

# Venice Area Orchid Society **News**

Jan. 2013

*Happy New Year*

**-2013 Starts with a Bang -  
Time for  
"Rhapsody in Hue"**

**February 2 & 3 Venice Show & Sale**

**Next Meeting: Wednesday  
January 2nd at 7:00 p.m.**

**Speaker: Bill Fender**

**Topic: How to Select Orchids for Purchase**

After 38 years in the nursery business, Bill and Susan Fender have retired. Bill is enjoying being an orchid hobbyist again. Bill has been growing orchids for 44 years while Susan has become a quilting machine and pretty much avoids Bill's orchid hobby. His first orchid plant, Bc. Binosa, received as a gift in 1969, is still thriving and blooming in the Fenders' backyard growing area. He has nicknamed his hobby area the Fender Orchid Shrine.



During their time running Fender's Flora, Bill expanded his love for orchids into a unique breeding program using selected cattleya-type orchids that he had collected over the years, a program which he continues in retirement. His emphasis in creating cattleya-type hybrids is to produce frequent bloomers with fragrant flowers. He breeds both standard and compact cattleya-types, many with spots.

Bill is a third generation Florida native, born in St. Petersburg and both Bill and Susan are longtime VAOS members.

Bill will be speaking about how to select new orchids in general and specifically for purchase at our VAOS Orchid Show - and will bring plants for sale. He will provide information about what to look for in an orchid, how to read an orchid label, and what questions to ask the vendors. Bring your own questions and he will be glad to answer them.

## **A Message from your President:**

Such a lovely evening! Again the Venice Yacht Club was a beautiful venue to launch the holidays on the 2nd floor above the boats decorated with lights. Our members were handsomely attired and some of us remembered how to dance again while others enjoyed watching. Thanks to the following people for making the party a grand success:



*Cynthia Vance*

Organization and Reception: Thank you, Gerry Thomas, for finding the wonderful keyboardist and fantastic singer; Pauline Adam, "foodie", who joined us on menu selection along with Judy Loeffler. Thanks to Judy and Ali Hicks who welcomed our members and guests.

Auction Volunteers: - Thank you. Bill Timm, delightful auctioneer, Jerry Manegold, assistant, and Toni Marie and Jimmy Thomas, presenters; Runners -- Lynne Pedlar, Ed Hicks and Bill Fahrenback who took items quickly to the winners and collected the money on the spot. Those with multiple wins kept track on the honor system and wrote one check. When the auction was over, instead of a stampede, we continued with more music and relaxed mingling. Jay Loeffler, your suggestion of runners-- worked!

The Plants, Paintings, Books and OrchidWiz: Thank you, Bill and Susan Fender, Helene Gabrey, Tawana Hardenbrook, Bryan Herd, Jeff Higel, Jerry Manegold, John Masters, Ted Kellogg, Jimmy Thomas, Bill Timm, Cynthia Vance, Barbara Wagner, and Carol Wood. We made \$540, surpassing our budget goal!

## **Progress on our Annual Show and Sale**

"Rhapsody in Hue", Feb 2-3, 2013: All tasks to prepare for the show are on schedule. It is a tradition that if

[WWW.VAOS.ORG](http://WWW.VAOS.ORG)

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**Venice Area Orchid Society, P.O. Box 443, Venice, FL 34284-0443**

## Officers 2012 - 2013

### President

Cynthia Vance, [pres@vaos.org](mailto:pres@vaos.org)

### Vice President - Programs

Jim Thomas

[programs@vaos.org](mailto:programs@vaos.org)

### Vice President - Social Affairs

Gerry Thomas, [social@vaos.org](mailto:social@vaos.org)

### Vice President - Show Displays

Richard Amos, [disp@vaos.org](mailto:disp@vaos.org)

### Treasurer

Ali Hicks, [tres@vaos.org](mailto:tres@vaos.org)

### Recording Secretary

Peg Fahrenback, [rsec@vaos.org](mailto:rsec@vaos.org)

### Membership

Jay & Judy Loeffler, [memb@vaos.org](mailto:memb@vaos.org)

### Directors At Large:

#### Annual Show Chairs

Barbara Wagner

Carol Wood

[showchair@vaos.org](mailto:showchair@vaos.org)

#### Immediate Past President

Ted Kellogg, [tmkellogg@gmail.com](mailto:tmkellogg@gmail.com)

### Volunteers

Donn Smart, Communications

The Cullens, Raffle Table

Judy Russell, Plant Table

Jerry Manegold, Technology

Bryan Herd, Librarian

### Newsletter Editor

Steve Vogelhaupt

### Newsletter Production

Barry Zack

### Website Maintenance

Ted Kellogg

### VAOS Printer

Creative Technology of Sarasota

## Venice Area Orchid Society News

P.O. Box 443, Venice, FL 34284-0443

- Published monthly.
- Deadline for submissions is the 15th of the prior month.
- Please direct comments to:  
Steve Vogelhaupt, [newsletter@vaos.org](mailto:newsletter@vaos.org)
- Written submissions are appreciated.

## Plants Needed for VAOS Exhibit at Sarasota Show

All members are encouraged to provide blooming plants for the VAOS exhibit at the Sarasota Orchid Show, January 5-6, 2013 at the Municipal Auditorium, 801 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota.

Submitting a plant for exhibit and judging or volunteering to work on the exhibit can be a tremendously gratifying experience. Rich and Mary Amos will be setting up our exhibit on Friday January 4th at 10am. Please contact Rich if you'd like to help with the exhibit.

Please start to groom and prep your plants now for the show. Plants should be cleaned, staked and free of pests/diseases. Each plant must have a plant name label and the pot should be marked with the owners name.

All plants should be pre-registered to ensure that registration, classification and signage is completed before Friday, otherwise it delays set up. Please email your plant names to Carol Wood by Thursday January 5th, 5pm. Include the color and blossom size with the plant name. ([showchair@vaos.org](mailto:showchair@vaos.org))

There are three options for plant submission:

- Plants can be brought to our meeting on January 2nd - we'll take them to the show, ensure their safety and coordinate return of your plants on Monday after the show.
- Plants can be delivered to Carol Wood in south Venice (497-4995) or Jim Thomas in north Venice (966-2479) by Thursday night.
- Plants may also be delivered to the Sarasota Municipal Auditorium on Friday January 4th by 9am.

Again, please pre-register your plants with Carol Wood by Thursday. If you are unsure if your plant will still be in prime condition for the show, please do go ahead and register it. It is easier to scratch a plant from our list if it is past prime then to have to add it at the show.

Please help us to create a winning exhibit by submitting your plants!

### Treasurer's Report December 2013

#### Checking Account

Starting Balance

11/16/2012.....\$1,235.67

+ Income.....\$2,045.00

- Payments.....\$2,830.02

Balance (12/16/12).....\$450.65

#### Show Checking Account

Balance (11/16/2012.....\$1,800.45

+ Income.....\$6,050.00

- Payments .....\$3,705.50

Balance (12/16/12).....\$4,144.95

#### Cash Account

Balance (12/16/2012.....\$40.00

#### Money Market Savings

Balance (12/16/12).....\$23,011.55

#### Total Assets

12/16/2012.....\$27,647.15

*Submitted by Ali Hicks*

### Support our 2013 Show Sponsors

- AAA South
- Center for Sight
- Drs. Davis & Beyer, DDS
- Edgewood Nursery
- Herald-Tribune Media Group
- Jacaranda Trace Retirement Community
- Pineapples Island Grill
- Raleigh & Associates
- Sharky's on the Pier
- Silverstein Institute
- Stanley Dean State Farm
- Valenti's Allegro Bistro



# 2012 Christmas Party Photo Album

Never realized just how many handsome men and beautiful women we have as members!

All the smiling faces are proof that everyone enjoyed the camaraderie, great setting, fine food, dancing and auction.

Happy holidays to all. Can't wait for next year's Extravaganza!!



## A “Portable” Solution for those Chilly Nights

Our warm climate here on the Suncoast is great for growing most orchids, but the few cold and chilly periods in the winter months often find us scrambling to find temporary shelters for our prized plants. A few of us are fortunate enough to have space for permanent greenhouses or have patios and pool cages that are relatively sheltered and can be modified to serve as temporary greenhouses with plastic sheeting/tarps and patio heaters and a bit of ingenuity.

Most of us make do by moving our shelves and orchids in and out of the garage or even into the house if we're lucky enough to have an orchid lover as a spouse or significant other. After wearing a deep path from the lanai to the garage, teetering on the edge of divorce, and still losing several orchids last year, we decided to buy a portable greenhouse for use during the coldest months of our winter.

Portable greenhouses range in size from 1x2x3 foot, with a couple of wire shelves, to 10x20x8 foot models with mist irrigation systems and custom shelving units. A few have wooden frames, while most use galvanized steel tubing and assorted hardware while others have spring-loaded poles and supports similar to those used in expedition tents. All are covered with some type of reinforced PVC sheeting, usually with UV protection, and most have zippers, vents and ports for water hoses or power cords and prices range from \$30 - \$1000+. - Our greenhouse was bought online from [greenhouse-megastore.com](http://greenhouse-megastore.com). Prices fluctuate with demand and many other vendors are available. We opted for a simple 6x6x7 foot unit, with clear plastic, a zippered front door with screen and a zippered and screened rear vent and the promise of easy set-up. Weighing just over 20 pounds, the unit popped out of its carrying bag and needed less than thirty minutes to

assemble with the seven spring-loaded support poles. We chose a sheltered corner location with easy access to water and electricity and anchored the unit to the lanai with a couple of patio blocks and gallon milk containers. With no floor and provided tent stakes and wind tie downs, the greenhouse could just as well have been placed on hard soil.



*Greenhouse with four happy owners*



*Lots of space*

We found that our existing resin shelves from our local home improvement center fit just fine and ended up with two 2X4 foot units, each with three shelves, as well as a 6 foot long stand to hang vandas, and plenty of space for a small ceramic oscillating space heater, outdoor thermometer and miscellaneous supplies. After a bit of trial and error, we bought a single-phase inline thermostat that prevents the heater from running until a minimum temperature is

reached. Total cost so far has been \$260 and includes shipping for the greenhouse and thermostat.

I'm keeping forty pots and various mounted specimens in the greenhouse and find that I still have space for another ten....or 20..... or more. There's even enough space for a seed tray for starting flowers and vegetables. A few of my orchids, such as the nobile type dendrobiums and a cymbidium or two, do well outside as long as the temperature stays above freezing. With a 1500 watt heater, we expect the impact on our electric bill to be reasonable. From my limited experience and from what I've read from other buyers, I expect the greenhouse to last four years if I take it down during the hot summer months when the PVC is most likely to be degraded. Taking it down should be just as simple as the assembly, but that remains to be seen.

A few important considerations to keep in mind:

*Continued on page 5*

## A Portable Solution continued from the previous page

Location - The ideal location is morning sun and afternoon shade as the greenhouse easily overheats even with the supplied "shade" cloth. Leaving the door and vents tightly zipped before going off to a day of shopping is a sure recipe for parboiled plants. I usually open the back vent and partially unzip the front door during the day and close the front door and partially close the back vent at night. With daytime temperatures in the low 80's so far, the interior temperature never rose above 85 degrees. The heater has a fan only function that helps with temperature control and ventilation.

Ventilation - Humidity tends to be quite high, especially during the nights when the heater isn't running and both front and rear vents need to be partially open. Even then, the humidity stands at 80% in the morning, but rapidly equalizes with the outside when the door is opened. Look for vents that can be opened from the inside as well as the outside or else you'll find yourself crawling between the lanai screen/wall and the greenhouse sides. I've found that I need to water less often than previously, but that will probably change once the heater runs. So far, all

the orchids appear to have enjoyed their first month in the greenhouse with multiple new blooms and no evidence of pests or disease.

Pest and Diseases - Any enclosed area favors pests and diseases, even more so when coupled with close proximity and high humidity. When bringing plants into the greenhouse, it is absolutely critical to make sure that they are as disease and pest free as possible. Plants need to be examined carefully on a daily basis and immediate action taken in case of infestation or indication of disease. My biggest problem has been with scale so far and I've decided to leave any and all affected plants to fend for themselves this coming winter.

Summer- I plan to take the greenhouse down by the end of March and put it on a shelf in the garage until early December so it won't get damaged by the strong sun, blown away during a hurricane or tropical storm, and leaves space for outdoor activities..

Stay tuned for an update next April, space permitting.

*Submitted by Steve Vogelhaupt*

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## President's message continued from page 1

you are a member you will surely want to sign up for 2 hours as a volunteer. Call Carol Wood at 497-4995 and leave your name. She'll help you to choose a task and a 2-hour time slot. The benefits? Free entry into the show, receiving the show T-shirt and wonderful camaraderie!

Our show needs are:

**Clerks** - We need 15 more to come on Saturday at 7:15 AM. You will have a great learning experience working with AOS judges as they evaluate plants. Other benefits -- great food and first in line when sales open.

**Security** - We need 12 more to monitor exits. This is a great sit down job - volunteer your spouse!

**Food** - Please sign up to bring your favorite dishes on Fri, Sat or Sunday. The kitchen feeds all the volunteers and judges and keeps everyone happy.

**Greenery/Foliage** - The Orchid Boutique needs greenery and foliage. Please cut and put in buckets or containers with about 2" water on Thursday, January 31 and bring to the design area on Friday, February 1 between

10 am and noon. Also needed are blocks of Oasis (for wet arrangements). Call Jane at 488-7283 or Toni Marie at 493-1489 for questions.

Sponsorship fundraising is going very well with well-known returning sponsors -

**Center for Sight, Jacaranda Trace, and State Farm,** etc. and new ones, such as **Advanced Windows Concept and Dr. Frederick Bloom.**

Yet we still need our members to become patrons. This is a long-time tradition - so kindly send \$25 or more to VAOS, PO Box 443, Venice, FL, 34284 so we can cover some of the show outlay. We will be pleased to honor you publicly.

Remember we're all in this together. The VAOS is a team that shares plants and expertise, supports the Show with time and \$\$, contributes to orchid conservation efforts and reaps the benefits of the "Best Show on the West Coast of Florida" throughout the year with exciting programs and hands-on growing clinics.

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## Please Support Our Raffle Table

Members and guests are reminded and encouraged to support our Raffle Table by donating orchids, pots/baskets, planting media and related items at our monthly meetings as well as purchasing tickets for the raffle held at the conclusion of each meeting.

Proceeds from the monthly raffles are an important source of revenue and directly support the activities of our society throughout the year. A donation allows you to share your orchids with other members and gives you

more room for new purchases while buying raffle tickets provides the opportunity of inexpensively expanding your own collection and experimenting with new species and hybrids. Tickets are a bargain at \$1.00 each/\$5.00 for six tickets.

Margaret and Charlie Cullen are our stalwart volunteers manning the tables and look forward to seeing you at the next meeting.

# Venice Area Orchid Society News

P.O. Box 443  
Venice, FL 34284-0443

## Next Meeting:

Wednesday, Jan. 2, 7:00pm  
at Venice Community Center

- **Speaker:** Bill Fender
- **Topic:** "How to Select Orchids for Purchase"
- Show table entries welcome
- Bring Plants for the Raffle Table
- Bring treats to share

## Upcoming Events

### January 5-6, 2013:

Sarasota Orchid Society Annual Show, "A Symphony of Orchids", at the Sarasota Municipal Auditorium, 801 N. Tamiami Tr., Sarasota, FL. Info: [www.sarasotaorchidsociety.org](http://www.sarasotaorchidsociety.org)

### January 9, 2013:

Growers Clinic, 7pm, Venice Community Center. Presenter: Jim Thomas.

**Topic:** Orchid Growing Made Easy with open Q & A. Bring your problem plants for expert help.

### January 10-12, 2013:

Sundance Orchids and Bromeliads Winter Open House and Sale, South Ft. Myers. Sundance purchased much of Fender's inventory so you

can have a second chance. Info: [www.Sundanceorchids.com](http://www.Sundanceorchids.com)

### January 18-19:

Ft. Lauderdale Orchid Society Show, War Memorial Auditorium, 800 NE 8th St., Info: [johnwrench@bellsouth.net](mailto:johnwrench@bellsouth.net)

### January 26-27:

Manatee River Orchid Society Show, Manatee Convention and Civic Center, Palmetto, FL. Info: Barbara Fuhlbruck (941) 751-1599.

### January 26-27:

Tamiami International Orchid Festival, Dade County Expo Center, Miami, FL.

### February 2-3, 2013:

VAOS Annual Show, "Rhapsody in Hue", at the Venice Community Center.

### Ongoing:

Mentor Program: help for beginning growers, contact Peg Fahrenback, [rsec@vaos.org](mailto:rsec@vaos.org)

Orchid Judging takes place at the Tampa Garden Center, 2629 Bayshore Blvd., Tampa, FL at 7:30pm on the fourth Wednesday of every month.

### Newsletter Supplements

For those members who receive their monthly newsletter by email, look for extra content which began in June. Included are culture articles and handouts from our monthly Growers Clinic. This supplemental information will only be available in our full color email edition of the newsletter.

## Patronize Our Local Growers

Honey Bee Nursery (941-474-6866)  
Jeff Higel  
2383 Englewood Road (Rt. 776)  
Englewood

Plantio La Orquidea (941-504-7737)  
Tina & Rafael Romero  
3480 Tallevast Rd, Sarasota  
[www.plantiolaorquidea.com](http://www.plantiolaorquidea.com)

## **January in Your Orchid Collection**

Dr. Martin Motes

January is somewhat like December but in reverse, with each succeeding day bringing longer hours of sunlight until days are long enough that afternoons return at the end of the month with extra sunshine to warm us after the extra sharp cold snaps.

January, like December, is cold and dry, in fact even colder and drier. Dry is good, cold can be very bad. We need to accentuate the positive by especially careful watering in January. By keeping our plants as dry as possible and spacing our waterings as far apart as possible, we conserve our potential to use water to protect our plants from the cold, keeping our powder dry, as it were.

In January water early, water thoroughly when you do and do so sparingly. The cooler overall temperatures of January are much less dehydrating even to plants which have received less water. Remember, many of our orchids come from seasonally dry and cool climates not so different from South Florida.

Many orchids are equipped already to handle the drier cooler conditions of our Florida January. A good strategy is to "top-up" the light watering that our plants receive with the passing showers that each successive cold front brings.

This slight additional artificial irrigation may prove to be all the watering that many genera need. Such parsimony with watering preserves the possibility of using water on truly cold nights to warm our plants.

Water is the only feasible source of heat available to plants grown in the open, under trees, in shade houses or on patios in South Florida. Ground water here (and in most of the rest of the world is about 63 F. (16C). Water out of municipal systems is not far different.

On truly cold nights turning on the water can be of great benefit to our plants, provided that they have not been over-watered in the days and weeks preceding, thus inviting the ever present fungi to do more damage than the cold. For this reason as well, in general, orchids are better off dry until temperatures approach frost or freezing.

The logic for maintaining plants dry is not only to minimize fungal problems but also because cold air is typically very dry air. If plants are wet in very dry and rapidly moving air say 10 or more MPH, evaporative cooling can take place, chilling our orchids further and faster than they would if dry.

When the water goes on it needs to be in heavy volume and it needs to stay on to keep the plants thoroughly bathed in its warmth. Very still air on the other hand, presents a different danger as frost is possible at temperatures higher than is commonly realized. In calm air frost can form at higher elevations and settle in on plants while the surface temperature is only in the upper 30's (4C).

The best forecast for nights when the temperature will hover near 40 is a light wind of 2-5 miles per hour. This light wind mixes the warm air near the surface and draws warm from the earth. Clear, cloudless, still nights with bright shining stars elevate the spirit but harbingers frost.

Forecasts of temperatures below 40 F should stimulate us to action.

If it is not practical to bring all the *Phalaenopsis*, vandas and hard cane dendrobiums into the house or garage, think of using water to help protect them. Shade cloth or even patio screen like a lacy Mantilla holds in a surprising amount of heat. Under screen, a fine mist head(1/2 gal. per minute) attached to a hose and left running beneath the bench or plant rack will provide several degrees of additional warmth that will often sufficiently temper the chill and ward off any light frost settling in.

Growers with swimming pools frequently turn on the re-circulating pump to keep a supply of warm water near the pool's surface where it can add heat to the ambient environment. A few degrees of warmth frequently make all the difference to our sensitive orchids. In more open areas not protected by a permanent irrigation system, an oscillating sprinkler at the end of a garden hose is very effective.

These are readily available at Home Depot and garden shops for a few dollars. On frosty nights, start the water at bedtime and let it run until the sun is up. The extra water once or twice in a month will do no harm to orchids that have been properly and judiciously watered the remainder of the month. In fact, these occasions present the opportunity to be sure that excess fertilizer salts have been leached from the pots and medium. A good work can be born of necessity!

Remember that Himalayan dendrobiums and "warm growing" *Cymbidium* hybrids will positively relish temperatures down to 32F and a light frost is just the ticket for great bloom. Keep the water off these!

In the drought of January, mites, which affect nearly all genera of orchids, continue to be a serious problem that will only get worse. Mite populations will reach a crescendo in March and April but January is a good time to scotch them. *Paphiopedilum* and other softly leaved genera are particularly susceptible but no genus is free of them. One theory on why deciduous genera such as *Catasetum*, *Calanthe* and others lose their leaves hypothesizes that this totally rids them of mites.

Being totally rid of mites is a good thing! Sometimes this is easier said than done because mites reproduce with such voluminous speed. Their life cycle from egg to reproductive adult being is as short as twelve days. In order to control mites one must achieve as total a kill of the population as possible. Total control can only be achieved with two successive sprays. After spraying for mites initially, one *must* spray again in 7 - 10 days. No single spray is totally effective in killing both adults and eggs and a second spraying is necessary to kill any survivors before they can reproduce. Oil at 1.5 oz per gal followed in 7-10 days by soap at the rate of 2 oz per gallon is very effective. These treatments are also quite effective against scale and mealy bugs which thrive on drought as well.

Be sure your plants are well watered the day before applying both oil and soap and be sure that you cover thoroughly all leaf surfaces especially the lower ones which are mites favorite hide outs.

For those who wish to be more aggressive, the University of Florida IFAS recommended chemicals for mite control are:

Avid 0.15 EC  
Kelthane T/O  
Mavarik Aquaflo  
Talstar Flowable

Always follow label instructions for use. Any of these chemicals can be alternated with the soap or the oil in the 7-10 day cycle.

Controlling mites pays huge dividends! You'll be surprised at the extra vigor your plants display.

## Cold Watch

As cold is a major theme of this month, a review of some factors effecting temperatures in South Florida should be particularly valuable to new comers in the wide world of orchid growing.

While we bask in the warm glow of a tourist board's vision of winter, (made all the warmer by thoughts of our envious friends and relatives stuck in the northern snow and ice) we should be mindful that January can produce quite severe cold. The majority of hard freezes in Florida take place in January, but even short of that catastrophe, the month usually brings the coldest weather of the year. We need to keep a sharp eye on the weather reports while remembering that in our almost island of Florida a number of factors influence the severity of the cold which will impact us.

First, the shape of the cold front interacting with the shape of the peninsula is of immense importance. The weather that delights the tourist board and all of us while plunging most of the US into the throes of ice and snow usually results from particularly large, slow-moving masses of cold air that have spread across much of the continent before reaching Florida. Large broad masses of cold air that seep downward over a broad front also cover the Gulf of Mexico and the eastern Atlantic as they progress southward. These tempering bodies of water bathe the cold to merely refreshingly brisk temperatures. More dangerous to our plants are the smaller, tighter, fast-moving fronts which plunge like a dagger of cold straight down the peninsula to the tropical heart of South Florida. Such fronts typically spawn the freezes and severe plant-damaging cold that is of the greatest concern to orchidists and other plant people. These Siberian Express fronts bring winds out of the Northwest that are un-influenced by the benign, protective bodies of water flanking the peninsula as they drive down the central landmass of Florida. When the winds from an approaching front start out from the southwest and move gradually to the northwest and then quickly to the north and northeast, we can expect cold nights and warm days that reasonably well-protected orchids not only tolerate but in some case actually relish. The more savage fast moving fronts where winds start in the Northwest and stay there are the ones to send us thinking of moving plants or providing additional heat.

Wind direction is always critical in South Florida. Because of the peninsula's decided eastward cant, winds from the north in much of South Florida are in fact relatively mild. North winds here are blowing across the warm Gulf Stream. The first shift to the northeast absolutely spells relief as the warm Atlantic has absorbed the cold.

Wind speed is also important. Strong winds at low temperatures chill our plants more rapidly, exposing them to additional hours of chilling. "Wind chill factor" has no relevance to plants until the actual air temperature drops

to a level unacceptable to the plant. After that, the more rapidly the plant its self's temperature falls to that damaging level and the longer it stays there the worse the case. Wind speed enters the equation only if the final low temperature is below our plants' tolerance. Wind breaks of vegetation or manmade are always to be sought. Native epiphytic orchids hide out in the most protected hammocks and sloughs. We can learn from them.

Dead, still air looms with another threat: radiational cooling which can allow frost generated at higher levels of the atmosphere to settle in on our plants even when the air at the surface is only in the upper 30's. These frosts typically occur when the front has passed leaving such low humidity that there is no moisture in the air to retain ground heat which radiates quickly into the cold reaches of space. Light winds of 2-5 miles an hour are our friends on these nights. Lightly moving air stirs additional heat from the ground and keeps the colder upper air from settling in.

Relative humidity also has a profound effect on temperatures. Dry, clear air allows heat to radiate out into space. Those bright starry nights are beautiful but as Good King Wenceslas knew they are not necessarily our comforters. The best measure of the dryness of the air relative to cold is the dew point. When water vapor is wrung from the air an incredible amount of energy is released and the heat of transformation raises the air temperature a degree or two. Because of this phenomenon, the dew point is usually the closest measure of the coldest temperature that will be reached in the night. Particularly on still clear nights it should be monitored closely.

Wind direction, wind speed, dew point - where does one find these on a chilly night? At the Florida Agricultural Weather Network (FAWN), a system of automated weather monitoring stations, as close as your computer. There will be a station near you. There are also several at points north of the nearest location that give data on conditions that are effecting areas through which the cold front is moving toward us. FAWN is updated every 15 minutes at <http://fawn.ifas.ufl.edu>. Bookmark it for something other than worrying to do on those cold nights.

Excerpted from Florida Orchid Growing Month by Month