

Venice Area Orchid Society News

August 2014

Next Meeting: Wednesday

August 6th at 7:00 p.m.

Speaker: Courtney Hackney

Topic: "Growing Cattleyas"

Professor Hackney is the Director of Coastal Biology at the University of North Florida in Jacksonville, Florida. He began growing orchids in the Florida Keys in 1962 while working for a small orchid nursery and has continued his interest in both orchid hybridizing and orchid culture since then. He grows many different genera, but his favorite is the Cattleya Alliance. He has about 500 mature cattleyas and even more seedlings, but his favorites are classic clones, some of which appeared in orchid collections over 100 years ago. He makes 8-10 hybrids and species sib crosses per year in various genera.



He wrote a Growing Tips column for 20 years, which ended in December 2013 that appeared in newsletters around the country and has published in Orchid Digest. In 2004, he published "American Cattleyas", the culmination of a decade of study and interviews, which summarizes in old photographs and print how all of the modern cattleyas came to be. The book also describes what we know about cattleyas and cattleya hybrids, how to grow them, and what to expect from modern hybrids.

He and his wife Rose live in Jacksonville, Florida adjacent to a tidal swamp. Rose paints and he enjoys the Epi. conopseum growing in the trees in his backyard, while he conducts his research in the swamp. His orchids are now enjoying residence in a new 24'x25' Florida shade house adjacent to the swamp.

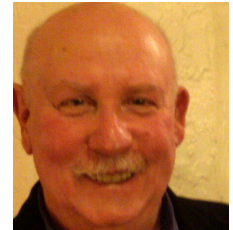
Courtney and Rose will have plants and books for sale.

VAOS Hosts EAOS at Our August 6th Meeting

Members are requested to bring extra snacks and baked goods as well as Raffle Table donations on August 6th, when we host our sister organization, the Englewood Area Orchid Society at our joint summertime meeting.

A Message from your President:

How many of you believe in the karma of orchids? I know I do. It doesn't matter how many plants you have; there are a few special orchids that you love more than the others. The ones that speak to you and always do better because you somehow know when they need something extra or special.



John Masters

This karma is also therapeutic. It opens your mind to another world that requires thinking, planning and caring. It also provides escape from the everyday worries we all have. Let's not discuss the obsessive behavior part of it; we all know this already. This new kind of thinking is relaxing also. My working life was consumed by deductive reasoning. In my law enforcement world A always led to B and then C and then someone was in handcuffs. Flights of fantasy generally didn't work and were never rewarded. In fact, the flights generally resulted in what we called time in the penalty box. (punishment assignments of which I was often the league leader.) But with the orchids your imagination can run wild. I am always looking for new things to mount the plants on. Unique pieces of wood or animal like items can often be found in thrift stores. I have become more creative in the past 15 years than in the whole rest of my life. I now live in the world of abstract reasoning. Try it for awhile. You will enjoy yourself more.

Most of you know I support my orchid habit by selling plants for various vendors at shows and sales and open houses. Sometimes I like to match plants to their new owners based on a snap shot analysis of the character of the shopper. I often hold certain plants back until I think the right person is present and deserving of the reserved plant. I know this drives the vendors crazy but I really think it has more positive results than just the exchange of cash for a plant. How many times have you looked at a table full of plants and had one calling you? This is not an accident. I can look at a table of plants and know which ones are going home with a new owner and which ones I will have to rescue for

WWW.VAOS.ORG

Continued on page 5

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

Officers 2014 – 2015

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John Masters, pres@vaos.org

Vice President - Programs

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Vice President - Social Affairs

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Vice President - Show Displays

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Jean Fairchild, Plant Table

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VAOS Printer

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Minutes of the June 4, 2014 VAOS Meeting

President John Masters opened the meeting by asking who went on the "Redlands" bus trip. Many people raised their hands and expressed that it was fun. Many bought orchids there. Barbara Wagner discussed the trip and reported that a book was left on the bus. She encouraged the owner to contact her. Barbara asked if members were interested in a trip to Hawaii. She briefly discussed an exciting trip VAOS took to Hawaii in the year of 2000. She then invited members to contact her if they are interested in traveling to Hawaii as a group to visit orchid growers there next year.

John Masters announced that Growers Clinic will be Thursday, June 12th. The topic is Catasetums.

Mary Anne DiGrazia announced our next monthly meeting will be hosted by Englewood on Monday, July 14th. This joint meeting of the two societies will be at 7pm in Christ Lutheran Church, Englewood. The speaker will be Katie Caldwell, speaking on Vanda orchids. Katie is known for growing beautiful, healthy Vanda orchids. An Englewood vendor, Blue Pagoda, will be selling orchids there.

John Masters welcomed and recognized new members. He announced the VAOS website has been improved and encouraged members to visit our updated website. The calendar of events has been expanded and reminders are cited. Members were also encouraged to visit our webpage

Continued on page 5

Treasurer's Report

July 2014

Checking Account

Starting Balance	
6/1/2014	\$ 14,367.56
+ Income	\$ 3,370.66
- Payments	\$ 1,422.61
Closing Balance	
6/30/2014	\$ 14,697.81

Show Checking Account

Starting Balance	
6/1/2014	\$ 2,930.66
+Income	0.00
-Payments*	2,930.66
Closing Balance	
6/30/14	\$ 0.00

Cash Account

Closing Balance	
6/30/14	\$ 40.00

Money Market Savings

Starting Balance	
6/1/14	\$ 25,037.06
+ Income	0.82
Closing Balance	
6/30/14	\$ 25,037.88

Total Assets

6/30/2014	\$ 39,775.69
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Submitted by Mary Amos

*Transfer to checking

Support Our 2014 Show Sponsors

Platinum

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- Raleigh & Associates
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Gold

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- Retina Assoc. of Sarasota

Silver

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

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.

Plant Table Awards June 4, 2014



Oncidium hybrid

First Place, a yellow Oncidium hybrid presented by Tawanna Hardenbrook. Tawanna had presented the same plant two years ago and it earned a second place ribbon. This time the plant had two inflorescences and many more flowers. Again this year, I attempt to find a name – it may be a very good form of *Onc. splacelatum*. It was bright yellow with

well-defined brown markings and the sepals were nearly flat. The multi-branched inflorescence made a beautiful display. Good growing Tawanna!

Second place and Members Choice, *Miltoniopsis* Andrea West exhibited by Joanna Shaw. This beautiful yellow hybrid was registered in 2001. All *Miltoniopsis* hybrids are various combinations of just three species, *Mps. vexillaria*, *Mps. roezlii* and *Mps. phalaenopsis*. Hybridizers, using just these three species have produced white, red, pink and yellow based breeding lines of *Miltoniopsis*. Plants of this genus like to be kept cool. In our area growing them in the house through the summer could be helpful.



Miltoniopsis Andrea West

Third place winner, *Encyclia tampensis*, another plant grown by Joanna Shaw. This species is named for the Tampa Bay area where it was first collected in 1846. It was botanically described by Lindley the following year. The exhibited plant shows why it is a favorite of local growers, long lasting, colorful and showy flow-

ers on a plant hardy in our area. Joanna's plant was a nice display with more than 12 inflorescences.

Best Species, *Vanda falcata* f. *Amani Island* was exhibited by Carol Wood under its 'old' name *Neofinetia falcata* var. *Amani Island*. Recent revisions to the *Vanda* section of orchids have reclassified the plant to *Vanda* based on DNA analysis. The *Amani Island*



Vanda falcata f. *Amani Island*

form has larger size flowers and a spur that points nearly straight down. In Japan, there are highly prized variations of the species, with many foliage types (variegated, blunt, etc.) and flowers of unusual shapes or

parts. Carol's plant put on a very nice display that makes growing this miniature worthwhile.

Speakers Commendation and New Member Grower Ribbons, *Grammatophyllum scriptum* brought in a cart by Jerry and Kathy Beck. This was a huge plant – maybe 8 feet across with its many spikes. The photograph is of a few individual flowers for two reasons – no photo can capture the size of the plant, and the close-up lets us focus on the wonderful color and markings of the individual flowers. Plants of this genus like to be kept warm and it is growing under a large tree. Thank you Jerry and Kathy for bringing in this wonderful plant to share with us.



Grammatophyllum scriptum



Encyclia tampensis

—Photos and narrative by Ted Kellogg

Our Days With the “Super Ghost”

The Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary attracts orchid enthusiasts from around the world. While we were walking to see the Super Ghost Orchid, we ran into 3 people who did not speak English, but we all enjoyed the experience. The Super Ghost Orchid is visible after walking halfway around the 2.25 mile boardwalk.

Our first visit was the last weekend of June. This is when we saw the Super Ghost for the first time. It had 20 spikes with many buds already forming. We knew then we would be back very soon to see this Super Ghost in all of its glory.

As we walked the boardwalk that first time we saw the water lines of when the swamp would have been to its highest. We believed it must have been in a drought, as even the (so called) lakes were very low. Our last visit, just 2 weeks after the first proved we were very wrong. The water had already reached a foot or so deep all over. It gave everything a nice dark background which made everything POP with color.

Ghost Orchids are so rare that they are endangered here in Florida. This spectacular one was named ‘Super Ghost’ because of the number of blossoms when discovered in 2010. Ghost Orchids have one or two blooms if any at all, while the Super Ghost was found with 10 blooms when it was discovered.

The second week of July was the best week for viewing the Super Ghost. During that week it had 15 blooms! Corkscrew sets up a telescope (until 1 p.m.) to view this beauty. If you don’t bring binoculars they are available in the nature store when you arrive. If you’re a photographer, bring a telephoto lens as the Super Ghost is about 100 feet off the boardwalk and 30 feet high.

We found this trip to be very exciting and we were very lucky to have seen such a great beauty of nature. Over the past years this was not always able to be seen as bugs and heavy rain ruined the buds before they were able to open fully.

The Ghost Orchid is very rare and endangered...and it is ILLEGAL to remove or relocate any ghost orchid or the even more rare seed pod. It’s native to Southwest Florida and Cuba (and perhaps also the island of Hispaniola between Haiti and the Dominican Republic). The number of ghost orchids in south Florida is around 1,200.

You may find a nursery or garden center that sells ghost orchid seedlings. Google is a great place to find seedlings for sale. You will not be able to find full-grown ghost orchids to buy, since nurseries and garden centers take a profit risk trying to grow them. Ghost Orchids are known to be very difficult to grow outside their natural environ-



Super Ghost

ment. If you think about it, they don’t even grow that well in that environment. Otherwise we would see more of them in Florida. If you need to know how difficult they are to grow you may ask my wife as I have Killed Hundreds of these little gems. I now have what I would call a semi-mature ghost orchid (about 3 years old). I hope that one day I will also have my version of a “Super Ghost” to put on display.

—Narrative and photo by Jay Loeffler

Footnote: Another interesting fact is that the giant sphinx moth is the only insect on this continent with a long enough proboscis to pollinate this orchid and reach the extremely long nectar spur.

The Fakahatchee Strand Preserve Park, located in Cope-land, Florida, about 140 miles southwest of Venice, is the only other reliable vantage point from which to see ghost orchids. Call the park at (239) 695-4593 for details.

The Ghost Orchid is known in the orchid world to be a very difficult plant to grow outside of its natural habitat. I have had very good luck with other Dendrophylax Orchids such as the Jamaican Ghost (Dendrophylax funalis). That one received a blue ribbon at the Englewood Orchid Show. The other fun leafless orchid is the Asian ghost or the Chiloschista orchid. There are many different types of Chiloschista orchids and they are much easier to keep alive.

President's message continued from page 1

myself. How many of you can look at your plants and remember exactly when and where you got most of them? More than a few of you I would wager. Am I right?

I like to believe the karma spreads through our meetings and growers clinics. I think our enthusiasm of our hobby generates more karma. It is impossible to leave one of Jimmy's clinics without feeling a renewed connection to the botanical world. His sensitivity to the culture and mentors in his pursuit of better growing is catching. It is not only the plants that infuse and inspire us. The people we play with bestow new insights all the time. The more you take advantage of what our society has to offer, the more you will enjoy the enlightenment of this hobby. Think about the relationships you have formed through chasing orchids and being in a really great orchid society. This is the karma of orchids.

Meeting Minutes continued from page 2

on Facebook. There are many orchid groups that one may join through Facebook.

John asked members to contact him with ideas and suggestions for VAOS. He encouraged everyone to enjoy the orchids on the Plant Table, to purchase plants from the vendor and purchase raffle tickets.

After the break, Bruce Weaver, VP Programs, introduced our speaker, Steve Hawkins. While Steve grows and sells many types of orchids, his specialty is Oncidiums. His greenhouse is in Apopka, FL, near Orlando; he has been growing orchids for 45 years. Steve gave an informative presentation about a variety of orchids that grow well in our South Florida climate. He discussed orchid culture including light, temperature, water, fertilizer, potting medium and control of pests and disease.

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

*Respectfully submitted by Peggy Fahrenback,
Recording Secretary*

Mark Your Calendar Now for VAOS Special Events

Several important VAOS events are coming up later this year and early next year:

November 15th (Saturday): Downtown Venice Member Plant Sale 9am - 2pm. The VAOS Member Plant Sale will be held November 15th at the Venice Centennial Park gazebo. Start getting your plants and divisions ready now. Members may sell orchids, supplies and other plants and should bring their own table. 20% of your proceeds should be donated to VAOS through the honor system. A fun event to mingle with other members, visit the Farmer's Market and make some extra cash to buy more orchids! Reserve your spot today. Sharon Kahnoski, social@vaos.org

Dr. Jimmy's Culture Tip for August 2014

Why are my Leaves Wilting?

With all of the humidity, why are my leaves looking so bad? This has been a mystery because there should be plenty of moisture to keep the plants healthy. This is caused by the biology of plants. When it gets as hot as it has been lately, the pores on the bottom of the leaf called stoma open to help relieve the plant of the excess heat. As it does this, it also loses moisture from the inside of the plant. If you do not compensate for the excess of water loss the plant starts to wilt. In hot humid weather the plant needs more air circulation and to be watered more often than usual. You cannot wait for the usual every 3rd or whatever day you normally water the plants. Turn on the fan and get out the hose.

Join us for "Dr. Jimmy's VAOS Growers Clinic" the 2nd Thursday of each month. The next Growers Clinic - Potting Without Pots - will be held August 14th, 7pm, Venice Community Center. Bring your plants and mounts for hands on instruction.

Submitted by Jimmy Thomas

Potting Without Pots VAOS' Most Popular Growers Clinic Scheduled August 14th

Mark your calendars to participate in one of the most popular VAOS education events of the year. Dr. Jimmy will present "Potting Without Pots" at the August 14th Growers Clinic, 7pm, Venice Community Center. Last year we had 62 participants! Jimmy and his team will provide hands on instruction to show you how to mount your orchid. Members should bring their plant and their mount (tree fern, cork or drift wood, cedar plank, etc).

VAOS will provide mounting media (sphagnum moss and coco husk), plastic ties and drills. Please limit to one plant and one mount per member household.

Growers Clinic Tailgate Parties Resume in October, with the October 9th meeting. Join us in the Venice Community Center parking lot at 5:30pm prior to the 7pm meeting. Bring your chairs and drinks and food to share.

December 12th (Friday) VAOS Annual Holiday Party. Plan to join us for our annual holiday party at Boca Royale Country Club for dinner, live music, dancing and the plant auction. Details to follow.

March 2015 VAOS Beach Picnic. Following our popular beach picnic last year, VAOS plans to host another in March 2015. Details to follow.

Ridge Orchid Show September 20-21

Get Your Plants Ready!

Our first orchid show of 2014 is coming up next month. The Ridge Orchid Society's 52nd annual show at the Lake Mirror Center in Lakeland FL will be held Sept 20-21. Set up is Friday Sept 19th at 10am. Rich Amos and Jay Loeffler have been busy designing props for the show theme "Orchid Jungle". Rich and his display team will travel to Lakeland on Friday Sept 19th to put in the VAOS display, returning on Sunday Sept 21st for take down.

We need your blooming plants to create a winning display! Because Lakeland is a two hour drive from Venice, many members will not be able to attend. We will collect and transport your plants to the show and ensure their safe return to you on Monday following the show.

1. Bring your plants to one of three locations by Thursday Sept 18th, by 8pm:

- South Venice: Carol Wood, 4941 Bella Terra Dr., Venice (Venetia) 497-4995

- North Venice: Jim Thomas, 453 S. Shore Dr., Osprey, FL 966-2479

- Sarasota: Rich Amos, 413 East Lake Dr., Sarasota 552-6723

2. All plants must be registered in advance by Wednesday, Sept 17th.

- Email your plant name with size and color description of the flowers to Carol Wood, ShowChair@vaos.org

3. Plants should be cleaned, staked, free of pests and disease and labeled with both the plant name and the owner's name. Flowers should be in prime condition to last through the weekend show.

If you would like to participate in setting up our display, help with take down on Sunday, help transport plants and materials to the show, or need further information, contact Rich Amos, VP Displays, at 552-6723.

VAOS 2015 Show Plans

Your 2015 Show Committee is already at work as we plan our 2015 Annual Orchid Show and Sale, February 7-8, 2015. We are counting on our army of member volunteers to produce a spectacular show again next year! Please mark your calendars now with these important dates:

Friday February 6	Set Up 1pm - 7pm
Saturday February 7	Show & Sale 10am - 5pm
Sunday February 8	Show & Sale 10am - 4pm
Sunday February 8	Take Down 4pm

REDLANDS

If you have never taken the trip to Redlands for their annual Orchid Show, put it on your Bucket List. With a full bus of very eager orchid lovers anticipating what items they would not be able to resist. We were given some great advice about vendors and what to look for so we didn't buy plants that are not good for Florida climate.

The weather was perfect, just breezy enough and not as hot as last year.

The displays took your breath away, especially the Awards Tent. All of the plants made your choices difficult. The Vietnamese vendors sold out by early Saturday afternoon. Accessories available gave you much to think about and many ideas for later use.

When everyone boarded the bus for our return they were full of stories about all that they found and purchased.

By: Sharon Kahnoski, VP of Social

Patronize Our Local Growers

- **Honey Bee Nursery**
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2383 Englewood Road (Rt. 776),
Englewood, FL

- **Palmer Orchids**
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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**
(941) 266-6351

339 Venice Ave.
West, Venice, FL

Join the American Orchid Society



If you are not already a member, membership in the American Orchid Society is a truly rewarding experience. Whether a beginner or an expert orchid grower, you will find information to inform and inspire in both our print and on-line media. Join others worldwide who share a passion for orchids, as well as supporting AOS conservation and research efforts for these wondrous plants.

Join today and begin receiving a wealth of membership benefits including:

- Educational members-only webinars about various orchid species, hybrids and culture have proven very popular. They feature subject matter experts who share their knowledge to help us better grow our orchids. If you miss the webinars, you can download them at your convenience at www.aos.org.
- Twelve issues of the award-winning Orchids magazine delivered monthly or digitally for those who would rather access it via their PC or mobile devices.
- Access to reliable on-line orchid information and features available only to members at www.aos.org
- Receipt of the annual Orchid Source Directory detailing orchid suppliers worldwide
- Free and discounted admission to more than 200 botanical gardens and arboreta across the country. View the listing at: ahs.org/uploads/pdfs/2014_Active_RAP_Members.pdf
- 10% discount on purchases on-line at www.aos.org including published books
- 5% discount on all purchases from the following vendors:

Exotic Orchids of Maui

Krull-Smith

Orchid Doctor

Orchid Inn, Ltd.

Seagrove Orchids

Sunset Valley Orchids

Woodstream Orchids

- Two-year new memberships and renewals receive a special coupon worth \$30 off of an order of \$100 or more from the following vendors:

Carter & Holmes

Dan & Margie Orchids

Exotic Orchids of Maui

Gold Country Orchids

Hillview Gardens

Indoor Gardening Supplies (IGS)

Kelley's Korner Orchid Supplies

Krull-Smith

Little Brook Orchids

Marsh Hollow Orchids

Mountain View Orchids

New Earth Orchids

Norman's Orchids

OFE International

Orchid Doctor

Orchid Inn Ltd.

Piping Rock Orchids

Quest Orchids

RF Orchids

Ravenvision,

Roberts Flower Supply

Soroa Orchids, Inc.

Sunset Valley Orchids

Tropical Gardens Orchids

The AOS has supported the study of a wide range of subjects -- tissue culture, seed germination, genetics, polyploidy, evolution, classical taxonomy, molecular taxonomy, domestic and foreign floras, monographs, anatomy, pest and disease control, virus detection, virus elimination, new culture methods, weed control, flower induction, flower senescence, conservation, fragrance, pollination studies and more. Past year conservation and research efforts have included:

- **Conservation:** To advance our orchid conservation goals, we have partnered with Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden in a five-year conservation project called The Million Orchid Project. Our aim is to reintroduce the native *Encyclia tampensis* and the *Cyrtopodium punctatum* to urban South Florida, especially in the places where people work, learn, and commute.
- **Research:** The AOS received a grant of \$50,000 to fund applied research on the topic, "LED Lighting: Optimization for Orchids." We are now notifying researchers of the topic and will be reviewing proposals to determine who will do the research. We will be reporting on the progress of this research on the website and in Orchids magazine.

AOS membership is \$65 a year. Applications are available at VAOS monthly meetings or join online at www.AOS.org

Venice Area Orchid Society News

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

Next Meeting:

Wednesday, August 6, 7:00pm
at Venice Community Center

- **Speaker:** Courtney Hackney
- **Topic:** "Growing Cattleyas"
- Show table entries welcome
- Bring Plants for the Raffle Table
- Bring treats to share

Upcoming Events

August 6 (1st Wednesday):

VAOS/EAOS joint Meeting, 7pm, Venice Community Center, 326 S. Nokomis Avenue, Venice. Speaker: Courtney Hackney, Topic: Growing Cattleyas. Courtney will have books for sale.

August 8-9: 4th Annual Cattleya Symposium, Fort Pierce, FL. Info: www.odoms.come

August 14 (2nd Thursday): VAOS Growers Clinic, 7pm, Venice Community Center, Speaker: Jim Thomas, Topic: Potting Without Pots. Bring your plants and mounting materials.

September 3 (1st Wednesday): VAOS monthly meeting, 7pm, Venice Community Center. Speaker: Alan Koch, Gold Country Orchids.

September 11 (2nd Thursday): VAOS Growers Clinic, 7pm, Venice Community Center, Speaker: Jim Thomas, Topic: Stakes and Clips.

September 19-21: Ridge Orchid Society Annual Show, Lake Mirror Center, Lakeland, FL.

Info: ridgeorchidsociety.org/wp/

Planning Ahead

November 1 (Saturday): EAOS member plant sale, Christ Lutheran Church, Englewood.

November 15 (Saturday): 9am - 2pm. VAOS member plant sale in downtown Venice.

November 15 (Saturday): Deerfield Beach Orchid Society annual orchid show and sale, 10am - 5pm, Emma Lou Olson Civic Center in Pompano Beach, FL.

December 12 (Friday): VAOS Holiday Party at Boca Royale Country Club.

January 3-4, 2015: Sarasota Orchid Society Annual Orchid Show. Set up Friday January 2nd, 8am - 4pm.

February 7-8, 2015: VAOS Annual Orchid Show. Set up Friday, February 6, 1pm-8pm

Ongoing

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

Orchid Judging takes place at **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: <http://www.fncjc.shutterfly.com/>

V.A.O.S.



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Culture Information: Velamen

Velamen - that silvery-gray coating on the roots of epiphytic orchids - has been described as consisting primarily as dead cells that act as a "sponge" to absorb water and nutrients, so the plant can then absorb them at a reasonable pace. Some of my reading, however, suggests that the velamen - technically velamen radicum - plays a far more active role in nutrient uptake.

Originally proposed back in the 1940's, a recent article published jointly by a professor at Oldenburg University in Germany and a Smithsonian Institute researcher in Panama, has offered scientific proof that the velamen actively traps positively-, and negatively-charged species - the dissolved mineral ions washed down out of the forest canopies in rainstorms - and tightly "holds onto them", to prevent them from being washed away by the continued rainfall. The whole thing seems very much akin to the "cation exchange capacity" (CEC) of soils that holds nutrients in place. Further, the velamen actively transfers those nutrients into the root's vascular structures, despite the concentration gradient favoring extraction from them, instead.

More than being just "Neat", or "That's interesting", this has implications to our watering and feeding practices.

Epiphytes have evolved in an environment in which the nutrient supply can easily be called "meager", and the efficiency of nature has likely outfitted the plants to "work with" what's available, and not expect more. That suggests that - just like the CEC of soils - orchids are likely equipped to only handle a limited loading of nutrients in their irrigation supply, but to capture it as completely as possible. If we apply solutions that are significantly more concentrated, the nutrient ions may "compete" for capture sites (think "musical chairs"), which may skew the ratio of the nutrients absorbed, to the plants' detriment. Similarly, if we follow the old practice of watering with plain water first, then doing so a second time with fertilizer, any ions that may be in your water supply may similarly occupy sites in the velamen, precluding the capture of other essential nutrients.

To me, the obvious conclusion is that the best way to feed and water our orchids is through frequent applications of very dilute fertilizers. Using the "musical chairs" analogy again, ten people will have no issues finding a seat if there are 20 chairs, but if we invite 100 people, there's going to be a lot of unhappy participants.

An Update from First Rays, May 2014

info@firstrays.com 888-283-5094

August in Your Orchid Collection

Reprinted with Permission, Dr. Martin Motes

August Climate Data
Average high: 90.6
Average low: 76.5
Average mean: 83.6
Average rainfall: 8.63"

July and August are the two most similar months in South Florida. Most of the advice on watering, disease and pest control in last month's calendar still apply but subtle changes are taking place. Although it may not seem so, as temperatures climb into the low nineties most afternoons, summer is in retreat: each day a little shorter, each night a little longer. With shorter days the importance of watering as early in the morning as possible comes to the fore. With less hours of sunlight to dry the plants, extra care should be taken in choosing when to water. Back to the basics of the classic saying : If a *Vanda* looks like it needs water, water it; If a *Cattleya* or *Oncidium* looks like it needs water, water it tomorrow. If a Paph or a Phal looks like it needs water, you should have watered it yesterday. If plants retain water even from an early morning watering, allowing them to dry a bit harder before the next watering is always a good idea. An extra day of drying rarely does harm.

August should provide numerous opportunities to dry each orchid to its desired level of dryness. Take the opportunity to dry your orchids "hard" at least once but preferably twice in August. This will give your orchids a leg up on their mortal enemies, the fungus, before the drizzle of September switches the advantage to our adversaries. August is definitely not the month to over indulge in water. September, the soggiest of months, is next up. The corollary to this calculated drying is the concept that when watering in August above all water thoroughly. If watering is necessary be sure that the roots and medium are totally saturated with the application.

The drizzling rains of September are so detrimental precisely because they keep the foliage of the plants wet unduly long. We want our plants which are still growing to receive plenty of water but also plenty of drying time.

Good air circulation and proper watering are the keys to disease prevention. Remember that your plants will have increased considerably in size by this point in the growing season. They have added extra growths and extra leaves across the summer. August is a good time to evaluate the spacing of our plants. Remember the old Florida saw that one needs a cat to grow good orchids because when properly spaced a cat should be able to navigate the benches between plants without knocking them over.

While we can not recommend specific chemicals, the county agent recommends *Banrot*, a convenient combination of Thiophanate-methyl and *Truban* which controls a number of leaf-spotting diseases and soft rots, for home owner use. A combination of Thiophanate-methyl and mancozeb has also been recommended. This can be found pre-packaged as Duosan. If one can overcome the aversion to chemicals and can learn the safe application of them, they are valuable tools to better orchid growing. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure especially before the soft, slow drizzle of September sets in.

Lengthening nights in August mean cooler nighttime temperatures. Many sympodial orchids are reaching the end of their growing cycle and require less nitrogen. Cattleyas and oncidiums have maturing bulbs. Genera that become deciduous in winter like nobile dendrobiums, calanthes and catasetums should be given much less nitrogen in August to prevent them producing an unwanted off season growth and perhaps forgetting to flower. Substitute an additional application of potassium nitrate and Epsom salt (1TBS each per gal) instead of the balanced 20-20-20. Vandas will respond well to this also, as several of the parental species of our hybrids produce blooms on shortening day lengths and lower levels of nitrogen in their fertilizer seems to egg them on. Modern research indicates that orchids require less phosphorous than previously thought. This concept should lead us to more judicious use of phosphorus. Fertilizer high in phosphorus may still be of some value at the end of the growing season, perhaps not so much as stimulus as shock. One or two heavy applications in succession, a week or so apart will certainly provide all the phosphorus and all the stimulus (or wake up shock) our plants require to bloom.

Snails can be somewhat of a problem in August too, but left to multiply they will be in their full glory when those slow unrelenting rains of September set in. Control them with baits in pellet or liquid/paste form. Remember, these are baits, the pests are drawn to them. Therefore apply lightly, but frequently. Because they wash away in the heavy rains, baits should be reapplied every two weeks. One pellet every two to three feet will do the job, but one application will not. Given a choice, the smallest pellets baits are best. They keep us from over applying and also pose much less threat to neighborhood pets. A small bait in a *Vanda* crown is a nuisance, a large bait can be a disaster.

If you have been waiting to make cuttings of the terete vandas or reed stem epidendrums, you can wait no longer. The potting season is drawing absolutely to a close. Pot up those overgrown phals before they even think of spiking. Re-set those strap leaf vandas early in August whilst they still have just enough time to re-establish themselves in the September humidity and before the cool weather arrives and their root growth slows or stops. As in all seasons be sure that the plants are firmly set in their containers. There is no "wiggle room" this late in the growing season to restart tender roots that have been chafed off a loosely set plant. As the cooler weather approaches try to give plants that have been repotted late more protection from the first cold snaps.