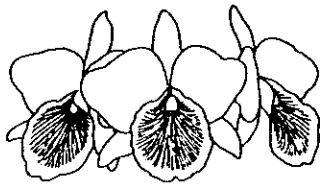


GREATER LAS VEGAS ORCHID SOCIETY

THE ORCHID COLUMN



SUNDAY, MAY 7, 2006

Carol Siegel, Newsletter
Editor

THERE WILL BE CINCO DE MAYO IN THE PARK ON OUR MEETING DAY. WE HAVE HIRED A GUARD TO SAVE PARKING SPOTS FOR US. TELL THE GUARDS YOU ARE WITH THE CLUB AND THEY WILL LET YOU THROUGH. VERY HIGH CLASS...

There were orchids everywhere at our April meeting. A magnificent orchid display with hundreds of blooming orchid plants graced the stage after the Spring Garden Show the day before. The tables and floor were covered with orchids and orchid plants from the hotels and the speaker for our raffle. The lobby was filled with orchids for sale from our friend Daniel Vong, and the meeting room was filled with more orchids from our speaker John Salventi. Add to this more member plants, and well, it was heaven!

We welcome back old members Mary Lepler and John Keller and new member Greg Miles. We greeted guests Ron Janke and Willy Baumann Miles and were happy, too, to meet Melissa Knight's sister Lucy. Hope they all had fun. It was good to see Roberta Schechter and Jean Gordon, both of whom are doing much better now. We love you!

Our speaker, John Salventi, co-owner of Parkside Orchids (and just the nicest man), did a wonderful power point presentation on The 2005 Taiwan Orchid Show. The magnificent and exotic displays and four-foot-long waterfall phalaenopsis took our breath away and filled us with orchid-envy. We were surprised to hear to what extent

orchid production has moved overseas, with 36 million pots coming from Thailand alone. The Home Depot crowd has a powerful appetite for inexpensive plants that Asian countries can readily satisfy. John sold inexpensive, lovely plants and gave all the plants he didn't sell to the raffle. Take a look at his terrific website www.parksideorchids.com when your wallet is full and you have a hankering for something beautiful.

The food at the meetings is getting better and better, and we had a delicious Italian feast thanks to Sharon Proehl, Carolyn Proper, Marilyn Short and Cathy Lofffield. We thank Terry Wilsey, Nicole Gazza, Steve Ninemire and Sandra Swan in advance for the May food.

Clarice Dean presented our Species of the Month, *Oncidium flexuosum*, a free-flowering, temperature tolerant "Dancing Doll" orchid. In Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay, it grows high in the trees with little contact between the branches and the roots, making it practically an "air plant." It loves to grow on a mount or hanging from a wire only. Water and mist heavily in the growing season with dryer conditions in the winter. Its three-foot-long inflorescence is covered with vivid golden yellow one-inch flowers with reddish brown blotches. You will love this easy-to-cultivate beauty in your collection. Thanks, Clarice!

We had lots of great orchid items for sale including orchid pads, Aussie Gold, our diatomite-based potting mix, and Aussie Gold fertilizer. For a limited time only, we are selling Horticultural Oil, a pint for \$10 with a free spray bottle. We mix a little of it with rubbing alcohol to make an "in SCHECTERcide" for killing and controlling orchid pests (Fred Schechter taught us how)

By the way, we have a date with our native orchid mentor, Jim Coyner, to look again for *Spiranthes diluvialis*, the orchid we rediscovered after 70 years, on July 29th. Plan to join us. It was fun!!

Our display at the Spring Garden Show with a "love and orchids" theme was a smashing success. We thank Dennis Dean, Carol Siegel, Clarice Dean, Eileen McKyton, Diana Smith, Steve Ninemire, and Ed McCormick for working so hard to set up this gorgeous display. We thank Tex and Gidget Severance for judging, Steve Ninemire and Miles Hoffman for serving as clerks, and Sharon and Uwe Proehl, Bill Whaley and Myra Lee Glassman for being our ambassadors. We can always count on the enthusiastic and talented members of our club! We won tons of ribbons with Ed McCormick doing us proud with three big wins.

We won **THREE** AOS awards at the Easter Show at the Cal. **BECKY BIONDI** won a **AM/AOS (Award of Merit)** with 83 points for her stupefying gorgeous **BLC Tsika Lily 'Becky'**, a magnificent plant with 65 brilliant orange blooms. **MIKE LEVIN** did us proud, winning **TWO HCC/AOS awards (Highly Commended Certificate)**- for two beautiful **Paph Jamboree Knight**, 76 points for one and 77 points for the other. Way to go, Mike! We outdid ourselves with our display at the Easter Show at the Cal, sponsored by our good friends at the Torrance Cymbidium

Society. We couldn't have done it without the artistic help of Shelly North, talented artist and the inspiration and hard work of Dennis and Clarice Dean, Eileen McKyton, Claudia Theriot, Carol Siegel and Diana Smith. Mike Levin, Tex and Gidget Severance were kind enough to judge, and Marilyn Short and Aaron Schave were our clerks. We thank, too, Tony Billitere, Bill Whaley, Terry Wilsey, Melissa Knight, Diana Smith and Cathy Loftfield who served as our gracious ambassadors. We especially thank the photographer, Loren Batchman, who photographed the AOS awards. Once again, we amazed visitors with our educational display on the thirteen native orchids that grow in Nevada, including three in dry, old Las Vegas.

Leslie Doyle, talented editor of the Silver State Gardener, encouraged our members to run for office in the Nevada Garden Club. Aaron Schave graciously invited all our members to his Annual Garden Walk on Sunday, April 23rd from noon to 6 p.m. at his magnificent gardens at 2686 East Eldorado Lane, (260-8865) near Warm Springs and Eastern. Go 1 block south of Warm Springs at Eastern and turn left on Eldorado Lane. You will be astounded by his beautiful gardens and will love the wine and cheese and concert pianist, Dennis O'Sullivan.

A special thank you to **TONY BILLITERE**, club angel, who goes to four hotels to beg orchids for our raffle and kindly stores and carts them to our meeting - **WITH A SMILE**.

Our speaker in May is Harry Phillips of Andy's Orchids who will be speaking on **MARVELOUS MINIATURES, GEMS OF THE ORCHID WORLD**.

Harry Phillips was born in San Diego. His Father taught him to appreciate plants at an early age. In January of 1963 Harry's

brother Andy (of Andy's Orchids fame) was born, and six years later is when it all started. They were both exposed to exotic plants and flowers at an early age, but when Andy became interested and latter obsessed with orchids, Harry some how resisted becoming involved with them for as long as he could. He assisted Andy in his passion by building his first two green houses, and Andy would reward him with a hybrid that was in bloom, tell him to bring it back when it goes out of bloom, and exchange it for one in bloom. Well this would only last about a year until he decided that he wanted to keep one and get it to re-bloom, the beginning of the end.

In 1986 Harry, with his soon to be wife Leslie, moved with Andy and his orchid collection to Encinitas, California. Being constantly exposed to all of Andy's orchids was beginning to have an effect on Harry. Shortly after, Andy left for four months to Costa Rica, and placed Harry in charge of the collection. When Andy returned he found that Harry had not killed too many plants and managed to become even more addicted. Andy now, feeling more confident about leaving his orchid collection under Harry's care, began to plan a cycling trip through South America which ended up lasting two years. After that it was all over for Harry, he was completely addicted to orchids.

Harry assisted Andy part time, for 10 years, going full time about 7 years ago. His interest in miniature orchids began several years ago while constantly being exposed to Andy's minis. He decided he would try some for himself, and that was the way the story starts. Harry would like to share some of his thoughts on growing and choosing the right mini for your conditions, or creating a growing area with miniatures in mind. Once you get to know and appreciate them,

miniatures will be a larger part of your collection.

After the newsletter is a BRILLIANT article on growing cattleyas by the very talented Clarice Dean. You will love it! There is also an article on *Phrag kovachii* reprinted from ORCHIDS magazine April 2005 with permission of John Salvanti, our April speaker as well as a continuation of my fragrance article from last month.

Much love, Carol 254-4168

ALL 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 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, Trip Chairman

Dan Vong-Favorite Member

Shelly North-Classy Club Apparel Chairlady



Spiranthes infernalis, found only in Ash Meadows, Nevada and nowhere else in the world!

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.

May 7, 2006	Harry Phillips, Andy's Orchids, "Magnificent Miniatures"
June 4, 2006	Jim Comstock "3-D Orchid Photos"
July 9, 2006	Barbecue in Mt. Charleston
August 6, 2006	Eric Christensen "Orchids of Peru"
September 10, 2006	Marni Turkel, "How to Grow Orchids"
October 1, 2006	Mike Glikbarg, "Multifloral Paphs"
November 5, 2006	Bill Bergstrom, "The Orchids of Mexico"
December 3, 2006	Seventh Annual Holiday Party
January 7, 2007	Steve Frowine, "Orchids for Dummies"
February 4, 2007	Jason Fischer, Topic to be Announced
March 4, 2007	Doug Conkin, Topic to be Announced
April 8, 2007	Dr. Paul Johnson "Orchids and Insects"
May 6, 2006	Glen Decker, "European Orchid Growing"- "The Spectacular Phrag Kovachii" (a double-header)
June 3, 2007	Fred Clarke, Sunset Orchids, "The Exciting World of Bulbophyllum"
August 5, 2007	Barbecue Mt Charleston
October 7, 2007	Greenhouse Tour
December 2, 2007	Eighth Annual Holiday Party

Growing *Cattleya* Alliance Orchids in Las Vegas

Clarice Dean

Cattleya orchids may well be the most easily recognized and popular group of orchids in the orchid world. Many plants in this alliance are noted for long-lasting, beautiful, fragrant, BIG flowers - that is what I like about *Cattleyas*. These South America beauties that grow near the tree tops in moist tropical forests are said to be easy to grow! In fact, Judy White stated in her book, *Taylor's Guide to Orchids* that "*Cattleyas* are among the easiest and showiest of all orchids to grow." If you do everything right, at the right time, this can be true. However, it's taken me many, many years and many, many dead plants to get the hang of growing them. I'm still learning and still killing some, but not as many as I used to.

The name "*Cattleyd*" and *Cattleya* Alliance are the terms most often used for *Cattleya*-like genera that interbreed readily. Some of the more common genera included in the alliance are *Cattleya*, *Laelia*, *Brassavola* and *Epidendrum*. Hybrids common of these genera are *Brassocattleya* (*Bc.*), *Brassoepidendrum* (*Bepi.*), *Brassolaelia* (*Bl.*), *Brassolaeliocattleya* (*Blc.*), *Laeliocattleya* and many others. Plants of these genera normally require similar growing conditions and will grow well together in a mixed collection with other orchids that respond to intermediate to warm growing conditions. These conditions can easily be provided in Las Vegas with a little help from greenhouses and other modified growing areas with the use of humidifiers, swamp coolers, misting systems, fans and quality water.

Generally speaking, *Cattleyas* like intermediate to warm temperatures. That means no cooler than 55°F in the winter and no warmer than 85°F in summer. The plants need bright light to bloom well. If you are growing inside, place plants in a southern, eastern or western windowsill or a greenhouse with 2500 - 3500 footcandles. Do not provide direct sun - the leaves will burn. Touch the leaves, if they feel hot, provide more shading and air movement. Humidity in the 80% to 85% range is greatly appreciated by the plants; however, very difficult to maintain in any Las Vegas growing area. Do the best you can - your plants will adapt.

Watering, in my opinion, is the most important part of *Cattleya* culture and the most difficult to master for me. The biggest mistake that I have made over the years is underwatering! Yes, underwatering. If you want to learn how to water your *Cattleyas* correctly, learn from your plants and remember we live in an extremely arid climate and our plants know this. Even if you grow in a controlled environment, your plants will need more water than orchids grown in a greenhouse in southern California. *Cattleyas* like to be moist at the roots with excellent ventilation and some drying out between waterings. If your roots are well ventilated in a coarse mix you will have a hard time overwatering them. I know this seems to go against the "cardinal rule" of orchid watering, but the key is balance between the media and frequency of watering. Adjust your watering with the media you provide. For instance, in my greenhouse many of the *Cattleyas* are potted in clay pots with a very coarse rock-type mix. I water them everyday during the hottest summer months! If your *Cattleyas* are grown in pots provide a very open, fast draining medium that allows rapid drying and good aeration for the roots.

Grow good roots - you'll have healthy plants that reward you with abundant beautiful blooms. A good rule of thumb for repotting *Cattleyas* is to NEVER repot until you see new root growth. The plants will then establish themselves easier in a shorter time.

It's a fact that not all plants grow well in my conditions even when I feel that I've provide all the correct cultural needs. I've learned that some plants just grow better and are easier to grow than others. And then, some plants just commit suicide in my growing conditions. They arrive here from Southern California and beg to be sent home as they shrivel up and die! Nevertheless, below you will find a list of plants that have grown well for me and I think will grow well for you. Most of these plants are readily available from the vendor list provided.

Some easy to grow *Cattleya's* that I like:

Blc. Aqi-Finn 'Nature's Best' - extra large white with fuchsia splash petals, very fragrant, easy to grow. Large plant.

Lc. Gold Digger - Many clones are available. Of the ones I have, I like 'Fuchs Mandarin' CCM/AOS the best for it's clear yellow petals and brilliant red lip. 'Orchid Jungle' HCC/AOS and 'Buttercup' are also nice. Excellent for specimen culture, can easily double in size each year with good culture. Likes abundant water in the summer. Compact grower.

Lc. Maikai 'Mayumi' HCC/AOS - Blooms right on time at Thanksgiving every year. Good for specimen culture. Can double in size each year. My plant had over 100 flowers this year. Compact grower. Primary hybrid of *B. nodosa* and *C. bowringiana*.

Bl. Petite Stars - A *Brassavola nodosa* hybrid, this plants like lots of water, fertilizer and high light. Starts blooming in May and blooms all summer for me. Flowers start out pink and turn white. Darker pink lip. Easy! Specimen culture. Compact grower.

C. Chocolate Drop 'Kodoma' AM/AOS, Red waxy flowers that are sometimes fragrant. This clone blooms well, but what I like about this orchid is the roots. You cannot keep them in the pot! My plant has, what seems like, hundreds of roots about 3 to 4 feet long. Amazing! Tall plant.

L. Minerva - The flowers of this hybrid look a lot like *L. tenebrosa* - bronze with bright pink lip. Many 4" flowers per spike. The pseudobulbs readily branch with more than one new growth on each old bulb. Easy! Likes abundant water the summer. Very tall plant.

Blc. Williette Wong 'The Best' AM/AOS - Simply the easiest yellow to grow in my collection. Large fragrant yellow flowers with red lip. Excellent grower, large plant.

Lc. Drumbeat 'Heritage' HCC/AOS - This is an old and famous hybrid - remakes can still be purchased. Breathtakingly large pink flowers that present perfectly. Large plants.

Blc. Pamela Hetherington 'Coronation' AM/AOS - Another old cross that has extra large spectacularly large pink flowers that are long lasting for me. Remakes of this cross are becoming available.

C. Dupreana 'coerulea - Kodama' - This is a primary hybrid blue form (*C. warneri* X *C. warscewiczii*) exhibiting wonderful hybrid vigor. Both parent species are easily grown. This is an amazing grower with wonderful large "blue" flowers that make an amazing display even on small plants. This orchid may be hard to find, but I've seen it lately from Hawaiian growers at the California shows. Large plants.

Blc. **Golden Tang** - A compact growing *B. nodosa* hybrid with multiple medium size flowers - the golden color intensifies as the blooms age. Easy to grow and bloom. High light. Plenty of water when growing.

Lc. **Hausermann's Firewings 'Pegasus'** - An amazing grower and bloomer! Lots of medium white with fuchsia-splashed petal flowers easily doubling in size each year. Good for specimen culture.

Lc. **Mary Elizabeth Bohn 'Royal Flare' AM/AOS** - This is a "must have" if you like blue flowers. Many medium size flowers per spike. Can bloom more than once a year. Good grower. Easy to bloom. Likes medium to high light.

C. **Hawaiian Variable** - Tall plants that are easy to grow. They bloom once a year with medium somewhat waxy flowers with variable color forms; I have two - one is pink with spots and the other is green with spots. Fragrant. Lots of flowers per spike.

Lc. **Stonehouse** - This orchid is easily found in Santa Barbara. Large easily grown plants with amazing white flowers with huge fuchsia lips. At least three large flowers per spike!

Eplc. **Charlie Brown** - Compact growing with many deep red flowers on tall spikes. Good for specimen culture. I grow mine in a wood basket so it will completely dry out between waterings. High light.

C. **Artic Star 'Snow Queen'** - One of my most favorite whites. Many medium white fragrant flowers on tall pseudobulbs. Once a year blooms. Easy

Blc. **Memoria Vida Lee 'Limelight'** - Amazing grower. *Nodosa* hybrid with many green large *nodosa*-shaped flowers with bright pink large lip. Excellent for specimen culture. My plant blooms all summer on every newly matured pseudobulb.

Blc. **Empress Worsley "Roman Holiday" HCC/AOS** - Easy grower that can bloom anytime, but not usually in winter. Medium size purple flowers with unusual color. The flowers appear white on the back and diffused purple on the front.

C. **Bactia 'Grape Wax'** - Tall primary hybrid bifoliate (*C. bowringiana* X *C. guttata*) with amazing medium waxy purple multiple flowers on tall spikes. The older the plant the greater the flower count.

Some easy to grow Cattleya alliance species: In general these species like to be slightly cooler and drier during the winter months and well watered during the growing period.

C. amethystoglossa - The tallest *Cattleya* species, up to 40 inches, mature plants can produce as many as 30 flowers per spike. White magenta spotted flowers with deep purple lip. Lots of water while growing with warmer temperatures and more light. Spring blooming.

C. aurantiaca - Small brilliant orange flowers on bifoliate plants. Other color forms can be found - ranging from yellow to red. Vigorous grower. High light.

C. bowringiana - Tall stems on easy growing plants with characteristic swollen bulbs at the base make these easy to identify. Up to 20 rose-purple satiny flowers can be produced on mature plants that are tolerant of heat, sun, and poor humidity.

C. forbesii - Strong growing and free flowering heat tolerant bifoliate with pale yellow-green flowers that are not spectacular but the plants are rewarding to grow because of their ease of culture.

C. gaskelliana - Large light purple flowers suffused with white and trumpet-like fringed rose lip. Spring blooming. Easy to grow and bloom.

C. guatemalensis - Natural hybrid between *C. skinneri* and *C. aurantiaca*. Many colors available - white, yellow, orange, salmon, pink, rose, purple and red. Grown similar to both parents.

C. guttata - These tall bifoliate plants can be 40 inches tall when well grown with up to 10 waxy flowers per spike that are yellow-green with deep purple spots. This is one of my favorite *Cattleya* species. They have long unbranching roots. The plants just look tall and majestic to me. Water heavily when growing. Otherwise grow on the dry side.

C. harrisoniana - Floriferous! Bloom in late summer with rose-lilac flowers with heavy substance. The plants can be 20 inches tall. I water heavily when the plants are growing and producing new roots.

C. jenmanni - Labiate type flower, unifoliate plants with fragrant rose-purple flowers with a darker central patch of coloring on the lip with orange and yellow veining in the throat. Winter blooming with up to three flowers and wonderful. Easy to grow for me.

C. labiata - Unifoliate free growing with typical double bud sheath that produces two to five rose-colored flowers with wavy petals. The throat is yellow with a white "eye" on either side. Very beautiful. I grow mine mounted and it gets watered twice daily in summer with medium to high light. Grow this plant drier in the winter and provide short days in the autumn to stimulate blooming. If you are growing in a greenhouse without use of artificial lighting, the natural shortening of the days will stimulate blooming; however, be careful in the home, even added light from a desk lamp can throw off the blooming cycle. Provide complete darkness.

C. maxima - Labiate type flower on unifoliate plants that are easy growing and easy to bloom. Flowers can appear anytime but usually in early spring and sometimes in fall too. The pale rose flowers have an amazing deep crimson network of veins and a yellow band on the throat with a pale ruffle around the border. Very easy to grow. Water heavily when growing and producing roots.

C. percivaliana - Christmas blooming unifoliate. Easy. Medium size rose-lilac flowers with maroon shaped lip. The front of the lip is crimson and becomes intense yellow in the throat. Likes high light and lots of water when growing.

C. schroderae - Almost always blooms in April with many light pink blooms on vigorous growing unifoliate plants. Fragrant.

C. warneri - Large 6 to 8 inch rose-shaded flowers with a darker fringed lip and a winged shape. Easy to grow and bloom

C. warszewiczii - Large beautiful flowers up to 9 inches across. Rose-mauve petals and very large rich purple lip with bright yellow "eyes" which is a characteristic of this species. Easy to grow and bloom; however, this species needs a dry winter resting period with much decreased watering. High light. Can grow cooler than other species.

I listed the above species because I've had success growing them. There is much to know and learn about *Cattleya* species. If you have an interest in growing these plants, Carl Withner's book is a good starting point to begin your study. Study each plant's individual habitat and try to duplicate its conditions in your growing area and you will be successful.

Happy growing and blooming. Good luck.

Clarice Dean

Some suppliers of Cattleya orchids:

Hausermann's
2N134 Addison Rd.
Villa Park IL 60181
(630) 543-6855
www.orchidsbyhausermann.com

Norman's Orchids
11039 Monte Vista Ave.
Montclair CA 91763
(888) 4orchid
www.orchids.com

Oak Hill Gardens
37W550 Binnie Rd.
P.O. Box 25
Dundee IL 60118
(847) 428-8500
www.oakhillgardens.com

R.F. Orchids
28100 SW 182 Ave.
Homestead FL 33030
(877) 482-6327
www.rforchids.com

Some books I like:

Taylor's Guide to Orchids by Judy White
100 Orchids for the American Gardener by Elvin McDonald
The Cattleyas and Their Relatives Volume I: The Cattleyas by Carl L. Withner

The Amazing World of Orchid Fragrance

Carol Siegel

(Orchid Digest accepted the article on fragrance I wrote for the newsletter last month for publication. They wanted me to add some fragrant orchids for folks to try so that they could include pictures. I thought you might like the list.)

SOME FRAGRANT ORCHIDS TO TRY

Brassovola Nodosa- Smelling strongly of *freesia* and *lily of the valley*, this orchid is known as the "Lady of the Night" because its exquisite perfume lasts from early evening until after midnight. With the lovely habit of blooming almost any time, this orchid is easy to grow and a delight to own. The pseudobulbs look like slender, thickened stems, and the cylindrical leaves are almost terete (an orchid leaf that looks cylindrical in cross-section). The large, heart-shaped white flower, is two inches across with spidery tepals.

Brassolaeliocattleya Hausermann's Holiday 'Ishpeming'- This is the orchid that teenage girls pray to get when they go to the prom. Its sepals and petals are a silvery rosy-lavender with an intensely-ruffled dark lavender lip with bright yellow veining in the throat. The heady fragrance, sweet and sultry, the "classic" orchid smell of memory, fills the greenhouse or home with the smell of honey and vanilla. You must have this or one of the many hybrids in this trigenic genus created for the first time in 1897 by crossing *Brassavola* x *Laelia* x *Cattleya*.

Cattleya Bob Betts 'White Lightning'- Elvin McDonald has called this cross of *Bow Bells* x *Cattleya mossiae*, "the quintessential big white ruffly cattleya orchid- the sight of which can cause the knees to buckle, the smell of which can bring cries of delight if not outright swooning." Blooming in the fall and winter, a mature plant can produce two or more spikes at once, each bearing up to three fragrant beauties.

Catasetum tenebrosum- Of all orchids, *catasetum* are truly the most strange. Not only do they have spring-loaded pollinia, but they have fabulous fragrance and exotic flowers. Their separate male and female flowers that look totally different. Their pseudobulbs look like fat cigars, their plants look dead for most of the winter, and their seed pods are as big as baseballs. So special! Male flowers of this species are 2 inches wide with a showy maroon to brownish-red lip. Female flowers are yellow-green, but all have a lovely citrus smell.

Laelia purpurata- This magnificent fragrant orchid smells strongly of anise and spice. Brazilians call their national flower, "Queen of the *Laelias*," and collectors in southern Brazil hold highly competitive orchid shows that feature only *L. purpurata* in myriad colors. There are in excess of one hundred named varieties that include concolor, lavender, semi-alba, white, vinicolor, *delicata*, flared and blue color forms with different patterns and striping within the lip. It is a large orchid growing up to two feet with flowers that are typically 4-5 inches across but can be larger! Recent DNA tests show that this *laelia* is really a *cattleya* genetically with the peculiarity of having eight pollinia instead of the usual *cattleya* four! They will never stop trying to confuse us. The two most popular varieties are *L. p.* var *carnea* and *L. p.* var *werkhauseri*.

Lycaste aromatica- Included in Steven Frowine's fragrance book under "Very Strong Fragrance," this orchid smells like cinnamon, and "spicy, like Big Red chewing gum." (Is there a pollinator out there who fancies chewing gum?) Found from Mexico to Nicaragua, up to 12 flower stems emerge from the base of the bulbs in summer after the leaves have dropped. The bright yellow blooms are 2 ½ inches wide and grow from the spiny pseudobulbs. The orchid is easily grown but does require reduced watering in winter when the plants are dormant.

Neofinetia falcata- Charming Jason Fischer, of Orchid Limited nursery, introduced me to this equally charming orchid. Smelling of jasmine and vanilla, this diminutive beauty can fill an entire room with an enticing aroma. Pollinated by a nocturnal moth, its fragrance is strongest before dawn and after dusk. A long nectary graces the tiny inflorescences which last a month or more. Best of all, the plant is easy to grow, even under fluorescent lights. Every part of the plant is beautiful, earning this orchid a place in every collection.

Oncidium Sharry Baby 'Sweet Fragrance'- One of the most popular orchids in the flowering pot-plant industry, this orchid can perfume an entire greenhouse with a delightful chocolate smell. Fat pseudobulbs, handsome thick green leaves, and three-foot long inflorescences have made this plant a must-have. Add to this its wonderful habit of appearing to be in bloom all the time, and you have an outstanding fragrant orchid to grow.

Stanhopea nigroviolacea- This species is the most commonly seen cultivated *Stanhopea* and has magnificent pairs of yellowish-green, 7-inch wide flowers, blotched with reddish brown. You sometimes smell the heavenly vanilla fragrance even before you see the flowers. Although the flowers last for only a few days at most, the otherworldly blooms and powerful aroma make it definitely worth growing. *Stanhopeas*, sometimes called the "Upside-Down Orchids," have large, bizarre, colorful flowers and an amazing lip and any of them will thrill you. Grow in baskets to allow the pendulous spikes to emerge from the bottom of the basket.

Zygopetalum Arthur Elle 'Tanzanite' AM/AOS- With its hauntingly beautiful smell of hyacinths and violets, this *zygopetalum* will evoke memories of spring flowers in bloom. Famous for its gorgeous green, blue, purple, brown and white flowers, the inflorescence stands over a foot high and can have as many as twelve fragrant flowers. Blooming from fall to spring, this (and almost any) *zygopetalum* is worth a try for its outstanding flowers, lush green leaves, and most often, its luscious aroma.

An Elusive Beauty

Searching for *Phragmipedium kovachii* in Peru

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOHN SALVENTI



IN NOVEMBER 2003, WHILE I WAS in Ecuador, I heard about the first public display and judging of the newly discovered *Phragmipedium kovachii* at the 5th International Orchid Exposition in Lima, Peru. Prior to this trip, I had also read about an expedition to Peru led by Harold Koopowitz, PhD, attempting to see flowering plants *in situ*. My curiosity was more than piqued by the descriptions of this orchid as the most spectacular ever found. I have been traveling to Ecuador on a regular basis for the last four years and have fallen in love with the country, its people and environment. I was anxious not only to see the *Phragmipedium* but also neighboring Peru. I asked my host, José Portilla, whether he could organize a trip to see the plant *in situ* and in flower. He felt confident he could within the next six to eight months.

On November 9, 2004, I left for Lima with two traveling companions, Jason Beeton and James Schirrmeyer,

members of the Manhattan Orchid Society, to meet Portilla, who would be our guide for the next 12 days through Peru and back to Ecuador. While in Peru, the four of us took a side trip to Machu Picchu before meeting a fifth traveler, Samuel Crothers, who would join us for the remainder of the trip.

Our expedition to see *Phrag. kovachii* began with a one-hour flight from arid Lima to tropical Tarapoto. The next morning, before departing for Moyobamba, we stopped to visit the University in Tarapoto to learn about its conservation efforts with indigenous Peruvian plants.

We arrived at our destination on Wednesday, November 10, after a side trip through the jungle looking for *Dracula* species in flower. This mini-adventure left us drenched to the skin, the result of a northeastern Peruvian downpour. We learned quickly the dreaded phrase "no flores," hoping this would not characterize the next day. While in this vicinity, we stopped at a



roadside farm to see its orchid collection that was in the back of the property. When the owner was sure we were not police, he tried to sell us five plants of *Phrag. kovachii*, in bud, for \$100.

On Thursday, we awoke at 7 am to a stunning day, warm and very sunny, hoping that this foretold a successful trek to the top of the mountain and blooming *Phrag. kovachii*.

Fortified by a hearty breakfast fried yucca, fried bananas and scrambled eggs — we piled into the truck and filled up at the local Exxon station, pouring a 5-gallon (19-l) bucket of regular gasoline through a cloth-lined funnel into our gas tank. We then took off for the entry point into the jungle that would take us to *Phrag. kovachii*. On the way, we stopped at our driver's home to pick up our pre-ordered lunch — hard-boiled eggs, fried bananas and fried yucca. There is a cuisine developing here.

We started our hike across the pasture of the first farm and into the

woods. The first of three guides was leading the way during this leg of the trek. We were rested but had to sprint to keep up with him. This section was of medium difficulty with lots of steep ups and downs but nothing very challenging. It ended in a cow pasture of a second farm deep in the jungle. This first section took about one hour and 10 minutes. The worst part of it was at the end when the muck was deep enough to suck your boots off. I never realized how exhausting walking through calf-deep mud could be.

The owner of this second farm was to be our guide for the next portion of our journey. When he came out to meet us there commenced a serious discussion with Portilla in Spanish. We started losing hope, because the few words we understood led us to conclude he would not take us to our destination. We had come three quarters of the way across Peru and would not be able to get near the home of *Phrag. kovachii*. The conversation

OPPOSITE LEFT The group prepares for a journey that will challenge their endurance as they search for *Phragmipedium kovachii* in Peru. From right to left are Jason Becton, James Schirrmeyer, Sam Croiners and the leader, Pepe Portilla of Ecuagenera in Ecuador. The two gentlemen standing on the road are our guides.

OPPOSITE RIGHT The cow pasture ends and the mountainous segment of the trail looms ominously in front of the explorers. ABOVE LEFT The incline and elevation of the trail are apparent here when it is realized that the gray scar behind Becton is the river bed that the hikers have left behind.

ABOVE This relatively young flower has intense color and round, almost orbicular petals. The broad shield-shaped staminode is also well represented.



picked up in intensity and finally, Portilla smiled, shook Pepe the farmer's hand, turned to us and said with gusto "Vamoose!".

Apparently the authorities had accused the farmer of selling *Phrag kovachii* to collectors and had threatened him with arrest. They also warned him that they would be watching him and his farm. Our guide finally convinced him that we were not interested in collecting, only photographing *Phrag. kovachii* and that taking pictures was not illegal.

We then began the second leg of the journey, which was along a mountain river that we crossed six times. I was luckier than some of my travel companions in that I stayed dry for all of the crossings. During this section of the trip we saw many *Pleurothallis*, *Stelis*, *Masdevallia*, *Ada* and *Maxillaria* species, and experienced much more boot-sucking muck.

The last portion of the trip was an upward hike, climbing through mud and decaying vegetation, pulling one's self up foot by foot on tree roots and rocks. Coming at the end of a three-hour medium-difficulty walk, this last section was the hardest hike I had ever experienced. High elevations normally make breathing difficult, but with the added exertion, my lungs were burning, as were my legs, and my heart was pounding audibly in my chest. I thought if ever I was going to have a coronary it would be now. We were heading for a sheer cliff emerging from the jungle, devoid of blanketing vegetation, with plants scattered here and there.

When we reached our destination, we found many large mature plants of *Phrag. kovachii*, 1 to 2 feet (30 to 60 cm) in diameter, with old flower spikes and capsules, medium-size plants with velvety red-brown inflorescences and many small seedlings. The farmer disappeared to our right and called out that he had found one in flower. The flower turned out to be badly fading and with significant slug damage, but was still impressive because of the size

6- to 7-plus inches (15- to 17.5-cm) in diameter. We stopped to rest, reveling in the fact that if this was the only one we had found, at least it was *in situ* and "in flores." Thinking that this might be the only one, we took many pictures, stifling our disappointment.

While we were occupied with this plant, the farmer disappeared again, this time to our left and slightly under the cliff. He called out in Spanish and Portilla took off in his direction to investigate. They began yelling to us that they had found others in flower and we were to join them. We were all beyond the point of exhaustion and the thought of resuming a climb of the cliff was almost beyond us, but we mustered the strength and joined them. To our delight, there were six of the most magnificent flowers I have ever seen, their heads peeking out of the vegetation covering this section of the cliff. The mature flowers were immense, with natural spans like those seen only on large standard cattleyas. The immature flowers were almost round, and smaller in size. The color was a deep royal purple to dark rose. The

deep red-purple pouch matched the size of the flower, with the typical rolled edge. The inside of the pouch was creamy white with dark regular spots of the same color as the outside of the pouch. We took pictures of the plants *in situ* with every conceivable combination of flower and exhausted man. Between the four of us, I'm sure we had more than 150 images. Now I understood the reason for the excitement, intrigue and turmoil surrounding this flower.

We started our return and, because six people had climbed the cliff, loosening the mud, rocks and vegetation, the descent was even more treacherous. The journey back proved to be one of mind over matter, with muscles already cramping and rest stops increasing in frequency. The six river crossings involved more wading than nimble jumping rock to rock. By the end of the trail, the six travelers were significant distances apart, with the farmer jogging out of the jungle long before anyone else.

As the group gathered at our vehicle and began the trip back to our hostel, we reflected on the day, between excruciating muscle cramps. We all agreed that we had just had a rare and rewarding experience that for most of us would be a once-in-a-lifetime event.

John Salventi is co-owner of Parkside Orchid Nursery, 2503 Mountainview Drive, Onitsville, Pennsylvania 18942 (e-mail parkside@pid.net; Web site www.parksideorchids.com).