

# Venice Area Orchid Society News

Nov. 2012

**Next Meeting: Wednesday,  
November 7th at 7:00 p.m.**

**Speaker: Bill Thoms  
Topic: "Bulbophyllums"**

Bill Thoms, renowned orchid grower, internationally recognized speaker and world traveler, will be speaking on *Bulbophyllums* (the largest genus in the orchid world).



Be prepared to learn more about this fascinating group of plants than you ever dreamed!

Bill and his wife, Doris Dukes, have been growing orchids around Central Florida for more than 40 years and have received almost every award granted by the AOS. They received more Awards for Culture than anyone else in the world, (93 in over 29 genera, including 42 in the *Bulbophyllum* alliance), capped off with a 97 point Certificate of Cultural Excellence for *Bulb.* Sue Blackmore.

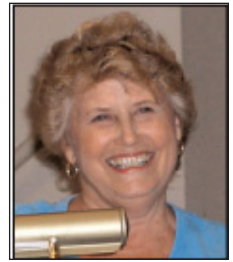
Bill is the only person to receive Awards of Quality for *Bulbophyllum* hybrids as well as receiving the hybridizer's dream: an Award of Distinction for a new avenue of breeding (a *Trias* hybrid). Many of his crosses are winning awards around the country and the AOS just added a yearly award named for him for the best *Bulbophyllum* exhibited.

His presentations are spiced with funny stories and funny associations so whether you grow thousands of orchids, only a few, or none at all, you will have a wonderfully entertaining time and be able to grow anything better. Many of the most important requirements for growing world class plants are made easy to understand and remember.

Don't miss this great opportunity to learn how to grow these fascinating plants and to hear one of the most knowledgeable, interesting and funny speakers in the orchid world.

Bill's new book, *Bulbophyllums: the Incomplete Guide, From A to WHY?* will be available at a discount and he will be bringing a selection of plants for sale.

## A Message from your President:



Cynthia Vance

By membership acclaim, we will again have our Holiday Party at the Venice Yacht Club! We'll have the entire second floor overlooking the bay and the Intracoastal Waterway at the best time of day, sunset. As we dine we will enjoy the decorated boats below – and yes – we will have live music and dancing at different times throughout the evening. Even if you don't dance – it's always enjoyable watching others!

Please view the expanded menu in this newsletter. Besides live music, at your request, we've increased the hors d'oeuvres and added wonderful desserts. And yes, the price has increased to \$30.00/per person due to late menu changes at the venue and the higher cost of beef due to the Midwest drought. Such a lovely event now fits within our budget projections and the Board felt that our members and many hard-working volunteers deserve such a special evening as we've planned. For the price, it will be a very special 4 hours of camaraderie and fun.

Again Bill Timm, our premier auctioneer, and his able helpers will highlight special qualities of the plants. The auction will be shorter– but we still need at least 25 magnificent plants. Please save some of your most glorious divisions for this special evening. A photo next to each plant will also enhance the pre-auction viewing.

So gentlemen, dust off your sports jackets and ladies, you have permission to wear (or purchase) a favorite dress-up outfit. This is the final event of our 50th year as a Society and we have much to celebrate!!

## Breaking News – Plant Safari an Overwhelming Success!!

Long time VAOS member Bill Timm hosted a fund raiser for the American Cancer Society at his home in North Port on October 13th. Bill opened up his property for a Plant Safari, allowing the public to collect orchids, bromeliads, ferns, succulents and other exotic plants on his three acre property.



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

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

## Officers 2012 - 2013

### President

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

### Vice President - Programs

Jim Thomas

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

### Vice President - Social Affairs

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

### Vice President - Show Displays

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

### Treasurer

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

### Recording Secretary

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

### Membership

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

### Directors At Large:

#### Annual Show Chairs

Barbara Wagner

Carol Wood

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

#### Immediate Past President

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

### Volunteers

Donn Smart, Communications

The Cullens, Raffle Table

Judy Russell, Plant Table

Jerry Manegold, Technology

Bryan Herd, Librarian

### Newsletter Editor

Steve Vogelhaupt

### Newsletter Production

Barry Zack

### Website Maintenance

Ted Kellogg

### VAOS Printer

Creative Technology of Sarasota

## Venice Area Orchid Society News

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

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

## From Cattleyas to Dendrobiums

The St. Augustine Orchid Society graciously shared the highlights of Fred Clarke's recent presentation at their October meeting.

He gave an excellent presentation on Today's Mini and Compact Cattleyas at our last meeting and is also a renowned expert on Australian Dendrobiums. He's taken numerous trips to Australia to participate in shows and give lectures and has developed a great interest in breeding these beauties. His article on Zygodactylina: A New Hybrid Genus, appears in the latest edition of the AOS magazine.

The Australian orchids have many endearing qualities. They are one of the few orchids that rebloom from old canes, and can do this for 6 or 7 years. It is not unusual to have 2 or 3 bloom spikes from each cane. The canes grow tightly together in smallish pots. As a result, you can get very floriferous specimen plants in a relatively short period of time.

Den. speciosum has flat to slightly cupped flowers that range in color from white, cream, and yellow to deep gold on long racemes. The var. speciosum 'Windmere' FCC/AOS is the gold standard prized by hybridizers and hobbyists.



Den. tetragonum has long slender pseudobulbs that are in the shape of a tetragon at the base. The flowers have a spidery shape and are yellow with red markings. This species is often used by hybridizers to impart red coloration and a spidery flower shape producing very showy orchids.



*Continued on page 5*

### Treasurer's Report October 2012

#### Checking Account

Starting Balance  
9/20/2012.....\$639.34  
+ .Income.....\$87.88  
+ Transfer from Savings..\$1,000.00  
- payments .....\$838.50  
Balance (10/13/12).....\$886.84

#### Show Checking Account

Balance (9/20/12).....\$1,858.17  
- payments .....\$26.53  
Balance (10/13/12).....\$1,831.64

#### Cash Account

Balance (10/13/2012).....\$40.00

#### Money Market Acct

Balance (10/13/12).....\$24,006.60

#### Total Assets

10/13/2012.....\$25,766.96

*Submitted by Ali Hicks*

### Plant Safari continued from page 1

Other event participants sold plants and garage sale items with a portion of their sales donated to the event. Bill netted a total of \$2304 for the North Port American Cancer Society Relay for Life. Congratulations Bill!

### Support our 2012 Show Sponsors

- AAA South
- Center for Sight
- Drs. Davis & Beyer, DDS
- Edgewood Nursery
- Herald-Tribune Media Group
- Jacaranda Trace Retirement Community
- Pineapples Island Grill
- Raleigh & Associates
- Silverstein Institute
- Stanley Dean State Farm

## Plant Table Awards November 3, 2012

Bev Manypenny took both **First Place** and **Members Choice** with her plant C. Phra Nakhon Khiri x C. Netrasiri Beauty. This unnamed cross produced pretty purple and white flowers with yellow sepals. Congratulations Bev!



*C. Phra Nakhon Khiri x  
C. Netrasiri Beauty*



*Cirrhopetalum (Cirr.)  
flabellum-veneris*

Bill Timm's plant *Cirrhopetalum (Cirr.) flabellum-veneris* took both **Second Place** and **Best Species** ribbons. Also known as *Bulb. flabellum-veneris* and *Bulb. lepidum*, each petal of these "daisy chain" shaped flowers are a separate flower. In June 2012 a plant of *Bulb. flabellum-veneris* received a CCM/AOS award for 407 flowers and 330 buds on 67 inflorescences.

Jane Camarota received **Third Place** for her

plant *Blc. Blue Grotto 'Takaqi'*. *Blue Grotto* is a cross of *Lc. Blue Boy* and *Blc. Victoria* and produces flowers as close to blue as you will see in an orchid.



*Blc. Blue Grotto 'Takaqi'*

Bill Timm also took the **Speakers Choice** award with his plant *Blc. Sanyung Ruby*. *Sanyung Ruby* is a cross of *Blc. Waianae Coast* x *Blc. Chia Lin*, producing a nice large purple cattleya with yellow eyes in the throat.



*Blc. Sanyung Ruby'*

Nice plant Bill!

*Plant descriptions submitted by Carol Wood*

## Minutes of the October 3, 2012 Meeting

Flyers of upcoming events were placed on seats prior to the opening of the meeting. President Cynthia Vance opened the meeting with announcements. She thanked Bill and Sue Fender for hosting the sale of orchids and supplies at their home in September. Several outreach programs were presented. VAOS is now a member of the Venice Chamber of Commerce and we will participate in their Expo at the Venice Community Center on Oct. 5th and 6th. Jimmy Thomas announced that he has created a slide show illustrating the many types of growing areas utilized by VAOS members. Judy and Jay Loeffler presented printed VAOS gift membership certificates which they designed on their computer. They will set up a VAOS display next to orchids for sale in Publix. It will disseminate information promoting VAOS membership, along with membership brochures. Other outreach programs discussed include the Mentor Program and Growers Clinic.

Jimmy Thomas reported the Growers Clinic Topic this month will be "Tips from the Experts." A printed hand-out will be provided. The format will be a question and answer session, so members are encouraged to bring in plants to discuss.

Cynthia congratulated the team that registered and labeled the orchids and created the display at the Lake-

land Ridge Show in September. Rich and Mary Amos were the designers; their exhibit received a second place award. Other team members included Carol Wood, Jimmy Thomas, Jerry Manegold, Ken Dolan and Bill Timm. Ten VAOS members exhibited 34 orchids and received three trophies and 25 ribbons.

Bill Timm presented information about his "Plant Safari" event on Oct. 13th. It will be a unique experience offering plant collecting, plant sales, arts and crafts and a yard sale. Cost is \$20 per person. All proceeds of admissions and 25% of the sale proceeds will be donated to the American Cancer Society. Cynthia reminded members there will be no VAOS sale in downtown Venice this year.

Mary Anne Digrazia announced the EAOS annual plant sale. It will be held on Saturday, Nov. 3 (first Saturday) from 9am to 2pm, at Christ Lutheran Church, 701 N. Indiana, Englewood.

Bill Fender introduced Fred Clarke, saying "Fred is the best orchid breeder in the universe. His website is beautiful and his plants are for sale tonight." Fred gave a comprehensive Power Point presentation entitled "Today's Mini and Compact Cattleyas".

Plant Table awards were given and the meeting was adjourned after the Raffle.

*Respectfully submitted by Peg Fahrenback*

## Thanksgiving is coming!

To continue our Society's long-held tradition of giving back, kindly bring your canned goods and extra food items to the Nov. meeting. They will be delivered to the All Faiths Food Bank.

### VAOS Holiday Party!! -- December 7th – Venice Yacht Club Fine Dinner, Music and Dancing Throughout and Premier Orchid Auction!



#### *Menu*

##### **5:30 Happy Hour with Cash Bar\***

Domestic Cheese Mirror with Fruit Garnishes with Cracker Assortment  
Fresh Garden Crudités with Blue Cheese and Ranch Dips

##### **6:30 Dinner (Choice of One Entree)**

Chicken – Sautéed Breast of Chicken “Nicholas” topped with Artichoke, Hearts of Palm, Olives, Tomatoes, Scallions and Feta Cheese, Sautéed with White Wine  
*served with Yukon Whipped Potatoes and Green Beans Almandine*

Beef – Top Round of Beef with Bordelaise Sauce served with *Veggies above*

Fish – Herb Crusted Salmon with Lemon Butter Sauce served with *Veggies above*

##### *Other options:*

*Vegetarian (Pasta Primavera) or Gluten free (Chicken, Beef or Fish Dinner)*  
All dinners include Hot Rolls and Butter, Beverage (coffee, tea, iced tea or water)  
and Dessert - Key Lime, Cherry or Boston cream pie

\* \$9 Premium Drinks; \$7 Mixed Drinks and Wine; \$5 Beer; \$2 Soda

##### **Après-Dinner Auction with Bill Timm, Auctioneer**

*\$30 per member; \*\*Cash bar.*

*Reservations by December 1st to:*

*VAOS Treasurer Ali Hicks*

*P.O. Box 443*

*Venice, FL 34284-0443*

*Please indicate your clear menu choice on your check*

## Venice Chamber of Commerce EXPO

VAOS participated in the EXPO at the Venice Community Center on October 5th and 6th. Richard Amos and James Thomas set up an orchid display with plants from our members across the back of our booth. The booth was staffed



VAOS Members Staff EXPO Booth

by Judy and Jay Loeffler, Peg Fahrenback, Cynthia Vance, and Gerry and James Thomas. Judy and Jay Loeffler provided an all-in-one computer that was used to show how our members grow their orchids without expensive green houses or structures.

There were over 3400 attendees at the EXPO with many visiting our booth and we gave out more than a hundred tick-

ets for our raffle of three phalaenopsis. The three winners received their prizes at the October Growers Meeting which was attended by 32 members and visitors, several of whom had visited our booth at the EXPO.



Marga Taylor Receives Raffle Prize

We met many who have orchids and were not sure of how to properly care for them and we provided information about our monthly Growers Clinic. We have 7 new members as a direct result of the EXPO and answered many questions about orchids and our Society. Many visitors told us how they enjoy our yearly show and wanted the dates for next year. Hopefully we will have more join and share our love of orchids.

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### From Cattleyas to Dendrobiums continued from page 2

*Den. kingianum* has slender pseudobulbs that are pink to mauve, cream to white and dark purple. The lateral sepals are 'chunky' as the Aussie's say. Hybridizers use *kingianum* to increase segment size and impart a wide variety of colors to their progeny.

*Den. biggibum* is another very showy species in the phalaenopsis section of dendrobiums. There can be 1 to 4 racemes per cane each with 2 to 8 flowers that bloom in the full range of colors and last for 2 months. They tend to be hot growing plants and are widely used in hybridizing.

There are two other species lesser used in hybridizing. *Den. falcorostrum* has white flowers with a heart shaped lip. It grows at high elevations where temperatures regularly drop below freezing. *Den. fleckeri* is a rather rare plant that grows in small clumps. Its blooms are butterscotch orange to apricot yellow to light yellows.

Fred provided a tutorial on cultural practices for these dendrobiums. During the heat and long days of summer, water and fertilize regularly to make sure your plants get the sustenance they need to bloom to their maximum potential. In the winter, let the plants dry out a little between watering. Basically, watering practices are very similar to that for cattleyas. The frequency of watering will depend on many factors related to the water holding capacity of your media, the type and size of container and your time availability.



Fred recommends that you fertilize each time you water and flush the plants monthly. In the summer you might use 1 tsp/gal and drop to 1/2 tsp/gal in the winter. If you have an alkaline water source, you might use a 15-15-15 or 20-20-20 fertilizer to generate acidity and if you have a pure water source like rainwater you might use a 15-5-15 Cal Mag fertilizer.

The light requirements for these dendrobiums are very similar to those of cattleyas, 2500 to 4000 ft candles. This translates to 65-75% shade in summer and 55-65% shade in winter.

For potting, Fred uses *Pinus radiata* bark mixed at a 3:1 ratio with perlite.

He considers it to be the best all around media because it contains organic material, is water absorbent, is inexpensive and buffers pH. He repots as new growth and roots are visible. You should select smallish pots that will accommodate no more than 3 years of new growth.

Fred treats all his plants as if they were virused to prevent the inadvertent spread of virus in his collection. This means he uses a newspaper underlayment for each potting event. He dons a new set of latex gloves for each plant. Only sterile cutting tools are used. He uses a butane torch and sterilizes each side of the cutting surface for 5 to 10 seconds. Potting sticks are taboo. After the plant is repotted, he wraps up all the debris, old mix, discarded plant parts, etc. in the newspaper and discards it, so there is fresh newspaper as the working surface for the next plant.

# Venice Area Orchid Society News

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

## Next Meeting:

Wednesday, Nov. 7, 7:00pm  
at Venice Community Center  
• Speaker: Bill Thoms "Bulbophyllums"  
• Show table entries welcome  
• Bring treats to share

## Upcoming Events

**November 3, 9 am to 1 pm:**  
EAOS Members Plant Sale, Christ Lutheran Church, Englewood, FL.  
Info: Ann Baldwin (941) 475-5097

**November 3-4:**  
14th International Slipper Symposium, Orlando, FL.  
Info: [www.slippersymposium.com](http://www.slippersymposium.com)

**November 7:**  
VAOS monthly meeting 7pm. Venice Community Center, 326 S. Nokomis Ave., Venice, FL. Speaker: Bill Thoms. Topic: Bulbophyllums.

**November 14:**  
Growers Clinic, 7pm, Venice Community Center.  
Presenter: Jim Thomas.  
**Topic:** Winter Preparations for Your

Orchids and Growing Areas and Q & A. Bring your problem plants for expert help.

**December 6:**  
EAOS Bus Trip to Fairchild Tropical Botanical Garden, Miami. \$45 pp. Contact Ann Baldwin, EAOS President, AnnMBaldwin501@frontier.com

**December 7:**  
VAOS Holiday Party (See Pg.4).

**January 5-6, 2013**  
Sarasota Orchid Society Annual Show at the Sarasota Municipal Auditorium  
Info: [www.sarasotaorchidsociety.org](http://www.sarasotaorchidsociety.org)

**February 2-3, 2013:**  
**VAOS Annual Show**, "Rhapsody in Hue", at the Venice Community Center.

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

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

## Newsletter Supplements

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

## Patronize Our Local Growers

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

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

# November in Your Orchid Collection

Dr. Martin Motes

In November we can no longer afford to be dominated by the illusion, so easy here at the northern edge of the tropics, that summer will never end. Although Indian Summer persists for the whole winter in South Florida, November is the month to prepare our plants for those short sharp blasts of cold which are inevitably coming as each successive cold front pushes the overall temperature a little lower and a little lower. Each day is shorter too. The loss of daylight savings time should awake us to the fact that there are less hours of sunlight to save our plants from the chill of the night. Many genera are already anticipating this sea change and have completed their growths for the season. Some like *Catasetum*, *Cycnoches*, *Calanthe* and the nobile dendrobiums are even beginning to shed their foliage in preparation for the cool, dry season. While the Himalayan *Dendrobium* species of the nobile and *Callista* types, *calanthes*, *cymbidiums* and a few others, actually relish temperatures down to near freezing, and most *cattleyas* and *Oncidium* alliance species and hybrids are not bothered by temperatures in the mid-thirties, the majority of the genera which we grow, *vandas*, evergreen dendrobiums, *Phalaenopsis* and others, benefit from being protected from the cold. Now, while the first breathes of cool air remind us that more and stronger cold is in the offing, is the time to start thinking about protecting our plants.

In nature nearly all the tender tropical epiphytic orchids native to South Florida are found nestled in the bosom of deep hammocks where they are well protected from the wind. This observation leads us to think of protecting our orchids from the north and northwest winds. Creating or utilizing already existing wind breaks to the north and west of our orchids will limit the ability of the wind to steal the warmth out of our

plants. The critical factor is not the low temperature that the air reaches but rather the temperature to which the plant tissue is chilled and for how long. This is why limiting the movement of cold air over our plants is essential. In still air, plant tissue (mostly water but with some dissolved salts) retains heat for a long time and is aided by the plants' metabolism. The very goings on of life generate heat, therefore considerable exposure to still air is needed to chill a plant to the temperature of the surrounding environment. Not so if wind enters the picture. Wind can quickly rob the plant's surfaces of heat, chilling the plants tissue deeper and deeper. When the plant's temperature tolerance is reached, at best growth ceases or worse yet damage ensues. Slowing the cooling process and limiting the hours of exposure to sub-optimal temperature is the best gift we can give our plants for the holidays.

Protecting our tender plants from exposure to wind must be our primary concern in preparing them for winter. Buildings, walls and even thick hedges can be very effective windbreaks slowing or stopping chill air. Choose places in your garden that offer this sort of protection to your orchid plants wherever possible. The geography of Florida plays into the equation as well. Because the Florida peninsular juts decidedly to the Southeast(Naples is due south of Jacksonville), protection from the Northwest wind is even more crucial than protection from the North wind on the east coast of Florida. Northwest winds are blowing out of the cold heart of the landmass while true North winds have in most locales usually blown over more warm water and less cold land. Regardless of the degree of north, safeguarding our collections from the wind is critical to their healthy maintenance. Not until the air circulating clockwise around the cold high pressure system shifts to the Northeast to blow over the warm Gulfstream can we relax our guard.

Orchids that are grown in shade houses, in patios or pool enclosures can be protected by installing plastic film on the north and west walls of the structure. This can be attached with staples or other devices that allow the plastic to be furled in warm weather and only lowered for



those few nights when it is needed. Easiest to come by (Home Depot, or any hardware store) and cheapest, is 6mil clear polyethylene (don't use 4mil; it rarely lasts the winter being exposed to Florida's bright ultraviolet light). One hundred feet by ten costs about \$20. Stored in a dark place, this stock will last the average grower several years and be a very small investment that will yield greatly improved orchids. Handled with care in furling and unfurling, 6 mil plastic usually will get the grower through the winter. If unobtrusive, it may be simply left in place till March. White polypropylene, similar to nursery ground cloth, is used by many nurseries for winterizing. More expensive than polyethylene, it is very durable and will last many more years. Some growers have it cut to size, taped and grommeted for easy up and down installation and storing.

Getting our growing area ready for winter is one half of the equation. We must also get the plants themselves ready. Healthy, well-nourished plants withstand cold better as do plants that are harder and not too lushly in growth. Because both light and temperature are lower in November and most orchids have slowed their growth, they need less fertilizer. In cooler weather ammoniacal nitrogen is less available to our plants because it needs the assistance of bacterial action to ease its absorption by the plants. Nitrate nitrogen is more desirable therefore in cooler weather, because it is more quickly and readily absorbed by the orchids. Check the label on your fertilizer and try to choose one with a higher ration of nitrate nitrogen to ammoniacal nitrogen for winter use. The very best source for nitrate nitrogen is potassium nitrate(KNO<sub>3</sub>). It has the formula 13-0-44. The lower level of the desirable nitrate form of nitrogen is well suited to the continuing but diminished nutritional needs of our orchids in cool weather. The level of potassium is thought to contribute to the 'hardening' of the plants. Try to obtain the soluble or 'Spray' grade. If only Prills(small beads like tapioca) are available they will need to be dissolved with boiling water, a tedious task.

Potassium nitrate is superlative also because it contains no phosphorus which, in combination with our hard, alkaline water interferes with the

plants' absorption of trace elements. Trace element nutrition is especially important to maintain healthy orchids in cool weather: above all, magnesium, the 'major' minor element. The reddening of orchid foliage which is usually attributed to cold is in fact the symptom of magnesium and potassium deficiency. Cold is only the efficient cause of this reddening; the material cause is lack of magnesium. Epsom salts at 1 tbs. per gal plus potassium nitrate at the same rate will quickly bring back the green. This regimen can be alternated with a general trace element mixture (follow the package rate) plus potassium nitrate. Indeed, following the recommendations of the Michigan State University study published in the July 2003 issue of Orchids, symptoms of magnesium or potassium deficiency might be a warning that we should have been following something closer to this "winter" fertilizer regimen all year. We now recommend alternating applications of 1TBS each of Epsom salts and potassium nitrate with a balance fertilizer such as 20-20-20 or 18-18-18 year round not just in the Fall. Best of all is a 15-5-15 with additional calcium and magnesium. Peters markets one as Excel.

The Epsom salts are as near as your medicine cabinet. The potassium nitrate is more difficult to find but a trip to the nearest Farm supply store is worth the effort. You'll save a bundle on fertilizer and have plenty of potassium nitrate left over to grow the biggest bunch of bananas in the neighborhood.

If you have the energy, November is also a great time for starting to pot those sympodial orchids (cattleyas, oncidiums, et al) that have finished blooming. You'll have a leg up on the Spring potting and will glow with virtue in expectation of the rewards of the Holidays. Be especially careful at this season that the newly transplanted orchids are well secured in their containers. It may be many weeks till they have broken growth and can anchor themselves with their own roots. If the plants are allowed any wiggle room the newly emerging roots will be chaffed off, sending the plant into a slow and difficult to reverse decline.

(Excerpted from Florida Orchid Growing: Month by Month)