

MARYLAND ORCHID SOCIETY

ORCHID

newsletter

News and information for the members of the Maryland Orchid Society

March 2011

president's message

March Madness

As one can imagine, "March Madness" aptly describes the past few weeks of Show preparation as well as the remaining weeks in the month as we prepare to install an MOS exhibit at the SEPOS (Longwood Gardens) Show.

The Show Committee was thrown quite a curveball as we made the final adjustments and fine-tuning for this year's Show. A week and a half before the Show, J&L Orchids informed us of a family medical situation that was going to keep them from participating in our Show this year. Obviously these sorts of situations cannot be anticipated and try as we might we could not come up with another vendor. The Show was still a success and I trust that you were able to attend and enjoy the event as much as I did.

More to come on the Show next month.

I hope that you have held onto some of those divisions and plants that no longer fit your collection, as this month's meeting will feature the MOS member plant sale and swap. Bring your divisions and doubles to sell, trade or just plain give away to other MOS members and guests attending this week's meeting. I'm sure after last week's Show we all could use a little more growing space. It should be a fun time and you'll have the advantage of asking the grower any questions about caring for the plant.

But wait, there's more!

We will also be featuring a panel discussion with diverse, experienced MOS growers in lieu of an individual speaker this

month. The panel will be ready to offer up all the advice you need to help grow and bloom your new-found treasure from the Show. I encourage you to bring along your favorite new plant or a long-time, *not so reliable bloomer* and put the panel to the test. I'm confident they'll be able to point you in the right direction to get your orchid blooming in your growing conditions. Feel free to share your own knowledge and secrets to blooming and re-blooming your selected orchid.

Happy growing!

Bill



Bill Scharf's Paph *delatanii* won best hobbyist Paphiopedilum species in this year's show.

MOS Board of Trustees Meeting



Lou and Barbara Buck are hosting our next Board of Trustees Meeting on April 28. Arrive at 6:30 pm to get a head start on light food and refreshments. (Please consider bringing a dish to share.) The meeting begins at 7:30 pm. Board meetings are open to the general membership, but please RSVP at BarbaraBuck@comcast.net if you plan to attend.

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Special thanks to Sarah Hurdel for the beautiful photos below of last month's show table plants!



Novice

1. Phal. Blond (above)- The Dagostins
2. Blc. White Spark - Janice Mazur
3. Epi. Hybrid - Gregg Custis



Home Grown

1. L. *sincorana* 'Rebecca Northen' AM/AOS (above)- Sarah Hurdel
2. Paph. Conco-bellatulum X (Lemon Hart X Sagialla) (below)- Les Kirkegaard
3. Ddc. *filiforme* - Bill Scharf



Greenhouse

1. Phrag. Giganteum (top center column) - Lou Vadorsky
2. Asctm. *christensonianum* - The Adamses
3. Tie Ddc. *tenellum* - David Smith
Lyc. *lasioglossa* - Cy Swett



Cattleya

1. Epi. *radicans* 'Al's Gift' (below)- The Adamses
2. Tie Pot. Fort Fortune X Blc. Small Fortune - David Smith
Bc. Maikai 'Mayumi' - Eric Wiles
3. Slc. Hazel Boyd 'Debbie' AM/AOS - The Lundys



Phalaenopsis

1. Phal. *schilleriana* 'Summer' - The Adamses
2. Phal. *bellina* - Gary Smith
3. Phal. Hybrid - Sarah Spence

Oncidium

1. Onc. Twinkle 'Red Fantasy' - Cy Swett
2. Wils. Golden Afternoon 'Rich Yellow' - Jamie Riegel & Erin Hunt
3. Brsda. Orange Delight - Eric Wiles

Paphiopedilum and Phragmipedium

1. Paph. Prince Edward of York 'TomCat' AM/AOS (top right column)- Mark Robbins
2. Tie Paph. *delenatii* - The Adamses
Paph. Dolgoldi - Les Kirkegaard
3. Tie Phrag. Sedenii 'Candidulum' - The Lundys
Paph. (Hsinying Inspiration X Sue Franz) - Bill Scharf



Dendrobium

1. Den. Virginia (below)- Eric Wiles
2. Den. Nora Tokunaga - Cy Swett
3. Tie Den. *aberrans* - David Smith
Den. Mini Snowflakes - Charlotte Grahe



Miscellaneous Hybrids

1. Ang. Veitchii - Eric Wiles
2. Masd. Falcata 'Don Richardson' AM/AOS - Bill Scharf

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Special thanks to Sarah Hurdel for the beautiful photos below of last month's show table plants!



Species

1. Ddc. *bicallosum* (above)- David Smith
2. Phrag. *pearcei* - Sarah Hurdel
3. Tie Chy. *bractescens* - Eric Wiles
Strs. *glicensteinii* - The Lundys

Miniature

1. Epi. *escarbarianum* - Sarah Hurdel
2. Bulb. *gracillimum* - The Adamses
3. Tie Pls. *stenostachya* - David Smith
Chsch. *lunifera* - Eric Wiles



First Bloom Seedling

1. Paph. *venustum* var. *album* (above)
- Les Kirkegaard
2. Paph. Monsoon Temptation
- Val Lowe
3. Paph. *deleatitii vini* - Clark Riley



Fragrance

1. Rhy. *gigantea* (above)- Phuong Tran & Rich Kaste
2. Onc. Sharry Baby 'Red Fantasy' - Laura Sobelman
3. Blc. Rosebud 'NN' - Jamie Riegel & Erin Hunt

The Judges Choice of the Evening was Epi. *radicans* 'Al's Gift', exhibited by The Adamses. The judges were Cy Swett, Barbara Buck and Gregg Custis. There were 116 beautiful plants displayed on our show table!

MOS Needs Help and Plants for SEPOS Show

Once again the Maryland Orchid Society is installing a 50 sq. ft. exhibit in the SEPOS show at Longwood Gardens. Set up is March 24 and I will be needing plants and help. Unfortunately, I will not be at the MOS meeting this month to plant shop because I am fulfilling AOS judging requirements by judging the Pittsburgh show. Therefore, I will need to pick up plants the weekend of March 20 and into the early part of the week of March 22.



Alternatively, Jamie Riegel will be at the meeting on March 18 and may be able to take some plants home with him then, since he has already agreed to help with setting up the SEPOS exhibit.

Please call me at 410.599.2923, e-mail me at vlowe14@comcast.net, or text me if you have any plants to lend me and/or will be willing to help with the exhibit.

Tear down will be Sunday, March 27.

Thank-you in advance for all your help.

Valerie Lowe,
Away Shows Chair

orchid web resources

This column provides helpful Web sites offering orchid-growing tips.

Phalaenopsis Care:

- <http://www.repotme.com/orchid-care/Phalaenopsis-Care.html>
- <http://phalaenopsiscare.net/>
- <http://www.orchidweb.com/phalcare.aspx>

This link is a video of Jason Fischer of Orchids Limited in Minnesota, aka orchidweb.com telling where to cut a Phalaenopsis spike:
<http://www.orchidweb.com/phalspikecut.aspx>

This link takes you to an orchid glossary so you can tell that orchidphiles are actually speaking a real language and something they made up:
http://www.beautifulorchids.com/orchids/orchid_care_tips/glossary.html

If you have any other favorite Web sites to add to this list, or any other orchid-related articles you'd like to publish in the newsletter, please e-mail Laura at sobelman1@verizon.net.

David Smith Wins Prestigious Carlyle A. Luer Pleurothallid Award

by David Smith

I have owned this plant, *Acianthera sonderiana* 'Turnberry' CCE/AOS for maybe 15-18 years, during which time the name of the source has been forgotten, but is possibly The Little Greenhouse in Baltimore, MD. I might be able to give specific information if I could get to the original label which is completely covered over by the plant, but for obvious reasons, I'm not willing to dig it out. The plant was originally grown in small plastic pots which were eventually replaced by the small oak burl on which it is now mounted. Originally it was tied onto the burl with light weight nylon monofilament fishing line holding it onto a small pad of long fiber sphagnum, which is long gone. I am hoping that the plant will eventually completely cover the burl because, at present, there is a small bare space on the very bottom.

'Turnberry' has been grown in a glass and aluminum greenhouse under intermediate winter conditions, with low temperatures of 53-56° F (depending on the wind speed around the greenhouse.) The light is relatively bright with even some full sun during mid-winter. The humidity is consistently high with good air movement from electric fans which run 24 hours a day. I fertilize lightly with 20-20-20

fertilizer every 3rd or 4th watering, which is every 6 to 10 days during winter, using slightly warm (about 65°-70° F) water from fall through spring. As the season progresses into spring I begin to water about every 4-5 days with daily, or as needed, manual misting using a hose and a low volume misting nozzle. My water comes from a well and is of good quality, but it is very cold as it comes from ground. For this reason, all of my plants have done better with the slight warming mentioned earlier. As a digression, I must say this plant, along with everything else in the greenhouse, has survived a few periods of less than good care, but most plants have responded well to, later, improved care. By using electric fans, an evaporative cooler, some shading, manual misting, and a timer controlled misting system I try to maintain a summer temperature maximum of 86° F. The greenhouse is not closed at all during the summer, so there is a constant flow-through of air. 'Turnberry' has been an easy plant to grow, responding well to consistent and good care and recovering quickly from periods of less than good care.

Previous to the CCE awarded to 'Turnberry' in September, 2009, it received an 83 point CCM on October 5, 2007 at



Photo by Jim Osen

the National Capitol Orchid Society show in Washington, DC. It has also received several local awards from both the NCOS and the Maryland Orchid Society. It has been an altogether satisfying plant to own and grow, even though it has taken several years to develop its current configuration. The bloom time of the September, 2009 awarding was about 5 weeks earlier than previous bloomings which were in early October. How to explain this change? Possibly it was due to better summer and early autumn care: consistent water and fertilizing, cooler, more air movement, better light, and better humidity, which, together, describe the care of practically all orchids. An illustration of consistency (or, lack of) is the 2010 blooming. The flowers were mostly concentrated on one side of the plant which had become shaded due to neglect. I had failed to keep my eye on the light distribution: the shaded side had only a few flowers! The 2011 blooming will be a different game: consistency is its name!

I must say that I was surprised and thrilled by the awarding of the Carlyle A. Luer Pleurothallid Award. I am truly honored. It is certainly not something that an orchid grower ever *expects* to receive. I have been growing orchids for almost 30 years and have never even considered winning such an award. Thank you AOS!



Meeting Your Plant's Needs by Mark Robbins

Growing Plants Indoors. You can grow and bloom any type of orchid in your house. However, houses were designed for your comfort and not for that of orchids. Creating places with an environment that orchids will like, or at least tolerate, can be easy or hard depending on the particular plant. You have to decide how hard you want to work when choosing plants.

Some plants that like conditions that are typical in the home are phalaenopsis and doritaenopsis, many paphiopedilums (especially Maudiae-type, concolor, niveum and some brachypetalum hybrids), miniature and compact cattleyas, and compact dendrobiums. I find the biggest limitations are temperature and plant size.

The American Orchid Society provides culture sheets (www.aos.org) for most types of orchids. These give general guidelines for the temperature range, and the amount of light, water, fertilizer, and humidity that different plants need. Most orchids will tolerate a wide range of conditions and there are large variations within a given species or hybrid. Brief notes on how to provide plant needs in a home follow. Many people give their plants a summer vacation outdoors. This can be great for plants that like high light (vandas, cattleyas, cymbidiums, ...) but be sure not to bring pests indoors with the plants.

Light. The simplest choice is a window. Plants have adapted to the sun's spectrum of light frequencies and sun is free. The problem is that the light is difficult to regulate and highly variable. Culture sheets generally suggest an East or South window for low or high light plants, respectively. Keep in mind that much more than the direction of the window is important. A window that works well in winter may be shaded by leaves in the summer, or a nearby building may block the lower winter sun. Dirty windows can block a lot of light and screens can block 1/4 to 1/2 of the light. I've had leaves burn when I took the screens off in the winter.

The distance from the window is also very important. Moving a plant 6 to 12 inches back from a window can keep it from burning or keep it from blooming.

How does one tell where to put a plant? In many cases you will have other houseplants to guide you. Phalaenopsis and paphiopedilums are often happy where African violets grow well. Light meters can also help, but the light intensity varies greatly over the course of the day and year. The best guide is to watch the leaves of the plant. Move the plant to a darker place if you see leaf burn or bleaching of the leaves. Move the plant to a brighter spot if the leaves are too dark a green or the plant doesn't grow and flower well. This can be frustrating because some changes take months to establish. Having several plants at different locations can speed things up.

The simplest alternative, or supplement, to windows is fluorescent lighting. Most orchids that are commonly cultivated can get enough light to grow and flower under new compact fluorescent fixtures or traditional 4 foot fluorescent bulbs. Putting 4' tubes side-by-side creates bright uniform lighting over a 2' by 4' area. One of the best things is the lack of shadows - almost every leaf gets light from somewhere. I grow cattleyas with the top of their leaves between 2 and 6" from the tubes and paphiopedilums and phalaenopsis at 4 to 10" from the tubes. The distance is not as important as some books say when you have several tubes side-by-side. I vary the day length from 11 or 12 hours in the winter to 14 in the summer on most lights. However, my phalaenopsis have a steady 12 hours all year and don't seem to mind. Some plants are reported to need a long dark night, but I haven't found this to be common. This might become an issue if the lights were on more than 14 hours a day. Some growers recommend 16 hours.

Not all fluorescent fixtures or tubes are the same. I have found that cheap shop lights and fixtures wear out quickly and give less light with the same bulb by up to 40%.



People grow successfully with all types of bulbs. I have been happy with Wide Spectrum Grow-Lux (above), which are not that expensive when bought by the dozen. Many say that fluorescent tubes need to be replaced once a year. I have found little change in intensity after a year, but bulbs that are two or more years old are noticeably dimmer at the ends. Cheaper fixtures cause bulbs to wear out more quickly.

The next step up is high-intensity-discharge (HID) lighting. There is a 150W bulb (\$50) that is fairly easy to install, but having light come from a single point leads to lots of shadowing. This bulb is probably best for small areas or to supplement a window. Larger lamps need a special ballast and are much more expensive (~\$300). However, they are much more efficient, and the bulb replacement cost is not much more. The metal-halide lights are closest to sunlight and said to be best when there is no other lighting. High-pressure sodium lights are more efficient and good for blooming, but have less energy at the frequencies needed for growth.

I found that a single stationary HID light gave uneven lighting. I would recommend spreading the light with a light track or mover, or mounting several lamps in a line. I grow plants 18 to 36 inches from my 400W metal-halide on a 4-foot long light track. I put high light plants in the center and low light plants at the edges. The day length is the same as for fluorescents. These bulbs dim by 1/3 after a year and should be replaced annually.

continued on next page

Whatever the light source, you can use white paint or reflective mylar to direct more of it on to your plants. Mylar is more reflective, but the light bounces off like a mirror. Paint spreads the light in many directions.

Water and Fertilizer. The most asked question is “How often should I water?” Unfortunately there is no simple answer. “You can never water an orchid too much, but you can water it too often.” Most orchids need to dry out between watering so that their roots get air. How long this takes depends greatly on pot size, growing media, humidity, air movement, temperature and other factors. You can judge how wet the roots are by looking at the top of the media, feeling the weight of the pot, or looking through the pot if you use clear plastic. I put lots of water through each pot when I water, but make sure the pots are well-drained and that their bottoms aren’t left under water when I’m done.

Orchids are very efficient at getting nutrients from the environment. They need fertilizer, but too strong a concentration makes the water too salty and may damage the roots. Many growers fertilize “weakly weekly”, that is about $\frac{1}{4}$ the recommended strength but with almost every watering. I use $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ strength every other week to save time and give the plants a taste of salt free water. If you have a water softener or are on a well, your water may be too salty for your plants. You can send a sample for testing or buy a simple meter. Sensitivity to salt varies, and you might ask the grower before buying if you have high salt water. You’ll find lots of magic blends for sale, but I normally stick with 20-20-20 or switch between several fertilizers.

One of the biggest challenges is getting water into pots without damaging your house or spending all day watering. A small number of plants can be carried to the sink and placed under the faucet. This is easier if one has perforated trays that can be carried to the water and then set back inside watertight trays. I have plants on trays that drain into a bucket that is emptied by hand or with a sump pump. I

can then use a hose for watering.

Temperature. Temperature can be hard to control. My plants get very hot in the summer because they aren’t air-conditioned. Some sensitive plants summer in my office. My plants also don’t get very cold nights in winter (the other residents of the house complained). Cymbidiums and some of the most beautiful miltoniopsis and related intergeneric crosses either won’t bloom or won’t bloom with the desirable deep colors if they don’t get cold nights. If you have a sun porch or other area that gets cold at night you may have more luck with these. You may also find a drafty window or pantry that works well.

Humidity. In the winter a house may drop far below the minimum 50% humidity often recommended for most orchids. I try to keep the humidity up around 35% with a humidifier. My basement doesn’t have a humidifier and may get down to 30% in the winter. The plants seem to survive this, perhaps because the local humidity is higher due to evaporation from the potting media, trays and nearby plants. Some people mist plants, but the increase in humidity is short-lived.

In the summer, humidity and temperatures can get much higher than recommended. In general, plants tolerate higher humidity at low temperatures and vice versa. I aim for lots of air movement in the summer with 16" and larger rotating fans. You can use box fans for small spaces. Air movement helps to limit heat buildup in the summer and limits bacterial and fungal infection in the winter. I think it also helps the potting mix to dry out more evenly.

Potting Media. Because my growing conditions are dryer and warmer than most greenhouses I find that some plants need, or can tolerate, a more absorbent mix. I try to make the mix less absorbent (coarser pieces) as the pot size increases so that plants dry out at more comparable rates. I find anything grows in sphagnum and it is easy to look at the surface and know it is time to water. Most growers use



a mixture of either fir bark or coconut husk (above) with perlite to lighten the mix and charcoal to remove salts. A common ratio is 3 to 2 to 1 of these three ingredients. I like to use clear plastic pots so I can see when some plants need water. I judge opaque pots by the weight. To make this easy I avoid heavy clay pots and mixes with too much charcoal or lava rock. I don’t water on a schedule, but mark a calendar or special sheet to keep track of when I watered which plant. This helps me focus on the plants that are likely to need water and helps keep me from forgetting to water plants. Plants are grouped by drying time and water requirements. While this makes life simpler, plants do better when each is watered at its own time.

Pests. Be careful when introducing new plants into your collection or bringing plants indoor at the end of the summer. It is often a good idea to quarantine new plants and look for signs of pests. I spray new plants – just to make sure. Indoor growers have to be careful with chemicals. I use Sunspray Ultrafine Oil, which is basically paraffin and kills by smothering. Other options are insecticidal soaps, pyrethins, and Neem. Remember that 3 regularly spaced sprays are needed to be sure the pests are gone.

Websites for more information:

The Maryland Orchid Society page has links to some sites: <http://marylandorchids.org>

The American Orchid Society is at www.aos.org

The Orchid Mall: www.orchidmall.com
For Paphs. <http://ladyslipper.com/1stpaph.htm>

Longwood Gardens, march 25–27, 2011
international ORCHID

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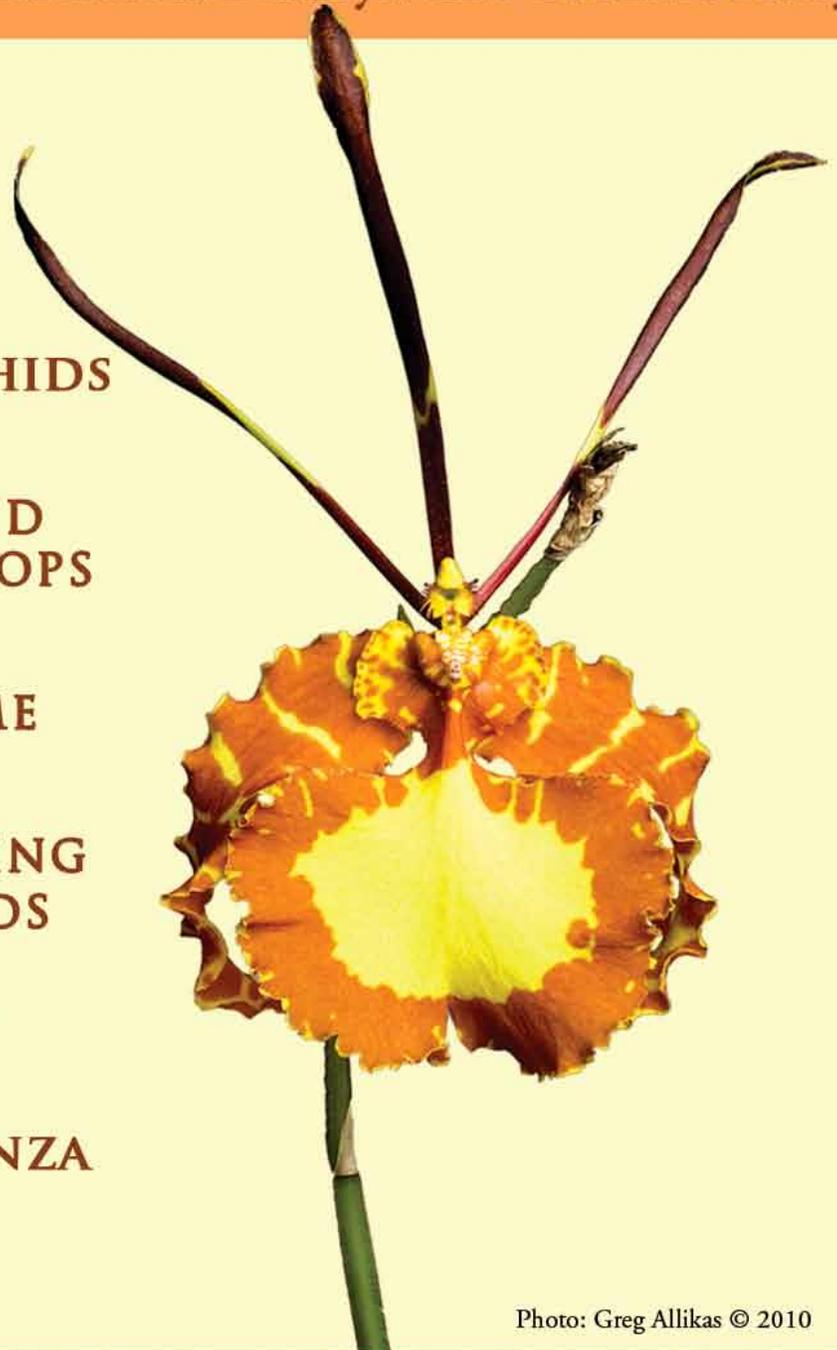


Photo: Greg Allikas © 2010

For all the beautiful details visit longwoodgardens.org or call 610.388.1000

ORCHID WORKSHOP YOU'RE INVITED

The Maryland Orchid Society is presenting a workshop on orchid growing, culture and care.

SATURDAY, APRIL 9, 2011

from 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. at St. David's Church,
4700 Roland Ave., Baltimore, MD 21210.

There will be demonstrations, discussions, hands-on training
in repotting, media, and growing techniques.

Admission is \$15.00 per person, includes lunch and
supplies. For more details call 410-456-1794.

Remove and return lower portion with payment.

Make your check payable to and mail to
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The *MOS Newsletter*, published monthly by the Maryland Orchid Society September through June, shares the latest news of our orchid community. Please submit your comments to sobelman1@verizon.net

We invite articles, notices, etc. for inclusion in our newsletter. The deadline for inclusion is first Sunday of the month.

Contributors: **Sarah Hurdell • Tom McBride • Mark Robbins • Bill Scharf • David Smith • Laura Sobelman**

The MOS brings together people interested in orchids to promote and encourage orchid culture, preservation, education, propagation, hybridization, and all other orchid-related activities of interest to its members. Benefits of membership include a subscription to the Newsletter (e-mail and web), voting rights, borrowing privileges from the MOS Library, monthly guest speakers, local judging, valuable door prizes, and much, much, more!

If you are interested in orchid culture and would like to meet others with similar interests, we cordially invite you to join the ranks of Marylanders already enjoying the benefits of membership in the Maryland Orchid Society.

Visit us on the Web at www.marylandorchids.org
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