



# VENICE AREA Orchid Society

Newsletter

Visit us on the web at [www.vaos.org](http://www.vaos.org)

May 2025

## May 2025

### General Meeting

Wednesday May 7

Doors Open: 6:30pm

Venice Community Center

Speaker: Tomas Bajza

Topic: Miniature Orchids



To introduce myself — my name is Tomas Bajza and I am an orchid lover and addict. I originally came to the USA from the Czech Republic and settled down in hot tropical Miami.

I adored orchids during my teenage years, but at that time there were not many to see in my country. My orchid beginnings were funny and sad, all at the same time. I managed to obtain few orchid plants back in Czech, two Phalaenopsis plants, and one Cymbidium plant. I had neither knowledge nor options to do some research (the Internet was really not present), so I grew as I felt. That approach was of course totally wrong. My poor Phals were over-watered constantly and kept by the window right above the heating, so the humidity was at zero. They must have hated me all these years as they were suffering and barely surviving, but I got at least one spike once, before they both went to orchid heaven.

My Cymbidium was even “better”. That sucker did nothing except grow leaves for years. Then I went to college and moved out of the house, completely forgetting about the plant. when fertilizing my oleanders, that’s it!”

Continued on next page

## May Events

May 3  
Growers Area Tour

May 7  
General Meeting

May 15  
Growers Clinic

### Quick Links:

[VAOS Officers](#)

[Orchid Resources](#)

Face Book Group

[https://  
www.facebook.com/  
groups/VAOS.org](https://www.facebook.com/groups/VAOS.org)



## **Tomas Bajza Bio continued from previous page**

I was laughing my a\*\* off about my over-caring this plant for so many years with no success while my mother just threw it outside behind the bushes. That's it, she gets the blooms!

Even though I am living in Florida surrounded by orchids, I got into serious orchid growing only over a decade ago, starting with the usual grocery store Phalaenopsis and Dendrobiums, slowly adding Cattleyas and Vandas since these were the orchids that everyone in Florida grew! All of these were large orchids and mostly hybrids. I was constantly searching different online orchid forums and saw a post about *Lepanthopsis astrophora* — that was the very first time I had ever seen a miniature orchid. I had no clue that such a thing even existed! I fell totally in love and immediately ordered a few. When they came, they were even smaller than I ever imagined!

That was it, I've got bitten by a "huge" miniature orchid bug — and in the past years I was fortunate enough to collect hundreds of micro and miniature orchid species, many of them pretty rare. I am a very stubborn grower — I do not listen to anything, and I do not like the word "impossible". I like all orchids, but I do love a huge amount of cold or intermediate growing species. Many growers in Florida told me that I cannot grow these here, because it is too hot, or they are too hard to grow. I do not believe any of this till I try things myself and either succeed or fail!

Through extended research, reading and being active on different orchid boards and in orchid groups, I've learned tremendously. I do not consider myself in any way an orchid expert, but someone once told me that a beginner orchid grower is someone who killed less than 10 plants, an advance orchid grower is someone who killed more than 100, and an orchid professional is someone who killed over 1000 and doesn't count anymore. By this yardstick, I do belong to advance growers.

I've been very fortunate with meeting and becoming friends with many international orchid growers and nursery owners. At the beginning, I bought only plants sold by US nurseries. Nowadays, nearly all of my orchids come from abroad. Buying orchids from US growers is safe and the majority of the plants come nicely established. Unfortunately, there are no species I am looking for offered by the US vendors anymore. I was really pushed to search and start my own importing because I could not just find any of the plants I wanted to own.

There is another "hobby" I do have, love for photography. With a growing miniature orchid collection, there were endless opportunities for taking the pictures of these amazing, sometimes microscopical blooms. Posting my pictures online caused quite a "buzz" leading to first invitations from various orchid societies to provide speeches for their members about growing miniature orchids and cold growing species in hot environment.

Here we are today. What used to be a "hobby" slowly grew to a small business that is expanding. We found out there are hundreds of growers, like me, searching for these hard to find, unusual, uncommon and rare micro and miniature orchids. Thankfully we can share our babies with the rest of the orchid world via our website and educate people interested in growing miniature and small orchids through my speech engagements across the USA. A number of my articles about miniature orchids were published in orchid magazines across the globe as well.

Doing what you love is the most rewarding thing in life!

**Tomas's topic is: Giant World of Miniature Orchids and How to Grow Cool in a Hot Climate.**

**He will have plants for sale**



## **VENICE AREA Orchid Society**

### **Show Them Where You Grow Them**

Please join us for our member orchid growing area tour on May 3, 2025.

“Show Them Where You Grow Them Tour Guide directions to each location and times to view the growing areas, Members can tour the areas at their leisure during the specified times. Visit one or all during the tour.

The tour is free and member guests are welcome.

As we all love our pets, please refrain from bringing them with you on the tour out of respect for each grower's home.

#### **2025 GROWERS TO BE SHOWCASED:**

**JOANNA SHAW**

**731 LEHIGH ROAD, VENICE FLORIDA 34293**

**RICK BELISLE**

**4969 LAUREL HILL DRIVE VENICE FLORIDA 34293**

1. FROM WALMART - VENICE HEAD SOUTH ON 41 FOR 1.5 MILES TO TIMBERLINE BLVD (SOUTHWOOD HOA).
2. LEFT ON TIMBERLINE BLVD TO LAUREL HILL DR. (3RD GATE ON LEFT, WHICH WILL BE OPEN.)
3. LEFT ONTO LAUREL HILL DR. TO 4969 LAUREL HILL DR. (5TH HOUSE ON LEFT.)

**SATURDAY**

**9 AM-1PM**

**MAY 3 2025**

**[www.vaos.org](http://www.vaos.org)**





## VAOS Tabletop Display at EAOS Show

Well, that's a wrap. We finished off show season with a tabletop display at the Englewood Orchid Show, April 5-6. The team consisted of Kristin Shaw, Joanna Shaw, Judy Loeffler, Janet Keown, Rick Hindman, Irene Bozogan, John Bozogan, and Diane Burns.

As this wasn't an AOS judged show, we changed things up a bit. Instead of squaring the two tables provided, we arranged them in a V shape and made Diane Burns' beautiful pink dendrobium the focal point. Yellows, oranges, and reds off to one side, and pinks to whites on the other. Several types of foliage and driftwood provided accents.

Building an orchid display is a fun outlet for creativity. I encourage any member interested to join us next season, as we create some more orchid magic

*Submitted by Kristin Shaw, VP Displays*





# Your Invitation!

Join us for this Outstanding Online Event  
Mark Your Calendar—Set Your Device Reminder



To Register  
Scan QR

American Orchid Society

7th CULTURE DAY

Sunday, May 18, 2025

11 a.m.—3:30 p.m. EDT

*This Event is Recorded for all Registrants to View at their Leisure*

## ORCHIDS—From Seed to Success

Door Prizes!  
Must be online day  
of event to be eligible

4 Guest Speakers  
4 Great Topics

- **Orchid Pollination - In Nature and at Your Kitchen Table** Explained by *Adam Karremans*, Director of Lankester Botanical Garden
- **Can I Make My Own Hybrid?** Demonstration of flasking, deflasking and compots, by Hobby Growers and Hybridizers, *Keith and Dina Emig*
- **Brassavola-Cattleya Alliance Novelty Hybrids** Tune in to meet *Allen Black* and understand his dedication to this group of orchids
- **Easy to Grow and Bloom Hybrids** Presented by *Manny Aybar*, accomplished hobbyist, AOS Judge, and AOS award winning exhibitor

Online Registration Required—Only \$40

## Webinars - Coming Attractions!

REGISTRATION IS EASY [www.aos.org/webinars](http://www.aos.org/webinars)

When	April 03, 2025 Thursday 8:30 pm EDT	April 16, 2025 Wednesday 8:30 pm EDT	May 08, 2025 Thursday 8:30 pm EDT	May 15, 2025 Thursday 8:30 pm EDT
Topic	<b>Greenhouse Chat Orchid Q &amp; A</b> Answers to your questions about all things orchid. <i>Send in your Photos and Questions by March 31</i>	<i>Master Orchidist Series</i> <b>Growing Orchids Indoors and In Terrariums</b> Light, media, pots! Successful steps to cultivate orchids indoors.	<b>Greenhouse Chat Orchid Q &amp; A</b> Answers to your questions about all things orchid. <i>Send in your Photos and Questions by May 05</i>	<i>Master Orchidist Series</i> <b>Calming Your Fears About Repotting Orchids</b> Learn about using the best media and techniques, growing orchids indoors.
Presenter	<b>Ron McHatton</b> AOS Chief Education and Science Officer	<b>Chris Satch</b> Orchid Grower and Professor at NY Botanical Gardens	<b>Ron McHatton</b> AOS Chief Education and Science Officer	<b>Janeil Payne</b> Long time orchid grower and AOS Orchid Judge

## April 2025 Growers Clinic Recap

Thursday, April 10, was indeed a special evening for the 50+ members who attended the Dividing and Repotting Clinic. We started at 6:00PM with our Growers Clinic Social Hour which grew, this month, to approximately 15 members! Many wonderful and delicious treats were brought in, from Pepper Jelly, Cheese and Crackers to Deviled Eggs to scrumptious ribs!

We were then treated to an awesome presentation on Dividing & Repotting by our long-time VAOS Show & Sale exhibitor, and VAOS member, Jim Roberts, from Florida Suncoast Orchids. Jim arrived early so as to offer a selection of his wonderful plants for sale as well. Jim gave a very informative “Show ‘n Tell” which was laced with many of his personal observations from so many years in the business. The class then got busy, under the watchful eyes of Jim and the Growers Clinic Team who answered questions and made suggestions, in the potting and repotting of their orchids. There were many big smiles and nods of satisfaction with the ensuing results. The Orchid ER had an easy night with only a few “patients”, each of whom was “treated and released” to recover at home. Join us next month, Thursday, May 15<sup>th</sup>, for our next Social Hour (6:00pm – 7:00pm) followed by a discussion and class on Orchid Pests & Diseases and our Orchid ER.

*Submitted by Rick Belisle, Director, Training & Education*





## Orchid Media: LECA (Light Expanded Clay Aggregate)

Googling “Orchid Care” results in, literally, 137,000,000 hits! Of the many questions asked on the various on-line orchid forums available, “What media should I use?” frequently comes up. Of course, the answer is far from simple. Some follow-up questions that come to mind are: What type(s) of orchid? Where do you grow it/them? What kind of “waterer” are you?

This last one, “What kind of “waterer” are you?”, is quite important. As many of you know, orchids don’t like “wet feet”. Most like to dry out between waterings which mimics their life in the wild. Short, heavy rains, like we have here in Florida during our wet season, allow their velamen, that thick spongy material surrounding the hair-like root, to absorb the water they need yet does not drown the plant.

The media used to grow orchids really is intended to make it easier for us, and not necessarily for the plant. Different growers use a variety of items as media. Bark, moss, wine corks, lava rock, orchiatia and LECA (Light Expanded Clay Aggregate) are just a few. Each has its place in growing orchids. Let’s dive a little deeper into LECA, a widely misunderstood product that can be quite valuable to us here in Florida.

Orchids that are grown in pots, outside, are prime candidates for LECA. Why? LECA is a man-made material. That is, it’s an inorganic compound that does not rot nor retain excessive amounts of water, even in the presence of repeated heavy watering from growers or Mother Nature. Unlike bark or other organic (formerly- living) media that break down and begin to hold and retain more and more water as it ages, which then can prevent orchids from drying out as they should, LECA rapidly sheds water, thus preventing “wet feet”. LECA does retain a small amount of water in its microscopic holes and crannies, but not enough to cause any damage.

LECA is made by many different companies and is sold under many different trade names, Aliflor, Hydroton, Glorox and Viastone, to name a few. LECA is basically small pieces of clay that are super-heated and baked until it puffs up, like popcorn. This results in a coarse medium that is perfect for growing plants in a wet environment. It is widely used in hydroponic systems.

When you first open a bag of LECA, you’ll see it has quite a bit of dust. This stems from the manufacturing process and should, if only for aesthetic reasons, be rinsed off. To do so, merely pour some into a large colander and, using a garden hose, run water through it for a few minutes while stirring it up. Do this outside, preferably in a grassy area. Now that you’ve removed the dust, some people choose another purely optional step, that is, to “charge” the LECA pellets. To do so, they place the desired amount in a bucket and cover the LECA with water. Let it set a few hours, preferable overnight, if you can. This will allow the nooks and crannies to fill with water and prepare it properly for the potting process. Some people add a little fertilizer, liquid seaweed or fish oil to the water, as well.

When you’re ready, and if the LECA has been “charged”, pot your plant(s) as usual. I add a tablespoon of Dynamite (the Red Can) to mine. Feel free to place them outside. Rain water will pass right through it and feed the plant as it does so. This is the perfect media for those of you who love to water or are known as “heavy waterers” as there is no chance to over-saturate the media, little if any chance for rot nor mold nor mildew. You will find that, normally, your watering frequency will be, once or twice per week from May through October, just before you fertilize, and weekly from November through April.

I purchase my LECA on line, from my local Home Depot where I have it shipped to the store, with free shipping, and can pick it up at my leisure. Just go to [homedepot.com](http://homedepot.com), and, in the Search field, type, Expanded Clay Pellets, or from Amazon.

*Rick Belisle, Director, Training & Education*



## Monthly Quick Tip from Your Growers Clinic Team



### MAY

- Be aware of air circulation - longer, hotter days.
- Finish repotting of various genera.
- Water well, as needed, when dry. Be aware of rainy season if growing outdoors.
- Initiate preventive spray fungicide if heavy rains.

And, of course, cleaning up your growing area and plants by removing dead leaves helps to keep your plants healthy. This should be done throughout the year as needed.

For more detailed information consult the [Florida Orchid Growing: Month-by-Month](#) book by Martin Motes, PhD.

### May Growers Clinic – Pests & Diseases

The May Growers Clinic will of course have with our [Orchid ER](#), as usual. Members and guests can bring in their problem plants and the team will diagnose and make suggestions as to how you should proceed. Attendees always hear new and important information for their own knowledge! This month we will highlight a slide presentation on “Orchid Pests & Diseases”. Learn to identify common pests and how to treat them. Members should remember to wear their VAOS Name Tags, please. There will be a Sign-in Sheet for guests. The Growers Clinic Social Hour starts at 6:00PM. Bring a snack to pass and your favorite non-alcoholic beverage and get to know your fellow members! The Growers Clinic starts at 7:00PM and both are held in Room F of the Venice Community Center. Park on the left (south) side of the building and enter through the side door.

*Submitted by Rick Belisle, Director, Training & Education*



### Treasurer's Report—March 31, 2025



<b>OPERATING FUND</b> February 28, 2025	\$18,770.26
+ Inflows	885.95
+/- Transfers to/from Reserve Account	0
- Outflows	(7,946.40)
<b>OPERATING FUND</b> March 31, 2025	<b>\$11,709.81</b>
<b>Reserve Account</b> March 31, 2025 - \$32,540.45	
Petty Cash on hand \$75.00	

*Submitted by Ian Kennedy, Treasurer*



## General Meeting Minutes April 2, 2025

7:05 Judy called the meeting to order and reviewed the way our meetings are run. She then welcomed all our new members. Tonight, we have some VAOS business to tend to, but before we get started, we are going to hear from Denise about our upcoming events.

7:08 Denise went over the success of the potluck dinner and our fun time playing orchid bingo and assured we will be having another one soon. Reminder that we have our annual members' plant sale coming up on Saturday the 26<sup>th</sup> of April in Blalock Park. Register in advance with Denise. Please remember to bring your own table and change.

We are also setting up our Show-em where you Grow-em tour where we have a few members who open their homes to us and let us come see what they grow and how they grow them. We are still looking for at least one more person if you are interested, see Denise after the meeting or email her.

7:11 Judy said that Dr. Zettler's book is now available. This is the book we are mentioned in as we helped fund this book to get it published. It is available on Amazon for \$26.00.

Reminder that the Englewood show is April 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>. The location this year is 1300 River Rd, Englewood and will be open from 10-5. This is not an AOS judged event. We will be having a small table display, and you can submit your plants for that if you wish.

Our next grower's clinic is next Thursday the 10<sup>th</sup> and will be located in the room right behind us. It will start at 7, but you can come and bring your own snack to Tailgate at 6. This is an excellent meeting done by Jim Roberts on re-potting.

Just a side note that the next show will be on February 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>, 2026 and we are going to incorporate Ikebana. It is a form of flower arranging. Judy then introduced Rick to explain our continued education. Judy was lucky enough to go through our mentor program and was in the first graduating group. Rick took the floor to explain the VAOS Mentor program and graduated three of our four graduating from this last group.

The VAOS annual meeting and election is held in April each year in conjunction with our monthly meeting. Board members are elected to a two year term and may serve an additional two year term. Ian Kennedy, Treasurer and Membership Chair, announced that we have no board vacancies this year as two directors have agreed to serve for two more years. They are Denise Langman, VP Social and Ian and Karen Kennedy, Membership Chairs. Ian encouraged members who are interested in becoming more involved with our society, volunteer positions and future board positions to contact him for information.

Vicki introduced Brett and Ruth Ullery the owners of Accent Orchids and one of our show vendors as the evening's speakers.

Following the presentation, Judy excused us for a 15 minute break. Following the break the plant table was presented followed by the raffle. The meeting was adjourned at 9:06pm

*Submitted by Michele Baker, VAOS Secretary*

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**May 3** VAOS Member Growing Area Tour. See flyer

**May 7 General Meeting**, Venice Community Center. Speaker: Tomas Bajza Topic: Miniatures and Growing Cool in a Hot Climate

**May 15 Growers Clinic**, Venice Community Center, 7pm. Topic: Orchid Pests & Diseases

**June 11 General Meeting**, Venice Community Center. Speaker: Allen Black Topic: Beauty & Intrigue of Brassavola—Cattleya Alliance Hybrids

**June 12 Growers Clinic**, Venice Community Center, 7pm. Topic: Top Tips from Growers

### ONGOING

**Mentor Program**: help for new growers, contact Rick Belisle [Mentor@vaos.org](mailto:Mentor@vaos.org)

### AOS JUDGING

**AOS Orchid Judging—Florida North Central Judging Center.** Check Website for Schedule: Info:

<https://aosfncjc.wixsite.com/aos-florida-north-ce>



American Orchid Society  
Education. Conservation. Research.

**Next meeting:**  
**May 7**

## Contact Us

**Venice Area Orchid Society**

**PO BOX 443**

**Venice, FL 34284-0443**

## **President**

**Judy Loeffler** [pres@vaos.org](mailto:pres@vaos.org)

## **Membership**

**Ian & Karen Kennedy**

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