church
3375 US 1 South, St. Aug 32086

Inspiration

Orchid Questions & Answers

by Sue Bottom,
sbottom15@hotmail.com

Q1. I've looked at multiple photos of this orchid on ine and I have a sneaky feeling I'm growing it upside down. Can you look at it and let me know what you think?

A1. Thrixspermum centipeda is in the vandaceous family, so it'll have a monopodial growth habit and it also tends to branch. It looks fine the way you're growing it, and if it starts branching, you might consider dropping it, tree fern and all, into a basket and let it go where it wants to go, while still being semicontained within the basket.

Q2. Though this Phal is in bloom, it's in a tiny rooting pot. I was soaking the huge root in order to get it into a larger pot with new sphag. It occurred to me some (all?) orchids don't like aerial roots buried in media, although these types of phals grow well in sphagnum. Your thoughts?

A2. A lot of people say not to bury aerial roots, because they have adapted to growing in open air and will suffocate if buried. But, if you can get the roots into the pot easily with or without a haircut, it will branch new rootlets from the main root that will adapt to growing in sphagnum moss. Don't mash all the roots in the new pot, but if the root mass fits well and you can wrap sphag around it, it should grow well for you.

Q3. This Catasetum tigrinum x fimbriatum from SVO blooms every year, but always with female flowers. We have had it since 2018. Can this be reversed?

A3. Female blooms mean you have a very healthy plant that is getting plenty of light. I've never had one that bloomed that way for 7 years straight though. I guess maybe move it to a little less light and see if you get rewarded with male flowers.

Temperature Considerations
by Dr. Courtney Hackney

Optimal time to repot is rapidly coming to an end as days get shorter. Repotted orchids need time to grow new roots into the medium so that they can acquire water and nutrients during winter and in early spring. Always remember that plants are “cold blooded”, which means only that their growth is entirely determined by temperature.

Each orchid can survive within some temperature range, but within that range is an optimal temperature range where it grows fastest because it can take up nutrients and water at a rate sufficient for it to use all of the light it is getting and move water to its leaves fast enough to keep its leaves cool while it absorbs sunlight. At higher temperatures an orchid may not be able to keep its leaves cool enough to prevent burning and at lower temperature it may not be able to obtain nutrients fast enough to turn light into new tissue.

The ideal temperature range for most orchids was determined by the natural environment of an orchid’s ancestors. This may be easy to determine for a species, but more difficult for hybrids. Hybrids, however, have been selected for best growth at typical greenhouse temperatures. Vandas whose ancestors are from the lowlands of the tropics generally stop growth at a much warmer temperature than phrags from the Andes where it is much cooler.

Most hobbyists pay attention to the temperature in their growing area. That, however, in not exactly what your orchids experience. Direct sunlight on a plant leaf warms the interior of the leaf far above the air temperature. If there is no air movement around the leaf or the orchids cannot obtain enough water to cool its leaves through transpiration then an orchid leaf can quickly burn even though the air temperature is below the maximum temperature recommended. Conversely, lots of air movement can allow an orchid to survive in an environment where air temperature is far above what is recommended.

The temperature within the orchid pot is another important facet for orchid growth. Typically, the temperature within an orchid pot is different than the air temperature; cooler during the day and warmer at night. The temperature within the pot determines the rate of root growth, nutrient uptake, decomposition of the medium, etc. In winter, a dark pot will absorb heat and roots remain well above the ambient air temperature at night. A soil temperature probe is ideal for understanding growth of orchids because it indicates what is happening in the pot. Hobbyists often note that root growth in vandas cease much earlier in the fall than other groups of orchids. To some degree, this occurs because we generally grow vandas in baskets where root temperature is at or near that of the air.

White plastic pots in a greenhouse remain much cooler than dark green pots even when there seems to be little direct light on the pot. Most surprising is the temperature within clear plastic pots. These act like little greenhouses and warm up quickly. A clear, plastic pot with medium exposed to direct sunlight can warm to well over 100 F in a matter of 15 minutes, while a white or even green pot remains below 90 F. This can be a problem in summer, but ideal in winter when air temperature is low and days short. Phalaenopsis mericlones grown side by side in clear and white pots will open their first flowers a week or so apart simply because of the difference in medium temperature produced by different types of pots.

This heat gain is most extreme when the medium is dry as the water in a wet medium absorbs large quantities of heat. Many successful hobbyists who live in environments that are not ideal for orchids take advantage of the different characteristics of pots and use it to mediate temperature extremes. Clay pots tend to be cooler than plastic in summer. Water evaporates from the exterior of the pot cooling the pot and its roots. Water is pulled continuously from the medium through the pot as long as the medium is wet. This works extremely well to cool orchids in hot climates during summer as long as there is lots of air movement and a supply of good water. The quality of water is critical since water is continuously evaporated from the surface of the pot and any dissolved salts are deposited on the pot surface.

If water quality is poor, i.e. lots of stuff in the water, a silver or grey sheen will develop on the pot surface that limits water movement through the pot. This salt buildup can become so severe that roots die when they come in contact with the pot. Fertilizer dissolved in R/O or rainwater can produce the same effect unless there is a sustained effort to flush pots. Pots can become so filled with a surface glaze of salt that water no longer moves from inside to outside a pot. In fact, salts can move back into the clay pot and make even the interior surface toxic to orchid roots. Hobbyists who use water high in dissolved solids are well advised to discard clay pots and not reuse them. Many arid areas in the U.S. have water with lots of dissolved solids. This combined with low humidity and high temperature leads to clay pots with lots of surface salts.

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 September 20131.

Phalaenopsis Mix Masters

by various hobbyists, courtesy of AOS

The potting media for phalaenopsis are as diverse as the people who grow these orchids. Here, hobbyists reveal their mixes and also offer insight into their growing areas, providing you with practical advice you can use in your own collection. Many of the ingredients are available at well-stocked nurseries and garden centers, but if you experience trouble finding any, consult with a member in your Affiliated Society or call a local orchid nursery. When using these mixes, remember that it is a good idea to pot a few plants in a new mix and grow them in it for a while. Make certain that it works for you before you transplant your entire collection into the potting mix.

- I use variations of the same mix for all the plants I grow in my greenhouse. It is a mix that works well in our hot, humid climate, and is forgiving about rehydrating when I have been away. Basically, for seedlings it is equal parts of perlite, charcoal and Pro-Mix or Metro-Mix. With the seedlings or small phalaenopsis. I use a medium-small-size charcoal; with mature cattleyas, dendrobiums and phalaenopsis I use a larger-size charcoal, larger perlite and less Pro-Mix. The phalaenopsis in general get an extra helping per pot of Pro-Mix, since they need to be moist all the time. Usually I tailor the proportion of the elements in the mix to the size of the container, the genus of the plant and whether it is a seedling or an adult. The beauty of this mix is that it eliminates snow mold, which is common and hard to control in this hot humid area if you pot in bark. The mix is long-lasting and works well for the 30 or 40 phalaenopsis I grow. Most of the plants need repotting about every two years, but root rot is not a problem if you have to let them go a little longer. Marianne Matthews, Houston, Texas.

- I have grown phalaenopsis for 15 years. For the last six-plus years, I have been a Pro-Mix grower, first using the BX mix and then two years ago moving to the HP mix with 40 percent #2 perlite added. I place a small amount of styrofoam peanuts at the bottom of the containers. I have been using this mix for plants of all sizes and I do not use any pots smaller than 4 inches. All the plants from compots are grown to move on to the 4-inch-pot size. Smaller, weak plants are weeded out of the compots and so no smaller containers are needed. I repot all the plants every year as this helps the roots from developing any rot. I feed at one-quarter strength every time I water with a balanced formula (20-20-20). I grow these plants in a greenhouse with bright light and strong air movement. I use additional lighting in the winter (three 400 watt lights with high-pressure sodium bulbs). I do not use any chemicals and rely on observation to prevent problems. Mark Srull, Seattle, Washington.

A 50 50 blend of ProMix HP and coarse sponge rock is a great alternative for those phal growers who are unhappy with growing in sphagnum moss.

- For phalaenopsis and paphiopedilums, I grow in both a greenhouse and on the windowsill using plastic pots and a peat-based mix. This mix is a 50/50 mixture of perlite and Pro-Mix, which is then cut one third with pea-sized, rough river gravel. The gravel adds both drainage and weight. Plastic pots of peat mixes are too light and usually fall over when plants are in bloom. Robert Griesbach, PhD, Maryland

- We grow all our phalaenopsis in New Zealand sphagnum moss in clay pots with a little bit of medium-grade lava rock mixed in to keep it porous. Greg Allikas, West Palm Beach, Florida

- I have been using Pro-Mix for phalaenopsis since September 1993. I was using Pro-Mix BX after a visit with Dr. John Martin of Evergreen Hill Orchids. Prior to Pro-Mix,I struggled with bark and lava rock, but neither work for me. At the time, I was growing orchids indoors under lights. Initially, the result with Pro-Mix was not good because the mix stayed fairly wet. After increasing the amount of air movement and watching my watering, I am beginning to appreciate Pro-Mix. At least a couple of years ago, there came on the market a new type of Pro-Mix called Pro-Mix HP, which promised less water retention. I fill the container one quarter full with styrofoam peanuts and then add the mix. I have about 1500 plants in a greenhouse, where Pro-Mix HP is used. I rely on it for compots (including those that came right out of flasks), seedlings and mature plants. But sphagnum moss is a better choice for seedlings in 2-inch pots or plants that do not have a lot of roots. Peter Lin, Irving, Texas

This article appeared in the American Orchid Society Orchids magazine in October 1997 (Vol. 66:10 pp 1026-1027).

Phalaenopsis
by Ned Nash, courtesy of AOS

Phalaenopsis have shown phenomenal growth in popularity, availability and cultural techniques in the past few years. These three factors have gone hand-in-hand in a synergistic manner, fueling a wave of plants and new growers unprecedented in the hobby of orchid growing.

The economic and social reasons behind this occurrence could be the subject of a lengthy essay. It is sufficient here, however, to note that there have been great changes to who is growing phalaenopsis and how they are doing it.

Growers of some years' experience, often with a long history of success with traditional cultural practices, are finding profound lessons to be learned in some of the breakthroughs being pioneered today, often by those less hindered by concepts of "how it has always been done." Newer growers, of which there are many, are finding a welter of often contradictory care information from which to select their preferred cultural methods. More experienced growers have the advantage of knowing the basic needs of their plants, and will usually be able to adapt to new or different techniques with a minimum of trauma to themselves or to their plants. Newer growers lack the confidence that comes with the experience of growing a variety of plants under a variety of conditions over a period of time.

First Steps. Growing phalaenopsis is remarkably straightforward and like the cultural needs for growing any group of orchids it can be broken into key components: watering, fertilizing, temperature, repotting and more. Knowing when to cut off the flower spike, understanding why the lower leaves fall off and choosing potting materials come with experience. Whether you grow phalaenopsis in a greenhouse, the home or even outdoors (in frost-free areas), you will soon learn that experience teaches the value of going from the general to the specific, rather than the reverse.

A good basic grounding in the plants and their needs will go a long way toward the understanding of some of the more specific needs and situations. Too, so many of the little things that happen to plants under cultivation are isolated instances, or prove to be part of a larger picture that is only discernible over a period of months or years. An advantage to phalaenopsis, one capitalized on by the emerging pot plant market, is their relative speed of growth when compared to other orchids. This rapidity enables observant growers to compress a significant amount of experience into a much shorter time than is needed by most other types of orchids. The fast growth rate of phalaenopsis indicates their cultural needs and helps to explain their overall appeal.

Problem-A plantlet (called a keiki) grows on a flower spike (called an 'inflorescence') Initially small, it will grow several leaves and then roots, at which time it can be severed to propagate a new specimen.
Solution-Once the roots grow several inches long, gently remove the plantlet with a sterile knife and pot in a container to which you add a label with the plant's name. Orchids, like animals, are susceptible to viruses, so whenever cutting an orchid plant always use a sterile tool to prevent the spread of virus. With proper care, a large keiki may flower in one year. Smaller keikis could take two or three years to reach flowering size.

First, phalaenopsis are tropical plants. They, or their species forebears, come from areas where high rainfall, high humidity and high temperatures combine with strong light softened by an upper tier of forest canopy to make for - especially in the case of orchids - rapid growth.

It is not uncommon for plants to flower, under good conditions, in two or three years from seed. Full maturity can be reached in as little as five or six years. This, compared to a cattleya's four or five years to flower and seven or eight to maturity. There are drawbacks to this rapidity of growth, most importantly an increased susceptibility to both sucking pests and to fungal infections fostered by the warm, moist conditions.

When planning a cultural regimen, remember the best performing plants will be grown in the greenhouse, with 65 to 68 F nights, and 80 to 85 F days. They will be kept evenly moist, be given applications of fertilizer regularly and receive approximately 1,200 foot-candles of light.

In the home, they can be grown adequately well with conditions under which African violets thrive. This is the better news for the novice growers. The plant they purchased in bloom will grow and flower over a period of many years, if kept in a bright window, watered regularly and potted every one or two years (depending on choice of mix). If a sufficiently bright window (east, west or lightly shaded south) is not easily available, supplementary

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Problem-When watering, the water can accumulate in the center of the plant (called a "crown"). Standing water can induce rot, which threatens the health of the plant.

Solution-Direct the water onto the potting mix and not the leaves. If water collects in the crown, dab it away with a paper towel or a Q-tip® An alternative is to attach a metal pot clip to the container and then hang the vessel in the greenhouse or growing area at a slight angle so water drains from the crown naturally.

artificial lighting may be provided with the simplest of fluorescent light fixtures. Phalaenopsis are not tough plants to grow - they grow fast and they flower easily. If they did not, they would not be so widely available, and so popular.

The new grower can fine-tune his or her culture to help the plants do as well as conditions allow. Watering is undoubtedly the first controllable variable that can be addressed. "Evenly moist," while the most commonly given advice on watering, is the least easily explained. Because most plants are grown in plastic containers a good diagnosis is the weight of the plant: heavy - does not need watering; light - does require water.

With a little practice, one can easily tell the amount of moisture remaining in the container. The classic advice is to water the day before it dries out. If you have to let the plant go dry to discover this weight point, it will not kill the plant and will make you a better grower. Always water copiously, until water drains through the drainage holes of the container.

Fertilizing, providing the plant the nutrients it needs for best growth, is obviously critical. The recommendation here is to feed "weakly, weekly" with a fertilizer appropriate to the mix in which the plant is grown. In most cases, this will be a balanced fertilizer with a formula ratio like 1-1-1; while if the plants are grown in a bark-based media, the higher nitrogen needs will require a formula similar to 3-1-1. If you fertilize every week at one-half to one-quarter strength, you will be able to remember easily; while if you intend to feed only every other week, you may forget whether or not you fed last week.

Potting Phalaenopsis. Potting is another misunderstood aspect of successful phalaenopsis culture. A fresh, fast-draining, though water-retentive medium, is essential to the healthy root system necessary for good growth. Whether a bark-based mix (which drains well, is forgiving of watering errors but breaks down rather quickly), a peat-based mix (which retains moisture well but requires more careful watering and frequent potting) or some inorganic, basically hydroponic method, phalaenopsis have been grown successfully in a variety of media.

Most important is to pot when roots are actively growing, evidenced by fresh green root tips, ideally when new root tips are emerging from the base of the plant. This usually happens in the spring. Because phalaenopsis will usually need to be potted every year or two, they do not need to be over-potted. That is, it is more important to size the container for the size of the root mass rather than for the foliage size.

Pot firmly, but without pounding in hard, with the base of the plant at the level of the mix in the pot. Often, tapping the container firmly on the potting surface will settle the mix firmly. More often than not, plants readily available as flowering potted plants today will have been recently repotted in fresh mix, so will not need repotting for some months. This disruption while in flower, coupled with the stress to the plants resulting from their removal from ideal greenhouse conditions to your home, may lead to the loss of one to several of the lower leaves. This is not normally a cause for alarm as long as the whole plant does not collapse at once. Increased humidity and careful watering

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are the best ways to avoid this problem, as is careful selection when purchasing of the plants that are showing the fastest reestablishing and best new root production.

Selecting Flowering Plants. Plants chosen in flower will have the freshest blooms and the longest floral life if picked with one or more buds left to open at the tip of the spike. If the spike is open to the tip, there is simply no way of knowing how long the plant has been on the vendor's shelf.

Flower life will be prolonged if kept away from hot, cold and dry drafts. When the last flower fades, the spike may be cut below the scar from the first flower, and above the top node on the stem. In many cases, a branch or branches will develop to flower in nine to 12 weeks. If the plant is weak, or young, however, this may not be recommended. You might rather cut the spike off at the base and allow the plant to grow strongly during the growing season to flower better the coming flowering season.

Problem-Slugs (and snails) eat the foliage and flowers of phalaenopsis. Solution-Damp conditions are inviting to these pests that do their damage at night. Eliminate moist, dark places where they can hide during the day. Inspect plants regularly; lift a container and check the bottom of the vessel to see if any of these culprits are lurking there or in a drainage hole. Apply a control (such as Slugit) or experiment with an organic remedy, such as spreading a bit of diatomaceous earth on the surface of the potting mix (it scarifies the slug or snail, causing death). However, the diatomaceous earth needs to be dry to be most effective. Remember that chemical controls can be poisonous to pets and people; store in a dry area out of reach.

Problem-A caterpillar eats the leaves of a phalaenopsis. Solution-This leaf is permanently damaged and will not grow back. To prevent damage in the future, inspect plants regularly, both when you water and occasionally take the time to check plants individually. Maintain a clean growing environment. If insects or disease appear, take a sample (in a plastic bag) to show members at an Affiliated Society meeting or to a nursery. Your county cooperative extension service may also be able to diagnose ailments.

Initiation of new spikes usually occurs as days shorten and nights become cooler. In the western states, this can be as early as July, though more often not until October or November. In the southeastern states, with their hot summer nights, spike initiation may not be seen until November or December. Spikes usually take 12 to 14 weeks to develop to first flower.

The main flowering season is winter. Careful staking and consistent orientation of the plant toward the light source will result in the best displayed spike and flowers. The plant should not be turned once in spike, or the spike will follow the light, resulting in a crooked, unattractive presentation. Be on the lookout, too, for sucking pests as the spikes develop, as they love to hide in the bracts and flower axils. Once the buds form, it is difficult to treat without damaging the blooms.

By working with your fellow members at Affiliated Society meetings, and vendors at orchid sales and nurseries, you can choose rewarding phalaenopsis that will bloom year after year.

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Repotting Clinic
at
Southeast Branch Library

The heat and humidity of summer in Florida will soon be replaced by the fall season, where our plants will perk up with a final growth spurt to finish out the year. This is a great opportunity for repotting those struggling orchids you didn't get to this spring. Stop by the library with any orchids you have questions about. As long as we're not slammed, we'll show you how we would handle the repotting and then let you do the honors. The best way to learn is by doing!

Show Table

Grower Ellen Fay
Paph. (sangii x liemianum)

Grower Suzanne Susko
Blc. Dewy Forest 'Kudos'

Grower Shelia Nathanson
Ctsm. (Melana Davison x Diana's Dots)

Grower Suzanne Susko
Miltonia Honolulu 'Warne's Best' HCC/AOS

Grower Deborah Fox
C. Bob Betts 'The Virgin' FCC/AOS

Grower Allen Black
C. Maximum Lust

Grower Denise Duncan
Bc. YU Toung '#1'

SHOW TABLE

Grower Sue Bottom
Blc. (Mem. Helen Brown x
Chinese Bronze-Waikiki Gold)

Grower Courtney Hackney
Blc. Memoria Vivian Ramnarace

Grower Gale Hall
C. Suavis 'Hamlyn'

Grower Allen Black
B. nodosa 'O'Whimsy' HCC/AOS

Grower Sue Bottom
Ddc. magnum

Grower Steve Dorsey
Brassia Edvah Loo

Link to all Submissions:https://flic.kr/s/aHBqjCsVnN