

# THE GREATER LAS VEGAS ORCHID SOCIETY

## THE ORCHID COLUMN

CAROL SIEGEL, EDITOR



2016

Sunday, February 7, 2016  
Piano music 1:00 pm  
Meeting 2:00

## OUR PROGRAMS

Feb 7 Fred Clarke "Catasetum"

March 6, 2016 Guillermo Salazar  
"African Orchids"

Saturday, March 12, 2016 "A  
Passion for Orchids Show" West  
Charleston Library 10-4

April 3, 2016 Greenhouse Tour  
Christine de la Cruz, Al de Ricco,  
Dan mumau

Native Orchid Walk

May 1, 2016 Art Chadwick  
"Large-Flowered Cattleyas"

June 12 2016 Cathy "Orchids of  
the Old World" 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday

July 10, 2016 Mark Romansky  
"Forgotten Orchids" 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday

Aug 7 Mary Gerritsen "The  
Orchids of Borneo"

Sept 11 Diana "What Kind of  
Orchid Is It?" 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday

Oct 2, 2016 Carol Siegel "10  
Ways to Kill an Orchid"

Nov 6, 2016 Steve Frowine  
"Growing Under Lights and In the  
Home"

December 4, 2016 Holiday Party



2016 DUES WERE DUE IN JANUARY. IF YOU HAVEN'T SENT YOURS IN YET, PLEASE REMEMBER THAT WE RUN AN EXTRAVAGANT, INFORMATIVE AND EXPENSIVE SPEAKER PROGRAM WITH ONLY THE BEST AND THAT TAKES \$\$\$ (WHAT DOESN'T?) WE HAVE NOT RAISED OUR DUES IN YEARS SINCE SOME OF US HAVE HAD TOUGH TIMES. DUES REMAIN \$30 FOR SINGLE, \$45 FOR A COUPLE- TWO PEOPLE RESIDING AT THE SAME ADDRESS. IF YOU CAN SEND AN EXTRA \$5 OR \$10, IT MAKES SUCH A DIFFERENCE. YOU CAN PAY AT THE NEXT MEETING OR SEND A CHECK MADE OUT TO: GLVOS C/O CAROL SIEGEL  
8601 ROBINSON RIDGE DRIVE LAS VEGAS, NV 89117.



## **JANUARY MEETING ABSOLUTELY A RIOT!! AND WE MADE \$1400, TOO!**

What fun we had at our January meeting! Part carnival, part rummage sale, our Annual White Elephant Sale was a huge success netting us over \$1400 ! We had such a good time haggling over the classy clutter that others foolishly discarded. To cries of, "But what is it?" we delightedly carted out more stuff than we carted in. Thank to everyone for the enthusiasm and generosity. I wrote to a lot of orchid nurseries, and they kindly donated really gorgeous orchids to us. (We offered to pay the postage. Among our generous friends:

The Hilo Orchid Farm ([www.hiloorchidfarm.com](http://www.hiloorchidfarm.com))

Santa Barbara Orchid Estate ([www.sborchid.com](http://www.sborchid.com))

Repotme ([www.repotme.com](http://www.repotme.com))

Lehua Orchids ([www.lehuaorchids.com](http://www.lehuaorchids.com))

Cal Orchids ([www.calorchid.com](http://www.calorchid.com))

Zuma Canyon Orchids ([www.zumacanyonorchids.com](http://www.zumacanyonorchids.com))

Fred Clarke and Sunset Valley Orchids ([www.sunsetvalleyorchids.com](http://www.sunsetvalleyorchids.com))

Andy's Orchids ([www.andysorchids.com](http://www.andysorchids.com)) allowed us to buy orchids at 50% off for the sale

Peter Lin of Diamond Orchids

Akatsuka Orchids ([www.akatsukaorchid.com](http://www.akatsukaorchid.com))

Calwest Tropical Orchid Supply ([www.calwesttropical.com](http://www.calwesttropical.com))

Orchids Limited ([www.orchidweb.com](http://www.orchidweb.com))

Chadwick Orchids ([www.chadwickorchids.com](http://www.chadwickorchids.com))

Despite requests, we did not succeed in getting donations from Norman's Orchids or Orchids by Hausermann. Everyone else has been very generous, mentioning how much they value our club.

**SUPPORT THE GENEROUS FOLKS WHO SUPPORT US IN THESE TOUGH ECONOMIC TIMES, AND TELL THEM THANK YOU WHEN YOU DO ORDER.** Thanks to Tony Billitere and Ole Borresen for the hotel plants and Joel Davidson, too. They deliver NO MATTER WHAT. What great guys! We made \$160 on their plants. We are grateful to our White Elephant Captains for helping with the sale- Cathy Loftfield, Myra Glassman, Bruce and Catherine Weber, Christina de la Cruz and others. We couldn't do it without you.. Thanks to everybody for being such good sports amid the madness and for bringing in such wonderful treasures for us to buy. Myra and her raffle made \$210. Members paid \$495 in dues, and we got \$260 in donations. I donated \$200 worth of plants from Andy's Orchids.

Thanks to Steve Hochman for hosting and entertaining the speaker. Thanks to Connie Jones, Lila Levine, Caroline Campbell, Mark Romansky and me for the delicious food. Thanks to Diana for keeping track of it all and to all the Captains who helped out. It was a blast!

We thank in advance our February food team, Betty Williams, Kathy Weber, Wanda La Follette, Bob Furtek and Mary King.

We welcomed guests Judy Hallgren, Toko Lee, Monica Hazel, Vicky Hazle, and Phyllis Selman. Happy to have you!

Hope Marge Redman is all recovered after her surgery.

Hope Myra Glassman had an easy time with her surgery.

## FRED CLARKE SPEAKS ON “CATASETUM” IN FEBRUARY

Everybody loves Fred Clarke of Sunset Orchids, so we are excited to have him speak to us on February 7<sup>th</sup>. He will be bringing orchids to sell. You can pre-order by going on his site [www.sunsetvalleyorchids.com](http://www.sunsetvalleyorchids.com) and then emailing him your request. Then, you don't have to pay postage. His email is [fred.clarke@att.net](mailto:fred.clarke@att.net)

## Sunset Valley Orchids Catasetinae Growing tips

What a great year for the genus Catasetinae! Feedback from Catasetinae growers confirms this was a spectacular growing and flowering year. The American Orchid Society judges have given many awards to Catasetinae in 2015. Our Catasetinae hybrids have done well with our customers and ourselves receiving seven FCC/AOS and ourselves receiving seven FCC/AOS and **twelve** AM/AOS awards: just had to brag a little.... Congratulations to all of you who have done a great job growing and have received the Awards!

Now that winter has clearly arrived, your Catasetums should have matured growths and be mostly done flowering, Cycnoches and Mormodes will be finishing up now, and Clowesia are just starting to flower.

Those of you in Florida and southern states will have dormant plants. In more temperate areas like here in California you should have had completed your last watering and the plants well into leaf drop.

If you have not done so, there is still time, remember: the first indications of leaf yellowing and leaf drop signal the beginning of dormancy. This is when you should stop fertilizing and cut back on watering frequency. You want to simulate the end of the wet season, as it happens in nature. This change in culture will cause the pseudobulbs to harden off, in preparation for dormancy. When most leaves are yellow/brown and have dropped off, cease watering altogether. This marks the start of the dormant period.

The onset of dormancy is caused by several factors: the maturity of the pseudobulb, shortening day length, cooler day/night temperatures and a reduction of root zone moisture. Generally, this process occurs naturally; however, when the plants are cultivated in warm growing areas such as in the home resisting the necessary transition.

By late December, it's important to get your Catasetinae into the dormant stage; to provide them with an adequate rest period so that they will 'wake up' early in the spring to a long growing season.

or under lights, dormancy sometimes needs to be encouraged. I have found that stopping watering in late December, regardless of the number of green leaves, will trigger dormancy in plants that are resisting the necessary transition.

By late December, it's important to get your *Catasetinae* into the dormant stage; to provide them with an adequate rest period so that they will 'wake up' early in the spring to a long growing season.

As my *Catasetinae* go to "sleep" for the winter I am reminded of an old proverb (with apologies to Ben Franklin) "Early to bed and early to rise, makes you healthy, happy and floriferous."

## 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. *Cycnoches*, 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 tried the second method this year, recommended by one of our speakers, and it also worked well. I watered the pseudobulbs just once in a while, and they are doing very well with their first flush of green growth. In any event, water must not be withheld completely. 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.

## SPEAKING OF SPEAKERS

Carol Siegel

The speaker in January gave quite a firm warning  
“Only water your orchids first thing in the morning.  
Never, oh never, water orchids at night  
Or the dust for sure they will certainly bite.”

The speaker in February laughed at that with glee  
“So you think in the jungle high up in the tree  
When the moon is full, there is no tropical rain  
Well, if you think that, think it over again.”

What, oh what, is a member to do  
Now for sure I haven't a clue.  
One says yes, and the other says no  
How am I supposed to know how to grow.

The speaker in March said to grow only species  
To try to preserve their ecological niches.  
“It is up to us to save orchid kind  
If you grow hybrids, you're out of your mind.”

The speaker in April thought that was a hoot  
He firmly advised us to give him the boot.  
“Hybrids are pretty, hybrids are better  
If you breed hybrids, you'll be a trendsetter.”

What, oh what, is a member to do  
Now for sure I haven't a clue  
One says yes, and the other says no,  
How am I supposed to know how to grow.

The speaker in May really was very bossy.  
He strongly advised we grow only sphagnum mossy.  
“Moss is strong and moss is clean  
And you'll hardly have to water in between”.

The speaker in June nearly fell on the floor  
He loudly told us we should have shown him the door.  
“Kiwi bark is the best, as everyone knows  
To grow great orchids that win all the shows.”

What, oh what is a member to do  
Now for sure, I haven't a clue  
One says yes, and the other says no  
How am I supposed to know how to grow.  
The speaker in July stressed watering with rain  
Though collecting it during drought proves a very big pain.  
“The rain is pure, and the rain can't be beat  
Anything else and orchids are dead meat.”



The speaker in August heard this with dismay  
He advised if we did this we would rue the day.  
“What you want is de-ionized, ladies and gents,  
Just don’t give any thought to the recurring expense.”

What, oh what is a member to do  
Now for sure, I haven’t a clue  
One says yes, and the other says no  
How am I supposed to know how to grow.

The speaker in September liked only clay pots  
He only used these, and he certainly had lots.  
“They retain the water and leech out the salts  
As a place to grow they don’t have any faults.”

The speaker in October said he had a bone to pick  
He said the only way to grow was mounted on a stick.  
“It’s how they grow out in nature you see  
I never have to repot so it’s great for me.”

What, oh what is a member to do  
Now for sure, I haven’t a clue  
One says yes, and the other says no  
How am I supposed to know how to grow.

The speaker in November liked to foliar feed  
For fertilizing the bark he saw no need.  
“Just spray it on the leaves and let it work  
Doing anything else makes you a jerk.”

The speaker in December came to our holiday party  
He drank lots of booze and ate really hearty.  
He confessed nobody knows just what to do  
And he gave us advice that we’ll pass on to you.

Enjoy your orchids and give them your heart  
Take lots of time and love them from the start.  
Orchids are like children, and there is no one right way  
Like Darwin, remember they are really just play.



### Getting to the Heart of Valentine's Day Carol Siegel

I was born on Valentine's Day, and I married a heart doctor, so this particular holiday has always had a special meaning for me. How did this Valentine's Day begin? Its origins are shrouded in mystery, but it takes us back to both pagan Roman and early Christian days. The roots of the holiday are steeped in sex and fertility. For 800 years,, the ancient Roman spring festival of Lupercalia was celebrated on February 15. It was dedicated to Faunus, the Roman god of agriculture as well as to Rome's founders, Romulus and Remus. Priests of the Luperci order gathered at a cave where the twins Romulus and Remus were thought to have been raised by a she-wolf or "lupa." A goat was sacrificed for fertility and a dog for purification. Boys sliced the goat's skin into strips, dipped it into the sacrificial blood, and went around slapping ladies with the goat hide to make them fertile. Later, all the ladies' names were placed in an urn, and gentlemen would choose a name. The couple would be paired sexually for a year, which, happily, often led to marriage. Needless to say, it was a very popular holiday.

In 498, the Pope Gelasius decided that it was a little TOO popular. He declared the lottery system "unchristian" and decided to recast it as a Christian holiday dedicated to St. Valentine. Men and women would choose the names of saints from an urn, instead. They would emulate the lives of the saints for the year. (We can only imagine the disappointment of the young Roman men.) Old habits die hard, and Roman men continued to send notes of affection to women on this day.

According to the Catholic Encyclopedia, there are at least two St. Valentines, according to legend. Archeologist recently unearthed a Roman catacomb and an ancient church dedicated to St. Valentine, who apparently was a real person. We just don't know which "Valentine" Pope Gelasius had in mind. Both were third-century Christian martyrs who were put to death on the same day, one an Italian priest and physician and the other the Bishop of Terni. Butler's *Lives of the Saints* tells both stories in an almost identical manner.

Legend tells us that the Roman Emperor Claudius II declared that married men were too emotionally involved and made poor soldiers. He, therefore, outlawed marriages for young men. Valentine, taking pity on young lovers, married them in secret despite the edict. Claudius had the young priest arrested and threw him into prison. His jailer, Asterius, had a blind daughter, and begged Valentine to cure her. Miraculously, Valentine restored her sight with the depth of his faith. When Valentine refused to give up his religion, Claudius had him beaten with clubs and beheaded on February 14, 270. Before he died, he wrote a last letter to the jailer's daughter and signed it, "From Your Valentine," the traditional signature we use today. So Valentine wrote the very first valentine.

The day of Valentine's death was decreed by Pope Gelasius as Valentine's Day, a day of religious devotion. However, sex and love continued to stick to the holiday. It was traditionally the day that birds started to mate, and the custom arose to exchange letters, gloves and gifts on this day to one's beloved. According to UCLA medieval scholar, Henry Ansgar Kelly, it was Geoffrey Chaucer who first linked Valentine's Day with romance. In 1381, he wrote a poem in honor of the engagement of England's King Richard II and Anne of Bohemia. By the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, Englishmen of all classes exchanged gifts and cards on this day. Gradually, printed cards replaced hand-written ones by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Postage was cheap, and people began mailing their notes. In 1840's, American Esther Howland, the Mother of the Valentine, made the first mass-produced valentines in America of lace, ribbons and colorful pictures, known as "scrap" and the American tradition of sending greeting cards was born. Today, one billion valentine cards are sent every year, 25% of all cards ever sent. In 1969, the Catholic Church dropped Valentine's Day from the official calendar of Catholic feasts, but some parishes still celebrate it.

Steeped in history and mystery, Valentine's Day continues to delight young and old with the chance to express our love and affection.



