THE GREATER LAS VEGAS ORCHID SOCIETY
THE ORCHID COLUMN
CAROL SIEGEL, EDITOR

SUNDAY, JUNE 3, 2012 2 PM
EASTER SEAL BUILDING
SUNDAY, JULY 1, 2012 2 PM
RAINBOW LIBRARY

SPECIAL EVENTS:

June 3, 2012 Diana Smith,
"Easy Species You Can Grow"
Potluck
July 1, 2012
Alan Koch "Species Habitat
And Hybrid Culture- An Orchid
Culture Talk"
August 5, 2012 Barbecue
Cathy Loftfield "Potting Orchids"
September 9, 2012
Second Sunday
Greenhouse Tour
Al deRicco, Clarice Dean, Dan Mumau
October 6, 2012
Peter Lin
"Growing Specimen Orchids"
November 4, 2012
Carol Siegel "Liars and Cheats:
The Story of Orchid Deception"
December 2, 2012
Holiday Party
January 6, 2012
Ron Parsons
"Miniature Orchids"
February 3, 2013
Alan Kochs
"Unusual Species for the Cattleya
Grower"
March 3, 2013 Mike Glikbarg
April 7, 2013 Karen Muir "Maxillaria"

AGAIN! The old building won't be ready for occupancy (that's the old OLD building not the NEW old building) until some time in 2013 since they are still working in the park. We have enjoyed the Easter Seal Building, but it is not available for rental now that our lease is up. In addition, the room is way too light for our presentations, and we always wanted to find a darker, more suitable room. We will continue to meet at the Easter Seals Building, 6200 West Oakey, for our June 3rd meeting. We will meet at the Meeting Room at the Rainbow Library, 3150 North Buffalo at the corner of Cheyenne starting with our July 1st meeting. (Why do I have nightmares about members roaming around the city looking for the meeting….) When you enter the library, make a sharp right and the Meeting Room is there. I think you will be delighted. THE ROOM HAS NO WINDOWS AND IS PLENTY DARK ENOUGH! I looked for a room with a kitchen where we could make food, a capacity of over 100 people, availability on Sundays which was not already taken, lots of tables and chairs, a microphone, screen, plenty of overhead lights, security, tons of parking. It even has TV's and a piano. It is nice that we will be able to eat, too. (Even if you can't grow, you can always eat…) Rental costs are just about the same, too. It is only a short walk from the parking lot, which is a plus carrying plants. I hope you will be pleased. WE THANK STEVE NINEMIRE FOR ALL HIS GENEROUS HELP THIS YEAR WITH THE EASTER SEAL BUILDING. HE IS AN ANGEL.

DIANA SMITH PRESENTS "EASY SPECIES YOU CAN GROW" AT OUR JUNE 3RD MEETING

Species are the wild and wonderful orchids that grow in nature- before orchid lovers fidget and fuss and cross them (like the *Pterostylis* above). Diana Smith will do a power point presentation from Orchid Digest at our June 3 meeting (at Easter Seals). Nick Burnett was supposed to speak to us in June on "Seven Ways to Kill An Orchid." He developed heart and lung problems, and he reluctantly cancelled. I called Alan Koch, and he kindly agreed to fill in for Nick. Last week, he called and said his father was having surgery, and he couldn't make June. (OY) I got Alan to agree to come in July. Diana Smith, my darling and dear friend, agreed to switch to June rather than speak in July. We will also be selling orchids.

(This is why I have to dye my hair…)

A special thank you to Cathy Loftfield who came early to help me set up the meeting when Diana was away. It meant so much to me. Thanks! We thank Wanda LaFollette, Shelly North, Carolyn Jones, Karla Thomas, and Judie Tuthill for the food and drink for our June meeting. We thank Penny Senneseth, Doris Fairchild, Katherine Weber, Pat Holland and Diana Michael for the food for the May meeting. It was just delicious, and the table was so pretty. We had a lot of fun at our May meeting. Our generous and smart member Norito Hasegawa, world famous orchidologist, did an interesting talk on multifloral paphs and sold slipper orchids, too. His talk was interesting and informative, and we delighted in the beautiful images. This was Norito's first power point presentation, and he did a great job. He also waived his travel and hotel expenses. Such a nice man. We welcomed Diana Michael as anew member (her food was great, too!) and welcomed Brian Thomas back, too. We are glad to have these two nice people as part of our group. WE ARE MOST GRATEFUL TO TONY AND OLE BORRESEN FOR THE GREAT JOB THEY ARE DOING PICKING UP RAFFLE PLANTS. WOW!! THANK YOU AND THANK JOEL AND ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE RAFFLE TEAM.

Get well to Christina De La Cruz. We hope you recover soon and are back to dancing… Get well to Myra Lee Glassman. Hope your knee recovers soon, and you are back to the gym and walking the dogs… Loving wishes to Tony Billitere on a complete recovery. You are in our thoughts and prayers… Hope Leslie Doyle is totally recovered soon from her broken arm… Best wishes to Roberta Schechter… Here's hoping your leg is better soon… Thinking of Bill Whaley and hoping to see him all well again… Hope Carolyn Jones had fun with her family from Nova Scotia… Congratulations to my granddaughter Lauren as she starts college (already…). Glad Ole Borresen is better after his fall… Happy Birthday to Toby Librot…Have fun fishing in Colorado… Good to see Mike Levin at the meeting… Glad Sandra Swan is doing so well in nursing school… Hope Ed Prudhomme is all well soon… Glad to meet Doris Fairchild's charming friend Don Gault… Hope he comes to another meeting… Glad Clarice Dean's daughter Sarah is having a good pregnancy…Thanks to Dennis Dean for donating money from his plant sales… Thanks to Dan Mumau who always brings interesting plants to sell and is so generous… AND to anyone I missed, we send loving thoughts and healing energy.

WE ARE HAVING A POTLUCK IN JULY…

Our July 1st meeting, in our new library location, will feature Alan Koch AND a potluck. Everyone is asked to bring a salad (fruit salad, Caesar salad, Greek salad, vegetable salad, egg salad, tuna salad, chicken salad, edamame salad, potato, rice, or broccoli salad, etc.) or/and a dessert. If you want to bring something else, feel free, but it is a new place, and I don't know how much oven space they have so ready-to-eat stuff would be good. We will provide the paper goods. If somebody would be willing to bring drinks and ice, please tell me.

In August, we are having our annual barbecue in COOL Mt. Charleston at the home of the gracious Eldine Stevens. The club will provide all the meats for the barbecue and the paper goods and drinks. We ask everyone to bring a side dish or dessert to round out the meal. Dan Mumau and Mike Lawless, brilliant professional caterers and owners of A Catered Affair (ACateredAffair@aol.com 362-5251) have graciously agreed to do all the work of bringing up the feast and preparing it. They do such a fabulous job, and we are lucky to have them. Cathy Loftfield has agreed to do a short presentation on potting orchids at the barbecue.

On September 9th (note that we meet the first Sunday in July but the second Sunday in September), we will have a greenhouse tour. We will visit the new greenhouse of Al de Ricco, as well as the greenhouses of the Deans and Dan Mumau and Mike Lawless. AND Mike and Dan are going to prepare the food for us. YAY!

In October, Peter Lin will return to do a presentation on growing specimen orchids. These big, gorgeous plants that make us faint, are very special, and Peter will teach us which orchids will make specimens and how we can do it.

In November, I will do a new power point presentation called "Liars and Cheats: The Story of Orchid Deception." Fully a third of all orchids pretend to be offer a reward they do not deliver, sometimes mimicking a plant that provides food, shelter, a place to lay eggs or to sleep, or mimicking a female insects who is sexually receptive. The talk is based on an article to be published in Orchid Digest Jan 2013.

IN PRAISE OF SPECIES

Diana Smith

There is nothing more breath-taking than a display of white phalaenopsis: perfectly spaced strings of unerringly round, flawlessly white blossoms that are ideally arranged in a cascading waterfall. The audience is usually at a loss for the words to describe the sight. "Perfect!" they'll whisper in awe. It's true.

So, now that you've got this picture in your mind, I might as well tell you that I find "perfect" to be perfectly annoying. (I'll bet you do, too. Think about that ideal employee you work with. Don't you wish he would spill coffee on his shirt?) I prefer to contemplate the fantastically shaped, rainbow colored, elusively scented flowers that make up Mother Nature's world of orchid species. In fact, I'm totally stuck on them.

In general, orchids are visually appealing flowers. They are bilaterally symmetrical, which means that if you draw a vertical line down the center of the flower, the sides would be mirror images of each other, like the human face. Humans tend to consider symmetrical objects more beautiful than nonsymmetrical objects. The lip, which may have attractive colors or designs, adds a focal point. Orchid flowers are often produced in stunning displays of blossoms, too. It's no wonder that, since their discovery, people have prized these plants and have become dedicated to growing them better than the next fellow. Shortly thereafter we noticed that, while flower A is a good size to wear as a corsage, flower B has brighter color; wouldn't it be nice if we could have both? We have been tinkering with them ever since.

One of our goals in hybridizing orchids was to produce flowers that approach a standard based on a definition of floral beauty that included large size, rounded shape, and consistent color. The closer that hybrid flowers get to this standard, the more similar they are to it, and to each other. Hybridizing also produces plants that represent the middle ground as far as plant size, structure and cultural requirements are concerned.

Evolution, on the other hand, produced flowers that fit specific ecological niches and fostered relationships with specific pollinators. Leaf size, shape, thickness and color, the presence of pseudobulbs or hairs, and root structure all contribute to a plant's survival and successful utilization of environmental resources. Flower size, shape and structure, color and color patterns, presence of warts or hairs, scent or nectar, and flowering schedule are some of the traits that will repel or draw the target pollinator and allow for successful pollination. These differences are what make orchid species so fascinating.

Coelogyne pandurata for example, is a showy green flower with a lip that appears to be wrapped in black net stockings. *C. fimbriata* has hairy edges and a number of keels that look like the ruffles on a tuxedo shirt. The white-flowered *C. nitida's* lip has yellow spots bordered with a thin orange line that appears to be painted on. Each flower form attracts or directs a specific pollinator to a valued resource.

Mention the word Pleurothallis to a junkie like me and be prepared to spend an indefinite period listening to rapturous descriptions of plant and leaf shape as well as the actual measurements of their cute little flowers. Many of them need to be viewed with a magnifying glass to see that they look like a good place for a bug to lay eggs. Just look at the tiny dangly things that look like suspended fly larvae. Aren't they adorable?

Once you break away from the highly hybridized Dendrobiums of the mass market, you start to notice a stunning array of colors, shapes, sizes and scents of the flowers of this genus. I particularly enjoy *D.*

crepidatum, a velvet-lipped pale lavender and yellow species with a lilac scent. It blooms in spring off of totally bare deciduous canes that look ready to be tossed into the trash until you notice the bud bumps from bottom to tip. *D. parishii* takes a close second, with its luminous deep lavender and purple lip and exotic fragrance.

Ah, yes, scents. From cinnamon to rotting meat, vanilla to sumptuous floral, orchids beat out any other family of plants in terms of variety and appeal of their odors. Cattleya hybrids often have a sensuous mixed-floral fragrance that reminds me of a bottle of fine perfume. But the species have more discrete scents that range from lily of the valley, rose, and lilac to lemon or grape; an entire wardrobe of mood-matching fragrances. Without seeing the flower, I know what is in bloom in my greenhouse. While most hybrids are lightly scented, my *Dendrobium kingianum* has been known to clear out an entire office because its strong (delightful) fragrance made the workers' eyes water.

Coelogynes typically have a light musky scent to attract flies rather than the more discriminating butterflies and bees. Many other fly attracting flowers have scents that are beyond our sense of smell … and you should get down on your knees and thank the serendipity of evolution for it! Au d'female fly is a bit too exotic for me.

Let's not forget the Angraecums. Remember Charles Darwin's prediction? *Angraecum sesquipidale* is a large white flower on a monopodial Vanda-like plant. Darwin studied it and came to the conclusion it was pollinated by a moth with a 15 inch proboscis. Turns out, he was right. How did he know? (Step aside, Sherlock Holmes; you've been demoted to Watson.) The flower only wafts its fragrance at night thereby guiding the moth to its white flowers in the darkness. It also has a nectary that is up to 15 inches long. How's that for "different"? Yes, having a room decorated with a display of perfect flowers is stunning, but after you have given them the once-over they become part of the furniture. Gather together a few flowering species, however, and you can contemplate their similarities and differences for hours.

There are, according to currently accepted figures, approximately 30,000 orchid species. With the help of a few good references you can even tell them apart. At the same time, there are over 300,000 registered hybrids, many of which resemble each other or have common ancestors. Even molecular biology wouldn't be able to identify them definitively.

Species are not only unique, they are also very collectable. The list of species in any particular genus or group is less likely to mushroom to impossible numbers than a list of hybrids, making their assemblage a bit more attainable. Yet the likelihood that no one in your vicinity has the exact same species in bloom in their collection adds some distinction to your triumph.

And well you may deserve the applause. Hybrids, being a combination of two or more species, are typically able to thrive in a broader set of conditions. Individual species are often more particular; their cultural requirements are more specific. Optimal temperatures, light conditions, potting requirements, feeding schedules, water quality and regimen may be more difficult for hobbyists to achieve within their more restricted growing environments. One species may delight in great temperature variations from day to night or season to season, but others may rot under those conditions. It takes the skills of observation, research, organization, trial and error, problem-solving, and luck to be successful with some species. You can see where a cultural victory is definitely something to savor.

While you're looking into cultural requirements for your species, you may as well get into the evolutionary function of its various characteristics. (Your brain will get a stimulating workout and your excited synapses will thank you.) The main purpose of a flower is sexual reproduction. Orchid plants can live for a long time without reproducing; all they need to do is continue to grow functional photosynthetic structures (leaves) while putting out new roots to support such growth. But this method may not allow the plant to accommodate to an environment that is constantly changing. Even if it does, it's only useful for that specific plant. Sexual reproduction is what drives the evolution of species because the most successful plant is the one that produces the most offspring. One plant's mutation can change the species.

The sole function of flowers is: attract the appropriate pollinator to facilitate sexual reproduction. Flowers are, however, energy sinks. Producing sepals, petals, a column with pollen and stigma, stems and possibly scent chemicals and nectar is very draining on a plant's resources. It is important that the plant doesn't waste its energy on inconsequential crossings; in other words, sex for successful procreation only! The differentiation of orchid species to attract a single pollinator lessens the waste of pollen and limits the production of natural hybrids that may weaken the gene pool. Orchids and their pollinators have co-evolved to a great extent; it is only equaled in the natural world by the link between parasites and their hosts. The investigation into this bond is fascinating and intellectually challenging.

Orchid species inspire me. They are the unique, pure representation of nature's web of interconnections. Look at a flower and see the temperature and rainfall patterns, winds, nutrients, pollinators and protectors, support plants and fungi, and animal neighbors in its native environment. Hybrids may be big, bold and beautiful, but they have lost that connection. Only the species continue to seduce the moth with fragrance and the bee with markers that yell, "Get your nectar here!" Only species continue to flourish in their ecological niches. That's why it's the species that continue to fascinate and draw me into their web.

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