

Venice Area Orchid Society News

Oct. 2013

**Next Meeting: Wednesday
October 2nd at 7:00 p.m.
Speaker: Jamie Lawson
Topic: "Orchids in Love"**



Jamie and Jackie Lawson, with their kids Brian and Lanie, settled in Central Florida in 1990 after a year traveling through Mexico and Central America in their motorhome. Having their interest piqued by the orchids they saw in the wild, they immediately bought a couple of orchids, took out the ugly white tags and went to their first orchid society meeting and immediately realized they had a lot to learn.

Although Jamie doesn't claim to be an expert, he has traveled extensively to various growers, both commercial and backyard, and picked their brains. He is also a member of four orchid societies which he regularly attends and is the past Moderator of the Slipper Orchid Study Group of Florida.

Jamie has an orchid flasking lab in Micco, Florida, Hummingbird Highway Orchid Lab, where he does seed flasking and mericloneing. Everyone is invited to visit the lab and learn about orchid propagation techniques.

Jamie's talk will be on "Orchids in Love" and will feature pictures and videos of orchids and bugs doing it. A review of his previous presentations calls "Orchids in Love" a triple X-Rated romp through the steamy jungle bedrooms of the exotic and sensuous world of orchids!

Jamie will have orchid seedlings and flasks for sale.

A Message from your President:

First, I'd like to thank our member, Debi Wolfe, for hosting such a fine orchid collection "downsizing" sale at her home. With both the VAOS email blast and the meeting flyer listing the names of her plants, the enormity and depth of her collection was revealed. Hence more than 70 persons came to shop and word must have quickly spread, for members of the Englewood and Sarasota Orchid Societies also showed up. Debi also had made colorful prints from the Internet of her plant types so customers knew what to expect when the plant bloomed. I think this is a model of how to stage a successful orchid sale.



Cynthia Vance

For others of you who may want to downsize your collection, VAOS is here to help. We see this as a service to our members who are upsizing! To take full advantage of the email blast and the meeting flyers, try to schedule your sale a week or ten days after the monthly meeting. Send me an email draft of your sale announcement at least two weeks in advance of the sale. Look at previous email blasts to make sure you provide all the necessary information or get in touch with the Newsletter Editor.

In August, Roy Tokunaga gave one of the best talks at our monthly meeting, "Orchid Culture and Strategies for More Flowers". As a brilliant hybridizer who has been in the business in Hawaii for more than 30 years, he humbly confessed that it was only 5 years ago that he really learned how to grow orchids!! He has done numerous experiments in his quest to increase flower quality and quantity. First of all he tested the water in the medium that he was using in the orchid pot. Yes, the medium does change the PH of the water. After knowing the PH of his wet medium, he was able to adjust his water PH to between 5 and 6 so that his orchids actually absorb all the nutrients he's been giving them for years. He compared two of the same plants and found that changing the PH and fertilizer increased the size of his plants and number of flowers by 30%!

He encouraged us to do the same. If the PH is too low (4), the plant will not absorb calcium and black rot will

WWW.VAOS.ORG

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

Officers 2013 – 2014

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Newsletter Production

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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, csec@vaos.org
- Written submissions are appreciated.

Minutes of the September 4, 2013 VAOS Meeting

Cynthia Vance opened the meeting by recognizing members who are making significant contributions to VAOS. These included Margaret and Charlie Cullen, who manage the plant raffle table, Ali Hicks, our Treasurer, Janice Felski, VP Social, who serves refreshments at each meeting and Jay and Judy Loeffler, our Membership chairs. Cynthia warmly welcomed new members. The upcoming Ridge Show at Lakeland was discussed. Richard Amos, our VP who designs the orchid display at shows, reported that blooming orchids are needed. He outlined plant registration procedures.

Attention was directed to other upcoming events which were printed and placed on chairs in advance of the meeting. Debi Wolfe is downsizing her huge orchid collection. She will have over 125 orchids for sale the weekend of Sept. 6-8. Members were asked to support Debi.

Cynthia then discussed the upcoming Holiday Party to be held at Boca Royale, on Dec. 7th. Cost will be \$25 per person for dinner, dessert, music, dancing and an orchid auction. Food entrees will include Vegan and Gluten Free options.

Jimmy Thomas reported the Sept. Growers Clinic will be a demo on how to divide plants. The October Growers Clinic will provide another hands-on potting class. For the Oct. clinic, members were asked to take an orchid out of the pot and clean it up **before** bringing it to the clinic. In Oct., members are asked to notify Jimmy of the type of plant they are bringing so he can provide proper supplies for potting.

Jimmy Thomas introduced our speaker, Bill Thoms, whose topic was Orchid Collecting in the Philippines. Bill's entertaining PowerPoint presentation took us on a journey deep into the lush tropical jungle. Many interesting and funny antidotes

Continued on page 4

Treasurer's Report

September, 2013

Checking Account

Starting Balance		
8/14/2013	\$	915.97
+ Income	\$	137.00
+ Transfer	\$	5,000.00
- Payments	\$	746.15
Closing Balance		
9/13/2013	\$	5,306.82

Show Checking Account

Starting Balance		
8/14/2013	\$	947.04
Closing Balance		
9/13/2013	\$	947.04

Cash Account

Starting Balance		
8/14/2013	\$	40.00
Closing Balance		
9/13/2013	\$	40.00

Money Market Savings

Starting Balance		
8/14/2013	\$	32,027.71
+ Income	\$	1.43
- Transfer	\$	5,000.00
9/13/2013	\$	27,029.14

Total Assets

9/13/2013	\$	33,323.00
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Submitted by Ali Hicks

Support our 2013 Show Sponsors

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Silver

- Valenti's Allegro Bistro
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Plant Table Awards September 4, 2013

The **First Place** ribbon was awarded to Cynthia Vance for her plant Rlc. Ryan Kowalczyk. This is a Krull-Smith 2007 cross of Rlc. Steve Stevenson x Rlc. Goldenzelle, a delicate pale green flower with a pretty lip. Cynthia did not know her plant was in bud and discovered it in flower one morning. Is there any nicer surprise? Congratulations, Cynthia!



Rlc. Ryan Kowalczyk

Burana Jade. It is a cross of Den. Bangkok Green x Den. Burana Fancy. His plant had 73 pale green flowers and 2 buds on three inflorescences. Note that a cultivar of this plant named 'Lorna' was awarded an HCC/AOS in 2011 with 22 flowers and 21 buds. Our speaker and AOS judge, Bill Thoms, gave Rick the ultimate compliment saying "if you are going to grow dendrobiums, this is how you do it". Well done, Rick!

Second Place and Members Choice ribbons went to Liz Ims for her plant Vanda Pachara Delight. One of the most popular vandas grown, Liz's plant had large deep violet flowers tessellated darker violet. It is a cross of V. Karulea x



V. Pachara Delight

V. Gordon Dillon. Liz is one of our new members who joined us earlier this year. Good growing, Liz!

The **Third Place Ribbon and Speaker's Choice** award was earned by Rick Belisle for his beautiful Den.



Den. Burana Jade

Jim Thomas' plant, Bulb. makoyanum, was awarded **Best Species**. This plant, commonly referred to as the Daisy Orchid, is native to Borneo, Malaya and the Philippines. We're pleased to see Jimmy expanding his passion beyond those big cattleyas to include some challenging species like Bulbos. Good growing, Jimmy!



Bulb. makoyanum

Judy Loeffler took **New Member Award** for her Paravanda Mecca's Candy 'Sweet Tooth', an unusual lavender pink flower not commonly seen in collections. There are only four species of paraphalaenopsis (Pps.). Paravanda



Paravanda Mecca's Candy 'Sweet Tooth'

is a cross of paraphalaenopsis and vanda. This plant is a cross of Pps. laycockii x Vanda teres. Not known as an easy to grow plant, we congratulate Judy on her well grown plant!

Narrative by Carol Wood, photos by Steve Vogelhaupt

Who Knows What Evil Lurks?

*Courtesy of St. Augustine Orchid
Society Newsletter, September 2013*

Once you get home and before you introduce a new plant to the growing area, apply a protective drench to kill any lurking pests. The Bayer imidacloprid product is a great systemic pesticide that can be introduced to the plant via the roots and absorbed throughout the plant. It will kill scale, mealybugs, etc. from the inside out without you having to spray it. If you are lucky enough to find the imidacloprid product that is 1.47% strength, mix up 1 ounce of it in a gallon of water and thoroughly drench the growing media (at 0.74% strength, add 2 oz./gal; at 0.47% strength, add 3 oz./gal, etc.).

Editor's note: Imidacloprid has been shown to adversely affect honey bees. Read and follow instructions carefully!

Available Bayer products and imidacloprid strengths:
12 Month Tree & Shrub Insect Control - Landscape Formula (2.94%); use 1/2 oz. per gal.

Advanced Garden, Tree and Shrub Insect Control (1.47%)

3-IN-1 Insect, Disease + Mite Control (.47%)

2 IN 1 Systemic Rose and Flower Care (.22%); use 6 oz. per gal.

Submitted by Steve Vogelhaupt

Minutes of the September 4, 2013 VAOS Meeting (continued from page 2)

were shared about his adventure. Bill showed photos of beautiful wild orchids growing in the jungle. Some were found near the ground; others grew on trees at heights of 30 feet. Bare-foot men climbed these trees to gather the wild orchids.

Plant Table orchids were presented by Bill Thoms and Jimmy Thomas; awards were announced. The meeting was adjourned following the Raffle.

Respectfully submitted by Peg Fahrenback

Have A Question???

Have a question about your orchid? Has my hybrid cross been named? Has my plant been awarded? What's its parentage?

Several VAOS members subscribe to OrchidWiz and will be happy to look it up for you. Email your orchid name and question to one of the following:

Carol Wood showchair@vaos.org
Jim Thomas programs@vaos.org
Ted Kellogg tmkellogg@gmail.com

From Your Editor

This issue marks my first anniversary as editor of your newsletter. My sincere thanks go to Cynthia, Carol, and all the other board members who made the year such a positive experience with their support and expertise. Carol held my hand during my "rocky" training period and continues to provide inspiration and invaluable advice. I'm especially grateful to Barry Zack, our layout artist, for his cooperation and technical skills, and who has kept the newsletter on schedule and the editor on the right track.

In the coming year I hope to make our newsletter even better and more relevant to all our members. Please send your feedback and suggestions, as well as ideas, articles, and photos for future issues to me at csec@vaos.org. I'll be glad to help with my limited photographic and editing skills.

Many thanks to all,

Steve Vogelhaupt

Message from your President (continued from page 1)

easily destroy the plant. We know that our water is more alkaline because we live on limestone rock, thus our PH may be too high to use all the nutrients we give them. He suggested we send an email to J.R. Peters who will send us a free testing kit at: <http://www.jrpeters.com/Lab-Services/Testing-Services/Request-a-Test-Kit.html>.

There is a \$36.00 charge for the water test, but you can split the cost with another member using similar water source and media. When you receive the test results from J.R Peters, they will freely tell you what fertilizer combination to use! Many of us have done so. I ordered two – using my husband's name for the second one because I want to test the water in the medium in my orchids which receive city water, and also those plants which are "outside" receiving both our well water and rain water. Of course, you could just purchase some swimming pool test strips at very low cost also, although they would not be as accurate nor provide fertilizer recommendations.

Roy did suggest that using Dynamite, the time release fertilizer that many of us use, is good for Florida growers, because this fertilizer is an "acid fertilizer". Many of us, not having measured our wet medium PH, have gotten away with just using this. But we could be better informed if we actually test our wet media. One member already shared with me that the PH of her wet media is 7.8. How to lower it to the 5-6 range -- some folks use citric acid and there's a lot of information on the Internet. Other words of wisdom he shared – "Use as much light as your orchid can tolerate to maximize photosynthesis" and "The best and hardiest plants are 50% roots". Keep this last advice in mind the next time you purchase an orchid!

VAOS Holiday Party!! - Saturday, December 7th

Boca Royale Golf and Country Club

1601 Englewood Road



5:30 Happy Hour with Cash Bar

6:30 Dinner (Choice of One Entrée)

Menu

Beef - Prime Rib served with starch and vegetable

Chicken - Chicken Marsala served with starch and vegetable

Fish - Salmon with Dill Sauce served with starch and vegetable

Other Options:

Vegetarian or Gluten Free with prior notification

All dinners include rolls and butter, salad, coffee and dessert

7:45 Après-Dinner Auction

\$25 per member, Cash Bar

Reservations by December 1st to:

VAOS Treasurer, Ali Hicks

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

Please clearly indicate your dinner choice on your check

Orchid Division and Orchid Potting Clinics

Almost 30 members, guests, mentees and mentors attended our recent Orchid Division Clinic. Once again, 'Dr.' Jimmy Thomas ably led the participants through the basic principles, tools, and tricks of the trade, all the while answering their many questions and enlivening the discussion with personal tips and anecdotes.

He split the group into three tables and provided numerous prepared cattleyas in dire need of division for their evaluation and recommended solutions. While few of the participants totally agreed on the best "surgery" option, Jimmy saw this as an opportunity to emphasize that there is usually more than one way to divide an orchid, each providing a valuable learning experience. He then divided the orchids into a number of plants, taking time to explain the procedure and rationale. He also divided a large vandaceous orchid that had lost most of its lower leaves due to age and neglect, explaining the process of getting the left over lower portion to produce one or more keikis. Sharon Schneider volunteered to give it a good home and put Jimmy's explanations to the test, while Rich Amos took the upper half to work his usual magic.

As a finale, Jimmy removed a large number of keikis from a large blooming dendrobium and discussed the proper potting for the keikis and dendrobiums in general. Many positive comments were heard from the enthusiastic audience and everyone welcomed the news that a Hands-on Potting Clinic would follow the next month.

Following the tremendous success of the Grand Potting Party last March, Jimmy will present another hands-on session on **Thursday, October 10, at the Venice Community Center at 7:00 pm.** He'll explain the supplies, tools, and planting media and demonstrate basic procedures and dazzle you with tricks of the trade. Once again, participants will then repot their own orchids with the assistance of several experienced growers and helpers.



We'll work in teams of 4 to 5 around a table with each person bringing an orchid that needs repotting as well as a suitable pot to replant the orchid and a sterile pair of shears.

With only two hours available, it is critical that everyone adhere to the instructions below:

1. Only one plant per person. All plants must be removed from their pots and all old planting media must be removed prior to the clinic.
2. If you are a novice and don't have a plant ready to repot, please contact Jimmy at pis2ces4@verizon.net not later than Monday, October 7 so he can bring a suitable plant and pot.
3. Anyone bringing a plant that needs potting media other than fir bark, such as phals which are normally potted in sphagnum, must also notify Jimmy at the email address above so that the proper media is available.
4. This is a potting clinic. Please do not bring plants for mounting on slabs, driftwood, etc.

Article and photo by Steve Vogelhaupt

2013 - 2014 Show Schedule

Sarasota Orchid Society Show: January 11-12.

Theme: A Symphony of Orchids

Set-up Friday, January 10.

Venice Orchid Society 48th Annual Show February 1- 2

Theme: Orchid Paradise

Set-up Friday, January 31

Englewood Area Orchid Society Show: Feb 28- March 1

Theme: Orchids on Lemon Bay

Set up Thursday, February 27th

Contact Rich Amos, VP Displays, for more information or to help with our show exhibits at:

disp@vaos.org or 894-5351.

RIDGE ORCHID SHOW

VAOS participated in the Ridge Orchid Society show in Lakeland, FL on September 14-15. Our display, consisting of 38 plants exhibited by 11 VAOS members, took five ribbons and one trophy. Judy Loeffler, a beginner grower, took two ribbons - congratulations Judy! And Rick Belisle, also a new grower, took the trophy for Best Dendrobium, antelope type flower, for his Den. Blue Fairy. Congratulations Rick!

Ribbon winners were:

Jim Thomas, yellow ribbon, Bulb. makoyanum

Carol Wood, red ribbon, Angcm. didieri

Judy Loeffler, blue ribbon, Den. convolutum

Judy Mulligan, red ribbon, Onc. Grower Ramsey

Judy Loeffler, red ribbon, Epi. Serena O'Neill

The theme for the Ridge show was "Orchids - The



"Fountain of Youth" and Jay Loeffler constructed a creative and realistic structure resembling the famous Fountain of Youth in St. Augustine for the center of our display. Rich Amos and Jay artistically arranged our 38 plants around this backdrop in a beautiful exhibit.

Thanks to our team: Rich & Mary Amos, Jay & Judy Loeffler, Jim Thomas, Peg & Bill Fahrenback, Carol Wood, and Tony & Ellen Nacinovich. Thanks also to the 11 members who contributed blooming plants for our display.

This was the first of four shows in which VAOS will exhibit. Sarasota is in January, our show in February and Englewood in March. Now is the time to start grooming

and staking your orchids for these upcoming shows! We also welcome new members who would like to join our team in putting in the exhibits, a fun and rewarding experience.

Narrative and photos by Carol Wood



Why Won't My Orchid Rebloom?

Courtesy of AOS, Culture Basics

Insufficient light is the most common cause of failure to rebloom your orchid. Leaf color indicates if the amount of light is adequate. The lush, rich, dark green color of most houseplants is not desirable in orchid leaves. A grassy green color (light or medium green with yellowish tones) means the plant is receiving sufficient light to rebloom. Orchid plants need sunlight. Light is used to turn moisture and nutrients into plant growth. A good rule is to give your plants as much light as possible without scorching. While too much light may damage the plants, too little light will prevent flowering or cause weak growth. It's always a good idea to increase the amount of light

gradually, giving the plant a chance to adjust.

Too much sun is indicated by scorched spots on the foliage or pseudobulbs where the sun hits directly. Rarely does sunburn discolor the whole plant, instead only the portion of the green parts hit by direct sun for too long a period. Increased light should be given gradually. Burn damage is caused when plant tissue gets too hot. If a leaf feels hot to your fingers, it may be burning. If you can, cool down the leaf temperature with moving air and water and temporarily decrease direct sunlight.

Submitted by Steve Vogelhaupt

Venice Area Orchid Society News

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

Next Meeting:

Wednesday, October 2, 7:00 p.m.

- **Speaker: Jamie Lawson**
- **Topic: "Orchids in Love"**
- Show table entries welcome
- Bring plants for the Raffle Table
- Bring treats to share

Upcoming Events

October 2, 2013:

VAOS monthly meeting, 7pm, Venice Community Center, 326 S. Nokomis Ave., Venice, FL. Speaker: Jamie Lawson. Topic: Orchids in Love. Jamie will have orchid flasks and seedlings for sale.

October 10, 2013:

Growers Clinic, 7pm, Venice Community Center, Presenter: Jim Thomas. Topic: Hands-on Orchid Potting session. **See Page 6 for important information.**

October 11 – 13:

67th Miami International Orchid Show, presented by the South Florida Orchid Society, 1245 Dauer Dr., Coral Gables, FL.
Info: www.sforchid.com

October 25-27:

East Everglades Orchid Society Annual Show at R.F. Orchids.
Info: 305-245-4570.

November 6, 2013:

VAOS monthly meeting, 7pm, Venice Community Center, 326 S. Nokomis Ave., Venice, FL. Speaker: Ted Kel-

logg. Topic: Orchid Names

November 14, 2013:

Growers Clinic, 7pm, Venice Community Center, Presenter: Jim Thomas. Topic: Video - Members' Growing Areas with Open Q&A. Bring your problem plants for expert help.

December 7, 2013 (Saturday):

VAOS Holiday Party, Boca Royale Golf and Country Club. \$25 per person. Dinner, dessert, music, dancing and orchid auction.

Ongoing:

Mentor Program: help for beginning growers, contact Peg Fahrenback, rsec@vaos.org

Orchid Judging takes place at the Christ the King Catholic Church – McLoughlin Center, Room C, 821 S. Dale Mabry Hwy., Tampa, FL 33609 at 6:30pm on the fourth Wednesday of every month.

Info: www.fncjc.shutterfly.com

Patronize Our Local Growers

- Honey Bee Nursery (941-474-6866)
 - Jeff Higel2383 Englewood Road (Rt. 776)
Englewood
- Plantio La Orquidea (941-504-7737)
 - Tina & Rafael Romero3480 Tallevast Rd, Sarasota
www.plantiolaorquidea.com

Newsletter Supplements

For those members who receive their monthly newsletter by email, look for extra content which began in 2012. 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.

Root Rot

Articles reprinted with the permission of www.firststrays.com.

What Causes Root Rot?

As a new orchid grower, one of the first pieces of cultural information we are given is that we should make sure to let the potting medium dry out between waterings, as the plants will otherwise get root rot. Some will even include the explanation that the constant moisture favors the growth of fungus and that is what attacks and rots the roots. Unfortunately, that is simply untrue.

If the mere presence of water was the cause of root rot, then there would be no possibility of growing orchids in hydroponic-, semi-hydroponic-, or water culture, all of which are quite viable techniques, or of wild plants surviving during the many months some experience in monsoon seasons, which is often when they thrive. If we take a different approach and blame it on fungi, then how would we expect orchids to grow in the wild, in natural environments that are no doubt overrun with all sorts of fungi, bacteria, and the like?

Instead, we should blame it on suffocation and poisoning, and consider what happens when we water a potted plant.

When we water, some (most) of the liquid simply runs through the pot, some of it is absorbed by the potting medium components, while more of it is held by surface tension in between the medium particles. Referring to the articles on Air Management and Particle Packing, we understand that the smaller the spaces between the particles, the more easily so-called "bridging water" is maintained, allowing it to more completely cut off the air flow pathways.

If the air flow to the root system is stifled long enough, the gas exchange is compromised, and the roots die due to a combination of suffocation from the lack of oxygen, and poisoning by its own waste gases. Once the root tissue dies, the natural resistance to pathogens is eliminated, and the roots will rot.

If you think about it, that mechanism is likely the misinterpreted basis for the "let the medium dry out" myth: as the plant absorbs moisture, and more of the liquid evaporates, those bridging water droplets go away, opening up the air flow pathways and allowing the root system to "breathe" again.

Rather than suffocating our plants at each watering, the better approach is to prevent the extensive occurrence of bridging water in our potting media, and keeping the spaces larger is the key.

1. Avoid mixing particles sizes. The smaller pieces fill the gaps between the larger ones, reducing the sizes of the void space.
2. Do not pack the potting medium too tightly. That is particularly important with sphagnum moss.
3. Repot into fresh medium on a regular, timely basis. As organic medium components age and decompose, they break down into smaller and smaller pieces, creating a dense and suffocating root environment.

Helping a Plant Recover from Root Rot

We've all done it... root rot.

Usually we let it happen by waiting too long to repot, letting a poor plant suffocate its roots in a dense, mucky mess. Of course, it's often our most valuable or favorite plant, so how do we get the plant to recover?

First, keep in mind that as a "natural creature", the plant has a survival mechanism, so it wants to recover. Then, with that in mind, consider that our job is to give it the highest likelihood of doing so.

The keys to recovery are high humidity, warm temperature, and subdued light.

Consider the following scenario:

1. A plant with no roots has no way to take up water, but can lose water through leaf stomata and cell wall permeation. As the plant dries, it gets weaker and weaker, making it less likely to have the energy to recover. That drying rate is directly related to the relative humidity, so high humidity sustains the plant while it tries to grow new roots.
2. Plant growth rates are directly related to the temperature, and warmer equals faster. You want the plants' metabolism to be faster, in hope that it will recover before the negative effects of desiccation kick in.
3. Low light levels seems counter-intuitive, as plants need light to create the sugars they "burn" to function, but doing so requires water as well, further depleting the plants' internal supplies. By keeping the plant in subdued light (not dark), you minimize that loss, again, extending the time that the plant can grow those new roots.

It may be difficult to maintain those conditions, so one thing to consider is the "Sphag-n-Bag" treatment to create a good, controlled environment.

Another option - one that adds to the probability of survival, but is not a substitute for providing the conditions above - is the application of a rooting hormone. Brand is not critical,

but freshness is (the hormones degrade with time, temperature and light exposure). We recommend K-L-N due to its lower cost for the volume received. The most effective treatment method for a root-free plant is a soak:

1. Fill a container with water at about 80°F (~27°C)
2. Add about a teaspoon of hormone concentrate per gallon of water (~1.25 ml/L)
3. Totally immerse the plant for about an hour.

It is not necessary to repeat that, but you may begin adding the hormone to your irrigating solution (only a drop or two per gallon) once root growth has begun. Do not fertilize until the plant is established in its new pot and fresh medium.

"Sphag-n-Bag"

OK, you've managed to rot the roots off of your plant, but you don't want to lose it. What can you do? Many orchid growers resort to the old "sphag-n-bag" technique. By the way, this is good for getting new imports established, too.

First, let's consider the needs of the plant: It needs water to survive - water is the life's blood of the plant. It provides turgidity to the tissues and cells, it is a chemical component used in the production of the sugars during photosynthesis, and it is used by the plant to control the osmotic pressure of ions inside- and outside of the cells. So if you have no roots, how does the plant get water?

Misting is of little value, as the plant cannot take up a substantial amount of liquid water through its leaves, and the brief period that the humidity is raised by periodic misting is likely insufficient to be of much benefit. The key is maintaining high humidity, not so much because of the easier absorption of water vapor (which is the case), but because a saturated environment prevents further loss of water from the plant tissues while it attempts to grow new roots. Basically, the "sphag-n-bag" concept uses a small bit of damp sphagnum as a moisture supply, and a plastic bag as a "micro-greenhouse" in which the elevated humidity can be easily maintained.

That's simple enough, but a big mistake that many folks make is placing the plant in direct contact with moss that's too wet.

The technique I use involves preparing the plant, then setting up the "rescue" environment:

Plant Preparation:

1. Remove any old organic media that may be sticking to the roots. If it's difficult to remove, just wait.
2. Using a sterile blade, trim off any dead or damaged roots.
3. Add about one teaspoon of a rooting hormone compound (K-L-N, SuperThrive, etc.) to a gallon of 80°F water. Do not add fertilizer to the soaking solution, as that will tend to draw water out of the plant. A tiny pinch of soluble trace element mixture (STEM) may be added, but only do so if you suspect a deficiency.
4. Soak the plant for about an hour or more, then rinse it in plain water.
5. Remove any remaining organic media - it's bound to come off after the soaking.
6. A dip in a disinfectant is also a good idea, as it will prevent the growth for fungus or molds.

Setting up the Environment (this is the easy part):

1. Get a clear plastic bag large enough to comfortably hold the plant.
2. Place a small amount of damp sphagnum moss in one corner of the bag. You may substitute a piece of folded-up paper towel for the moss, or just add a teaspoon of water to the bag.
3. Place the plant in the bag, oriented as if growing normally, and not in direct contact with the moss or any free liquid.
4. Seal the bag. If it's a Zip-Lock, that's easy, if not, fold over the top several times and hold it with a paper clip.
5. Place it in a warm, shady location and walk away.

Placing the plant in that warm, shady location (not dark) is important: The warmth will induce some growth activity, but the shade serves to moderate the vegetative growth while the plant develops new roots. Furthermore, warmth results in a higher moisture content of the air in the bag, and the shade prevents the bag from becoming a broiler, as it would become if direct sun hits it.

In a few weeks, the plant is likely to have developed a new root system, at which point it can be repotted.

Another idea for those of you who grow your plants in Semi-Hydroponic™ culture: Pot up your suffering plant and then place the plant - pot and all - in the bag. It will get all of the benefits of

the "sphag-n-bag" environment, but has the bonus of growing its roots into the medium without the need for repotting afterward.