

# GREATER LAS VEGAS ORCHID SOCIETY

## THE ORCHID COLUMN

SUNDAY, APRIL 1, 2007 2 PM  
**BUILDING OPEN AT 1 PM**

Carol Siegel, Newsletter Editor



At our March meeting, we had the pleasure of hosting Glen Decker, owner of Piping Rock Orchids. His fascinating and fun slide lecture called ORCHIDS IN EUROPE- A TOUR OF ORCHID GROWERS AND FLOWER MARKETS OF EUROPE, showed us just how orchid growers do it there, starting off in Holland, including the floating flower markets of Amsterdam and the main flower market in Aalsmeer, then on to Germany, finishing off at the Eric Young Foundation in Jersey.

Best of all, he included some *Phrag kovachii* pictures and news, including the first slide of a *Phrag kovachii* hybrid in bloom. His nursery was the first American nursery to be actively propagating and hybridizing this great new species from Peru. He has been working on this project since 2003 when Alfredo Manrique, owner of Centry de Jardinaria Manriue, Lima, Peru, was given permission to collect the five plants that they are working with. He is one of the few in the world to legally offer the fabulous new phrag hybrids, big as a dinner plate and deep magenta, that have caused such a stir. He has four hybrids for sale now- crosses of *Phrag kovachii* with Saint Ouen or Living Fire or Walter Schomburg or Cape Sunset. You can order some of these exciting new plants at [www.pipingrockorchids.com](http://www.pipingrockorchids.com).

Thank you to all the folks who have paid 2007 dues. Single dues for 2007 are \$30, and couple (two folks residing at the same address) dues remain \$40. You can send a check made out to GLVOS to me at: Carol Siegel 8601 Robinson Ridge Drive Las Vegas, NV 89117. If you have not paid dues, this is the last newsletter you will be receiving.

Thanks to Terry Wilsey and Myra Lee "Doc" Glassman for serving as representatives to the Nevada State Garden Club meeting.

We will be participating in the Easter Show at the Cal again this year. We will have a display designed by our Shelly North, creative lady. We need your plants to make it happen. The setup for the display will be on Thursday, April 5<sup>th</sup> at 4:30 pm at the Ohana Room at the California Hotel. You can drop plants off at my house on Thursday (Call to set up a time 254-4168), and I will bring it down for you if you cannot. I have included a brief article on how to prepare your orchid for a show- going to the orchid beauty parlor.

Tex and Gidget Severance will serve as AOS judges on Friday morning with Steve Ninemire and Marilyn Short acting as judges. It is very exciting to be able to win a coveted AOS award, This is the only

show offering this judging in Las Vegas. Diana Smith, Mike Levin, and Becky Biondi have all won awards at previous shows. Why should you care? At the end of the newsletter is an article on WHY those AOS awards are important.

Come down and enjoy the show which will be open and free on Friday, April 6<sup>th</sup> from 1-5 pm, Saturday, April 7<sup>th</sup> from 10-5pm and Sunday April 8<sup>th</sup> 10-3. The Torrance Cymbidium Society will be selling orchid corsages and arrangements for Easter. We thank Miles Hoffman, Aaron Schave and Terry Wilsey for serving as ambassadors at the show on Saturday, and thank Diana Smith and Cathy Loftfield for their service on Sunday. We still need two ambassadors from 1 to 5 pm on Friday the 6<sup>th</sup> and one ambassador on Saturday the 7<sup>th</sup> from 1 to 5. We will provide you with materials to give out, and you just have to tell people how great the club is and answer any questions. Orchids can be picked up at 3 pm on Sunday.

Many thanks to Miles Hoffman, now known as "THE RECRUITER" who has just signed up the SEVENTH new member. Way to go, Miles.

I will be attending a big family event at the time of the April meeting and will miss our meeting which makes me sad. Clarice Dean, our wonderful vice-president, will be chairing the meeting and for that, I am so grateful. The speaker is Dr. Paul Johnson, a good friend of Clarice and Dennis. An associate professor at South Dakota State University, Paul is the curator of the SDSU Insect Museum and is a maven on insects. He will be speaking on "Insects and Global Domination" and will enlighten us about insects and orchids.

We thank Carol Siegel, Diana Smith,

Eileen McKyton, and Clarice Dean for the Chinese feast that we enjoyed at our March meeting. We thank Lee White, Nicole Gazza, Pearl Anton and Sandra Swan for the treats at our May meeting.

Fred Clarke of Sunset Valley Orchids has sent us two free tickets and a stack of discount coupons for the "Orchids at the Flower Fields" sale in Carlsbad, Ca. featuring 25 vendors on April 27-29 from 9 am to 6 pm daily. The Flower Fields are a remarkable place, and there will be over 2,000,000 (!) ranunculus flowers in bloom during the orchid sale weekend. (No, they are not orchids themselves.) It will truly be a sight to behold. Admission to the show is \$6 with the coupon and parking is free. Interested? Write to Fred at [fclarke@caritas.com](mailto:fclarke@caritas.com). Go to the show. Buy orchids. Be astounded by the ranunculus.

I never used to be able to grow vandas, and Dennis Dean's vandas made me drool and turn green with envy. Lately, I put up lights on my ceiling just above my fogger, taking care of my problems with humidity and high light and long length that hindered my growing. THEY SEEM TO BE DOING WELL! I have included the care sheet on vandas from RF Orchids which is full of information. I have also reprinted the chapter on Vandas and their relatives from ORCHIDS FOR DUMMIES with kind permission of Steve Frowine. In addition, there is a page from that same book on AOS awards as well as a page I wrote on preparing orchids for a show. Enjoy!

Keep blooming. Keep happy.  
Love Carol 254-4168 [growlove@cox.net](mailto:growlove@cox.net)

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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.

March 4, 2007	Glen Decker, "European Orchid Growing Spectacular Phrag Kovachii"
April 1, 2007	Dr. Paul Johnson "Insects and Orchids:
May 6, 2007	Doug Conkin, "Growing Cattleyas"
June 3, 2007	Fred Clarke, Sunset Orchids, "The Exciting World of Bulbophyllum"
July 8, 2007	"The 15-Minute Solution"- A Culture Day
August 5, 2007	Barbecue Mt Charleston
September 9, 2007	Leon Glicenstein, "Jewel Orchids"
October 7, 2007	Helen Hersch, "Advanced Windowsill Growing"
November 4, 2007	Greenhouse Tour
December 2, 2007	Eighth Annual Holiday Party
January 6, 2008	Jim Comstock, 3D Photos of Orchids
February 3, 2008	Jason Fischer, Orchids Limited, Topic TBA
March 2, 2008	Steve Frowine, "Miniature Orchids"
June 1, 2008	Mike Blietz, Exotic Orchids of Maui, TBA

## PREPARING YOUR PLANTS FOR THE SHOW: GOING TO THE ORCHID BEAUTY PARLOR by Carol Siegel

If you are bringing plants for the display, take a good hard look at them before you put them in the car. Most plants need a beauty treatment before being entered for display or judging.

1. All dried sheaths should be removed so the clean pseudobulb is shown. Imperfect leaves should be removed or trimmed.
2. Old dried inflorescences should be cut off.
3. Leaves should be wiped with "fat" milk to clean off hard water spots and give a natural sheen to the leaves. Some people swear by diluted lemon juice or even beer!
4. Stake the inflorescence so the flower presents itself for best effect. Cut the stake so that it is not visible above the flower it is supporting. Hide any twist ties out of the way so they don't stick out.
5. Tuck any tags or labels down into the pot out of sight.
6. Top off the plant with a layer of fresh bark.
7. Clean the pots so they are tidy looking
8. Leave diseased or infested plants at home.
9. Water your plants thoroughly before judging. They will get thirsty.
10. Put your mailing address labels on bottoms of pots to make it easier to find after show OR put a colored sticker on the bottom or write on a piece of masking tape. Make a list of all the plants you have brought in. Keep it at home. Make a list of all important information that is on your tags in case a tag is lost.
11. Put TWO tags in each plant in case one falls out. Put one in at an angle.
12. Don't forget to clean the stems of your orchids with a tissue

# Why do I care that an orchid was awarded?

Awarded orchids are the *crème de la crème* of the orchid world. They've been deemed this distinction by trained, discriminating orchid judges. The American Orchid Society, a nonprofit educational organization that is dedicated to the study of orchids has established the judging criteria. Similar organizations serve the same function in other parts of the world.

At each accredited orchid show, a covey of judges carefully examines orchids that are exceptional. They use Internet connections to check all existing records of the orchids being judged. They look for ones of the same *grex* or similar parentage to see what has been awarded in the past to serve as a benchmark of excellence. These records will reveal which of their parents have been awarded, what size and number of flowers were on the awarded plants, and so on. These criteria are then used to decide if these specimens are indeed superior to others of this type and whether they're worthy of awards. The three award categories used by the American Orchid Society that you're most likely to encounter are (from highest to lowest):

- ✓ **First Class Certificate (FCC):** This is the coveted highest award that only a handful of orchids (10 or 15!) receive every year.
- ✓ **Award of Merit (AM):** Usually a few hundred orchids win this distinction every year.
- ✓ **Highly Commended Certificate (HCC):** Another few hundred orchids are given this level of award.

Very few orchids make it through this gauntlet. Because of modern cloning techniques (see Chapter 2), you can now obtain these prize winners for your own collection at very reasonable prices. Some types of orchids, like the slippers, are not yet able to be cloned, so in that case, picking out those hybrids with awarded parents is a good idea. **Remember:** It takes the same amount of space to grow a high-quality orchid as it does a poor one, so why not grow the best?

# Vandaceous Orchids: Their Care and Culture

The objective of good orchid culture is robust, disease-free plants with high quality blooms. These goals are especially important for vandaceous orchids, which produce quality flowers only from strong plants.

The most common Vandaceous orchids are *Vanda*, *Ascocentrum*, and *Ascocenda* (*Vanda* X *Ascocentrum*). Here in South Florida we also grow many other species and intergeneric hybrids such as *Rhynchostylis*, *Vascostylis* (*Vanda* X *Ascocentrum* X *Rhynchostylis*), *Aerides*, *Aeridovanda* (*Aerides* X *Vanda*), and numerous other combinations of these closely-related plants.

It's important to remember that all vandaceous orchids are *monopodials*. Monopodial orchids have a single stem and growing point at the tip, or crown, of the plant. They are generally upright in habit, and the main stem may have lateral buds which can develop into plantlets ("keikis") when the plant has attained sufficient size and strength to support them. Each keiki will also continue to grow indefinitely from its tip.

Vandaceous orchids have leaves arranged in two rows or ranks along the main stem, and the inflorescences emerge from the leaf axils (the angle where a leaf is attached to the main stem). Spacing between leaves is extremely variable, from less than an inch to several inches apart depending on the plant's breeding. There are three broad types of leaf shape among Vandaceous orchids: strap-leaf, terete and semi-terete, and the three groups have somewhat different cultural needs. (Note that there are also terete-leaf orchids unrelated to vandas.)

Strap-leaf plants have flat or V-shaped, leathery leaves. This category includes such vanda species as *coerulea*, *dearei*, *luzonica*, *merrillii*, *tricolor* and *sanderiana*, as well as the *ascocentrums*.

Terete orchids have tapering, pencil-shaped leaves that are circular in cross-section. The most common vandaceous species in this group are *V. teres* and *V. hookeriana*.

Semi-teretes, as they are referred to here, are a hybrid combination with some terete species in the background. Their leaves are somewhat pencil-shaped and tapered but not always completely round in cross-section.

## Cultural Requirements

Success with vandaceous orchids requires attention to five elements of their growing conditions:

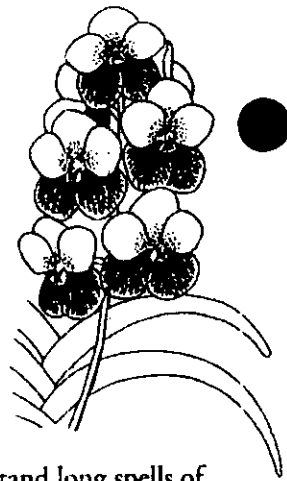
**Temperature** – Vandaceous orchids grow best under daytime conditions of 65°F (18°C) or higher, but they can withstand long spells of hot weather and short spells of cold. They will continue in active growth any time of the year if given warm temperatures and bright light. Night temperatures should not generally be lower than 55°F (12°C) for extended periods. We've seen some vandaceous plants withstand temperatures as low as 38°F (4°C) for 23 hours with damage to root tips and flower buds, but not to the plant itself, but you should protect your vandaceous orchids from those temperatures if at all possible. During a period of extreme cold, the most important thing you can do is to protect the plants from air movement (wind). For the most part, vandaceous orchids fall into the "warm-growing" group mentioned in most books and publications about growing orchids.

**Light** – If the humidity is high, maximum sunlight should be given with only enough shade to keep the temperature within the appropriate range and protect the foliage of strap-leaf plants during the middle part of the day. For our greenhouses in South Florida we use 46% shade cloth covered with 6 mil clear plastic on the top and sides of the greenhouses, producing about 50% shade. Outdoors, the plants want maximum light without burning the leaves. They will benefit from full sun in the morning and late afternoon, but need some shade during the middle part of the day.

Terete vandas and their semi-terete hybrids are sun lovers. Not only will they flower intermittently year-round in tropical areas, they are also floriferous in the subtropics. They can be grown in the full sun and are ideal for landscape use.

**Air Movement** – Vandaceous orchids are epiphytes and need good air circulation. Air movement also reduces the incidence of leaf-spotting fungal and bacterial infestations. However, as noted above it is important to restrict air movement under colder temperatures.

**Water** – Vandaceous orchids in slat baskets should be watered daily, preferably early in the morning. Give them a good drink with the hose, or a dunk in a bucket or sink if you



only have a few plants, and let them dry. High daytime humidity is essential, especially on sunny days, and misting once or twice a day in bright weather will be helpful. On hot, sunny days around 80% humidity is appropriate. Water more sparingly in winter, during long cloudy spells, or after repotting. In any season, avoid watering plants late in the afternoon. Vandaceous plants should be dry before nightfall.

In addition to the natural ingredients of temperature, air and water, good culture also requires some help from man-made supplies: containers, potting media, insecticides, fungicides, and fertilizers.

**Fertilizing** – Vandaceous orchids are heavy feeders. Once a week during the growing season, give the plants a solution of a complete, balanced fertilizer. High-nitrogen fertilizers will inhibit flowering and are not recommended for these orchids. All plants should be flushed thoroughly with plain water once a week to remove built-up salts. If you use an automatic proportioner, plants may be fertilized as often as daily with a more dilute solution. Whatever feeding plan you follow, remember, it is important to be faithful to the regimen you have established.

We use Peter's 20-20-20 (All Purpose with micronutrients) fertilizer weekly during the growing season. Inside the greenhouse, under a controlled environment, we use the standard, recommended concentration of 1 teaspoon per gallon. During the winter (non-growing season), we apply the same proportions every two weeks rather than weekly. In addition, at every third feeding we substitute Peter's 10-50-10 (Bloom Booster). This substitution applies to plants in all seasons of the year. And once a month we add 1/4 teaspoon of SUPERthrive, a concentrated vitamin and hormone solution for plants, to each gallon of fertilizer solution.

**Potting** – Vandaceous plants will grow well in any porous medium if properly aerated. Tree-fern chunks, coarse bark or charcoal are good choices. The roots should not be smothered by tight potting or soggy medium. We prefer wooden baskets with little or no additional growing medium, but pots can be used if drainage is good. Teakwood is the best choice for baskets, as it lasts the longest. If teakwood is not available redwood is a good second choice, and cedar a third option. We use 3" teakwood baskets for the first two years after seedling size, 6" baskets for the next two years, and 8" baskets for mature plants. Plants should be suspended so that the aerial roots are free; otherwise, the roots attach themselves to the bench or wall and are damaged when the plants are moved. Recently potted plants should be maintained under slightly more shaded conditions until they are established.

Because vandaceous plants have large aerial roots, they don't like to be disturbed. So instead of removing them from their smaller, older baskets at repotting time, we "elevate" plants from smaller to larger baskets. We soak the roots briefly in water until they become pliable, and then work the roots through the slats in the larger basket so that we can place the old smaller basket and plant intact in the larger basket. Never coil the roots around the old basket because vandaceous plants will feed better with an unrestricted root system. A few large pieces of charcoal can be added to hold the smaller basket securely within the larger; wiring the smaller basket into the larger will accomplish the same result. This method minimizes shock to the plant and permits continued, uninterrupted growth. Adding SUPERthrive to the water used to soak the plant will further minimize its shock and seems to encourage faster growth of new roots.

There are occasions, however, when disturbing the roots cannot be avoided, e.g. a rotten basket, or repotting of pot-grown plants. Soak these plants in plain water for a few minutes, and then remove from the old container as carefully as possible. It may be necessary to dismantle the old basket by cutting its wire fasteners. Clean debris from the roots and soak in a solution of vitamins/hormones and fungicide for about 5 minutes, and then pot in a new basket. If you must trim roots or leaves, be sure your cutting tool is sterilized.

Late spring to early summer is the best season for potting or repotting vandaceous plants, but these orchids may be repotted at almost anytime of the year.

Since vandaceous orchids grow rapidly with good light, water and regular fertilizing, seedlings should be grown in 3" pots, loosely potted in a mix of fine charcoal and tree-fern fiber. Keep seedlings in slightly more shaded conditions than mature plants, but include them in the same water and fertilizer programs. Maintain humidity and good air movement.



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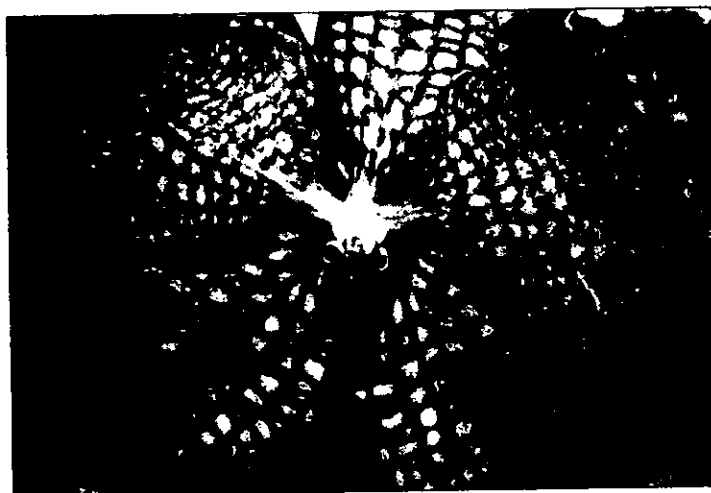
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## *Vandas and some of their close cousins*

Anyone who has been to Hawaii is familiar with the orchids that are used in the welcoming leis; most often, they're vandas. Sadly, the varieties used for these flowery necklaces are ones only suitable for growing in Hawaii and other very bright areas. Fortunately, there are others in this group that are less demanding but still can be quite a challenge for many home growers because of their higher light requirements. If you live in warmer, higher light areas of the country, like Hawaii, Florida, or parts of California, these plants are more doable.

Large strap-leaved vandas are simply gorgeous and are found in a wide range of colors including heavenly blues (see Figure 10-17), cotton-candy pinks, sunny yellows, and hot oranges. The flowers can be quite huge, 5 to 6 inches (12.5 to 15 cm) across on some hybrids.

Although they don't require as bright light as some of the other vandas, they still present quite a challenge to home growers in the northern part of the United States who experience heavy cloud cover and short, dark days in the winter. To grow them in these areas, you need to have an exceptionally sunny southern window or a hobby greenhouse. I've grown and bloomed some of them under high-intensity lights, but you don't want to know what my electric bill was!



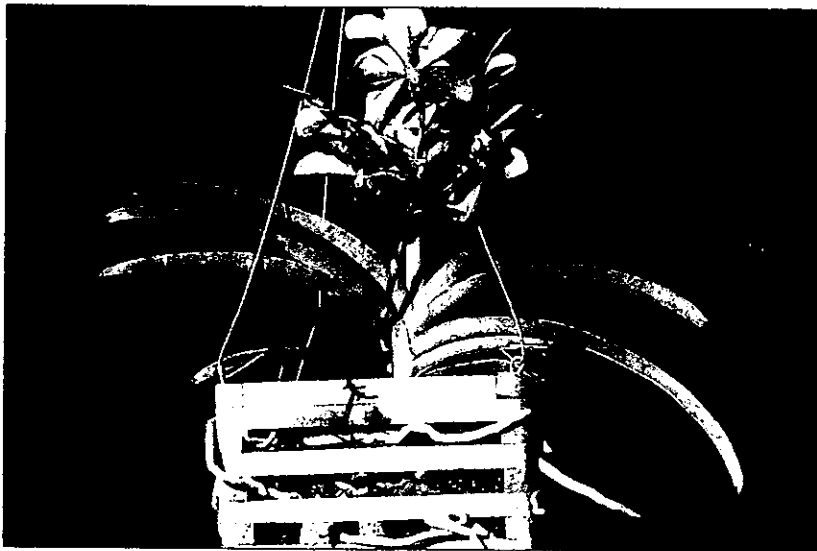
**Figure 10-17:** This strap-leaved variety, *Vanda Kasem's Delight*, shows the typical large round flowers of today's superb quality varieties.



Ascocendas are the result of breeding the larger vandas with a much smaller growing group of plants called ascocentrums. Their flowers may not be quite as giant as the 6-inch (15 cm) flowered strap-leaved vandas, but they can still be showstoppers and their smaller stature makes them much easier to manage. Grow them in a sunny window or close to florescent lights. Search out those that have the smaller sized growth habit.

Ascocendas come in a wide range of colors with many different varieties. Here are a few of the classics:

- ✓ **Ascocenda Yip Sum Wah:** The most famous of all ascocendas. It is most commonly found in bright oranges or reds, sometimes in purples, but it's also available in shades of yellow. It's noted for its prolific blooming and relatively compact habit.
- ✓ **Ascocenda Peggy Foo:** Another fine performer with clear, glossy red flowers on a compact plant (see the color insert for a full-color photo).
- ✓ **Ascocenda Medasand:** Still used in breeding to produce superior plants. Plants like *Ascocenda Medasand* are frequently grown in teak baskets like the one shown in Figure 10-18, because they afford the excellent drainage that ascocendas and vandas love. They can also be grown in pots as long as there are plenty of holes in the bottom of the containers.



**Figure 10-18:** *Ascocenda Medasand* in a teak basket.

Here is an assortment of different vanda-type orchids that I recommend:



- ✓ ***Aerides odorata***: Bears clove-scented white flowers with purple spots on a pendulous flower spike. Leaves are about 10 inches (25 cm) long, but the stem grows quite tall, so this plant would be suitable in a bright window, but not under lights.



- ✓ ***Neofinetia falcata***: This dwarf plant, 3 to 6 inches (7.5 to 10 cm) high with waxy white flowers about 1 inch (2.5 cm) wide is easy to bloom on a bright windowsill or under lights. It's frequently used as a parent to impart its compact growth habit and vanilla fragrance to its offspring (see Figure 10-19). Commonly called the Japanese Wind Orchid, this was once the exclusive property of the Royal Family of Japan. Commoners were forbidden to have it in their possession. Its cultivation dates many centuries back to the Edo period in Japan. It was first described in 1784.



- ✓ ***Neostylis Lou Sneary***: This has been a very successful variety that has a compact habit (inherited from one of its parents, *Neofinetia falcata*). It comes in various color forms — white, pink, and blue. All produce a flurry of 1-inch (2.5-cm) fragrant flowers and make super plants for growing on the windowsill or under lights.



- ✓ ***Ascofinetia Cherry Blossom***: Another compact beauty with lightly fragrant rose-lavender flowers that is the result of breeding an ascocentrum with our Japanese friend, neofinetia.



- ✓ ***Renanthera monachica***: Many of the renantheras are huge plants that can get several feet tall and so are a bit of a challenge to handle in the house. This is a dazzling dwarf form that takes years to get up to 1 foot (30 cm). Its flowers are the colors of a bright yellow-orange flame (see Figure 10-20).



- ✓ ***Rhynchostylis gigantea***: When you smell the intoxicating citrus fragrance of this orchid, commonly called foxtail orchid because of the shape of its pendulous cluster of flowers, you will be hooked. This can eventually become a quite large orchid, but it will take many years to get there. This one performs great in a sunny window. There are several color forms including the most common white with purple spots, all white, and solid burgundy red, at times referred to as the Sagarik Strain (see Figure 10-21).

- ✓ ***Rhynchostylis retusa***: This looks very similar to the preceding plant and its flower color range is similar. The flowers tend to be smaller but there are usually more of them on longer flower spikes.

- ✓ ***Rhynchostylis coelestis***: Unlike the other two rhynchostylis, this one has upright flower spikes and the most common

form has blue and white flowers. Other color forms are pink and white.



✓ *Sedirea japonica*: Another gift from Asia that not many Western orchidists are familiar with. After I witnessed this orchid being judged for its lemon fragrance at the New York International Orchid Show, I made a beeline for the vendor who was selling this charmer. I found myself behind a long line of mostly Asian folks ahead of me who fully appreciated this orchid's merits. It's like a dwarf phalaenopsis in its growth habit, with about 6-inch (15-cm) leaves and has the same cultural requirements.



Figure 10-19: *Neofinetia falcata* — commonly called the Japanese Wind Orchid.

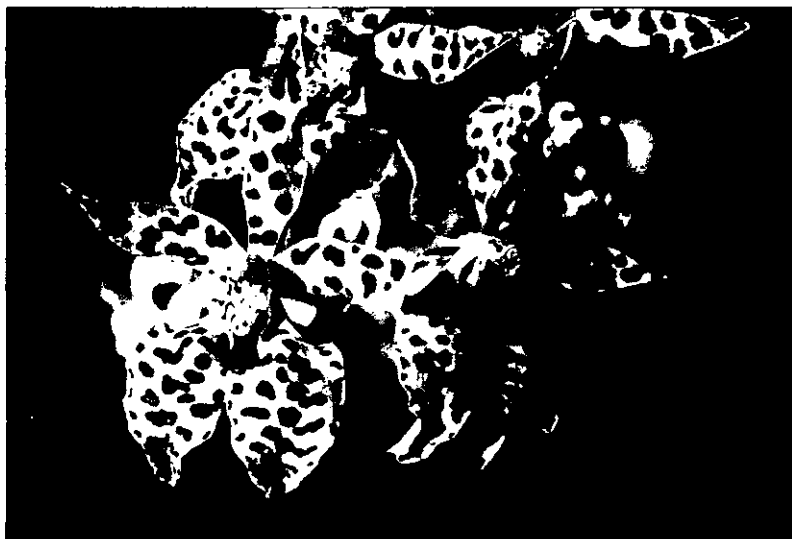


Figure 10-20: *Renanthera monachica* is a delightful, small, and brightly colored orchid.

