

# Venice Area Orchid Society News

Apr. 2014

**Next Meeting: Wednesday**  
**April 2<sup>nd</sup> at 7:00 p.m.**  
**Speaker: Rafael Romero**  
**Topic: "Orchid Tales"**

Rafael Romero, Plantio La Orquidea, was born in Caracas, Venezuela and graduated as a biologist from the Universidad Simon Bolivar. He began working with orchids in 1986 with his father in law, Henrique Graf, owner of Plantio La Orquidea, the largest orchid nursery in Venezuela.



Together with his wife, Rafael started the laboratory at Plantio La Orquidea in 1986 where they produce the species and hybrids for which they are known. They moved to Sarasota in 2003 and started their small nursery, approximately 10000 sq. ft., where they offer a fine variety of the species and hybrids produced in Venezuela as well as adding interesting species and hybrids from around the world.

Rafael will be sharing his knowledge and experiences as well as answering questions and will have a great selection of his orchids available for sale. Plantio La Orquidea is one of our excellent local growers and is located at 3480 Tallevast Road in Sarasota.

## The VAOS Beach Picnic Potluck is here!!

We'll be having our first ever Beach Picnic Potluck at the Caspersen Beach Picnic Shelter at the south end of Harbor Drive **this Saturday, from 12:00 noon to 4:00 PM.**

With sheltered picnic tables, barbecue grills and easily accessible restrooms, all that's needed is you, and a starter/side dish, or main dish, or dessert to share with family and friends! VAOS is supplying paper plates, utensils, soda pop, ice and charcoal for the grills. The weather will be sunny and warm, so there's no excuse for an afternoon of fun.

We're looking forward to a great afternoon of food and friendship at the beautiful beach.

## A Message from your President:

Let me begin my first message as your president by assuring you all that I really wanted the position. Many times over the years, I've seen officers in other orchid societies take jobs simply because no one else wanted to hold office. This has not happened in Venice, where we have a long history of office holders who have served our society well with enthusiasm and dedication and have improved it continually.



John Masters

Following our past president will not be an easy task. Luckily, for all of us, we have a superior board of directors who will keep our society on the right track. Truthfully, the strength and enthusiasm of our board was the deciding factor when I was losing sleep thinking about this position. I'm very excited to become part of what I see as a great team of orchid enthusiasts dedicated to the growth of our society.

We have many exciting events coming up in the near future. Your support and participation will make the events more meaningful and rewarding. Keep attending our monthly meetings and Growers Clinics and read the newsletter for exact details. Those articles will probably not use the word "exciting" as much as I do, but this hobby, perhaps passion, of ours still gets me excited. I hope it's catching.

Our next "exciting" adventure is the VAOS Beach Picnic Potluck on Saturday, March 22nd, at the Caspersen Beach Picnic Shelter from noon to 4 pm; details are in the March newsletter. This will be followed by our Spring Orchid Greenhouse Tour on Saturday, April 26 and our Redlands Bus Trip on May 17th; details on both "ex....." events are in this newsletter.

Our Raffle Table has been spectacular lately thanks to the generous donations from many vendors at recent shows. Now, we have to support our Raffle Table on our own; this means more member contributions. By now, between plant shows and vendor sales at our meetings, as well as recent raffle wins, we all probably have a few more plants than we need or can handle. Start looking

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

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

## Officers 2013 – 2014

### **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**

Janice Felski, [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

### **Annual Show Chairs**

Carol Wood

Judy Loeffler

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

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

Jim Thomas

### **Newsletter Production**

Barry Zack

### **VAOS Printer**

Creative Technology of Sarasota

## *Venice Area Orchid Society News*

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

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

## Minutes of the March 5, 2014 VAOS Meeting

President Cynthia Vance opened the meeting by welcoming new members. She announced upcoming events, referring to a printed sheet with detailed information. Janice Felski, VP Social, presented information about the March 22nd Beach Party to be held at Caspersen Beach. A sign-up sheet was passed for members who plan to attend.

Cynthia Vance stated this is her last meeting as President. She then honored all retiring volunteers who have worked at monthly meetings: Sharon Schneider, Library; Charlie and Margaret Cullen, Raffle; Jerry Manegold, Tech; and Judy Russell, Plant Table. Cynthia then recognized new volunteers who will be assuming these roles: Kathy Beck, Library; Kathy Toth and Sharon Kahnoski and Carol Wisser, Raffle Table; Gary Becker, Sue Grimmer and Sharon Schneider, Techs; Jean Fairchild and Nora Berger, Plant Table. Cynthia thanked past and new volunteers.

Cynthia Vance announced our new slate of nominated officers. Tony Nacinovich moved to elect the entire slate of officers and the motion was seconded. The voice vote was unanimous. Our new officers are: John Masters, President; Bruce Weaver, VP Programs and Mary Amos, Treasurer. Jimmy Thomas was appointed Director at Large with no term limits. Jimmy will be Director, Education and Outreach; in this capacity he will continue to direct the Growers Clinic.

Cynthia then honored retiring Directors: Ted Kellogg, Past President; Ali Hicks, Treasurer, and Barbara Wagner, Director at Large. Carol Wood then paid tribute to Barbara Wagner, who has been a "driving

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### **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

### **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

## Plant Table Awards March 5, 2014

Rich Amos took the **First Place** ribbon for his beautiful specimen plant of *Dendrobium primulinum*. His plant had close to 100 flowers. *Den. primulinum* is a species native to India and SE Asia where it grows in deciduous trees. In cultivation, it requires a cool dry rest in order to bloom and it blooms on leafless pendant canes. Rich told us that his plant had not been watered or fertilized for four months, which is the secret to getting this plant to bloom. Congratulations Rich!

Gayle Rinella won both **Second Place** and **Members Choice** ribbons



*Den. primulinum*

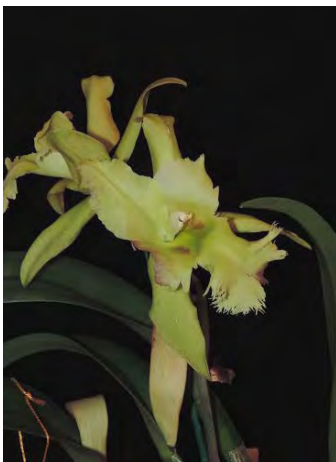
*Den. speciosum* is native to SE Australia and requires a dry winter rest (little water, no fertilizer), cooler temperatures and very bright winter light to bloom. Jean - WELL DONE!

Peg Hartley won **Speakers Commendation** Award for her *Miltonia* hybrid plant. The flowers were a beautiful magenta with the white "waterfall" markings in the lip that is typical of *Miltonias*. Typically cool growing plants, Peg purchased her's at the Sarasota Orchid Society show in January, so we are hoping that it was bred for



*Lc. Gold Digger 'Fuch's Mandarin'*

for her plant *Lc. Gold Digger 'Fuch's Mandarin'*. A cross of *Lc. Red Gold* x *C. Warpaint*, her plant had more than 40 flowers - a beautiful golden yellow with red spots in the lip. Congratulations, Gayle - good growing!



*digbyana hybrid*

Cynthia Vance received **Third Place** for her *digbyana* hybrid. While we don't know the name of her hybrid, its feathered lip indicates it has *digbyana* in its background. Her plant exhibited large green and unusually shaped flowers, very striking. Congrats, Cynthia!

Jean Becker took both the **Best Species** ribbon and **New Member** Award for her huge, gorgeous specimen plant of *Dendrobium speciosum*. This was an exceptionally well grown, healthy plant with unblemished leaves and hundreds of blooms.



*Den. speciosum*



*Miltonia hybrid*

warmth tolerance. Ted suggested that Peg bring her plant inside during our hot summers to maintain the cooler temps it may favor. Beautiful plant, Peg!

—Photos by Ted Kellogg, narrative by Carol Wood

## VAOS Display Takes 1st Place and AOS Trophy at EAOS Show

VAOS wrapped up the winter orchid show season in grand style with a display at the Englewood Area Orchid Society (EAOS) annual show February 28 - March 1, 2014. Rich Amos, VP Displays, Jay Loeffler and Renee Bynum created a stunning display consisting of 65 plants registered by 21 VAOS members.



greenery and display materials, registering plants, preparing labels, and providing the finishing touches to the display. Our thanks to Rich, Jay and Renee and the whole team: Judy Loeffler, Jim Thomas, John Masters, Mary Amos, Linda Schaller, Peg and Bill Fahrenback, Peg and Steve Hartley, Sue Grimmer, Matt Rinder

All total, our display took 46 ribbons and nine trophies, most likely an all-time record for VAOS. Three trophies and nine ribbons went to new VAOS members - most impressive!

Starting well before the show, display team members collected a barnacle encrusted pier and post, an old propeller, fish net, an old paddle, some 50 year old seashells and wooden birds (carved by Bruce Weaver) to depict the EAOS show theme "Orchids By Lemon Bay". The plants were artfully arranged around the display props starting with white at the top, flowing clockwise to pastels and then vivid reds and yellows.

Our display was awarded the American Orchid Society (AOS) Trophy for the best exhibit in the show, which may be awarded at the discre-



Congratulations to the following members who were awarded ribbons and trophies:

**Rich Amos** - 4 blue, 1 red and Best Dendrobium Trophy

**Renee Bynum\*** - 1 blue

**Diane Cumming\*** - 1 blue, Best Hybrid Trophy and Best Cattleya Alliance Trophy

**Peg & Bill Fahrenback** - 1 blue, 1 red and Best Large Cattleya Trophy

**Sharon Kahnoski\*** - 2 blue and Best Diversified Genera Trophy

**Ted Kellogg** - 4 blue, Best Miniature Trophy, Best Vanda Alliance Trophy and Best Specimen Plant Trophy

**Judy & Jay Loeffler** - 2 blue

**Karen Mann** - 1 blue

**Matthew Rinder\*** - 1 red

**Judy Russell** - 2 red, 1 yellow

**Linda Schaller** - 1 blue, 3 red

**Joanna Shaw\*** - 3 blue, 1 red

**Ed Soentgen** - 1 yellow

**Jim Thomas** - 2 yellow

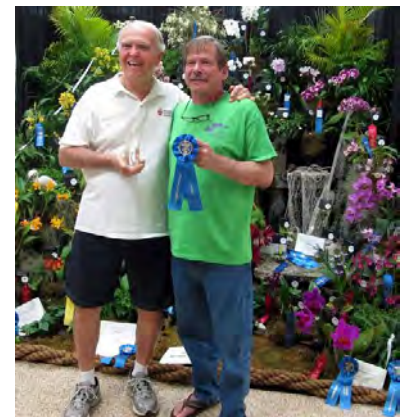
**Cynthia Vance** - 2 blue, 1 red

**Steve Vogelhaupt** - 2 blue

**Debi Wolfe** - 1 blue, 2 red, 1 yellow

**Carol Wood** - 2 blue, 1 yellow

\* new members



tion of the AOS judges and must score 80 points or more. Therefore, this was a very special honor of which we all can be proud.

Display team members helped by transporting plants,

—Photos by J. Loeffler & T. Nacinovich, narrative by Carol Wood

## **Bus Trip to Redland International Orchid Festival, Saturday, May 17**

Here's the event you won't want to miss!! The annual festival is held at the beautiful Fruit and Spice Park, Homestead, FL. More than 60 orchid vendors come from all over the world. During the ride and the event, Barbara Wagner will give you tips on which orchids to purchase that thrive in our area and will make sure everyone is comfortable and having a good time.

**\$37 Per Person:** Includes \$10 festival admission, bus trip, gratuity for driver and snack goodies for the ride – and a \$5.00 discount ticket if you purchase an orchid \$25 or more! **What a deal!!!!**

**Departure Times and locations:** (Arrive **15 minutes** before departure times)

- 7:00 am – South Sarasota – Bank of America parking lot at Gulf Gate Drive & Route 41
- 7:30 am – Venice – Venice Community Center (south parking lot)
- 8:30 am – Punta Gorda – Wal-Mart Supercenter, Taylor Road

**Arrival time at festival:** 11-11:30

**Return trip:** Bus will leave festival at 4:00 or earlier if all riders are ready to leave. There is room inside the bus to keep your new orchids safe and healthy on the trip home.

- Bring a hat and sunscreen; also a jacket or sweater for bus with A/C and a small cooler since the bus doesn't stop for dinner on the way home. Lovely international food is for sale at the park!

- **Payment by Friday, May 10th;** no refunds after May 10th. You may sell your seat, but please notify Barbara Wagner at (941) 923-7706 if you do.

- Make \$37 check payable to VAOS and mail to Mary Amos, 413 East Lake Drive, Sarasota, FL, 34232

- **On check write:** Redlands trip - Pick up: (write Sarasota, Venice or Punta Gorda)

Seating is limited, so send your check early

- Need more info? Contact Barbara Wagner by phone or visit [www.redlandorchidfestival.org](http://www.redlandorchidfestival.org).

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### **Meeting Minutes continued from page 2**

force" in VAOS for more than 23 years. She has held many offices, including President; she was Chair or Co-Chair for the Annual Show for many years and has organized many bus trips. Barbara will continue to assist with the Annual Show and bus trips.

Cynthia Vance congratulated the Display Team, headed by Rich Amos and Jay Loeffler. Their display took first place AND won the coveted American Orchid Society trophy for Most Outstanding Orchid Exhibit at the Englewood Annual Orchid Show.

Carol Wood honored Cynthia Vance, VAOS President during the past 4 years. Carol cited Cynthia's extensive contributions to our society. She brought Show sponsorships to an all-time high. Cynthia will continue as a Director, serving as Immediate Past President.

Cynthia thanked the VAOS Board of Directors for their creativity and enthusiasm. She thanked Carol Wood for her help and support. Cynthia then handed the microphone to our new President, John Masters, pledging to be his faithful servant. John recognized Cynthia for her many achievements, saying she brought "the society into a new age."

After the break, John Masters brought the meeting to order and announced the upcoming Palmer Orchids sale. He also discussed the May 17th bus trip to the Redland International Orchid Festival in Homestead, FL. A sign-up sheet was passed to members.

John introduced our speaker, Bill Fender, describing him as "one of the most famous hybridizers in the country." Bill is now retired and grows orchids in his back

yard as a hobby. His informative and interesting program, "Growing Orchids in Venice", offered many tips and short cuts for potting, mounting and keeping orchids healthy.

After the program, John Masters asked members for suggestions regarding the December holiday party and a Spring Orchid Greenhouse Tour. He reminded members to sign up for the bus trip to Redland. Bill Fender and Ted Kellogg presented orchids from the Plant Table and announced awards. The meeting was adjourned following the Raffle.

*–Respectfully submitted, Peg Fahrenback*

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### **President's message continued from page 1**

over your plants and select one or two that you could live without. Bring them to the Raffle Table and you will be supporting our society as well as giving fellow members the opportunity to expand their collections. And remember, the Raffle Table is "....."

In closing, let me ask everyone for ideas and suggestions about the direction in which we want our society to proceed. Come to the meetings and clinics, bring refreshments and a plant or two for the raffle and display tables. I'm very much looking forward to working with and for our society in the coming months.

## Hands-on Potting Clinic on April 10, 2014

Dr. Jimmy will present another hands-on session on Thursday, April 10, at the Venice Community Center at 7:00 pm. He'll explain the supplies, tools, and planting media and demonstrate basic procedures and share his tips of the trade. Participants will then repot their own orchids with the assistance of several experienced growers and helpers. We'll work in teams of 4 to 5 around a table with each person bringing an orchid that needs repotting as well as a suitable pot to replant the orchid and a sterile pair of shears.

With only two hours available and a large turnout expected, it's critical that everyone adhere to the instructions below:

1. Only one plant per person. All plants must be removed from their pots and all old planting media must be removed prior to the clinic. Plants should be divided prior to the clinic as only limited assistance will be available.

2. Media and supplies for Phalaenopsis, Cattleya alliance, and Dendrobium plants will be provided. Please contact Jimmy if you are planning to bring other plants.

3. If you are a novice and don't have a plant ready to repot, please contact Jimmy at [pis2ces4@verizon.net](mailto:pis2ces4@verizon.net) not later than Monday, April 7 so he can bring a suitable plant and pot for use during the clinic.



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## Do You Really Need the Nuclear Option?

You walk out to the pool cage, greenhouse or wherever you grow your orchid collection to see what's blooming since last week and you're shocked to see aphids on a couple of cattleyas, mealy bugs on a den and the dreaded soft scale on another. If you're like me, the first impulse is to reach for the nearest container of insecticide within your reach, mix a batch and douse everything in sight. Is this really necessary or are we taking what we perceive as the easy way out?

We've all heard and read many times that simple household chemicals such as dish soap, rubbing alcohol, cooking oil, among many others, are very effective if used at the first signs of infestation. You might have to alternate and repeat the treatments periodically, but will often be able to avoid the use of insecticides that can potentially cause harm to ourselves and our environment. This is a problem that we often tend to overlook in our zeal to kill the darn critters as quickly as possible, forgetting that what kills the scale and aphids can just as easily kill beneficial toads and lizards that help to control most pests. If you take the time to read the Caution statements on most labels, you'll find that almost all fungicides and insecticides are harmful to humans and pets, and in the case of broad spectrum insecticides, also kills most ben-

eficial insects.

Systemic insecticides containing imidacloprid, most commonly found in Bayer products, are very effective in part because they travel throughout almost the whole plant and remain effective for an extended period of time. What isn't mentioned is the fact that these and similar systemic may be responsible for the drastic decline in our bee population. Thomas Mirenda is the orchid collection specialist at the Smithsonian Institution, an accredited AOS judge, and a frequent contributor to Orchids magazine. In the March 2014 issue of Orchids, discussing web spinners in his Questions and Answers column, writes, "Some systemics have been implicated in the decline of bees and they may be the likely cause of the colony collapse disorder that is plaguing our pollinators around the world". Do we want to contribute to a potential catastrophe?

There are other steps we can take to eliminate or at least control pests in our growing areas. Among these are to provide the best environment for our orchids, be it light, temperature, humidity, moisture and fertilizer. All orchids have these needs, but there are subtle, and often quite substantial, differences among genera and species.

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## VAOS Spring Orchid Greenhouse Tour

Saturday, April 26, 2014 9am-2pm

This is a perfect opportunity to see a variety of ways VAOS members grow their orchids. Please be aware of the need to respect the parking in each neighborhood.

A “nature preserve”: Jean & Jerry Becker, 5829 S. Miami Rd., Venice. The setting is a certified “Florida-friendly” yard, developed over 20 years to encourage birds, butterflies and native wildlife. In addition to growing orchids, Jerry is a Master Gardener and Purple Martin fan. They’re happy to share their knowledge.

### Travel Directions from Venice:

Take SR# 776 to Manasota Beach Rd, turn left.

At the beginning of the first curve, turn right on Belvidere Rd, just prior to reaching Japanese Gardens.

Turn right on S. Miami Rd. and be on the lookout for white Purple Martin Gourd houses on the left. 5828 is across the street on the right.

**Note: Gopher turtles are along and in the road and No Parking is requested on the west side of S. Miami.**

Great growing tips under a pool cage: John Masters, 1948 Greenlawn Dr., Englewood

John is our new President, past President of the EAOS and is a “master” grower who is always willing to share his knowledge. He will have an assortment of orchids for sale.

Travel Directions from Venice:

Take SR#776 about 3.7 miles and turn right onto Overbrook Rd.

Take the 3rd left onto Fairview Dr. and then take the 2nd right onto Fairless Rd.

Take the 1st left onto Greenlawn Dr. to John’s home on the left.

See how Dr. Jimmy operates at home: Jimmy and Gerry Thomas, 453 South Shore Dr., Osprey.

Dr. Jim, aka The Orchid Doctor, is our Growers Clinic resident expert and VAOS Director, Education and Outreach. He has many plants on display including his favorite red Cattleyas. He also grows Phals, Vandas, Dendrobium, Bulbophyllum and many others. Although he’s lost track of just how many orchids he has, some say the collection is in the 300’s. Although Dr. Jim won’t be selling any plants, he’ll be glad to share his experience and tips.

### Directions from Venice:

Take U.S. 41 north towards Nokomis and continue to Sorrento Shores.

Turn left onto Shore Dr. (there is a Lutheran Church on the corner) and continue almost to the end at a triangular traffic island.

Veer right and continue on S. Shore Dr. Jimmy’s home is on the left shortly after the intersection with Velasquez Drive.

## Nuclear Option (continued from page 6)

Keeping the area clean, providing adequate airflow, and removing dead sheaths and other decaying plant material, are simple things we can do without chemicals.

From my own personal perspective, the most important thing that we can do is to look at our orchids often, not only to admire the fragrance and the blossoms, but to do a quick visual check for anything that seems out of the or-

dinary. Are there black or yellow spots that weren’t there yesterday? Is a leaf shriveling? Is there a pseudobulb that has turned soft or brown? This will allow us to attack the fungus, disease or pest in the earliest stages, giving us the best chance for success at the least cost to our environment.

–Submitted by Steve Vogelhaupt



### Dr. Jimmy’s Culture Tip

The number #1 cause of orchids dying is either over watering or under watering. While there are all kinds of fancy moisture meters on the market, the best and most convenient instrument you can use is your index finger.

If you water all your orchids on the bench or stand at the same time, pick two plants from different locations, using the same plants/location each time. Stick your finger into the medium. If the medium feels moist or wet, leave it alone. If the media feels dry, water.

If you water your orchids individually, use the index finger technique for each plant. You can also use this method for plants that are potted in baskets with medium.

–Submitted by Jimmy Thomas, aka Dr. Jimmy

# Venice Area Orchid Society News

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

## Next Meeting:

**Wednesday, April 2, 7:00pm**  
**at Venice Community Center**

- **Speaker:** Rafael Romero
- **Topic:** "Orchid Tales"
- Show table entries welcome
- Bring Plants for the Raffle Table
- Bring treats to share

## Upcoming Events

**March 22 (Saturday):** VAOS Beach Picnic Potluck, 12 noon-4 pm, Caspersen Beach Picnic Shelter, 4100 Harbor Drive S., Venice.

**April 2 (Wednesday):** VAOS monthly Meeting, 7pm, Venice Community Center, 326 S. Nokomis Avenue, Venice. Speaker: Rafael Romero, Plantio La Orquidea, Topic: Orchid Tales

**April 10 (Thursday):** VAOS Growers Clinic, 7pm, Venice Community Center, Speaker: Jimmy Thomas and other expert growers, Topic: Hands-on Potting Clinic. See page 6 for important details.

**April 26 (Saturday):** Spring Orchid Greenhouse Tour, 9am-2pm. Details on page 7.

## Planning Ahead

**May 17:** 2014 Redland International Orchid Festival, Redland Fruit and Spice Park, 24801 S.W. 187th Ave., Homestead, Fl.  
See page 5 for details..

## 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, 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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Share your Orchid Bliss  
Search for us as  
"VeniceArea OrchidSociety"





April in your Orchid Collection  
by Dr. Martin Motes, from his monthly newsletter and book "Florida Orchid Growing"

April Climate Data

Average high: 83.8

Average low: 67.6

Average mean: 75.7

Average rainfall: 3.36"

Far from the cruelest, April is the kindest month to South Florida orchid growers. The weather in April is definitely settled into warm, even deliciously hot, with passing cold fronts only adding the delight of a pleasant change in temperature. The clean, bright days brimming with abundant sunlight and the low relative humidity create the high drying potential that orchids love. Now we can get our orchids off to a great start on the growing season by practicing our very best watering skills under ideal conditions. Water heavily when you water and allow the plants to dry thoroughly before watering heavily again. Drying 'hard' in the spring will produce benefits all season. We want to get our plants well launched while leaving all the fungi high and dry.

The new shoots of Oncidinae (including Brassia, Oncidium and Psychopsis among others), grammatophyllums and dendrobiums forming now are quite cup-like; care must be taken that water does not stand too long in these immature growths. Water these types very thoroughly with two or three applications of water spaced 10-15 minutes apart. Water should run freely through the pot on each application. Saturated thoroughly in this fashion the plants will need only weekly watering. Even more care should be taken with the soft plicate leafed genera like *Catasetum*, *Mormodes*, *Cycnoches*, *Gongora*, *Calanthe* and *Thunia*. The new growths of this type are rolled together (the fancy word is convolute) like a collapsible drinking cup. These should be grown in water retentive media that should be saturated at each watering to permit the developing roots to have abundant water but allow the vulnerable new growth extra time to dry. Feel the weight of a pot when you have finished watering. Be sure it is heavy with water. If it's not, water one more time. With plants properly spaced, good drying should not be difficult in the hot dry air of April. But do be careful to water early enough in the day to allow the tender new growth to thoroughly dry by twilight.

With vandaceous orchids grown in slatted baskets, most growers find that they dry altogether too well in April. Vandas can be watered almost every morning in April. Indeed, a second light watering or misting in mid-afternoon in April and early May is often beneficial provided the crowns and leaf axils of the plants have time to dry completely by nightfall. Another strategy under high drying conditions is to bend the rules, at least occasionally, and water heavily in mid to late morning. Late waterings on

weekend mornings (you didn't want to get up early, anyway) provide relief for plants that are more stressed on week days with their owners absent. Very occasionally, one needs to break the rules absolutely and water thoroughly (not just mist) in the mid to late afternoon so the plants can slowly absorb the water across the cool hours of the night. This is the season that one must be sure that Vanda roots have turned overall dark green when we have finished watering. Two applications of water to the point of runoff spaced several minutes apart should accomplish the required color change from white to totally green. Saturated roots are absolutely necessary to provide the plants the moisture the plants need to withstand the heat and dry air typical of April. Sometimes, particularly at this season, the roots will not change color even after the second or third application of water. This lack of response to water is because the roots have become so dry that they are repelling rather than absorbing water. They are behaving like a cork in a wine bottle. The grower must exert special effort to re-saturate the roots. Often this will require 4 or 5 waterings to the point of run off spaced 15 minutes apart. Once the roots have been changed to the healthy overall green, normal applications of water should bring them around in future.

With increased heat and light and the onset of growth, fertilizer becomes more crucially important to the plants. Balanced time release pellets (13-13-13) can still be applied to potted plants provided the duration is 180 days or less. Most time release fertilizer breaks down faster under South Florida conditions and should be exhausted by October when we will want our plants to slow down. The brand marketed at retail as "Dynamite" is generally considered by professionals as superior in reliability to other types. In April, 15-5-15 can be applied to most genera at the rate of 2 tsp. per gal every two weeks. Vandas, ascocendas, Aerides, et al will benefit from a full tablespoon of 15-5-15 weekly during this high energy period. One can also apply high phosphorous 'Bloom Booster' fertilizer once or twice at this time to stimulate them to flower for Mothers' Day or failing that to win those trophies and A.O.S. awards at the Redland International Orchid Festival the next weekend. High phosphorous (we use Millers' Solugrow 8-48-12) also stimulates root action and is important in getting all genera off to a good start on the growing season. This is one of the few times that high phosphorus is perhaps beneficial. During the rest of the year it is to be avoided particularly with our alkaline water. Current science recommends fertilizers lower in nitrogen, much lower in phosphorus and higher in potassium, magnesium and calcium. Peter's Excel 15-5-15 is now the standard for year round use.

The warmth of April, alas, stimulates the growth of bugs as well as plants. Both Thrips and mites thrive in the dry heat of April. Liquid dishwashing soap (at 2 oz. per gal) will control both but be mindful that soap should not be applied to plants that are suffering from drought stress. Be sure that your plants are well hydrated before you apply soap. Water them extra hard the day before. To be effective soap must be used profusely. The plants should be washed in the solution to the point of wetting every nook and cranny of both the plant and its container. Only such thorough treatment can reach the reclusive Thrips and be sure to touch all of the ever prolific mites. A second treatment at 7-10 days is necessary to control mites and a miticide such as Kelthane might be advised. Orthene which is the insecticide of choice for Thrips (because of its

residual action) is compatible with many miticides. Check with your county agent if in doubt.

April is the classic month to catch up with all the re-potting which you meant to do across the winter. New roots form fast in April; don't rot them off by over-potting or break them off by allowing the plant to wiggle in the pot. Tie them up: tie them down!

April is a month for great moral decisions. When turning on the air conditioner for the first time, consider how much better an orchid grower you would be if you set the thermostat 2 or 3 degrees higher. You will find that you spend more time with your plants when you are accustomed to slightly higher temperatures and it is the master's shadow that makes the plants grow. Besides spending more time enjoying your orchids, when the FPL bill arrives, you can celebrate with some splendid additions to your collection.

April is a great month for naturalizing orchids in the garden. Perhaps it's time to think of new homes for some of our burgeoning collection on trees or elsewhere. The space emptied in the growing area will soon fill with the healthy new growth of those plants which remain to enjoy their additional light and air.