

# GREATER LAS VEGAS ORCHID SOCIETY

## THE ORCHID COLUMN

### SUNDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2006

#### IT'S PARTY TIME!

It's party time once more! Our holiday party will be held at my home, 8601 Robinson Ridge Drive in Canyon Gate Country Club (located between Durango and Fort Apache on West Sahara) at **12:30 p.m.** on Sunday, December 3<sup>rd</sup>. From Rainbow and Sahara, go west on Sahara until you pass Durango. The next light is Canyon Gate Drive (opposite the Lakes). Make a right turn into the guard gate. Make the first right after the guard gate, which will be Medalist, Iron Ridge and Robinson Ridge in just a minute. Mine is the first house on Robinson Ridge Drive. It has a peculiar grass driveway, copper exterior lights, and stained-glass shell doors. Lost? Call me at 254-4168.

We will eat and drink and shmooze and enjoy each other's company, as always. I will provide music and song with Mike and Adrianne Thurber who will play keyboard and violin and sing. Our very own Carol Mendocino will add her magnificent voice and great talent to our party. I will provide paper goods, roast duck, roast pork and one prime rib, fried rice, tiramasu, bread pudding, bok choy salad, wine, champagne AND a MARTINI BAR with a bartender! (Very happening...)

Each of us is asked to BRING A DISH (FILLED WITH FOOD, OF COURSE!) for 10-12, main dish, salad, side dish or dessert. WE ALSO TRADITIONALLY ASK

\*\*\*\*\*12:30 p.m. (NOT 2 p.m. EARLIER!)\*\*\*\*\*

EVERYONE TO BRING A FEW CANNED GOODS OR BOXED FOOD WHICH WE WILL DONATE TO THE SALVATION ARMY TO HELP THE NEEDY.

We thank Nita Bragg for volunteering to bring a ham. We thank our chefs Dan Mumau and Mike Lawless for treating us to their prime rib, and appreciate Dr. Joel Davidson who is frying up two turkeys for us. Many thanks to Bill Whaley who will bring luau smoked pork. Loosen your belts, put on your fancy pants, and join us for a good time.

The club will underwrite 100 holiday blooming orchids which members will get for a \$6 raffle ticket. The plants are worth at least \$20, so it is a bargain. Everyone will get one (couples will get two). I can't believe that it is that time again, but good things can't come around too fast! Don't forget your dish for 10-12, your canned goods, and your party shoes. MAKE SURE TO BRING SERVING SPOONS AND FORKS FOR YOUR DISH AND HAVE IT HEATED AND CUT-UP, IF NECESSARY, AHEAD OF TIME.

It is membership dues time again. All our speakers are costing us more due to increased air fares and gasoline costs, and we unfortunately need to raise dues a bit. Single dues, which have not been

raised in years, will be raised to \$30, but couples dues will remain \$40 since they were raised \$5 last year. If the extra \$5 presents a hardship, tell Diana, and we will help.

We held our 2007 elections, and our current board was elected. I am honored to be president and appreciate your confidence and support. Clarice Dean, who is such a bright, helpful, smart person and a great grower was justly re-elected vice-president. Eileen McKyton, a lovely and gracious lady who does so much for our club and is the friendly and helpful face at the front desk, was re-elected secretary. Diana Smith, my warm, knowledgeable friend who helps me, and everyone else, at every meeting, was re-elected treasurer. We are honored to serve and consider the club a source of pleasure and fun.

In November, Bill Bergstrom and his lovely wife Doris shared their orchid exploring adventures in Mexico, much to our delight. We thank Alex and Eileen McKyton for housing and entertaining our speaker.

The club added a new feature- a CULTURE DESK, manned by everyone's favorite orchid grower, Diana Smith. If you are a new member and have a question, or if you are an OLD member and have a problem, stop by before the meeting and ask Diana what to do. We thought this would be a friendly way to help people who have questions and problems and don't know whom to ask- or are too shy to come up to one of us. Diana has grown for more than 30 years, is a teacher, and is the nicest person, so who better to start out our CULTURE DESK.

We loved the chili bar and deserts provided by our friends Becky Biondi, Cathy Loftfield, Sharon Proehl and Jackie Braverman. So delicious and so nice of you.

Our library now has a new book, ORCHID SPECIES CULTURE: ONCIDIUM/ODONTOGLOSSUM CULTURE, part of the great orchid series by Margaret and Charles Baker. We are so cutting edge that the book was written up this month in ORCHIDS magazine. Be sure to take out some of our free, excellent books. It is the best way to make those orchids bloom.

We hope Tony Billitere, who has pneumonia, is feeling better. He begged and carted in plants for our raffle despite being so sick. What a trooper and what a friend. If you want to give Tony a call and ask how this great friend of our club is doing, his number is (870-9639) and his email is [billitere@nans.net](mailto:billitere@nans.net). Thanks to Myra Glassman who took care of some of the plants, too. Our great friends at English Garden Florists, the Mirage, Treasure Island, the Wynn, and Plant World, help support our raffle which subsidizes our educational program.

I had an article printed in Orchid Digest, "Freaks and Stinkers," and Lonesome Fields, our member, won the subscription to the magazine I donated to the raffle because I got published. ORCHID DIGEST has also accepted the "Fidgeting" article that appeared last month in our newsletter for publication. A dozen of our members contributed to that article, and we will all be published world-wide. How fun! Thanks for all your help. It made the article much more interesting to have your input.

Many of us have been growing in Aussie Gold for a few years now, and I asked Rosemary Harrison, the owner of the company some questions. Her answers are reprinted after the newsletter. Just because Aussie Gold is a long-lasting mix doesn't mean you never have to look at your roots again or never have to evaluate if it is in need of refreshing or replacement. This is a learning experience, and I thought it important that the mix makers give some thought as to what we should do a few years out. Remember- You, your growing conditions, your watering style and your plants are a unique combination. You will have to "fidget" a little to come up with what works best for you.

Following the newsletter is also a poem "The Orchid Growers Christmas" by Elaine Cantwell from the December 1986 AMERICAN ORCHID SOCIETY BULLETIN and an article "The Trouble with Tribles" by Ned Nash from AMERICAN ORCHID SOCIETY BULLETIN August 1987 on the three kinds of orchids you are most likely to get as a gift—and what to do with them.

HAPPY THANKSGIVING! May you always have much to be thankful for.  
Love, Carol growlove@cox.net

## THE PEOPLE WHO MAKE IT HAPPEN:

CAROL SIEGEL- PRESIDENT  
CLARICE DEAN -VICE-PRESIDENT  
EILEEN MCKYTON- SECRETARY  
DIANA SMITH-TREASURER  
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, Myra Glassman and Gail Harris- Nevada State Garden Club Representative  
Alex McKyton -Building Chairmen and Webmaster  
Tex Severance and Mike Levin- Show and Tell Gurus and Judging Chairmen  
Scotty Nogaim- Election Chairman, Raffle Lady  
Terry Wilsey- Club Travel Agent  
Steve Ninemire Library Chairman  
Clarice Dean, Assistant Librarian, Trip Chairman  
Shelly North- Classy Club Apparel Chairlady  
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## COMING ATTRACTIONS...

Our meetings are held at the Nevada Garden Club Building at Twin Lakes and Washington between Valley View and Rancho at the western edge of Lorenzi Park. The meeting starts at 2, but I open the building at 1 for shopping and setup.

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| December 3, 2006  | Seventh Annual Holiday Party  |
| January 7, 2007   | Jason Fischer, "World of Phragmipedium"   |
| February 4, 2007  | Steve Frowine, "Orchids for Dummies"  |
| March 4, 2007     | Glen Decker, "European Orchid Growing/<br>Spectacular Phrag Kovachii"                                       |
| April 1, 2007     | Dr. Paul Johnson "Insects and Orchids:<br>Complexities of Global Domination"                                |
| May 6, 2006       | Doug Conkin, "Growing Cattleyas"  |
| June 3, 2007      | Fred Clarke, Sunset Orchids, "The Exciting<br>World of Bulbophyllum"  |
| July 8, 2007      | Mark Hachadourian, "Pleurothallids"<br>OR (if he can't make it) "The 15-Minute<br>Solution" - A Culture Day |
| August 5, 2007    | Barbecue Mt Charleston  |
| September 9, 2007 | Leon Glicenstein, Hoosier Orchids,<br>"Jewel Orchids"   |
| October 7, 2007   | Helen Hersch, "Advanced Windowsill Growing"   |
| November 4, 2007  | Greenhouse Tour   |
| December 2, 2007  | Eighth Annual Holiday Party   |

calculated for synergy, but we understand the desire to add a little of your favorite medium. We do not believe that this will improve the Aussie Gold Orchid Mix. If you decide to add anything, please ensure that it is something like Diatomite or lava rock that will not break down. Again, I repeat that we do not believe that adding anything will improve AGOM!

**7. What about phal roots coming out of the pot?**

We suggest using a larger, clear plastic pot and ensuring that the roots are pointing down. In nature, they tend to grow ALONG the waterfalls, but providing the AGOM does not dry out, they should stay happily in the pot.

**8. Losing roots on mottled-leaf paphs**

Again, ensure that the pot is big enough and they should continue to grow in the pot. Lots of our paphs like to be cramped, so it's a bit of a canundrum. They do not seem to suffer if you take them out of the pot to check them more regularly than other orchids.

**9. What about fertilizer build-up?**

The first rule of thumb is to use "good" water, and to fertilize less often and with a weaker solution than before you used AGOM. Aussie Gold does not need to be flushed every month like bark and other media, and the salt built appears to be minimal. We dispute the article stating that Diatomite holds salts. Diatomite is used worldwide to cleanse water and other liquids, so salt build-up is nonsense!

I hope this answers all your questions. If not, we will be back home later this evening, and I can add to the above before we retire tonight, so that you will have the information before your meeting tomorrow.

Love

Ro

PS I will be adding this information to the website to help people, so if any more questions arise tomorrow, please let me know

## The Trouble with Tribbles

NED NASH<sup>1</sup>

**N**ONE WHO HAS watched *Star Trek* with any regularity can forget the Tribbles. They were cute, furry, affectionate little varmints that were loved by all. Unfortunately, they proliferated out of control. Similar to orchids in their habit of multiplication, they were quite dissimilar to orchids in that while all Tribbles look alike, a matched set of orchids is rarely found. This only increases the charm of orchids.

Here is where we "pick up" that other group of beginning orchidists, those who actually *asked* for their first Tribble — er, orchid. Whether through the good offices of a friend or by intent, you have obtained your first orchid plant(s), and now you want to know how to grow it (them). Most people already have in their home a spot that would prove satisfactory for growing orchids. If there is an area where typical house plants already grow well, this would be the obvious choice. Depending on the type of orchid, the area should be more or less bright, because *no* orchid will grow — let alone flower — with insufficient light. Raising other plants in the same area helps to provide the needed humidity owing to collective transpiration. We are not talking about steam room levels here. People are most comfortable with relative humidity in the 40-50% range. So are orchids, with some exceptions.

Of prime importance to the successful growing of orchids in the home is thoughtful selection of appropriate types. The three most commonly grown types in order of ease of culture are phalaenopsis, paphiopedilums, and cattleyas. Usually, however, the order of acquisition is somewhat different. In most areas of the country, first orchids are either a cattleya or a phalaenopsis, with paphiopedilums a distant third. (We are not considering cymbidiums here because, while popular gifts especially in southern California, they simply will not grow or flower well in the home.)

### CATTLEYS

Phalaenopsis are by far the easiest and most satisfactory of orchids as house plants. Nevertheless, when most beginners think of an "orchid" they think of a *Cattleya*. So do many orchid gift-givers. Until recently, the type of *Cattleya* most often given as a gift, a large white or purple, was one of the least satisfactory for growing in the home.

"Standard" cattleyas, as well as the larger bifoliate types, are simply too large to be grown easily in the home. The limiting factor is light. The size of a mature *Cattleya* makes it difficult, if not impossible, to illuminate the entire plant evenly and effectively. In a greenhouse, the light comes from overhead, whereas in the home, the light comes through a window at an angle. "Incident" light (that which comes at an angle) has much less energy than "direct" light (that which comes from overhead). Naturally, if you are lucky enough to have a solarium, skylight, or greenhouse window, the preceding caveat does not apply to you, and you should be able to succeed with standard-size cattleyas. But do you really want to? Maybe not. This type of *Cattleya* does not really "hit stride" until it is in at least a 6" pot, sometimes an 8". The foliage may be over 18" tall and 18"-24" across. If you cannot picture this, measure it out with a ruler. We are talking about a bulky plant here, and this is just *one*. Surmounting a challenge is fine, but is the result worthwhile? Perhaps, in this case, we can say that a similar result may be obtained from plants that are much less bulky and easier to grow.

It would be encouraging to report here that, thanks to the concerted and thoughtful efforts of orchid breeders, today's cattleyas are more satisfactory as gifts than ever before. More compact, floriferous, colorful, and easy to grow, maturing earlier, offering more of everything that a beginner could want in any flowering plant. This is not to say that these claims cannot be made. Indeed, the cattleyas generally available today, especially in the pot plant segment of the market, are much more satisfactory for home growing than their predecessors. It is fortunate that most of the traits that make a *Cattleya* better for the home also make it better for the commercial grower. If a plant is faster growing, takes less space, and has brightly colored flowers, it is that much easier to produce and sell. This means more profitable. For whatever reason, we now have a good supply of cattleyas that are very satisfactory for home growing.

What constitutes the "ideal" house plant/pot plant *Cattleya*? In my mind's eye, I see *Sophrolaeliocattleya* Madge Fordyce 'Red Orb' available in a range of colors as well as red. Why? 'Red Orb' is a relatively compact grower — 12" tall or so — that branches freely and flowers easily. A beautiful specimen plant can be grown in a 5" pot. I have seen five inflorescences in a 5" pot!

While this is the ideal toward which we can work, slightly larger plants and much smaller plants can be accommodated in the home and are widely available. With plants of this size, we can get sufficient light to all parts of the plant without having to burn some areas at the expense of others. Using available light from a window, it is helpful periodically to rotate the plant(s) to avoid the "lean" toward the main light source that can develop. How much light is enough? Developing pseudobulbs and inflorescences should stand relatively erect without the need of staking. The foliage should be a medium green (as opposed to dark green), and the pseudobulbs should be at least the size of the preceding ones. If the foliage is very soft and dark green and the pseudobulbs decrease significantly in size, your plant is not receiving enough light. East, west, or very lightly shaded south exposures generally are recommended. A north window will not receive enough light. If your plants have not been getting enough light, don't move them immediately and all at once into high light. In the same way that you sunburn on your first day at the beach after a long, dark winter, so your plants will burn if they are not accustomed to the higher light intensity. Do it gradually over a period of a few weeks until the desired light intensity is reached.

Watering and fertilizing are dependent on so many factors that it is difficult, if not impossible, to give an exact schedule. One of the main variables is the mix in which the plants are grown. Until recently, the "mix of choice" in most of the U.S. was one based on fir bark. Supply and quality have begun to decline, leading many growers to experiment with other media. Basically, cattleyas should be allowed to go almost dry between waterings. In the warm, dry atmosphere of most homes, and with the generally smallish pots used by compact cattleyas, once every 4-7 days will be about right. During the summer months, more frequent waterings may be required, while the short days of winter will see a decrease in required frequency. Cattleyas grown in fir bark or tree fern require a high-nitrogen fertilizer (30-10-10). Those grown in another medium will need a fertilizer suited to the needs of that medium, usually a balanced ratio of 10-10-10. A warning sign for improper watering practices is wrinkled, leathery foliage. This is caused by dehydration. Only rarely will increased frequency of watering solve this problem because most often it indicates that the roots have been lost rather than signaling insufficient watering. The loss of roots usually points up the need for repotting because breakdown of the mix has killed the roots.

There are several good sources of information about *Cattleya* plants appropriate for home growing. Local, more experienced growers are usually the best and most reliable sources. They may be found either in orchid nurseries or at your local orchid society. The A.O.S. BULLETIN is the next best source (and in too many cases the *only* source) for up-to-date information. A little research will pay off in increased

satisfaction. Most breeders have their particular lines of work in this type. This explains why local information is best. Also, many of the "typical" house plant cattleyas are notoriously shy in seed production and so cannot be relied on in breeding. Your research will show that most established orchid nurseries have their particular favorites in production of this type, and their growers or salespeople should be able to answer your specific questions. Another very productive avenue for information is your local orchid society. Members generally are only too happy to share both their good and bad experiences with orchid nurseries and sources and also may be able to recommend particular crosses or parents that they have especially enjoyed.

Before going on to the next subject, I should probably admit to some "divided loyalties." When I first started growing orchids, cattleyas were the first acquisitions. My first orchid knowledge came not from the A.O.S. BULLETIN (shame, shame!) but from the Fred A. Stewart, Inc. orchid catalogs written by Ernest Hetherington. I still enjoy the *Cattleya* alliance immensely, but as a hobby I grow paphiopedilums. This being said, I also have to admit that there are few sights as lovely as a house of phalaenopsis in bloom. Add to this the factors that make them such completely satisfying house plants and such profitable items for growers and retailers, and it is easy to see why more growth is being exhibited by the phalaenopsis segment of the industry than any other. (This sort of "divided loyalty" is just what traps so many, including myself, into the orchid world!)

#### PHALAEOPSIS

What makes a phalaenopsis the best orchid gift plant? The most satisfactory orchid house plant? First and foremost, they are quick and easy to grow. This makes them good for the producer, cost-wise, and good for the consumer who wants to be able both to afford and then to grow the plant.

Phalaenopsis are ideally suited for the conditions found in most homes — shady and warm. Again, no orchid will grow or flower without enough light. Phalaenopsis just require less light than most. The other aspect of phalaenopsis that makes them so good for the home is their flowering habit. Because they are a spray-type orchid, they usually will have anywhere from 5-10 or more flowers open and/or opening, depending on the size of the plant. Because the individual flowers last 2-3 weeks, one spray (inflorescence) has the potential to last 4-6 weeks or more. Under anything but the very worst conditions, phalaenopsis stems usually will branch just beneath the first flower, giving an even longer floral display. This is especially satisfying to the person with only a few plants because nothing is more frustrating than to have orchid plants without flowers. Phalaenopsis do not have a set bloom season, as do many other types, but tend to respond to a set of environmental factors that allow them to be "controlled" for almost any season. These factors, primarily lower temperatures, occur naturally in late summer to early fall, making the "main season" of phalaenopsis bloom between Christmas and Valentine's Day. However, growers usually will drop temperatures in their growing areas to initiate inflorescences 90-120 days before they desire flowers. This enables them to have blooming plants available for almost any occasion.

More new hybrids are being registered in the genus *Phalaenopsis* today than in any other single genus. Unlike even the recent past, many of these hybrids are in the so-called "standard" types — white, white with red lip, striped, and pink. The public has not accepted the novelty types as being sufficiently decorative, and, as is usual in our industry, growers are responding now to a trend already a few years old with plants they won't be able to sell for several more years.



What sort of conditions do phalaenopsis require? The ideal (and cheapest) way to tell if you have conditions for these plants is to spring for several dollars to buy an African violet. If the violet survives and continues to flower, or if you already have an area in which violets do well, you have a spot for phalaenopsis. Basically, phalaenopsis like exactly the same sort of regime as do violets, that is, warm, evenly moist, and well fed. As with cattleyas, fertilizer will depend largely on the mix in which the plants are grown, but because phalaenopsis are faster-growing plants requiring more frequent watering, they also will require slightly more regular fertilization to do their best. Phalaenopsis plants, while possessing a growth habit distinctly different from cattleyas, will show whether they are receiving enough light by their foliage. The leaves should be firm and a darkish green, holding themselves horizontally or slightly drooping. If they are too dark and limp, the plant is not getting enough light.

The standard types of phalaenopsis are the most commonly marketed today. Their great beauty makes this understandable. However, most will never reach their full potential under home conditions. This is both a boon and bane for the grower. A fully mature phalaenopsis plant in an 8"-10" pot in full bloom is a sight never to be forgotten. This is very difficult to achieve under most circumstances for the same reasons that fully mature standard cattleyas are just too unwieldy for the home. There are types of phalaenopsis bred specifically to give a miniaturized version of such a display on much more compact plants. Descended from such species as *Phalaenopsis stuartiana* and *Phalaenopsis equestris*, these types can give a wealth of flowers on branching inflorescences. Breeders are working hard to produce these, and fortunately, these types are becoming more widely available.

#### PAPHIOPEDILUMS

The last group of plants liable to be received as a gift is currently enjoying a growth in popularity with the general public. Paphiopedilums, or lady's-slippers, are not always easily appreciated by new growers or gift purchasers. The charm of their flowers is sometimes difficult to appreciate at first. Interestingly, probably no group of orchids commands the fanatical devotion that the paphiopedilums do among more experienced growers. This is a shame because paphiopedilums are among the longest-lasting of all orchid blooms, sometimes staying in flower so long that the grower tires of the display.

While flower form and color are nowhere more diverse than in this group, there are two types most commonly available to beginning growers. The "standard" paphs have plain green foliage and generally bear one flower per growth. Colors are in the greens and reds or combinations of these colors, often with spots. This type generally requires somewhat cooler conditions to flower well. The mottled-leaf or "Maudiae types" are really showing a great gain in popularity and availability. These are distinguished by their beautifully patterned foliage, tall stems, and habit of flowering more than once per year on larger plants. Colors are mostly in the reds or greens, although more color combinations are beginning to become available. Basically, these grow under conditions in the home similar to those enjoyed by phalaenopsis, except that slightly cooler temperatures help to promote more regular flowering. Plants left undivided form colorful clumps that are, unlike most orchids, attractive even when not in bloom. Paphiopedilums seem to be rather intolerant of division and so should be left to form nice clumps for best performance.



# GREATER LAS VEGAS ORCHID SOCIETY

## THE ORCHID COLUMN

### SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2006

Our October meeting was great fun. Mike Glikbarg of Orchids of Los Osos spoiled us with hundreds of gorgeous blooming orchids. There was a lot of swooning and buying, followed by more swooning and even more buying. It was heaven.

His slide lecture introduced us to the glorious world of multifloral papahs. He impressed on us how hardy are the plants and how long-lasting are the flowers. He stressed that hybrids with rothschildianum in them are especially beautiful and especially tough. He noted that these plants love seaweed fertilizer and frequent repotting. They appreciate a few weeks of chilling in the fall (open a window or a door a crack...) in order to bloom.

(Remember now is the time to chill your phalaenopsis, too.) I learned that strap-leaf papahs like high light, but mottled-leaf papahs (the lighter green ones with the little pattern of spots) "dwindle" in high light and actually bloom better in lower light. I ran home and put my mottled-leaf dwindlers under fluorescent lights and out of my high-intensity lights. There is so much to learn! Thanks, Mike.

Our raffle table was overflowing with blooming orchids from Mike Glikbarg, donated hotel plants, and Aussie Gold and fertilizer I donated after speaking in Green Bay. Tony Billitere did a fabulous job of garnering orchids from the Mirage, Treasure Island, English Garden Florist,

and the Wynn. We were sorry that Tony was ill and had to leave early. He is the life of every party- and every meeting. Feel better.

We had the best Hawaiian feast ever thanks to the culinary skill and imagination of Marsha Hawley, Gail Harris, Diana Smith and Bill Whaley. We thank Becky Biondi, Cathy Loftfield, Sharon Proehl, and Jackie Braverman in advance for next month's snacks.

Mike Glikbarg donated four copies of Sunset's book on orchid growing to our library. Take one out. There is no better way to learn to grow orchids than to borrow a FREE book from our library.

On October 14<sup>th</sup>, we participated in the Southern Nevada Water Authority's annual Day with the Experts at the Gardens at the Springs Preserve. Steve Ninemire, Terry Wilsey, Sharon and Uwe Proehl were kind enough to serve as our ambassadors and get the word out about our great club. We know they did us proud.

On October 21-22, the Nevada Garden Club will be holding its Fall Flower Show at our usual meeting place. They have asked us NOT to have a display this year (!) but just to bring plants in for judging. Tex and Gidget Severance have graciously agreed to serve as our judges. Bring your plants to the Garden Club

Building between 3 and 7 p.m. on Friday the 20<sup>th</sup>. There are TONS of ribbons to win, and you are assured of getting something if you show up with your beauty. If you can't make it on Friday, call me (254-4168), and I will take them down for you. There will be lots to see at the show which runs from 12-4 p.m. on Saturday and 10-4 p.m. on Sunday. It's FREE, too. Miles Hoffman will be our ambassador of good will on Saturday. Steve Ninemire and Bill Whaley will do their turn on Sunday from 10-1 p.m., and Christine de la Cruz and Karen Fields will do theirs from 1-4 p.m. We thank them all for making friends for our club.

Bill Bergstrom from Hawaii is coming to speak in November on "The Orchids of Mexico," and he is bringing lots of plants to sell and for the raffle. Thanks to Eileen and Alex for housing Bill.

We will be having elections at our November meeting. The current board has consented to run again. Anyone who would like to run as well or who would like to nominate someone should call our Election Chairlady, Scotty Nogaim, at 363-3991. Also, we will take nominations from the floor at the November meeting.

Our Holiday Party is just around the corner at my home. Mike and Adrienne Thurber will be entertaining us with keyboard, violin, and song. We hope Carol Mendocino will lend her gorgeous voice. TI have arranged for us to have a MARTINI BAR, very happening. We will again have our holiday blooming orchids. I will provide booze, drinks, paper goods, duck, roast pork, rice, tiramasu, bread pudding, and bok choy salad. Bill Whaley said he will bring his great luau smoked pork. We will take volunteers at the meeting for a ham,

turkey, and roast beef. Each person is asked to bring a dish for 10-12 people with serving spoons- an appetizer, salad, main dish, casserole, vegetable, desserts and the like. It is always a feast and lots of fun.

After the newsletter, I have included the article on "Fidgeting" that I told you I was writing. If you contributed to the article, collect a raffle ticket at the meeting. Also, if you helped out at any of our October events, make sure to get a free raffle ticket, too. Love, Carol

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| April 1, 2007     | Dr. Paul Johnson "Insects and Orchids:<br>Complexities of Global Domination"                               |
| May 6, 2006       | Glen Decker, "European Orchid Growing/<br>Spectacular Phrag Kovachii"                                      |
| June 3, 2007      | Fred Clarke, Sunset Orchids, "The Exciting<br>World of Bulbophyllum"                                       |
| July 8,           | Mark Hachadourian, "Pleurothallids"<br>OR (if he can't make it) "The 15-Minute<br>Solution"- A Culture Day |
| August 5, 2007    | Barbecue Mt Charleston   |
| September 9, 2007 | Leon Glicenstein, Hoosier Orchids,<br>"Jewel Orchids"  |
| October 7, 2007   | Helen Hersch, "Advanced Windowsill Growing"  |
| November 4, 2007  | Greenhouse Tour  |
| December 2, 2007  | Eighth Annual Holiday Party  |

**Fidgeting: The Little Changes That Make A Big Difference**  
**Carol Siegel**

My third-grade teacher, Miss Switt, used to tell the story of the man who quit too soon. She said he wanted to invent a new drink that everyone would love. He experimented and invented "One-Up." When this didn't sell, he tried something different and called it, "Two-Up." When this wasn't good either, he tried again and invented "Three-Up." Finally, discouraged, he quit after his "Six-Up" failed. Miss Switt said, "He never knew how close he came to success. If he had just fidgeted a little bit more, he would have had it-Seven-Up."

Fidgeting... Miss Switt was on to something. You can often get discouraged in your orchid growing. You spend a lot of money and time on your orchids only to see too many of them share the sad fate of Six-Up. It makes you just want to GIVE-Up. You may, however, be closer than you think to success. Sometimes, all you have to do is fidget a little with your growing technique, and that little change will make a big difference in your orchid success.

GCK Dunsterville shares his classic "fidgeting" story in his book, **ORCHID HUNTING IN THE LOST WORLD (AND ELSEWHERE IN VENEZUELA)**. The president of Shell Oil, Dunsterville roamed the snake-infested and mosquito-laden forests and rivers in search of Venezuela's 1200 wild orchids. On one trip, he brought back a gorgeous specimen of *Scuticaria steelei* from Angel Falls. To keep the dangling five-foot-long leaves out of the way, he hung it high under the plastic roof of his greenhouse. Year after year, he hoped in vain for another sight of its magnificent, large flowers, but year after year, the plant refused to bloom. One day, while reorganizing his greenhouse, he moved the plant to an identical spot but three feet to the left. Very soon after this, the orchid burst into gorgeous bloom for the first time. As Dunsterville remarked:

It is episodes like that that make orchid growing so fascinating, and which emphasize to us how much we still have to learn about what orchids do, or do not, like.

Diana Smith, Greater Las Vegas Orchid Society grower, had a similar fidgeting success. She had a healthy specimen plant of *Coelogyne lawrenceana*, which sat on a lower shelf of her greenhouse. Every year, the buds on the plant would hopefully swell and then all blast. Finally, frustrated, she hung it high up near the roof of her greenhouse to get it out of the way. The plant rewarded this small change by bursting into such glorious bloom that it earned an AOS award that year.

Fidgeting is really fine-tuning your orchid techniques and practices without making huge changes like building a new greenhouse or throwing out all your orchids and starting again. If you grow on a windowsill, fine-tuning may mean putting up a sheer curtain to filter light. If you grow under lights, fine-tuning may mean growing phalaenopsis instead of high-light big vandas. If you have a greenhouse, fine-tuning may mean watering with reverse-osmosis instead of tap water. These little changes are small things everyone can do to produce a better growing environment for our beloved orchids.

What can you fidget with to help your orchids?

#### MOVE IT

For one thing, you can move your troublesome plant a little. Every growing area has microclimates. Your high benches may get more light and be warmer than your lower benches. The corner of your greenhouse may get less air movement than a central area. The southwest side of the house can get more light than the northeast side. Unbelievably, just moving a plant a few feet may give it a whole new environment and increase success.

Marni Turkel, famed potter and orchid grower, related that her *Dendrochilum yuccaefolium* disappointing did absolutely nothing for years. Frustrated, she roughly broke it up and moved the plant to an area with brighter light and more extreme temperatures. Amazingly, it started to bloom on every division.

Bob Gordon, phalaenopsis genius point out:

Finding the right place to grow your phal is also important. If you have the wrong spot, nothing you can do will make them bloom. If you have the right spot, almost nothing you can do will keep them from blooming.

Try mapping the microclimates in your growing area. Light a candle and see where it flickers most. A lot of air movement may dry out plants faster. If the candle doesn't flicker at all, add a fan. See how the placement of windows or heaters or coolers affects the temperature at different times of day and

at different seasons. One side of my growing area is ten degrees cooler than the other. Moving an odontoglossum to the cooler side may make all the difference. Humidity right next to my fogger is 10% higher than farther away from it. Moving a phragmipedium to this wet place may really add to plant happiness.

Make a physical map of your area using light meters, hygrometers and minimum/maximum thermometers to get your information. Actually, stand in front of your fans, coolers, and windows and see if you are getting hit by desiccating hurricane winds, catching a chill, or getting too much sun in your eyes. Mark different areas on your map with notations like "cool," "warm," "dry," "wet," "bright," "shady," and the like. Then decide if your problem plant might benefit from a different spot.

You can also modify your growing area a little bit if you find it is too dry or too wet for your needs. Decide what you want to change. Too bright for a mottled-leaf paph? Put up a little shade cloth. Move it to a lower bench. Too dry in one spot? Add a mister or another fogger. Too dark in your greenhouse? Cut down a tree or add a bank of fluorescent lights. Put up Mylar or white Styrofoam to reflect light. Wash your windows. Too cold? Add insulation to reduce chilling of plants near an exterior wall. Fiddle a little.

#### HOLD ME, TOUCH ME

A little change you can make that will make a huge difference is to simply spend a little hands-on time with your beauties- even just five minutes a day. Many folks water with a sprinkler or hose and rarely get close to their orchids unless they are in bloom or in trouble. Resolve to spend a few minutes a day pushing, prodding, looking, touching and getting to know your plants. Slip one out of the pot and look at the roots. Look under a few leaves and see if you have beasties, Lift the pot and see if it is lighter than it was a few days ago. Look at the potting mix and see if it looks like mud.

David Grove in "Learn to Think Like An Orchid," says observing your plant will help you learn to think like an orchid and make you a big success. It is most important to focus on each plant's response to its environment and culture. Spending time with plants helps you to diagnose symptoms of distress as soon as they appear and even before they are visible. Grove even speaks of a friend who came home for lunch so that he didn't have to go eight hours before seeing his orchids after his morning inspection! Train yourself to be very observant of your plants, and allow them tell you what they need. There is a beautiful little village called Igls in the Austrian Alps with a house, which has three wooden flower boxes. On the boxes is written, "Lassett Blumen



Sprechen" which means "Let Flowers Speak." Just spend time with your orchids and let them speak to you.

#### GET POTTED

Want to do one easy, cheap thing that is guaranteed to help difficult plants? Mike Levin, former president of the Las Vegas orchid club, feels that when an orchid- or an entire collection- is not doing well, the best thing to do is to repot the orchid in FRESH media. As he says, "Repotting forces one to examine the roots, the lifeline of the orchid. Paphs especially love to be repotted, anytime, and even after just six months."

Members of our club in Las Vegas get many out-of-bloom hotel plants donated to the raffle. Myra Lee Glassman in our club calls them Orchidis hotelis because they often don't have tags. They are great plants to learn on, but members know they have to CHANGE the media right away to give the plant a fighting chance of doing well. Plants repotted into almost any media seem to give a sigh of relief. Contrary to many, I put all my new purchases in fresh Aussie Gold mix, in bloom or not, as soon as they come in (with the exception of cattleyas.) My buds rarely blast, and I don't import any bugs.

Every five years or so a new darling mix comes out. Orchid genius Harold Koopowitz says that it is living proof of how hardy orchids really are that they can withstand all these swings in mixes. In "Cattleya Culture," Ned Nash describes one of the many bizarre mixes tried over the years. He says Paul Gripp's first orchid job was collecting rat's nests from Topanga Canyon for Robert Chrisman to use in his cymbidium mix! Resist the urge to put ALL your plants in the newest rats' nest potting mix. Offer up just a few victims and see how they do. Wait a year, and then assess your results.

Judy White in her beginners' series says you should check the roots when the plant has been in the mix for a few months. If the roots are healthy, the mix is excellent. If the roots are soggy, mushy, or black, the mix is not draining well and may not be aerated enough for your watering schedule and growing condition.

You can fine-tune your mix. If it stays too wet, add a material that has better drainage and less water retention like charcoal, Alliflor, Styrofoam, perlite or a coarser bark. If your plants are staying too dry, you can add sphagnum moss, smaller bark, coconut chips, or Aussie Gold, a water-retentive diatomite. Do you have a heavy hand with watering and a lot of humidity? Switch to a clay pot. Plastic pots hold twice as much water as clay pots. Make lots more holes in your plastic pots to help drainage. Do you fertilize a lot?

You probably need to change your mix more often. Do you want to reflect more light? Put your plant in a white pot. Potting a big plant? Take the coarse stuff from the top of your potting mix. Potting a tiny plant? Dig down to get more of the fine crumbs on the bottom.

Dan Mumau and Mike Lawless in our Las Vegas Club experimented with different growing medium. They found that their oncidium did best in clear plastic pots with sphagnum moss. They had more root growth and no leaf wrinkling. Now they have repotted all their oncidiums, miltoniopsis and brassias with happy results.

You can also try taking some things out of mix and mounting them. Dan and Mike now put many of their species and all their vandas on wood logs or mounts, removing them from baskets. They are all doing much better with fat roots growing into the wood.

#### LIZARD SPECIAL AND OTHER FERTILIZER

You can fidget with the kind, timing and amount of fertilizer you use, too. Although some studies indicate that just about any fertilizer used weakly and weekly will do, people report amazing results with change. I myself could not get my multifloral paphs to bloom for two years. I used a bloom booster fertilizer last fall for a month or two because that was what I had in the drawer. I was thrilled when DOZENS of my paphs burst into glorious bloom at the same time. My growths may simply have grown big enough to bloom, but I am a believer and am using bloom booster again this fall. Why argue with success? I later read that paph expert Helen Congleton recommends cutting down on high nitrogen in the fall to initiate bloom, substantiating my happy results. Bob Gordon, too, recommends lower-nitrogen fertilizer for phals in the fall spike-initiation period.

Scotty Nogaim in our Las Vegas club changed to fish emulsion when her orchids were reluctant to bloom and found that that change alone quickly initiated spikes in half a dozen shy bloomers. Leslie Doyle, another successful member, started spraying her plants with a solution of Amazing Kelp, a water-soluble product loaded with micronutrients. During the growing season, she drenched her foliage, pouring the leftover solution through the roots. She was amazed at the improved health of her plants. Miles Hoffman in our club got phals to bloom by spraying on his fertilizer solution of something called "Liquid Karma" from Trader Joe's. Carson Barnes in the article "Backyard Cloud Forest" says he started having great success when he applied his Lizard Special every time he misted or watered (lizard guano produced by his very own lizards). Some folks find that NOT fertilizing for a watering or two and just drenching the

soil with lots of water washes out undesirable accumulated fertilizer salts and helps plants.

Fidget with a lizard, foliar feeding, a new fertilizer, or a good drench.

### GETTING WET

Little changes in your watering practices can help, too. It sometimes is confusing to figure out when to water an individual plant. As Kevin Donohue says in "Orchids I Have Killed: What Every Beginner Should Know:

It becomes difficult in large collections to remember that Plant A won't every bloom if watered on the Harvest Moon and that Plant B needs exactly two and a half days in the freezer at the vernal equinox.

Diana Smith recommends grouping plants that have similar watering needs together. Some plants need to be watered daily, and others need a dry rest. Placing those plants together simplifies your watering.

Others suggest putting the thirsty plants in water-retentive medium and the "camels" in loose, open mix and watering them all together, simply varying the mix. I changed my plants to Aussie Gold and can water them together since the mix cannot be overwatered.

Know your limits, too. If you are a busy person and can get to your plants just once a week, avoid mounted plants and tiny plants that require daily attention. If you travel a great deal, see if you can get some of your watering automatic with a sprinkling system or mister.

An important change you can make is to give your plants water that is similar to rainwater. If you can, collect rainwater. If your city water is very hard, think about buying a reverse-osmosis system or renting a deionized water tank. The thing that made the MOST difference in my growing was switching to deionized water. Under no circumstances give your plants water that has been softened with salt. You may change to potassium in your water softener for better watering results.

Judy White suggests an easy solution to your watering dilemma:

If you are still totally bewildered by watering and still can't figure out what to do, then use the most basic and simplistic rules of all: Water plants in two-inch pots every three days. Water plants in four-inch pots every five days. Water plants in six-inch

pots every week. And if even that's too hard, water them all once a week. The ones that die are too sissy for your collection anyway.

### SALT-WATER FISH IN A FRESH-WATER TANK

Sometimes, you can fine-tune what you buy. As Karen Ann Wilson says in "The Keys to Successful Orchid Culture," "You wouldn't want to put saltwater fish in a freshwater fish tank." An orchid from the tropical lowland is not going to be happy in a cold place. An orchid from a high mountain region, a cloud forest, won't like being outdoors in a typical warm Florida environment. Find out what type of climate your orchid came from and prefers by reading, going on the web, or speaking to other orchid growers. Then see IF you could grow it easily and reasonably well in your setup. If you can't, you might decide not to buy it, to give it away, or- if you MUST have it- to see what you can do to make your area a little more like where your orchid is from.

When buying plants, you can decide to buy whatever pleases you and let it take its chances, a kind of horticultural Darwinism. If it makes it, it makes it. OR you can purchase plants that have a fighting chance of surviving in conditions you can reasonably provide. OR you can buy more demanding plants and make little changes in your environment to make it more like the native orchid environment. As Wes Addison says:

You can grow everything. It gets down to what kind of conditions you can give them or are willing to give them. Basically, I have a set of conditions in my greenhouse, and the plants that will survive under these conditions are surviving and the ones that won't are dead. If I want to grow the ones that died, then I would have to figure out where I went wrong and what needed to be done differently.

Karen Ann Wilson who lives in west-central Florida decided to limit herself to things that grew well in her environment. She loved masdevallias and draculas, but they didn't love her. As she says, "I have tried some of the more spectacular cool-growing species with predictably fatal results." Now, she restricts herself to a few species that are tolerant of warm-growing conditions. You might restrict yourself to plants that like your growing conditions. You might grow lots of pleurothallids and phalaenopsis under your lights but not vandas and dendrobium.

However, Clarice Dean, talented vice-president of our club, loves draculas and masdevallias and wanted to grow the cool ones in the hottest, driest desert on earth. Clarice fidgeted a little and modified her culture to suit the orchids. She placed the plants right near the front of the swamp cooler. The plants were placed on a gridless humidity tray in  $\frac{1}{2}$ " of filtered water. Each plastic-potted plant was placed snugly in a clay pot with a close fit. The water seeped into the clay pots and helped to cool and humidify the area around the plants.

The pots have drainage material in the bottom so the plants were not sitting directly in the water. These little changes resulted in her bringing some gorgeous cool-growers in gorgeous bloom to our desert meetings. You can grow the impossible, but you will have to fidget a little.

In "A Pouch Fetish," Lenny Winter describes the little changes he made to make his phragmipedium feel more at home. He read that his favorite Phrag pearcei grows along the banks of streams in Ecuador and Peru. There is a rainy season from March to June, tapering but still humid and wet in August. Then in September, October, and November there are showers, while December, January, February are the hot, dry months. Lenny made some changes to make his environment match the native environment as much as possible. Ingeniously, he set the plants in  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch of water in a tray to simulate the rainy season. By December, he began reducing the water in the trays. In Mid-January, he put the plants on wire racks above the water. He watered the plants every third day, and in the "dry season" watered only every six days. In September, the watering was every third day again, and by September, they were back in the water again. He made small changes that he said made a big difference.

When making changes, knowing where a plant is originally from can help with culture. Marni Turkel tried to grow *Dendrochilum longifolium*, but it never bloomed. She noticed that the tag said it was from the Kasipi swamp of Papua, New Guinea at high altitude. She put it outside with her sobralias where it got extreme temperature from 30-90 degrees F, mimicking what she thought was the original environment. To her delight, the orchid bloomed at last.

#### ZAPPING THE LITTLE BEASTIES

Nothing is more discouraging than growing little creatures when you wanted to grow plants. Little changes can result in many fewer bugs, bacteria, fungus and virus.

First, make sure that you wear gloves when you touch your plants and change gloves after cutting or potting a plant, anything that releases plant juices. Try not to have the water from one plant spray on another plant. Don't use a fingernail to cut off a spent blossom. Assume everything you own has a virus or fungus and don't spread it.

Clean up your area. Remove old sheaths where bugs can hide. Reduce crowding of plants which causes less air movement and can lead to fungal and bacterial infection. Chemical sprays also have a hard time reaching areas that are crowded.

Bacteria and fungus multiply under cool, moist conditions. Water plants in the morning and have lots of fans blowing to dry out the leaves. If you get a dark, mushy brown or black spot or area on your leaves or sunken purple or brown spots, immediately cut off the affected part with a new razor blade. Discard razors after one use. Razor blades are the ONLY 100% safe way to cut a plant and not spread disease. Just be careful to not cut yourself. Isolate sick plants and take care they don't touch other plants. Consider repotting plants with disease. Treat with the appropriate chemical.

Norman of Norman's Orchids suggests watering with a solution of 1 tsp. of Physan to a gallon of water once a month to control disease. I do it, and I think it is a great little change.

Don't reuse pots. Others suggest all sorts of sterilizing techniques, but pots are cheap and plants are not. Spring for a new pot. Second, never reuse potting mix from one pot to another. It is like sharing dirty underwear.

Test languishing or funny-looking plants for virus. The literature suggests that established collections frequently have incurable virus. There are testing facilities listed in the back of orchid magazines. You will have to carefully isolate or handle such plants or throw them out.

Use the LEAST toxic chemical to treat your problem. In our club, we swear by one tablespoon of ultra-fine horticultural oil in a quart of rubbing alcohol to spray on bugs. It is fabulous. Although you don't want to eat or breathe this, it is a low-toxicity way to zap beasties. Years ago, men used to use shake cyanide crystals from Mason jars with perforated lids on wet walkways to treat bugs. Just because it is out there doesn't mean it can't harm you or your orchids. Start with just a little soapy water and don't rush to use a nuclear bomb on your plants.

#### FIDGETING WITH YOUR SIMULTANEOUS EQUATION

Half the articles in orchid magazines are about how to fidget with your orchids. They usually stress modifying one practice or techniques, treating it as though it were independent of all the others. It is easier to tell someone to add more light or grow in moss, but this segmented approach is basically false. Good growing needs a systems approach. When you fidget with one aspect of your growing, it will ultimately affect the others. You must become sensitive to the whole growing set-up.

For example, Clarice Dean lives in the desert where it is very dry. As part of her fidgeting, she started watering a great deal more with good success. However, she points out that "I have found that most of my orchids (cattleyas included) like to be evenly moist- but no soggy bottoms." Her love of watering and her sprinkler system would have caused soggy bottoms, so she changed her potting mix, too, to Alliflor, a compacted aggregate (mixed with a little sponge rock and bark or coconut) which works beautifully for her in the desert.

Your growing area is a system with interrelated parts. You must focus on your total environment and how each variable forms an optimal environment. As Wes Addison, smart Tucson grower cleverly notes:

The greatest challenge is "creating a balance between water, light, nutrients, air movement and temperature. It doesn't matter whether you are in the tropics or in the desert, you still have to deal with the same elements, and once you figure that out, your plants are going to do well. Every time you change one of the elements you need for growing, it will have an effect on your plants. When you have higher heat, you need to water more. You need more air movement. You need to change something to take care of the additional water. The challenge is trying to create an overall atmosphere with balance...with the correct amount of water, light, heat, humidity, air movement and nutrients to sustain the plants well."

#### **PUSHING OUT THE WALLS**

Strangely, there is always room for one more plant in even the most crowded collections. We just SQUEEZE it in. Overcrowding is the inevitable consequence of our orchid addiction. Like rabbits, the plants multiply when you shut off the lights at night. You can make little changes that makes use of your space more efficiently and alleviates overcrowding that can block light and foster disease.

Downs Matthews in "How to Add to Your Collection without Building A New Greenhouse" suggests throwing out the dogs in your collection. Bad plants take up room, too. Relocate the inanimate objects like bark, pots, chairs, boxes to free up space for plants. Use step benches to increase growing space. Wire dividers separating benches can increase the number of plants you can hang in wasted space. Make efficient use of overhead space by installing PVC pipes from one end of the greenhouse to the other to hang plants. Hang plants from a wheel of welded wire. Hang chains from the ceiling and grow plants one below the other. Run conduit fitted with wire hangers suspended in long rows. Put wire mesh at the back of benches to hang more plants. Use a tree or pillar to support tiers of shelves like a lazy Susan.

Dan Mumau and Mike Lawless purchased many single wire hook hangers from six to twelve inches long. They installed electrical conduit pipe along the roof of the greenhouse and were able to get half the orchids off the benches and hang them high near the windows of the greenhouse for maximum light. It is an easy thing to do that will make a big difference in your space.

#### A FAREWELL TO ALGAE

When making changes, always be open to experimentation and accident. Bud Mellott had a terrible time getting rid of algae in his greenhouse. It took several unhappy people a full day of scraping with a squeaky blade and Clorox to get the glass clean. One day, he was using a \$6 garden hose attachment composed of a plastic jar and nozzle from Ortho to treat a distant plant. When the plant crashed to the floor, he bent over and the powerful jet accidentally hit the window. The algae peeled off like magic.

Pat Holland and Becky Biondi in our club went to the pet store and bought two electric fish tank oxygenators for \$5 each and put them in a drum with water for their orchids. They noticed a real improvement in their orchids with this super-oxygenated water.

Leslie Doyle uses bamboo-skewers in her pots to check moisture. She puts the skewer in the north side of the pot to insure that the pot does not get turned, and if it does, that it is easy to tell. Paphs often get an unattractively twisted flower stem if the orchid is turned while the spike forms. This really helps.

Dan Mumau placed his phalaenopsis on their sides during the summer. He had a few getting crown rot due to the high fog and water. The plants don't bloom in the summer and this keeps the tops dry. From November to May, he keeps them upright since he doesn't need as much fog or water in the cool months. The plants love this innovative treatment.

Iris Cohen gave up on her pebble trays years ago. She says they were messy and spread bugs. Now she uses 18"x25" heavy aluminum baking pans from a restaurant supply store. "You would be surprised at how many useful items for gardening you can find in a restaurant supply store." She finds old oven and refrigerator shelves are just the right size for the baking pan. The pots stand on them and the shelves are supported by overturned flowerpots. She says it is a good way to store pots, and that eggcrate is expensive. When the trays are full, she siphons the water into a pail with a ketchup pump. When company comes, she cleans trays and uses  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. Physan for algae.



Jane Green places her orchid pots inside champagne buckets and vases filled with a little water. The orchids roots grow down toward the water.

Sometimes, you just have to keep changing just a bit. I started growing under fluorescent lights, plain old fluorescent bulbs. Little bloomed. So I changed to full-spectrum fluorescent lights. Many paphs and phals bloomed but not my cattleyas. I changed to High Intensity Discharge sodium bulbs that were brighter but I couldn't stand the yellow color. I changed to HID full spectrum Agrosun bulbs but I bloomed everything but cattleyas. I upped my HID bulbs from 250 watt to 400 watt, but I still didn't have good cattleya blooming. I fidgeted once again and put in TWO 400 watt fixtures in my space, and voila, my cattleyas bloomed. It was seven-up all over again.

Keep fidgeting and trying and experimenting. You are closer to success than you think.

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