

# GREATER LAS VEGAS ORCHID SOCIETY

## THE ORCHID COLUMN

SUNDAY, JANUARY 8, 2006 2 p.m.

Carol Siegel, Newsletter Editor

WHITE ELEPHANT SALE AT 1 PM!!

It is unbelievable that 2006 is upon us! We wish all our dear members a year of safety, peace, good health, and LOTS OF BLOOMING ORCHID.

Just for fun, I gave the newsletter a name. The column of an orchid is the fused sexual structure found in the middle of the flower, about the size of a child's pinky. It contains both male and female structures, has evolved to be overwhelming attractive, cleverly knows how to get what it wants, gives lots of pleasure, and is full of life- just like OUR CLUB!

It was our best holiday party ever as our fun-loving club gathered for all the things we love best- music, mayhem, margaritas and orchids (more orchids...) It was great fun to hostess the party. The food was glorious, thanks to the creativity and generosity of our members. A special thanks to Ed McCormack for the ham, Scotty and John Nogaim for the turkey, and Clarice and Dennis Dean for the roast beef, and to me, too. Through the generosity of members, we were able to donate five cartons of food to the Salvation Army. How nice of us! We really loved the margarita machine kindly donated by Mark and Katie Cravenn for the party. We discovered we sang much better after a few margaritas (and THIRTY-FIVE bottles of champagne and wine! ) The real star of the party was Carol Mendocina, who didn't need any booze at all to steal the show. Her magnificent voice and subtle styling kept us all mesmerized as the very talented Mike and Adrianna Thurber accompanied her on keyboard, guitar and violin.

Just in case that weren't enough, artist Ken Hofbauer drew everyone's caricature. I hope you were as pleased with yours as I was with mine. (I look about fifteen years old and 102 lbs with an extremely little nose. We have to invite him back.) I recognized all the members who had done extra special things with certificates of appreciation, and we thrilled to 100 blooming holiday orchids purchased at a great price from our own Santa, Daniel Vong. We also had the extra treat of three boxes of florist orchids donated by English Garden Florists courtesy of Tony Billitere. Orchids and champagne! What could be better!

### JANUARY SPEAKER

On January 8<sup>th</sup>, we will have the pleasure of having Jason Fischer- of Phrag Jason Fischer fame- as our speaker on "The Orchids of Japan." We thank Jeri Lee, Carol Spencer, Miles Hoffman, Gustavo Mattiello, and me for providing food and drink for the meeting. Jason has kindly sent us his biography:

Name: Jason Makoto Fischer

Date of birth: 05/12/1976+

Nationality: 1/2 Japanese, 1/2 American

I've had a life-long education in orchids by having the opportunity to be raised in a family orchid business. My father had me doing chores around the greenhouse from age 5, which most likely and lab work around 14 years of age, and first started breeding with phalaenopsis, which later on lead to helped me develop an interest in orchids over the years. I took up interest in orchid hybridization paphs and phrags, and now just about anything I can get my hands on that's unique. I continue to work primarily with paph, phrag

and neofinetia falcata breeding. I believe we are one of the few companies left who are making an effort to continue the art of breeding paphiopedilum species and hybrids.

My educational interests were strongly influenced by Japan, most likely because it was the other half of my self that I had yet to explore. I decided to pursue the Japanese language and culture studies in high school and college as I was not raised with the language at home. After 6 years of Japanese language, and completing all the Japanese courses at the University of Minnesota, I quit college to move to Japan where I got married, worked as an English teacher and continued my study of language and culture. I've returned to the US to help out the family business again, and hopefully open the Japanese orchid market to the US, as well as the US market to Japan. I also frequently visit the Japan Paphioforum held once a year in Mito city.

After living in Japan and making a few important contacts, I am finally able to import rare varieties of Japanese orchid species such as Neofinetia falcata. There is such a rich culture and history in the Japanese orchid world that is little understood outside of Japan. I have written an article for the Orchid Digest on the neofinetia of Japan which will be published in the spring 2006 issue. I have spent much time studying the history and culture of Japanese orchids, and greatly enjoy sharing this art with others.

## **W**HITE ELEPHANT SALE COME AT 1 TO SET UP AND BUY

In addition, we will be having our annual SEVENTH ANNUAL White Elephant Sale, an event which earned us \$1500 last year. (We donated \$150 to tsunami relief). COME EARLY SO THAT YOU CAN SET UP AND

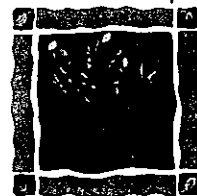
BROWSE AND BUY. ONE O'CLOCK WOULD BE GOOD. We are a very high-class club, and our junk is of the very best quality. Everyone brings in some unwanted treasure—wine, a holiday gift, a lamp, an unused bike, books, CD's, VHS's, DVD's, dishes, pictures, nick nacks, sporting equipment.... Don't have anything elephantine? Buy an orchid or orchid stuff and donate that or take an orchid from your collection and bring it in. Wine or home-made things are always welcome. Start looking around now. It is great fun!

### 2006 DUES ARE DUE, DUDE!

Dues membership for 2006 will remain \$25 for individuals. However, couples membership will be raised from \$35 to \$40. The Nevada Garden Club, which provides the building we meet in for free to us, used to allow us to pay just one membership for each couple membership. We now have to pay two fees for each couple, and therefore, we have to raise the couple fee to compensate for this. Remember, couples get TWO plants at the Christmas party, so couple membership is still a bargain. Don't know if you paid? If there is an (06) after your name on the label on your envelope, you are paid up. If there is an (05), you paid for 2005 and need to pay for 2006 now. If there is an (\*) after your name, you were a guest and need to pay if you want to join the club. I pay for the newsletter and postage myself, so if you can't join, please give me a call (254-4168 or email me at growlove@cox.

### LOOKING BACK TO 2005...

It is hard to believe that 2006 is already here. We had a fantastic year. Pardon us as we



strut our stuff, 2005 style. Looking back at 2005, we have really learned a lot and had great fun. We attracted lots of new members

and had 135 members at year's end, another record! We advertised in newspapers, on TV, on flyers and on invitations. We provided inexpensive, quality orchids at every meeting. We had fabulous speakers who entertained and informed us and sold lovely, interesting plants. We continued our great friendship with Daniel Vong who continued to spoil us with fabulous blooming plants. We raffled everything from plants to fertilizers to potting supplies, ate great food and made wonderful new friends. We added books to our library every month and donated food and money to charities. We participated in an orchid show and two garden shows and won lots of awards. Clarice Dean did a Species of the Month presentation every month. We learned a lot from our show and tell gurus, Mike Levin and Tex Severance and had LOTS more people bringing in their blooming beauties. We made history by rediscovering a native orchid. Let us stroll back through 2005 and remember all we did together.

In **JANUARY**, it may have been raining outside, but it was sunny, funny and warm at our meeting as the talented Carol Mendocino entertained us with a medley of RAIN songs. Famous orchid photographer Charles Rowden taught us the tricks of photographing orchids and showed us his beautiful orchid slides, too. Our Sixth Annual White Elephant Sale was a stupendous success as members outdid themselves carting in their precious- though unwanted- stuff and carting out even more. We made \$1500 and donated \$150 to the Red Cross to aid with tsunami relief. Steve Ninemire catalogued all our library books, and the newsletter had several articles on integrated pest management as well as one I wrote with member input called "Let There Be Light," on orchids and light.

In **FEBRUARY**, proving once again that orchids are more fascinating than the Super Bowl, a big crowd enjoyed Alan Koch of Gold

Country Orchids speak on "Orchid Growing for Dummies." The club gave Valentine's gift of Aussie Gold, and *Cattleya harrisoniana* was our Species of the Month. The newsletter had an original article I wrote "In Praise of Phalaenopsis" as well as a poem by Sue Fordyce and an article on integrated pest management by Doug Conkin.

In **MARCH**, the Review Journal came to our meeting to photograph us for an article about our club. You can't buy that kind of publicity! Jerry Fischer, of Orchids Limited, (father of our speaker next month) presented a lively and entertaining talk on the orchids of Borneo, complete with tales of snakes, Mafia chieftains, murder, gold mines and pirates (and, and yes, orchids...). We sold beautiful orchid pads, bookmarks, and Aussie Gold. We got new books for the library, and Steve Ninemire catalogued the newsletters for the library. Our Species of the Month was *Coelogyne pandurata*, and we participated in the Easter Show at the Cal. Clarice Dean won Best of Show, and our January speaker will be using the hotel certificate she donated, her prize. The newsletter had tips on preparing orchids for show, an article on "My Favorite Things" by Diana Smith, and an article I wrote, "If It Turns Brown and Falls Off, Is It Dead?- Ten Questions You Are Ashamed to Ask."

In **APRIL**, we were all stars. The Review Journal did a full page spread on us, and our very own Eileen McKyton was interviewed about orchids for a television show in Pahrump. An article I wrote on "Growing Orchids in the Desert" was the cover story in the Southern Nevada Home and Garden Magazine, and our favorite Tomato Lady, Leslie Doyle, did TV spots for Plant World. Mike Glikberg, our speaker on oncidium and odontoglossum, outdid himself with blooming orchids. The Mirage, the Wynn, Treasure Island and English Garden Florists began donating orchids to our raffle

(as they did every month after that!) shlepped in graciously by Tony Billitere, Dan Mumau and Mile Lawless. Our club participated in the Spring Garden Show, and we won an award for our display and numerous other awards. Terry Wilsey, who kindly arranged travel and lodging for all our speakers, and Jeri Lee were our representative at the Nevada State Garden Club Meeting. Aaron Schave hosted us once again on his memorable Spring Garden Walk at his home. The newsletter had an original article I wrote, "In Praise of *Catasetum*" and information on *oncidium* and *odontoglossum*.

In MAY, amid maracas and mariachi music (Cinco de Mayo in the park is ALWAYS held during our May meeting), we sold plants from Carter and Holmes and featured *Brassia cordata* as our Species of the Month. The library purchased a book on *laelias*, and Dr. Joseph Arditti presented an amusing slide lecture on the ways orchids adapt to living in the wild. The newsletter had an article from National Wildlife Magazine on Florida's rare orchids and another which I wrote on common household products to use in orchid growing.

In JUNE, Fred Clarke wowed us with a dynamite presentation on "*Catasetum*, *Cynoches*, and *Mormodes*." *Cynoches warscewiczii* was our Species of the Month, and the newsletter had an original article by Diana Smith, "In Praise of *Coelogyne*" (which will be in the Orchid Digest!). In addition, Steve Ninemire wrote an article on our library.

In JULY, we amazed the orchid world by re-discovering our native orchid, *Spiranthes diluvialis*, which had not been seen in over seventy years! We received congratulations from all over the world and deposited a voucher specimen in the herbarium at UNLV. The newsletter had an original article I wrote on our find, which was

published in the summer issue of the NATIVE ORCHID CONFERENCE JOURNAL. Our lively speaker from Hawaii was Sheldon Takasaki, owner of Carmela's Orchids, who did a hands-on presentation on cattleyas. We sold the orchid book, DESERT MAGIC and added one to our library, and the newsletter also had an article from that book on *phalaenopsis*, our subject for the next month's meeting. *Stanhopea tigrina* was our species of the month.

In AUGUST, we had a terrific barbecue in Mt. Charleston at the lovely home of Eldine Stevens. Dan Mumau and Mike Lawless outdid themselves with a delicious barbecue, and Clarice Dean did a talk on *phalaenopsis*. Members loved the hotel plants we gave away.

In SEPTEMBER, in the wake of the devastation in the Gulf Coast, the club generously raised \$225 for the Red Cross Disaster Relief with a special raffle.

We donated \$100 to the AOS and \$100 to the Orchid Digest and gave \$50 to the Pacific Judging Center. Weren't we nice! We sold orchids from Norman's Orchids as well as orchid mouse pads, orchid calendars, orchid fertilizer, orchid books and orchid mix as well as Hydrologs. (This is why we could be so generous.) Doug Conkin did a very good talk on how to plan your orchid collection, and

*Encyclia pentotis* was our Species of the Month. The newsletter had an article that the ORCHID DIGEST asked me to write, "Making the Desert Bloom," which will be published in that magazine in the spring. They accepted other articles which appeared first in the newsletter- "The Zen of the Orchid Club" for January, "Thou Shalt Not Buy" for July, and "Freaks and Stinkers" for September. Leslie Doyle published her wonderful Garden Club magazine,

SILVER STATE GARDENER, and we were all impressed.

In **OCTOBER**, we had a greenhouse tour of the homes of Clarice and Dennis Dean and Dan Mumau and Mike Lawless. Clarice and Mike both did presentations on their great growing areas. Clarice gave away companion plants and Tony gave out hotel orchids for free. Dan and Mike treated us to the best food at their home, too! Steve Ninemire, Terry Wilsey, Becky Biondi and Eileen McKyton were ambassadors at our Day with the Experts at the Springs, and Jeri Lee and Terry Wilsey were our fine representatives to the fall Nevada Garden Club Conference.

The newsletter had an article on dendrobium growing from **DESERT MAGIC**, and I wrote an original article, "That Blasted Bud Blast."

In **November**. Dennis D'Allesdro delighted us with his Indiana Jones tales of his brushes with the law in pursuit of undiscovered orchids and showed us all the new paphiopedilum. Our elections voted in the former board who were very pleased. Marsha Hawley, our new Fund Raising Chairman, did a wonderful job selling our many products, including kelp donated by Leslie Doyle. The newsletter had articles from Hausermann Orchids on orchid culture, as well as two articles from **ORCHIDS FOR DUMMIES**, a list of orchid suppliers and a month-by-month care chart.

In **DECEMBER**, we all ate and drank and made merry and once again realized that the only thing better than growing orchids are growing orchid friends.

After the newsletter is an original article I wrote, "Ten Ways to Kill An Orchid," which has been accepted for publication in **ORCHID DIGEST**. There is also the publisher's proof from **ORCHID DIGEST** on "Freaks and Stinkers," which I wrote for the newsletter a few years ago. Although it says it will come

out in March, it will actually be published in July.

Wishing you the happiest of New Year's. Love,  
Carol 254-4168 growlove@cox.net

**ALL THE PEOPLE WHO MAKE IT HAPPEN:**

CAROL SIEGEL- PRESIDENT  
CLARICE DEAN -VICE-PRESIDENT  
EILEEN MCKYTON- SECRETARY  
DIANA SMITH-TREASURER  
AND

Dan Mumau, Michael Lawless, Marsha Hawley -  
Membership Hospitality Chairmen  
Eileen McKyton and Dan Hawley- Welcome  
Desk

Lillian Patterson- Photographer and Historian  
Dan Mumau, Mike Lawless, and Tony Billitere-  
Raffle Chairmen

Marsha Hawley- Fund Raising Chairlady  
Phyllis Bond, Leslie Doyle, Shelly North and  
Eileen McKyton- Special Events Chairmen  
Jeri Lee and Terry Wilsey- Nevada State  
Garden Club Representative

Alex McKyton -Building Chairmen and  
Webmaster

Tex Severance and Mike Levin- Show and Tell  
Gurus

Tex and Gidget Severance- Judging Chairmen  
Scotty Nogaim- Election Chairman, Raffle  
Lady

Terry Wilsey- Club Travel Agent  
Extraordinaire

Steve Ninemire Library Chairman Clarice Dean,  
Assistant Librarian

Clarice Dean- Trip Chairman

Shelly North- Classy Club Apparel Chairlady

Dan Vong- Most Loved Member\_

.....  
2005 SCHEDULE & TWO ARTICLES FOLLOW



OUR UPCOMING SCHEDULE 2006-2007

OUR CLUB MEETS AT THE NEVADA GARDEN CLUB BUILDING ON WASHINGTON AND TWIN LAKES, BETWEEN VALLEY VIEW AND RANCHO. THE BUILDING IS OPEN AT 1 PM FOR SET AND WHITE ELEPHANT SALE. COME EARLY!

January 8, 2006 Jason Fischer,  
ORCHIDS OF JAPAN  
WHITE ELEPHANT SALE

February 5, 2006 Mark Dimmitt  
NO GREENHOUSE, NO  
PROBLEM  
Growing Orchids Outdoors  
in the Desert!

March 5, 2006 Doug Conkin,  
INTEGRATED PEST  
MANAGEMENT

April 2, 2006 John Salventi,  
GROW AWARD WINNING

May 7, 2006 Harry Phillips  
TINY TREASURES

June 5, 2006 Jim Comstock  
3-D ORCHID PHOTOS  
July 9, 2006 Eric Christensen

August 6, 2006 BARBECUE

September 10, 2006 Marni Turkel,  
SECRETS TO GROWING  
GREAT ORCHIDS

October 1, 2006 Mike Glikbarg,  
PAPHIOPEDILUM

November 5, 2006 Bill Bergstrom,  
THE ORCHIDS OF MEXICO

December 3, 2006 Holiday Party

January 7, 2007 Steve Frowine,  
ORCHIDS FOR DUMMI

## Ten Ways to Kill An Orchid

Carol Siegel

They say that you should only write about the things you know best. When Nick Burnett, gifted speaker, came to our Greater Las Vegas Orchid Society several years ago, he jokingly said that he would show us seven ways to kill an orchid- because that was what he knew best! We howled with recognition as he regaled us with all his favorite ways to hurry an orchid on its way to the garbage can- and all his favorite ways to avoid that trip as well.

Nick, however, is not the only expert on orchids and the Grim Reaper. Many of us collect the tags from orchids that have sadly bit the dust, colored plastic tombstones which remind us of our departed beauties and our worst mistakes. With a nod to Nick, I present to you ten other ways to kill an orchid in the hope that you will avoid- rather than repeat- them.

**1, LISTEN TO WHAT EVERYONE TELLS YOU (AND IT'S COROLLARY- DON'T LISTEN TO WHAT ANYONE TELLS YOU)** When my son, now 38, was a baby, everyone told you to put a baby to sleep on its stomach. When his daughter, now 12, was born, everyone told you to put a baby to sleep on its side. Now, doctors recommend you ONLY put babies to sleep on their stomachs. All these recommendations were supposed to absolutely prevent sudden infant death syndrome . Well, they couldn't all be right or all be wrong. Just because people tell you something with authority doesn't mean they are right FOR YOU and your orchid babies.

No matter what speaker comes to a meeting, he tells you that everything the speaker at the last meeting recommended was dead wrong. If you follow what everyone tells you, foliar spraying with strong fertilizer solutions or pouring peroxide through your potting mix every watering or switching all your plants to clay pellets or ground-up rubber tires, you will have a formula for sudden orchid death syndrome.

When you are told, for example, to put your orchids in alliflor, make sure that you evaluate the advice. Is this suitable for your dry climate? Does this make sense for all your orchids or just for those that like to dry out? Will this fit in

with your very heavy daily watering? Ask yourself if this fits in with what you do and where you do it.

Wes Addison, a great grower from Tucson, says that if you adjust one element of your growing, you have to change something else. If you are only watering once every ten days, you may have to switch to a water-retentive mix like sphagnum moss. For you, this makes sense although it won't work at all for a heavy-watering cattleya grower. The more bizarre the suggestion, the greater is your need to respectfully evaluate what you hear. Remember, when somebody gives you advice, he should preface it by saying, "In my conditions, with what I grow, at this time, this seems to work well. It may or may not work for you, but you might want to try it if you are not having success. You might want to try it on a few plants and see how you do." Have you EVER heard a speaker say this? They mean to, but sometimes they forget to add the disclaimer.

## **2. DON'T WEAR YOUR GLASSES WHEN YOU WATER YOUR ORCHIDS.**

This, of course, is especially important if you wear glasses or NEED to wear glasses, but it applies equally to all of us. Pay attention to your orchids. Really LOOK at them. Doug Conkin, intelligent writer on integrated pest management, says that you should spend 15 minutes every day with your orchids.

All of us spend 15 minutes a day with our dogs, cats, and kids. We really pay attention to them so that we can take the very best care we can of them.

Doug says that there is a day when there is only one mealy bug. Neglected, they often surprise us a month down the road with a disgusting infestation of the cotton creatures which refuse to be dislodged with the most toxic of poison regimes. If you really examine your orchids every day, up close and personal, you will be able to use a q-tip with soapy water or a quick spray with alcohol and a little horticultural oil and deal with the problem then and there. People who neglect to spend time, who spray with a hose from a distance, who never remove an orchid from its pot and examine the roots, set themselves up for orchid death. Get to know your orchids. Put your hands on them. Examine the bottom of their leaves. Feel their roots. Check the consistency of their potting medium. Put on your glasses, dear, and avoid the trip to the garbage.

## **3. PRETEND YOU ARE MORE SUCCESSFUL THAN YOU ARE (AKA LYING)**

We all know people who say they never have scale, they never have had a bud blast, and they never have an orchid that doesn't bloom. Baloney. They are lying.



It is okay to admit that you need help. The only way to learn is to ask for help. When all my new cattleya growths turned black, I asked a former president, and she promptly suggested that I might be keeping my growing area too cold and wet in winter. She was right! I warmed up my growing area and watered earlier in the day, and I never had a new growth turn black again.

Sometimes, it is hard to admit you are having trouble. One speaker asked us to bring plants in that needed help. I was the only one who did, and she ripped it out of the pot, showing its poor little rootless, soggy bottom to the whole meeting. It was very embarrassing. However, she made some excellent suggestions to me, which really helped me be more successful. Never be ashamed to admit that you are having difficulty. Everyone has difficulty. Everyone loses more plants than they care to admit. Most of us have many plants that refuse to bloom. If you share your problems, you will be less discouraged and learn lots of useful lessons.

#### **4. PUT IT IN YOUR YARD AND FORGET ABOUT IT.**

I went to the Santa Barbara show one year and was speaking to a native about my problems with watering and fertilizing. She turned to me in exasperation and said, "Oh, honey, just put it in your yard like I do and forget about it!" I live in the desert in Las Vegas where it is 120 degrees in summer and 10 degrees in winter. Few orchids can survive this brutal climate outdoors without some very special modifications.

An orchid comes from somewhere, and you live somewhere else. Millions of years have made that orchid superbly adapted to its native environment. When you buy an orchid, you have to know where it came from so you can provide for its needs. Is it a cattleya from a rainforest in Brazil? Is it an invasive weed from Hawaii like *Phaius tankervilleae* which can survive outdoors in the desert? Did it grow in a swamp in Florida or Central America like *Bletia purpurea*? Did it grow on a shady forest floor in China like *Bletilla striata*? Do you have conditions to offer the plant that it will like? If you do not, what are you willing to do to modify your environment to make it closer to the native environment of the orchid? Can you up the humidity? Are you willing to provide shade? Will you pay to put in a reverse-osmosis water system? My dear friend Diana Smith, talented grower, says you have to be willing to modify your environment to match the needs of your orchid or you just can't grow it well. Don't just "buy and forget about it"!

## **5. BUY ONLY THE CHEAPEST-OR THE MOST EXPENSIVE- ORCHIDS.**

You can always tell an orchid addict by how poor they are. There is no such thing as "extra money" for an orchid enthusiast. There is always a special orchid, a new potting mix, a light cart, an upgraded watering system. One of the greatest pleasures of growing orchids is that it involves a lot of shopping and even more spending.

It is a strange paradox that buying either very cheap or very expensive orchids can set you up for orchids that die. Cheap orchids, often purchased at hardware stores or brought in by members for the raffle, are often not the most desirable. Sadly, hardware stores and gourmet grocery stores often know little about orchids. They leave their plants on cold docks or in hot trucks, which suck the life out of the plants before you even get them. Stores sometimes neglect to water their orchids enough, and the plants can have lots of stressed buds that later blast. The orchids are produced quickly for their flowers, and the store EXPECTS you to throw them out. Often, the plants are fully open and look bedraggled. Members, on the other hand, usually bring in plants to the raffle that they don't want. Of course, some are just culling their collection, but sometimes the plants are those that are mules and don't bloom or have had bugs or just are not that nice-looking. Our club gets many plants donated from hotels, a real treasure, but sometimes there are some that have been neglected by well-meaning workers who have lots to do besides care for plants. When no one is looking, slip the plant out of the pot and examine the roots and medium. Pick the best ones. Encourage members to sometimes give away GOOD plants and to never bring in sick plants. Don't buy ALL your plants from the cheapie dealer. It is okay to buy these "bargain" plants but don't feel bad if they up and die. Sometimes, a bargain is no bargain.

On the other hand, some plants are very expensive because they are rare, and they are rare because they are hard to grow and very fussy. They die easily and bloom rarely. Be sure to ask if you buy a very expensive plant, if it is expensive because it is a real beauty, an award-winning knock-out or just a disappointing fussy budget

## **6. WELCOME ALL NEW PLANTS WITH OPEN ARMS INTO YOUR COLLECTION**

We get so excited when we get a new plant in bloom that we want to introduce it immediately to all our other plants so that they can share the beauty and share

the joy. You often can't tell if an orchid is diseased or buggy just by looking. Remember that Rock Hudson looked really good for a long time even though he was very sick. Resist the urge to give unconditional love to new plants. Isolate, quarantine, and examine everything new. Take a few weeks to see what crawly thing you may have gotten for free with your purchase. Some people give a little spray of insecticide to new plants. Although I am very stingy with pesticide, I always replace the potting mix of all new plants, in bud, flower, or not gently in Aussie Gold, a diatomite potting mix, as soon as it arrives. I have visited a grower who is well-respected, and I have seen roaches on the floor. I don't want to bring those eggs into my collection. Although not everyone agrees, I have found that this policy virtually eliminates bugs taking a free ride from a grower or store and that very few of my buds blast when this "gentle" repotting is done.

#### **7. BUY PLANTS BUT NOT BOOKS**

If you read a book or magazine article every time you buy an orchid, it is like buying an insurance policy for your new orchid. If your orchids keep dying, replace orchid buying with book buying. You can buy orchid books from the AOS ([www.orchidweb.org](http://www.orchidweb.org)), from Amazon.com, from Alibris, from many local book stores. Even if you have read a book in the past, re-reading it again will remind you of many things you have forgotten or were too inexperienced to appreciate at the first read. Encourage your club to build a library and to have regular book reports. Borrow books. Be sure to reward yourself with a subscription to ORCHID DIGEST or ORCHIDS magazine, two fine publications that have lots of great information to help you grow. Make sure your club library has subscriptions as well.

#### **8. GIVE ORCHIDS AS GIFTS TO DOG LOVERS.**

Orchids are living things. Don't give them as gifts to just anybody. Many of us like to share our pleasure with our friends and families at holidays or birthdays by giving orchid gifts. If you give an orchid to someone with no experience or interest in growing, realize that the orchid will probably be thrown out after blooming or after a discouraging month or two. Give the orchid only if you are willing to teach the person how to rebloom it or are willing to babysit it until it blooms again. I have several "guests" that are waiting to rebloom so I can return them to their new owners. Make sure you are willing to do this before you give the gift. You might want to give the orchid and a paid membership to your orchid club as a gift. Better yet, just give the club membership and see if the person

really wants to grow orchids. You would never give a puppy to your friend and think it all right for him to throw it out after the holidays.

### **9.FAIL TO PLAN**

They say that failing to plan is the same as planning to fail. If you buy orchids like a nervous tick with no planning, you will wind up with lots of orchids that don't do well in your growing area. Doug Conkin wisely told our club that you must make a plan of what orchids you want to buy. He suggested selecting five genera and a few little subsets, making a list of those you really want and then sticking to it. Rather than buying the same orchids that die over and over again, see what does really well for you. If you have success with phalaenopsis, buy more phalaenopsis and perhaps branch out into other low light plants like paphiopedilum. If masdevallias die in your warm environment, try oncidium that like it warmer. If you have no time to water, avoid little mounted pleurothallids that need lots of watering so they don't dry out. Try larger plants in sphagnum or diatomite that will stay wetter. In scuba, they tell you to plan your dive and dive your plan. You will have fewer orchid deaths if you plan your purchases.

### **10.TREAT IT LIKE A HOUSEPLANT.**

People who begin growing orchids often have years of success growing houseplants. They bring their orchids into their homes and lovingly treat them like their houseplants and are shocked when their orchids curl up and die. Orchid and houseplants are very different. We grow most houseplants for their lush green leaves and not for their flowers. The lush green color is a sign that the houseplants are living at the lower limit of the light they need. Their leaves are producing lots of extra chlorophyll to cope with the low light conditions, making their leaves look greener. Most of these plants grow in soil and don't object to being treated the same way all year round. We don't care if they bloom.

Orchids are different. 80% of them grow clinging by their thick, velamen-covered roots to the bark of a tree. The other 20% grow in the leaf litter and mold of forests and meadows. They need air in their mix and don't appreciate being grown in soil. They do better mounted as in nature or potted, for our convenience, in bark, coconut chips, Aussie Gold (diatomite) or the like. Many of them need to dry out between waterings so that they have air around their roots. They need different treatment in winter and summer to bloom. Most don't appreciate tap water loaded with calcium.

Most orchids have really unimpressive leaves and are grown for their flowers. A dark green leaf usually means the orchid is not getting enough light and will not bloom. Moderate to light green leaves usually mean that your plant is getting the right amount of light to bloom. Think of ways to give your orchid more light. If you grow under lights, use grow-light fluorescent or HID bulbs and replace them annually. Put light-loving plants closer to bulbs or to the middle of fluorescents, and keep leaves, fluorescents, and light fixtures clean. Don't crowd plants together. If you grow on a windowsill or greenhouse, make sure your window or glass is clean. Bring the plant closer to the window of your house or glass of your greenhouse for more light. Buy a light meter and see if your window or greenhouse is getting enough light. It might be too dark to bloom orchids. You can add artificial lights to your window or greenhouse to supplement your natural light. You can make your growing area more reflective with white paint, mirrored tiles or Mylar,

Make sure you treat your orchid differently with the seasons. Your orchid is genetically programmed to bloom in response to certain signals from the rainforest or jungle or mountaintop where it evolved. Your living room may be missing these signals. You should provide less light in winter and more light in summer. You should have it ten to twenty degrees cooler on winter nights than in summer. If you supplement your greenhouse light with artificial light or grow under lights, you will have to put your artificial light on a timer to mimic the light that nature is giving- gradually increasing up to 18 hours in summer and decreasing to perhaps 12 hours in winter. If you are growing in a windowsill in the living room, and light is always on for the same number of hours while you conduct your normal life, you need to block the living room or TV light with a screen or sheet. You can also put the orchid in a room that is seldom-used and can be dark when it is dark outside.

Many orchids need to be ten to twenty degrees cooler on winter nights to bloom. If you grow in your living room, opening a window will often do the trick. Turn the thermostat down at night. If you grow under lights, temperature will drop about 5 degrees when the lights are off at night. Open the door in your greenhouse a crack. Get a minimum-maximum thermometer (available at many places including Charley's Greenhouse) to see just what a variation you have in temperature. You MUST have a temperature difference at night. Just dropping temperature 10 or 20 degrees at night will go a long way to making your plants bloom. If avoid these ten pitfalls, you will avoid many of your orchid trips to the garbage!

more ↓

# FREAKS AND STINKERS

CAROL SIEGEL

WHEN MOST PEOPLE THINK OF ORCHIDS, they think of Miss America, gorgeous creatures with sensuous lips, perfect form, and a luscious fragrance. In reality, many orchids are more like teen-age boys with blue hair, metal in their mouths, ugly tattoos, and a rather disagreeable smell. This is the freak show side of orchids, the weird and wacky, the deformed, the midgets, the giants, and the stinkers. Come with us to explore this bizarre world of unbelievable orchids.

Fabulously gorgeous, *Bulbophyllum fletcherianum* has the foulest odor of any orchid. One of the largest of the genus, *B. fletcherianum* has leaves that can be one foot across and seven feet long, taller than a man! You can buy this glorious plant on the web, but be warned. Under that spectacular leaf bloom 20 to 30 clustered flowers, each of which looks like a toucan's bill and smells like a herd of dead elephants. The devastating foul rotting-flesh smell makes it impossible to enter the greenhouse. Like most plants of the genus *Bulbophyllum*, this stinky beauty is pollinated by flies, which love the smell of urine, blood, dung and rotting meat. This is not the flower to give your girlfriend at the prom.

To entice pollinators, orchids have developed other weird smells that cater to the kinky tastes of insects. *Galeandra greenwoodiana* smells like a wet dog, while *Bulbophyllum phalaenopsis* smells like a garbage can in summer, and *Pleurothallis cocornaensis* smells like unwashed socks. Many a collector has washed his feet several times thinking it was he and not the orchids who needed a bath. There must be a pollinator out there who fancies the smell of dirty feet.

Some orchid freaks stink, while others are big enough to blot out the sun or small enough to pass through the eye of a needle. Weighing more than half a ton and growing to forty feet across, *Grammatophyllum speciosum* surely wins the prize for most massive orchid. More than 100 flowers can be borne on flower spikes five- to eight-feet tall!! Men harvesting the orchid have been killed when the orchid fell on them. Orchids of species of *Grammatophyllum* from Southeast Asia and the Pacific islands tie with their remarkable look-a-like from Ecuador, *Cyrtopodium longibulbosum*, for sheer mass. Both these species produce enormous clumps of huge pseudobulbs. *Cyrtopodium* bears pseudobulbs up to 11 ½ feet tall while *Grammatophyllum* pseudobulbs can reach 16 feet tall.

However, there are even taller orchids. Before the discovery of *Sobralia altissima*, the title "tallest orchid" went to a rare Panamanian slipper orchid, *Selenipedium chica*. The stems have been recorded to be 16 ½ feet tall. It lost its title to the giant *Sobralia altissima*, which has been recorded at a stupendous 41 feet in height, more than 2 ½ times as tall!! That's as high as a four-story building!

While some orchids are monstrously big, others are as tiny as an ant. They are so teeny that you can never run out of space. A collection of hundreds of these miniatures can fit on a shelf. These are the orchids you need a magnifying glass to truly appreciate, the midgets and dwarfs of the orchid world.

A bouquet of *Platystele ornata* or the pseudobulb of *Bulbophyllum globuliforme* could fit on the head of a pin. A bouquet of *Lepanthes* flowers could easily fit inside a wedding ring. Tiny blooms of *Pleurothallis tridentata* rest shyly nestled in the top of their leaves, visible only with a hand lens. The entire plant of *Pleurothallis grobyi* grows only six inches tall, while the blooms of *Trisetella hoejeri* resemble tiny flying origami birds nestled in the one-inch-tall foliage.

Among the strangest miniatures is *Pleurothallis schiedei* (syn. *P. ornata*) with flowers only 1/4 inch wide. White streamers just 1/25 of an inch long dangle from the edges of this Mexican species like tiny fringe on a lampshade. Any change in humidity or temperature makes these streamers wriggle. Passing flies are enticed to lay their eggs in the flower, mistaking the wriggling streamers for maggots and the black dots for baby flies. It is part of the subtribe Pleurothallidinae, which comprise fully 10 percent of all orchid species. It is here that you find many of the Lilliputian flowers.

At least, the stinky, giant and midget orchids look like orchids. Other orchids have the audacity to look like insects, fruit, mushrooms or aphids in order to get pollinated. They look nothing like an orchid at all. Fully a third of all orchids pretend to be something they are not, stopping at nothing in order to get pollinated.

In order to attract fruit flies, *Pleurothallis endotrachys* looks and smells like rotten fruit. In order to fool fungus gnats, *Dracula vampira*'s lip looks like a mushroom and emits mushroom smell. In order to make carrion flies visit to lay their eggs, *Bulbophyllum giganteum* looks and smells like a big piece of rotten liver.

Among the most bizarre orchids are those in the genus *Ophrys*. *Ophrys* means "eyebrow", and this hairy orchid bears an almost uncanny resemblance to female bees and wasps. Plants of this genus even emit a fragrance identical to that produced in the Dufour's gland of female bees in need of a little male companionship. The orchid lip has a tiny ridge, identical to the ridge surrounding the genital apparatus of a female bee. In the spring, male solitary bees come out of the ground looking to mate. There are fewer females, and the ladies mate only once in their lives. Some males are really inexperienced and are easily fooled by the *Ophrys* orchids. The male bees mount the flowers and attempt to copulate with them. In the process, they pick up pollinia, and frustrated, because the flowers don't quite do the trick for the bee, they fly off to

another flower and fall for the same trick again. It's called pseudocopulation, but it is only false for the bee. It is real for the orchid. The bee doesn't score, but the orchid does! Many other look just like insects including *Caladenia*, *Trichoceros*, and *Drachea*.

Some orchids are freaks because they are missing parts that normal orchids have. There are actually orchids with no leaves. The entire process of photosynthesis takes place in their specially adapted green roots. Their vestigial leaves are now just small scale-like structures.

The most famous of the leafless orchids is *Polyradicion lindenii*, the ghost orchid, made legendary as the subject of the book *Orchid Thief* and the movie *Adaptation*. When not in bloom, the whole plant looks like a grey-green wagon wheel of thick roots attached to a tree trunk. Then, the nearly-unnoticeable roots suddenly throw a stunningly eerie six-inch glowing-white flower with what looks like two frog's legs hanging down and an eight-inch nectary. Bizarre and leafless, this freak makes its living without any leaves at all.

Another bizarre leafless orchid is *Corallorrhiza striata*, gaily decorated with a riot of peppermint stripes. This odd orchid gets its nourishment solely by being parasitic on its fungus hosts. This is one of those orchids that doesn't look like most people's idea of an orchid. Known as the "striped coral root", its fungus-infected roots have a knobby appearance like pieces of branched coral. It is known as a "mycotrophic plant" because it relies on a special relationship with mycorrhizal fungus for its food. All orchids start their lives dependent on fungus for food because orchid seeds have no endosperm or food tissue for their growing embryos. The little seed must land on the fungus that serves as its nanny providing food. As most orchids grow, they develop leaves and become self-supporting. *Corallorrhiza striata*, however, is like a teen-ager who never leaves home. It continues to feed off its fungus for food throughout its whole life. The strangely-shaped plants are just rhizome, stem and flowers, and appear above the ground to bloom.

At least the *Corallorrhiza* bloom above ground. Some weird orchids live their whole lives underground. *Rhizanthella gardneri*, the Underground Orchid, of Western Australia, spends its whole life underground, and is pollinated by blind subterranean termites. In 1928, Farmer John Trott, of Corrigin, unearthed the first specimens of the orchid when plowing land that had been burnt. It grows in association with *Melaleuca uncinata*, which sheds its leaves to produce thick layers of leaf mold under which the orchid grows. The head of tiny, crowded orchids is exposed when the floral bracts expand and occasionally push through the leaf mold, allowing a little light and perhaps another pollinator to enter. The "capitulum" or head looks like one large flower but is really a whole group of small flowers, a "bouquet".

From stinkers to fatties, from giants to midgets, from liars to weirdos, orchids are surely a strange and

wonderful family of flowers.

## References

- [http://members.iinet.net.au/~emntee/Rhizanthella\\_garnerii7.htm](http://members.iinet.net.au/~emntee/Rhizanthella_garnerii7.htm)  
<http://www.orchidspecies.com/bulbflecterianum.htm>  
Christenson, Eric. "The Largest Orchids," *Orchids*, November 1999, p.1111.  
Davies, Paul H., "The Genus Ophrys," *American Orchid Society Bulletin*, February 1985, pp. 132-141.  
Fitch, Charles Marden. "Fragrant Orchids," *Orchids*, April 2000, pp.322-333.  
Kalman, Bela. *Rare Orchids*. Little Brown and Company, New York. 1999.  
McCartney, Chuck. "African Affinities," *Orchids*, March 2000, pp. 244-250.  
McQueen, Jim and Barbara. *Minature Orchids*. Timber Press, Oregon. 1992.  
Pridgeon, Alec, ed. *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Orchids*. Timber Press, Oregon.1992.  
Watts, Jim. "Leafless Orchids," *Orchids*, March 2003, pp, 190-201.  
Watts, Jim. "The Ghost Orchid," *Orchids*. March 2003, pp. 202-203.

Author info - need

NEED:

Captions and slides

