

# Venice Area Orchid Society News

June 2014

**Next Meeting: Wednesday  
June 4th at 7:00 p.m.**

**Speaker: Steve Hawkins**

**Topic: "Oncidiums"**

Steve's career started with a couple of Cattleya orchids on a windowsill in a Kansas farmhouse at the age of 15. After graduating college with a degree in horticulture, Steve started work at Rod McLellan Co., "Acres of Orchids", in South San Francisco, first as a grower and later as hybridizer and sales manager over a 13 year period. Shortly after moving to Florida in 1988, he opened his own nursery, Orchid Specialists, in Apopka, and grows a wide variety of orchids and some unusual tropicals in a 6000 square foot greenhouse.

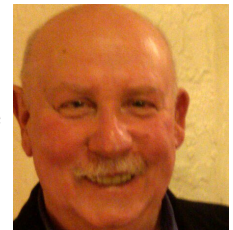


His focus is on serving individuals and small businesses and educating the public with presentations to garden clubs and other organizations. He is a well-known speaker at numerous area and regional orchid societies and is a member of both the Central Florida Orchid Society and American Orchid Society. He does most of the work himself, but is helped by his hobbyist sister, Linda, at the many orchid shows and other venues where he exhibits.

He always saves time at the end of his presentations for questions and answers and will have a great selection of orchids for sale.

## A Message from your President:

I am never happy about spraying insecticides in my orchid zone. There are a lot of issues. We have dogs. We live on a canal. We hate the smell. And we need our lungs. Without proper safety equipment, some products have a danger factor, especially if you are not familiar with R.E.I. warning listed on the package that no one reads. It means re-entry interval and tells you how long to stay out after spraying. I mostly use neem oil, which is organic, after I spot a problem, but sometimes that is too late. I also use Bayer insect spray on a per plant basis and also employ a herd of lizards.



*John Masters*

One of our newer members, Matthew Rinder, offered a solution that made sense and sounded like fun. And we all know how important the fun factor is. On the day of the home tour, he brought me a tube sock full of 500 ladybugs which he claimed would solve all my problems forever (those must be some magic bugs cause I have more than my share of problems). Matthew gets his beneficial predators at [www.Arbico-Organics.com](http://www.Arbico-Organics.com) and said the staff is very knowledgeable. I thought about ordering bugs, but some of them are very scary looking and we all know how I get about that stuff.

So that evening, as directed, I watered the orchids and opened the sock of lady bugs. Linda and I didn't count them but that was one hefty sockful of bugs that came tumbling out of the tube. The lizards went completely

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## VAOS Newsletter Goes on Vacation

Your newsletter will not be published during the month of June. Publication will resume in July with the July/August edition appearing the third or fourth week of the month.

Please retain this month's newsletter as it contains dates and details for upcoming events for the month of June and July.

## 2014 Spring Orchid Greenhouse Tour Recap

Were you among those fortunate enough to make it to the homes and growing areas that three of our members opened for us? If not, you missed great displays and hospitality as well as unique insights and tips from the growers. We'll try for another chance next year, so watch the newsletters and attend our meetings and Growers Clinics.

John Masters had hanging orchids in his front yard which welcomed us to the huge pool cage area, overlook-

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

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

## Officers 2014 – 2015

### **President**

John Masters, [pres@vaos.org](mailto:pres@vaos.org)

### **Vice President - Programs**

Bruce Weaver, [programs@vaos.org](mailto:programs@vaos.org)

### **Vice President - Social Affairs**

Sharon Kahnoski, [social@vaos.org](mailto:social@vaos.org)

### **Vice President - Show Displays**

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

### **Treasurer**

Mary Amos, [tres@vaos.org](mailto:tres@vaos.org)

### **Recording Secretary & Mentor Coordinator**

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

### **Communications Director & Newsletter Editor**

Steve Vogelhaupt, [csec@vaos.org](mailto:csec@vaos.org)

### **Membership Chairs**

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

### **Immediate Past President**

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

### **Annual Show Chairs**

Carol Wood

Judy Loeffler

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

### **Director, Education & Outreach**

Jim Thomas, [Education@vaos.org](mailto:Education@vaos.org)

### **Volunteers**

Ted Kellogg, Webmaster

Matthew Rinder, Raffle Table

Jean Fairchild, Plant Table

Sue Grimmer/Gary Becker, Technology

Kathy Beck, Librarian

### **Newsletter Production**

Barry Zack

### **VAOS Printer**

Creative Technology of Sarasota

## Minutes of the May 7, 2014 VAOS Meeting

President John Masters opened the meeting by welcoming members and guests. He directed their attention to the orchids on the Plant Table and plants offered for sale by Orchid Envy, a new retailer on Venice Ave. VAOS members Dusty Crum and Natalee McKinney are owners. He thanked Sharon Kahnoski, VP, Social, for organizing the recent successful Spring Orchid Greenhouse Tour. John also thanked Jim and Gerry Thomas and Jean and Jerry Becker for opening their homes and gardens for members to visit. He announced the May 17th bus trip to the Redland International Orchid Festival is filled and has a waiting list.

John discussed plans for the Fall Plant Sale, which will be held November 15th in Centennial Park on Venice Ave. The Chalk Festival and Venice Farmers Market events are expected to bring many people into Venice that weekend. Members may sell any kind of plant, including orchids. Sellers must bring their own table.

Membership Chair, Judy Loeffler, asked "Is there was an orchid doctor in the house?" She presented a moving tribute to Jimmy Thomas for his contributions to VAOS. Judy humorously described how his dedicated teaching has impacted her life and the lives of many others. A trophy was presented to Jimmy from VAOS in recognition of his extensive contributions. Judy also announced the 2014 Membership Directory has been emailed; she requests notification of any changes in contact

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### **Treasurer's Report**

April 2014

#### **Checking Account**

Starting Balance		
4/1/2014	\$	14,367.56
+ Income	\$	1,449.00
- Payments	\$	2,825.33
Closing Balance		
4/30/2014	\$	12,991.23

#### **Show Checking Account**

Starting Balance		
4/1/2014	\$	3,000.00
+Income		0.00
-Payments		69.34
Closing Balance		
4/30/14	\$	2,930.66

#### **Cash Account**

Starting Balance		
4/1/2014	\$	40.00
Closing Balance		
4/30/2014	\$	40.00

#### **Money Market Savings**

Starting Balance		
4/1/2014	\$	25,035.39
+ Income		0.82
Closing Balance		
4/30/2014	\$	25,036.21
<b>Total Assets</b>		
4/30/2014	\$	40,998.81

*Submitted by Mary Amos*

## **2014 Show Sponsors**

### **Platinum**

- Absolute Aluminum
- Herald-Tribune Media Group
- Raleigh & Associates
- Stanley Dean State Farm

### **Gold**

- AAA Auto Group
- Frederick Bloom, MD
- Center For Sight
- Daiquiri Deck
- Edgewood Nursery
- Jacaranda Trace Retirement Community
- Davis & Beyer, DDS
- Kennedy-White Orthopaedics
- Pavilion Grill
- Silverstein Institute
- Venice Reg. Bayfront Health
- Retina Assoc. of Sarasota

### **Silver**

- Allegro Bistro
- Burgundy Square Café
- Happy Puppy Pet Spa
- Kerri's Jewels & Gems
- Orchid Envy

## **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](mailto:csec@vaos.org)
- Written submissions are appreciated.

## Plant Table Awards May 7, 2014

Hank Irvine took three ribbons for his Brassia Hybrid - **First Place, Members Choice** and **Speakers Choice**. An unusual flower that we don't see often on the plant table, this mounted plant had eight flowers on one spike. Ted Kellogg believes this plant is either Brassia Edvah Loo or Brassia Rex. An interesting plant; thanks, Hank, for bringing it in!



Roberta Williams won the **Second Place** ribbon for her plant Dendrobium Burana Emerald 'Green'. A cross of Den. Boon Burana and Den. Burana Green, the flowers were a beautiful shade of pale green with a pink lip. This type of dendrobium grows well here preferring hot temps and bright light with lots of water and fertilizer during active growth. Like other dendrobiums, it prefers a small, tight, pot and resents repotting. Congratulations, Roberta!



Pauline Adam won the **Third Place** ribbon for her Phalaenopsis Surf Song. Formerly Dtps. Surf Song, all Doritaenopsis are now classified as Phalaenopsis. Pauline's plant is a cross of Phal. Taipei Gold and Phal. King

Shiang's Rose. Its color could best be described as sunset, art shade or salmon with a nice 'diamond dust' texture. Beautiful plant; congratulations, Pauline!



Carol Wood took the **Best Species** ribbon for her Encyclia randii. This species is native to Brazil and Peru. Olive green petals are overlaid with chocolate brown and the lip is a purple veined cream color. Carol grows several encyclias - she likes them because their long lasting and fragrant flowers provide summertime blooms after our spring blooming cattleyas have faded. Carol recommends mounts or baskets for these fast growing plants that will quickly overtake a pot.



**NOTE:** New members are encouraged to bring in their blooming plants to be eligible for the **New Member Ribbon**. Recently initiated by VAOS, members with two years or less of orchid growing experience are eligible for this award. Please use the **green** card to register your plant at the plant table so the judges can identify the plants in this award category.

*—Photos by Ted Kellogg, narrative by Carol Wood*



## Orchids in Ecuador and Peru

On our way to the Galapagos Islands in February, my wife, Tori, and I stopped in Quito, Ecuador's busy capital and visited the Botanical Gardens to see their collection of endemic orchids and other native plants. The orchid collection was housed in a large greenhouse, arranged by type and size of bloom. Many of the orchids in bloom had very small blossoms, arranged on numerous stems, or oddly perched atop large leaves that looked like philodendrons. What appeared to be a clump of pampas grass were actually thousands of little orchid blossoms hanging in air, waiting for a pollinator. A large section was planted in Masdevallias of all colors: pink, orange, purple and every combination. Overhead, hung carnivorous plants, ferns and more orchids.



*Masdevallia*

Epidendrums predominated, but the tiny flowers of Prosthechea and Pleurothallis were everywhere, hidden in tiny rock crevices. Oncidiums, Odontoglossums and Otoglossums sprung up in the usual yellows and oranges. Cultivars of Lycaste, Maxillaria and Sobralia hung from baskets. The Masdevallias were the showiest of all and though I looked, I didn't see one Cattleya!



*Lycaste*

The Galapagos Islands, famed for their diversity and unique species, were next on our trip and are home to five endemic orchids, all growing above 300 meters. We

especially hoped to see the rather attractive Ionopsis but strict government controls prevented our climbing attempts. The dry climate precludes most epiphytes, so cactus and thorny shrubs predominate the landscape. Actually, the life under the sea is more diverse than on land so, luckily, we spent a lot of time snorkeling along the shoreline.

We finally arrived in Machu Picchu and toured the famous fortress city in a pouring rain which adequately demonstrated the Inca genius for handling runoff and preventing the city from sliding down the 2000 foot slopes. The rainforest at the river's edge was filled with plants and a few orchids, hidden among ferns, palms and philodendrons. Our "eco-lodge", in the vendor-filled hillside town of Aguas Calientes, housed an orchid collection of over 370 species so I was pleased to go on a 2 hour tour the following morning. Our guide spoke poor English, knew only the local Peruvian names for the plants, but was very cheerful! In the rainy gloom of the forest it was difficult to focus the camera, but I got a few good shots anyway.

Oddest of all was the Elleanthus, called Happy Face in Peru. The tiny flowers were arranged in an erect clump that looked exactly like ginger in bloom. We also saw many Prosthechea, Masdevallias (though pale and moth pollinated), Maxillarias, 6 different Pleurothallis, and an intriguing Anguloa, commonly known as the tulip orchid, that lurked under huge Canna like leaves. We also saw Hoffmeisterella, Bletia, Telipogon, Kefersteinia, Compartmentia and Lueddemannia, all growing happily on 5 acres of tourist filled hotel grounds with a train running through the midst. Walt Disney would have felt right at home!

The lesson learned from this trip: There are LOTS of orchids out there and we'll never see them all, but they're all beautiful. Colombia and Brazil are still out there to explore. But we also have a lot of Florida natives in our own backyard, so get out there and discover!

—Narrative by Bruce Weaver,  
photos by Tori Weaver



*Epidendrum*



*Elleanthus*

## President's message continued from page 1

berserk. It was the best day of their lives and I could almost hear them singing our praises. The next morning I went to inspect the orchids, expecting to see my bugs hard at work, but found none. I couldn't imagine my cute little lizards eating 500 bugs in one night but who knows what they do when we're not watching. I call Linda for help. She finds them on the pool cage screen. Happily there were none in the pool as 500 bugs could clog the best pool filter. But each day I see fewer and fewer on the screen, leading me to believe they must be in the plants if the little cannibals didn't get them all. I cannot take the disappointment of not seeing them, so I don't check anymore.

Enough already.... Come to the June meeting. Bring a friend, bring a plant, and bring a snack!

## Meeting Minutes continued from page 2

information. Jimmy announced the Growers Clinic will be May 15th.

Bruce Weaver, VP Programs, introduced our speaker, Dr. Antonio Toscano, a world expert on orchids. His PowerPoint presentation, "Sex, Lies and Orchids", discussed the unique form and structure of orchids, including criteria that "make them an orchid." He showed videos of

unusual pollination methods and concluded by strongly advocating plant conservation.

Ted Kellogg presented orchids from the Plant Table and announced awards. The meeting was adjourned following the Raffle.

*Respectfully submitted by Peggy Fahrenback*

## 2014 Spring Orchid Greenhouse Tour Recap continued from page 1

ing a beautiful canal. He had hundreds (?) of plants of different varieties displayed on unique mounts, repurposed stands and hanging from the lanai cage and custom racks. John had a great assortment of plants for sale, so it was difficult to leave without at least one.

The white gourd Purple Martin bird houses marked Jerry & Jean Becker's home in their "Florida Friendly Garden" and the butterflies fluttered around us as we walked through the wooded "nature preserve". Jean used the many ancient oaks to display her diverse collection in the dappled sunlight. Cardinals and woodpeckers were everywhere and Jean had photos on each plant not in bloom. Jerry, a Florida master gardener, led us through the paths and trails, pointing out hidden delights.

The last stop was at "Dr." Jimmy Thomas' home,



## Dr. Jimmy's Culture Tip for June 2014

If your orchid leaf is turning color from the tip and it has a definite sharp contrast line between the dark and green area, it's most probably caused by a nutritional deficiency, generally a lack of Magnesium. You can remedy this by periodically adding household Epsom Salt at the rate of 1 tsp/gallon when you water.

If there is a yellow band between the dark and green area, then it's a fungus. Cut the leaf into the green area away from the yellow, making sure you remove any trace of the yellow, and treat with a fungicide.

Join us at Dr. Jimmy's VAOS Growers Clinic the 2nd Thursday of each month, 7 pm, VCC.

*Submitted by Jimmy Thomas*

where his wife, Gerry, welcomed us to their home, which displayed spectacular blooming and scented orchids, including his favorite reds. Jimmy grows his plants in



the pool cage area as well as a side yard area filled with his custom built shelves full of orchids from familiar and unusual genera. He recently installed polycarbonate panels and Aluminet shade cloth for the roof and has large propane patio heaters for the cold nights.



Dr. Jimmy never stops teaching and every question he asked was answered with a smile and often an example. Jim and Gerry

provided refreshments at the conclusion.

*Narrative: Sharon Kahnoski/Steve Vogelhaupt,  
photos: Steve Vogelhaupt*



## Our Orchid Doctor Receives Trophy

At our monthly meeting on May 7, Jimmy Thomas, a.k.a. the Orchid Doctor, was recognized by Judy Loeffler on behalf of our members, especially the Growers Clinic participants and mentees, for his many achievements and significant contributions to our society.

Judy Loeffler, co-Chair, Membership and Shows, and also one of Jimmy's enthusiastic mentees, shared a few of her personal insights before presenting him with a 2014 Orchid Show plaque for passing on his deep passion and extensive knowledge to our society and members.

She said that before she met Jimmy:

- "Roots used to be something I colored every month. Now I have to worry about how to make them grow"
- "A lip used to be something you kissed; not part of an orchid"
- "Orchids are worse than potato chips – you can't just

have one. You want to own them all"

Jimmy has served as the Vice President – Programs for several years and has brought outstanding speakers and programs to our monthly meetings. At the same time, he transformed our Growers Clinics from rather dull affairs attended by five or six people into dynamic and fun events for fifty to seventy members and guests. As Director, Education and Outreach, Jimmy continues to chair the Growers Clinics, and with the help of his wife, Gerry, and other members, works ceaselessly to promote VAOS through presentations, membership, and programs with various civic groups.

Thanks for all you've done over the years!!

*Narrative by Steve Vogelhaupt/Judy Loeffler,  
photo by Steve Vogelhaupt*



## HOW TO KILL YOUR ORCHIDS!

*With permission of the author, Milton O. Carpenter. Milton is past President of the AOS and of the Orchid Society of the Palm Beaches and an accredited AOS Judge*

I have been growing, and killing, orchids for 50 years now and it occurred to me that I should pass on to others some of the more basic, as well as advanced methods I have discovered, and in some cases "stumbled upon" to accomplish this purpose!

### BASIC RULES:

(1) Never seek information on how to keep them alive. For example,

- (a) Don't try to distinguish what KIND of orchid you have
- (b) Don't ask for help from other orchid growers,
- (c) Don't subscribe to the AOS Bulletin and don't go to local orchid society meetings,
- (d) Don't purchase the AOS handbook on orchid pests and diseases and
- (e) Don't call the AOS Director of Information Services.

### RATHER OBVIOUS FUNDAMENTAL METHODS:

Aside from pouring on gasoline and striking a match, consider the following:

- (1) Give the orchid far too little or too much light.

(2) As most orchids like fairly good air movement, either give them none at all or a veritable hurricane.

(3) Don't worry about what particular temperature your orchids like - a good "rule of thumb" is to treat them all alike.

(4) Forget that most orchids like rather high humidity and let the humidity drop as low as it will. Never "damp down" the benches and floors on really hot days.

(5) Remember to water every orchid every day (drench thoroughly) regardless of what kind of media or pots they are in - or very seldom water the orchids at all, allowing the pseudobulbs (those things between the top of the pot and the base of the leaves) to become very shriveled and wrinkled.

(6) Never be concerned about the quality of the water you are using - whether it's loaded with chlorines, sulfides, or whatever.

(7) Repot your orchids only when you have to and only "when you have spare time."

(8) Use just about anything handy to pot your orchids in, it really doesn't matter and there is no truth to the

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## No Library Card Needed!! – A note from your librarian

I recently took over the position of Librarian and plan to spend the next few months making the library more user friendly and reflecting the wishes and needs of our members. I'll be reorganizing our considerable collection of books, pamphlets and videos so that it will be easier to see what we have available. I'm still learning the ropes and will be glad to help you look to see if we have what you need.

We have some excellent videos listed below which certainly look interesting and which may be checked out at the next meeting:

- Orchid Jewels of the Rain Forest #3  
—a step by step guide to growing orchids
- Orchid Jewels of the Rain Forest #4  
—a guide to identifying many orchid genera and species
- Orchid Pests & Diseases, from the American Orchid Society AOS)

—an excellent visual guide to help in the identification of orchid pests and diseases

- An Introduction to Orchids, also from the AOS  
—an explanation of orchid biology, cultivation and history suitable for novice orchidists

As a follow-up to a recent Growers Clinic, be sure to check out the book “Vandas”, by Dr. Martin R. Motes. The book has many growing tips for our growing conditions, delves into the mysteries of vanda hybridizing, and includes a troubleshooting guide as well as 44 pages of color photos.

I'm always open to comments and suggestions and would love to hear about books and videos that would be good additions to our library. Please see me at any meeting or email me at [kathleenbck@gmail.com](mailto:kathleenbck@gmail.com).

*Narrative by Kathy Beck*

### How to Kill Your Orchids continued from page 6

thinking that certain types like different potting media (that's the stuff you put in the pot). Potting in plain old dirt from your garden is a good idea.

(9) Fertilize only once or twice a year, but when you do - really pour it on, perhaps triple or quadruple the formula.

(10) Try to never be concerned about insects or diseases - just let nature take its course.

#### ADVANCED RULES:

(1) Because orchids prefer the full light spectrum, put them under heavily colored fiberglass.

(2) Arrange your greenhouse or growing area near a brightly illuminated city street lamp so they won't know the difference between night and day.

(3) Try to locate your orchids as near as possible to heavily traveled roads - the carbon monoxide (and other goodies) will help with your job.

(4) Keep turning each pot around about one quarter turn each day so they will become thoroughly disoriented.

(5) If it gets cold, put an unvented kerosene heater in your greenhouse - the fumes can work wonders.

(6) If it gets cold, don't do anything - perhaps they will just go into hibernation.

(7) When you water, always try to water late in the afternoon or (preferably) at night. The water standing in the new leads creates unusual effects.

(8) When potting your plants always use a pot about four times as large as the plants roots. Remembering that that's the way they grow in nature.

(9) If your plant starts to look sick, NEVER take it out of the pot to see what's happening with the roots. After all, what you can't see can't hurt you, can it?

(10) Should you notice some kind of insect on a plant, just put it under the faucet and wash the critters off - don't bother to check the other plants in its vicinity and don't worry about some kind of pesticide, that stuff's hard to handle properly and besides it leaves the greenhouse smelling poorly for days.

(11) Keep your leaves nice and clean - never spray a preventive fungicide as it leaves an ugly residue.

(12) Always use the same knife or plant shears when cutting from one plant to another and don't bother to sterilize - this is the democratic way, whatever malady one has, soon they will all share!

I am sure there are those of you who have discovered more unusual ways to kill your orchids but I have only been growing these plants for 50 years and I'm still learning!!

Another method, which I have found to be quite successful, can also be found in instructions on how to destroy sunglasses or camera equipment. You simply set the orchid on the roof of your car and drive away....very effective.

Editor's note: If you are receiving the email version of this newsletter, check out the culture supplement at the end of the newsletter for excellent advice on growing heat tolerant cymbidiums.

# Venice Area Orchid Society News

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

## Next Meeting:

**Wednesday, June 4, 7:00pm**  
**at Venice Community Center**

- **Speaker:** Steve Hawkins
- **Topic:** "Oncidiums"
- Show table entries welcome
- Bring Plants for the Raffle Table
- Bring treats to share

## Upcoming Events

**June 4 (1st Wednesday):** VAOS monthly Meeting, 7pm, Venice Community Center, 326 S. Nokomis Avenue, Venice. Speaker: Steve Hawkins, Topic: Oncidiums. Steve will have plants for sale.

**June 12 (2nd Thursday):** VAOS Growers Clinic, 7pm, Venice Community Center, Speaker: Richard Amos, Topic: Lesser Known Orchids. Bring your questions and problem plants for expert advice.

**July 10 (2nd Thursday):** VAOS Growers Clinic, 7pm, Venice Community Center, Speaker: Jim Thomas, Topic: Back Divisions – a "cheap" way to increase your collection. Bring your questions and problem plants for expert advice.

**July 14 (2nd Monday):** Joint monthly meeting with the Englewood Area Orchid Society, Christ Lutheran Church, 701 N. Indiana Ave., Englewood. The hall will open at 6:30

pm and the meeting will start at 7:00 pm. Speaker: Katie Caldwell, Topic: Vandas. Bring your plants for the Plant Table..

### Ongoing:

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

Orchid Judging takes place at **Christ the King Catholic Church, Mc-Loughlin Center – Room C, 821 S. Dale Mabry Hwy., Tampa, FL 33609.** at 6:30pm on the fourth Wednesday of every month. Info: <http://www.fncjc.shutterfly.com/>

**V.A.O.S.**

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Share your Orchid Bliss  
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"VeniceArea OrchidSociety"



## Patronize Our Local Growers

- Honey Bee Nursery  
(941-474-6866)  
2383 Englewood Road (Rt. 776),  
Englewood, FL
- Palmer Orchids  
(941-322-1644)  
22700 Taylor Dr.,  
Myakka City, FL 34251
- Plantio La Orquidea  
(941-504-7737)  
3480 Tallevast Rd,  
Sarasota
- Florida SunCoast Orchids  
(941-322-8777),  
8211 Verna Bethany Rd.,  
Myakka City, FL.
- Orchid Envy, 339 Venice Ave.  
West, Venice, FL  
Tel: (941) 266-6351



Errata: The editor's notes to the culture supplement of the May 2014 newsletter incorrectly stated that Nutricote substantially differs from Dynamite extended release fertilizer (red cap) and should not be used in our climatic zone.

Nutricote, in fact, is virtually identical to Dynamite, differing only for marketing purposes, and may be substituted for Dynamite. **Osmocote**, another extended release fertilizer, should not be used in this area as our excessive heat may cause the pellets to burst and release the nutrients prematurely.

## Growing the New "Temperature Tolerant" Cymbidiums

With the permission of the author, Milton O. Carpenter

Cymbidiums are tops among all orchids for commercial flower sales throughout the world. Why is this? Because the plants are highly productive in terms of yield, easy to grow, and produce rather large, attractive flowers with excellent lasting qualities (on or off the plant). In addition, the colors and combinations of colors seen in our modern Cymbidium hybrids are the equal of those seen anywhere in the Orchid world. So, why aren't Cymbidiums cultivated by all orchid growers? Well, first of all, orchid growers differ greatly in their "tastes" and because Orchids are the largest plant family in the world, they have plenty of selection to choose from. The main reason, however, for lack of universal cultivation is the fact that almost all modern hybrids are derived from just seven of the large flowered Cymbidium species found principally in the hills of Nepal and Sikkim, where they enjoy bright sunlight and cool days and nights. Successful cultivation then requires that we emulate these climatic conditions - which is easily done in California, Australia, New Zealand, and England and Holland (the latter two with greenhouses to protect from freezing in their winters). Areas of the world without these naturally cool conditions have been usually unsuccessful in Cymbidium cultivation.

About 30 years ago we saw a great interest in "miniature" cymbidiums, made by combining the species *pumilum* with various of the "Standard" (large flowered, cool growing), cymbidiums. While these plants were more floriferous and somewhat easier to bloom than "Standard" cymbidiums they were not reliable blooming plants for areas such as South Florida where we do not have naturally cool nights. Thus, our decision, 30 years ago, to embark on a hybridizing program, designed to create (with nature's help) "temperature tolerant" Cymbidiums. We define these as Cymbidiums which will perform well in a temperature range of 95 F to 45 F and generally without the need of a wide temperature variation between day and night to initiate spikes. We recently saw some of our hybrids blooming at sea level in Tahiti, where the difference between day and night temperatures is quite small.

From among 200 select breeding plants of "Standard" cymbidiums, we found just four that would perform reasonably well in our semi-tropical climate and have used these principally in combination with: (1) *Parishii* 'Sanderæ' from Burma. A beautiful pure white flower with red labellum, erect inflorescence, 10 to 12 flowers of 7.5 cm. natural spread, which blooms reliably once every winter and is somewhat temperature tolerant.

(2) ensifolium and its allied species from Ceylon, Assam, and Southern China. These are small plants and flowers with delightful fragrance (which is generally imparted to their progeny) and excellent heat tolerance. Some of these species like to bloom in the middle of our summers when temperatures in our greenhouses reach 110 F daytime and 80 F at night. Hybrids involving these species and "Standard" cymbidiums usually bloom both summer and winter and occasionally all year around for us. (3) chloranthum, from Malaysia and Java (also reported from the Philippines), a very warm growing cymbidium producing up to 40 one inch luminous green flowers on each semi-erect inflorescence. We have however, only been successful in making one hybrid with this species so far (Cym. Nancy Carpenter). To the best of our knowledge, we are the only commercial orchid firm in the world to specifically develop a breeding program to produce "Temperature Tolerant" cymbidiums, but we do want to acknowledge the substantial help of one of the world's most knowledgeable Cymbidium growers, Mr. Andy Easton of New Zealand.

#### CULTURE:

First, remember that all cultural factors are inter-related (for example, a significant decrease in light intensity will call for a corresponding decrease in water and fertilizer), and secondly, we know that climatic conditions vary from place to place, thus the individual grower should make those adjustments which allow him to obtain the best results under his conditions.

#### LIGHT:

This is probably the most important factor in the flowering of Cymbidiums. A good rule is to give as much light as possible, short of injuring the leaves. Proper intensity is indicated when the leaves are a grassy yellow-green color. Too much shade is the most frequent cause of non-blooming cymbidiums. If you have a foot candle meter, it should register 4,000 to 6,000 or more during the growing season. When the bloom spikes begin to form, it is a good practice to leave the plant in the same orientation to the sun, for we have found that moving a plant and changing this orientation at that time will occasionally cause the young spikes to blast. Later, as the buds begin to emerge from the spike sheath, rather heavy shade may be applied (which will generally result in clearer colors and longer lasting flowers. Too high light intensities at this time could cause sepal deformation and/or bud drop. As soon as plants have finished blooming, return to the higher light intensity.

#### TEMPERATURE:

Our "Temperature Tolerant" hybrids are tolerant of heat and also enjoy cool night temperatures (but do not require them). We experience daytime temperatures up to 110 F during our five summer months and many of our plants are happily in bloom during that time. While most "Standard" cymbidiums require 20-25 F differential between daytime and nighttime temperatures during late summer and early fall to induce plants to start spikes, this is not required by most of our "Temperature Tolerant" cymbidiums.

#### WATER (Quantity):

During their most active growth period, March through September in the Northern hemisphere, cymbidiums require much more water, in fact, with good drainage (a necessity at all times) the compost should be kept moist. During the winter months, cymbidiums should be thoroughly drenched and then allowed to become almost dry before watering again. Never allow the potting medium to become "bone" dry however! It is also a good practice to thoroughly leach the potting medium periodically to remove any excessive accumulation of salts. On bright summer days cymbidiums will respond heartily to misting of the leaves, which reduces leaf temperature through increased evaporation and humidity.

#### WATER (Quality):

A factor often overlooked and of prime importance. City water and/or well water will many times be found to contain an unusually high total soluble salt content. Ideally, the soluble salt level should be 25-50 ppm (parts per million) but not more than 100 ppm. Rainwater is almost always the best source for good water, generally having a low soluble salts concentration and proper pH. One of the main causes of leaf tip die-back is too high a concentration of soluble salts in the water (the other main cause being simply a lack of water). In South Florida, most cymbidiums are grown out-of doors all year and benefit from the natural rains, especially during our wet summer months when almost daily showers are experienced (this fortunately coincides with our period of highest light intensities).

#### FERTILIZER:

During the growing season (April through August here) use high nitrogen e.g. (30-10-10) water soluble fertilizer at the rate of one teaspoon to a gallon every two weeks if in fir bark, or balanced e.g. (20-20-20) if in an inorganic media. There are a number of commercial fertilizers available now which combine a number of the minor and trace elements along with the major ones, all in one formula - these are recommended. Another alternative is the use of pelletized, slow release fertilizers, which, placed on the surface of the potting medium, release minute amounts of fertilizer at each watering. In Tropical and Semi-Tropical areas apply no fertilizer during September, and from October through March use a low nitrogen e.g. (10-20-30) water soluble fertilizer at the same concentration and frequency mentioned above. Always feed on bright sunny days, as plants cannot utilize the food in cold, overcast conditions.

#### AIR:

Good air movement is a necessity at all times and the plants should be potted somewhat high in the pot to allow good air movement around the base of the bulbs. Depending on the individual growing situation it may be desirable to hang the plants from an overhead frame in order to provide the best air circulation.

#### POTTING MEDIUM:

There are almost as many different cymbidium mixes as there are growers but if you are using an organic mix it should be slightly acid (pH 5-6). Generally speaking, whatever is being used with success in your area on "Standard" cymbidiums will work well with our



plants. Remember that the drainage must be good however, for while these plants require copious amounts of water during their growing season, they will not tolerate water standing around the roots. For the past several years we have been using "Rock Wool", an inert material made from molten, spun, rock. This is available in a 70/30 mix (water retentive/water repellent) and most recently Grodan 'Stone Wool' especially formulated for orchids has been used with good results (better roots and leaves). The obvious advantage to using this material is that it will not break down as do organic materials and thus can be left on the plant root system for a long time if particular attention is paid to "flushing" routinely for accumulated salts. When "potting up" from a smaller to a larger pot the entire root ball can be transferred to the new pot when in this media - thus preventing the broken roots and plant "shock" which normally results when trying to remove old organic media. If you use "Rock or Stone Wool" do not press down the media as this removes the natural air spaces which are between the fibers and which are beneficial to the roots.

#### CONTAINERS:

Experience leads us to believe that plastic pots are best for these cymbidiums as they have better moisture retention, roots do not stick as much as with clay, there is practically no salts accumulation, and they are lighter in weight.

#### PESTS & DISEASES

Fortunately cymbidiums are more resistant to pests and diseases than are most orchids. Snails and slugs must be controlled, especially during the blooming season. Metaldehyde in powder, liquid and pellets are effective. Spider mites are probably the major pest. Its small size makes it difficult to detect and spray must generally be applied to the underside of the leaves (where it locates) for proper control. Kelthane, Cygon, Pentac, Avid, Vendex or Dimite may be used. Orchid scale can be controlled with Malathion or Cygon. Fungus diseases are seldom a problem; when they do occur, use Subdue or Aliette. A good preventative spray is Captan, Tersan or Kocide applied three to six times yearly. Cymbidiums along with most other orchids are subject to all virus diseases. Their spread can be controlled by proper precautionary measures such as destroying or segregating infected plants, sterilizing all cutting tools (a propane torch is good), and keeping insect populations at a minimum.

#### REPOTTING:

The best time to repot is after the plant has just finished blooming. Repotting is necessary when (1) the plant has reached the edge of the pot and there is no room for development of new growths or (2) the potting medium (if organic) is decomposed. If you are not sure of the health of the roots or condition of potting medium, take the plant out of the pot to examine closely. If the plant and medium are in good condition, with only a few leafless bulbs, you may want to shift the entire plant to a larger pot keeping the root ball intact. Division of the plant may be desired if there are several leafless back bulbs present. Keep each division to a minimum of three leafed bulbs, removing the back bulbs which you can repot individually to start new divisions. When repotting, allow enough room between the plant and edge of the pot for two or three years growth. After

repotting, place plant in a shady, humid location and mist the foliage often, while curtailing the watering of the compost. This will encourage new root action, after which the plant is returned to normal light, food, and watering practices.

Editor's note: Milton O. Carpenter is a past president of AOS, past president of the Orchid Society of the Palm Beaches, and an accredited AOS judge. He is a renowned hybridizer of cymbidiums and has named more than 500 of his crosses.

Carter & Holmes is offering some of his warm temperature tolerant cymbidiums in their newest catalog, so take a look.

Check out Milton's website at [www.evergladesorchids.com](http://www.evergladesorchids.com) for more information, beautiful photos, and his latest book.