

GREATER LAS VEGAS ORCHID SOCIETY

THE ORCHID COLUMN

CAROL SIEGEL, EDITOR



SUNDAY, JUNE 1, 2014
1PM LIVE PIANO MUSIC
2 PM MEETING
RAINBOW LIBRARY

SPECIAL EVENTS 2014

June 1 Peter Lin "Orchids for Every Day of the Year"
July 13 Alan Kochs "Orchids 101"
August 3 Diana Smith "Pests and Diseases"
September 7 Harold Koopowitz "A Fantastic Paph Journey"
October 5 Greenhouse Tour
Melanie Long and Dan Mumau
November 2 Carol Siegel "Freaks and Stinkers: Bizarre Orchids"
December 7 Holiday Party
January 11, 2015 Fred Clarke "Aussie Dendrobium"
Feb 1 Ron Parsons "Orchids of Ecuador"
March 1, 2015 Ron Kaufmann "Orchids on the Rocks"
April 12, 2015 Art Chadwick "First Ladies and Their Cattleyas"
May 3, 2015 Tentative barbecue
June 7 Jason Fischer "7th New Zealand Orchid Council and Orchids New Zealand"

JUNE SPEAKER: PETER LIN

"ORCHIDS FOR EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR"

We often buy orchids in a random way and wind up with lots of blooms sometimes and no blooms at others. Peter, a favorite and frequent speaker at our club, knows how to amass a collection of orchids that will allow growers to have blooms all year round. He will show us just how to do that, giving us a steady dose of annual pleasure. He will also be selling his lovely orchids.

Peter, owner of Diamond Orchids, (www.diamondorchids.com) started growing orchids over 30 years ago, but then stopped due to school and starting a career. It wasn't until about 10 years ago that the orchid "bug" came back and he is now heavily involved once again! He is an accredited judge with the American Orchid Society, and a hybridizer of mini-catts. He enjoys meeting with other orchid enthusiasts, and can often be found at various orchid shows and societies around the country.

Due to limited growing space, Peter likes to specialize in miniature orchids, both species and hybrids, and has received numerous AOS awards. His interests in orchids include Dendrobiums, Angraecoids, and Neofinetias. He is also known as "Mr Sophronitis" as he has a passion for growing and collecting them. He maintains a collection of a thousand or more orchids at his home in Southern California in 3 small greenhouses, outdoors, as well as indoors under lights.

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WE LOVED OUR BARBECUE!

What fun we had in May at our annual barbecue at Shelly North's house. Many thanks to Dan Mumau and Mike Lawless, Master Chefs (A Catered Affair 362-5251) who prepared a fabulous feast for us. We are so grateful to you. Thanks to Shelly for opening her heart and home to us. Thanks, too, to Eileen Mckyton for her interesting talk on how to buy orchids. Again, we thank Ole Borresen for delighting us with hotel plants. We love you all. It was a great day!





WHERE TO BUY ORCHIDS

Eileen's talk at the barbecue generated a lot of excitement about buying orchids, our very favorite thing. I promised to write down some of our discussion. Of course, there are always Trader Joe's orchids which are cheap, plentiful, gorgeous (but have no tags)- and the other supermarkets and hardware store orchids. There are the out-of-bloom and outrageously inexpensive hotel plants that grace our raffle table thanks to Ole, Tony and Joel. Going to orchid shows (advertised in the AOS ORCHIDS magazine) is a sure way to empty your wallet and bring home lots of different and magnificent orchids. I love the San Francisco show and going to Orchid Digest Day each year to get my orchid fix. Steve loves the Santa Barbara Show.

Want fabulous cattleyas? Go to the "Orchids In Bud" section Hausermann's Orchids

www.orchidsbyhausermann.com Irene Finney is on sale right now for just \$29.99 (usually \$42.99)

Want the best in phalaenopsis and other orchids? Try Norman's Orchids. www.orchids.com

Want interesting Paphiopedilum and miniature orchids? Try www.parksideorchids.com

Want the best in orchids on a stick and great advice? www.andysorchids.com

Fred Clarke at www.sunsetvalleyorchids.com has a marvelous catalogue of small cattleyas and Catasetum-type orchids. You may have to call for what's in bud. His potting mixes are top rate.

Want potting supplies? Try www.repotme.com. They have it all.

www.sborchid.com is the website of the legendary Santa Barbara Orchid Estate. You can sign up for their Orchid of the Day, peruse their website, or call to see what is in bloom. The best...

www.zumacanyon.com is the website of Zuma Canyon Orchids. They sell gorgeous blooming phals.

Cal Orchids (www.calorchid.com) has really interesting orchids. You may have to call to see what's in bloom.

Brookside Orchids (www.brookside-orchids) I bought from at a show. They have great plants. You will have to call to see what is in bloom.

Orchids Limited, the nursery of Jerry and Jason Fischer, has incredible plants, with a section in bud/bloom. The plants are pricey but top-rate- and they have excellent growing videos on their site.

Tell us what you like and we will put it in the next newsletter.

Just remember not to spend the rent money on orchids (again...)

IT'S A MIRACLE!! A PHALAENOPSIS FLOWER GROWS ON A ZYGOPETALUM ORCHID PLANT! A VANDA FLOWER GROWS ON A PHALAENOPSIS PLANT!

Well, I thought it was pretty funny. I gave my non-orchid growing friend a fragrant *Zygopetalum* orchid for Valentine's Day. She loved it. It bloomed for a month, and then she went and bought a silk spray of *Phalaenopsis* flowers and stuck it in the pot. She says people keep giving her more out-of-bloom orchids to re-bloom since she they call her the "Orchid Doctor" now. It's a miracle! Like a lion with a giraffe head... When they gave her an out-of-bloom phalaenopsis, she stuck an artificial vanda flower sprig in the pot. It's the next hilarious photo on the next page. This one is a giraffe with a zebra head...





MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR THE TWELFTH ORCHID DIGEST SPEAKERS' DAY!!

"ORCHIDS AROUND THE WORLD"

Huntington Library and Botanical Gardens, San Marino, California
Saturday, June 14, 2014 – 12:30 pm to 8:00 pm in the Ahmanson Classroom

Orchid Displays – Orchid Sales– Expert Lectures – Dinner

Open at 11:00AM to bring your blooming plants for the flower display
Prize for best species and best hybrid

SCHEDULED SPEAKERS:

Mary Gerritsen – Orchids of Borneo

Tom Miranda – Orchids of Sicily

Ron McHatton – Orchids of Madagascar

Jim Sloniker – History of Orchids in Santa Barbara County

2014 Orchid Digest Distinguished Lecture: Gene Crocker – Cattleyas

Remember!! AOS judging at 10:00 AM

VENDORS: Cal Orchids; Sunset Valley Orchids, Andy's Orchids, Carter & Holmes

Tickets: \$65 (\$80 at door)

After June 11th contact

Simone Friend, 4349 Dogwood Ave., Seal Beach, CA 90740

Phone: (562) 431-1247 E-mail: orchidsimonef@aol.com

Limited Space!! Make Your Reservations Now!

We thank the lovely ladies who volunteered to bring food to our June 1st meeting- Wanda LaFollette,

Valery Godino, Mieko Magaki, Claire Ehrsam and Liz Waters. We really appreciate it! Thank you to Terry Wilsey for arranging our speaker. He is our club travel agent. (Need travel? Call him 460-2700.) Thanks to Steve Hochman for providing transportation and lunch for our speaker. So nice.

On July 13, we will be having our potluck at our meeting in the library. Alan Koch will be presenting "Orchids 101." Everyone will bring a dish with serving spoons for 10-12 people. We have limited space for reheating so food that is ready to go is always a good idea- salads and desserts are usually best- things like chicken salad, tuna salad with rolls or bread, vegetable salads, rice or pasta salads, egg salad, Chinese salad, fruit salad, layered salads, like that. You can, of course, bring anything you want! We will make it work. We need someone to provide ice and drinks and someone else to provide paper goods. Tell me if you can do this instead of food.

IT'S CATASETUM TIME! SUDDENLY, THE CIGAR-SHAPED LEAFLESS PSEUDOBULBS HAVE SPROUTED LONG GREEN LEAVES AND FAT ROOTS AND ARE GETTING READY TO BLOOM. IF YOU HAVE NEVER GROWN THESE MIRACULOUS ORCHIDS, GO TO www.sunsetvalleyorchids.com AND ORDER SOME FROM FRED CLARKE!



In Praise of Catasetum

By Carol Siegel

They say you never forget your first orchid, and my first orchid was truly unforgettable. There used to be a nursery in town called the Orchid House, and it was there I fell in love with orchids. I walked in, and Bob Vitto, the owner, told me he had a very special orchid to show me. It was a *Catasetum*. He told me to bend close to the flower and touch the middle. Unsuspecting, I did as I was told, and a missile shot out of the center of the flower and stuck to my nose. No amount of pulling could dislodge this thing. Such began my love affair with orchids—and with *Catasetum*. They say the nose knows, and mine knew I had come home to the weird and wonderful world of orchids.

A WEIRD ORCHID

Of all orchids, *Catasetum* are truly the most strange. Not only do they have spring-loaded pollinia (orchid pollen), but they have fabulous fragrance and exotic flowers. They have separate male and female flowers that look totally different. Their pseudobulbs look like fat cigars, their plants look dead for most of the winter, and their seed pods are as big as baseballs. So special!

EXPLODING POLLINIA

With about 100 species, the genus name *Catasetum* (kat-uh-SEE-tum) comes from the Greek *cata*, meaning “downward” and the Latin *seta* meaning “bristles.” The male flowers have two “bristles” or appendages called “antennae” that in the male flowers extend down into the lip cavity and keep the sexual apparatus under tension. Any touch can cause an explosive release of the pollinarium that sticks to the pollinator- or in my case, the nose.

SEPARATE MALE AND FEMALE FLOWERS

Most orchid flowers are “perfect,” which in the flower world means they are bisexual hemaphrodites with both functional male and female parts in every flower. *Catasetum* have male flowers and female flowers that look very different. Early explorers believed that the male flowers were a different species from the female flowers because they were so unlike, causing lots of confusion in describing the genus. Later, it was understood that when a *catasetum* blooms, it can carry all male or all female flowers, a combination of male and female flowers on one spike, or occasionally even regular bisexual flowers (which are usually sterile).

It is believed that female flowers will be produced when the plant is given lots of light, and male flowers will be produced in shadier conditions. Female flowers of all species are amazingly similar, with a thick, fleshy hood. Male flowers are thought to be more interesting and varied and can be encouraged by moving the plants out of bright light after the pseudobulb has matured in the spring. In nature, many more male than female flowers are produced, and it seems the orchid only produces female flowers when it thinks that conditions are so good that it can invest in the expensive act of producing a big seed pod.

CATASETUM RELATIVES

Catasetum belong to a subtribe called *Catasetinae* which has four relatives that grow a lot like *catasetum*. Much of what is said about *catasetum* applies to these, too. *Clowesia* has a few species that have bisexual flowers which can fling their pollinia, too. *Cynoches*, the swan orchid, has long-lasting male and female flowers which bear little resemblance to one another. *Mormodes*, the goblin orchid, has amazing separate male and female flowers, too. Finally, *Dressleria* has some bisexual species that fling pollinia after the anther cap is lifted.

CATASETUM SEX

In a mature male flower, the entire column is a trap waiting to be sprung. Male bees from miles away are attracted by the fragrance of a waxlike, musky substance in the lip. It contains aromatic hydrocarbons and volatile terpenes (strong smells!!) which mesmerize the male bees who land and fight each other off in the frenzy to collect this fragrant oil. They will later make a potent aphrodisiac to attract female bees. In the excitement, one of them bumps into the antennae and the pollinarium is thrown forward at speeds of ten feet per second. The pollinia do a complete somersault and land behind the head of the frightened bee. Inebriated from the waxes and wanting more, he drunkenly avoids the male flowers that have frightened him, and gorges on the waxes inside the female flower hood, depositing the pollinia. The seed pod forms in a few months and contains at least a million seeds.

CATASETUM LEAVES

The great thing about *Catasetum* leaves is that if they become spotted, blemished or disfigured by insects, they will probably fall off at the end of the growing season, and you will have another chance! No one will know about your lack of experience and poor fortune because next year you will get a whole brand new set of leaves. The leaves have parallel folds like a fan (plicate) and love lots of light.

CATASETUM PSEUDOBULBS

Catasetum have big, long-lasting moisture-storing organs called pseudobulbs. Although they come in lots of different shapes, they mostly look like fat cigars. They are an adaptation to the dry season that they find in nature in places like Mexico, El Salvador and Brazil, and allow the plant to survive with little water throughout the winter. Some have even said that *catasetum* hate water, but they just hate too much water at the wrong time.

The pseudobulbs are covered by leaf sheaths which when young and green are connected to the leaves. After the leaf falls, the sheaths become dry and papery, often with sharp spikes to deter foraging animals. Remove the sheaths to prevent being stuck and to avoid insects from hiding within.

THE GROWTH CYCLE OF CATASETUM

Unlike *cattleya* and *phalaenopsis*, most *Catasetum* lose their leaves after the growing season. They have a unique period of rest or dormancy which corresponds to the dry season in nature. Once a pseudobulb and its leaves show signs of yellowing, it will not produce any more leaves, but may eventually put out a new growth from its base. The old pseudobulb will remain a source of reserve for the total plant for a long time, but eventually they will shrivel and become soft and should be removed. During the dormant period, the plant should be given a minimum of water until a new growth emerges and is two inches long. Then, the grower should spring into action with regular watering and fertilizing as the drama of regeneration quickly begins.

Sometimes, the flower spike appears simultaneously with the new growth in spring, in other it appears in summer or fall. There are even some species that bloom long after they lose their leaves.

THE DORMANT PERIOD

When dormant, a catasetum may be treated in one of three ways:

1. Leave it in its pot and potting material and place it somewhere where it won't get its regular watering. Give it only enough water to prevent shriveling of the pseudobulb.
2. Remove it from its pot, throw out potting material, put it back in the pot naked with its tag and water with your other plants,
3. Take the plant out of its pot with its tag, store it somewhere dry and sprinkle occasionally.

Arthur Holst, author of the excellent book *THE WORLD OF CATASETUM*, uses the first method since he says that it preserves the old roots. I leave my plant in the pot in a separate area and do not water it until the roots are several inches long and the green also several inches high with their first flush of green growth. The period of dormancy can last from several weeks to several months, interrupted as the first exciting green growth arises on the otherwise dead-looking plant.

REPOTTING

Catasetum grow best with minimal root disturbance and really like to be mounted. If you grow with a pot, Charles Marden Fitch recommends putting a plant that has outgrown its pot into a larger pot filled with some growing medium. This pot within a pot allows him to leave the plant undisturbed for 3-4 years. Repot when the new growth and roots are just starting. You can do conventional bark or sphagnum potting, but Arthur Holst recommends putting a wood mount vertically against the far wall of a pot, attaching the plant to the mount with the base one inch above the medium in the pot, and letting the plant decide whether to grow up the mount or into the pot. !! He also uses another unconventional method by only putting very large (2 to 3 inch) chunks of wood, bark and charcoal in a plastic pan, net or clay pot which he says retains some water yet allows a lot of air without smothering the roots. He also likes growing in wooden baskets, propped up by some wood and bark chunks and chips.

FERTILIZING

Everyone has a different opinion on fertilizer just as everyone has a different opinion of vitamin supplements. Don't fertilize during the dormant period, but fertilize with a weak formula every time the plants are watered after the new growth is 2 inches tall. Holst likes to add nutrient solution containing silicon from time to time since he believes it helps resist disease and fungi.

LIGHT

Most catasetum are sun-loving plants and grow well in their native habitat in full sunlight and like humidity. They rarely grow in the deep shade of the tropical jungle. However, they need constant air movement naturally or with fans. Remember that if you decide you want male flowers, you will need to bring the plant to a more shady spot after the leaves are formed. You may still not get males, but it will, supposedly, up the odds.

(Personally, I like girl flowers...)

INSECTS

The major pests are spider mites and mealy bugs which can be controlled with 70-90 % rubbing alcohol sprayed directly on the insects. Pull the dry pseudobulb sheaths off to prevent insects from hiding. Ants will often make a nest in the plant transplanting mealy bugs with them. Orange Guard will deter ants and a plastic ant-bait disc on top of the potting mix will kill them. You can always submerge the plants for 30 minutes in a bucket of water, and the ants will drown.

Try this great genus. You will love it!