

Orchid Society of Santa Barbara



Meeting: Wednesday, January 9, 2002

MacKenzie Adult Building
at MacKenzie Park
3111 State Street (at Las Positas)
Meeting begins at 7:30 pm

PROGRAM

Catherine Lee
will speak about
Cultural Excellence

Want to know how to get awards for specimen plants and good culture? AOS judge Catherine Lee will tell us about what is required to catch a judge's attention. As we all strive to improve the culture in our collections, we can follow advice we learn at the January meeting about keeping our plants looking their best.

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

- Fascination of Orchids International Show and Sale** February 7-10,
2002
South Coast Plaza, Crate and Barrel Wing, Costa Mesa. www.fascinationforchids.com
- San Francisco Orchid Society's Pacific Orchid Exposition** February 22-24, 2002
Festival Pavilion, Fort Mason Center, San Francisco. www.orchidsanfrancisco.com
- Santa Barbara International Orchid Show, "Lights ... Camera ... Orchids!"** March 8-10,
2002

Earl Warren Showgrounds, Santa Barbara. www.sborchidshow.com

27th Annual Cymbidium Congress

See the announcements section for more information.

March 9, 2002

Five Cities Orchid Show, "Orchids Olé"

South County Regional Center, Arroyo Grande. www.fix.net/~duba/fcos/

March 23-24, 2002

Summary of the December 2001 Meeting

- President Sandy Svoboda welcomed visitors, guests and new members. Visitors who sign the guest book receive 2 months of free newsletters!
- President Svoboda congratulated everyone involved in installation of the society exhibit at our December show. The OSSB exhibit received the American Orchid Society Show Trophy and the Orchid Digest Trophy. Congratulations also to the individuals whose plants received AOS awards or ribbons at the show.
- Since the December meeting was Sandy Svoboda's last as OSSB president, she thanked the board and the membership for two enjoyable years. President Svoboda thanked Vice President Rob Hofberg on behalf of the society for his efforts in bringing us interesting, quality speakers at our monthly meetings. She also thanked resigning board member Randall Umland for his service to the society. He will be replaced by Bryan Davis.
- The OSSB 2002 officers and board of directors will be as follows.
 - President: Jeff Thompson
 - Vice President: Frank Methmann
 - Treasurer: Carole Cowan
 - Secretary: Heidi Kirkpatrick
 - Directors: Tom Ball
Bryan Davis
Dan Fuller
Carol Rogers
Sandy Svoboda
- Attendees of the December meeting enjoyed the annual OSSB holiday potluck. Many thanks to everyone for the wonderful

array of tempting dishes. If you forgot anything at the meeting (dishes, bags, et cetera), Carole Cowan will bring them to the January meeting.

Program

If you enjoy exploring the growing areas of your fellow orchid hobbyists, then the December meeting was for you. Our own Tom Ball took us on a photographic tour through a few greenhouses and gardens. This was an opportunity not only for a little vicarious snooping, but to remember friends who have left the society.

Long-time members recall Cliff Stein, whom Ball characterized as a true enthusiast. Stein used many chemicals in his greenhouse; Ball noted that the rest of us might take more caution with the pesticides, fertilizers, and fungicides we use on our plants.

Kyi Kyi and San Hla have moved away from Santa Barbara, but they are remembered by many for their fine outdoor collection. Their meticulous research on habitats allowed them to grow a broad variety of orchids outdoors.

Current member Dick Swain has many clever tricks for growing his cymbidiums at their best. Swain grows outdoors beneath shadecloth. To discourage snails, he has wire mesh on the benches and copper tape on the legs. Retractable string attached to the shadehouse frame helps support growing spikes.

Several members use orchids as home decoration. Past President Pat Siordia displays her enthusiasm with orchids hanging at the entrance to her home. Treasurer Carole Cowan brings blooming plants into her house for display on a turntable atop her dining table. Shirlie and Ed Carter have orchids blooming eternally on stained glass windows.

Ball showed members successfully using simple materials in their growing areas. Our new president, Jeff Thompson, has made plant trays from rain gutters hung along the side of his house. To ward off frost on those rare, chilly evenings in our area, Thompson uses outdoor Christmas lights.

Alan Chovil made simple greenhouse benches from plastic coated closet shelving. During cold weather, he opens the bathroom window to allow warm air into his lean-to greenhouse.

Ball noted that couples who both grow orchids often maintain separate collections – the secret to a happy marriage? Al and Sandy Svoboda have separate greenhouses, as do Buzz and Ethel Seeburg.

Ball admits that his own orchid hobby has suffered from his enthusiasm for another hobby, sport fishing. He does so much for the society, however, that we can forgive the fishing habit.

Preparing Your Orchids for a Show

by Heidi Kirkpatrick

With the spring show only two months away, I would like to revisit a topic of timely concern, namely how to prepare your plants for a show. If you are like me, preparing for a show means running out to the greenhouse the night before and trying to find something with a few flowers on it that the slugs have yet to discover.

This is not how to win awards at a show.

I know better and doubtless you do, too. In an attempt to inspire myself and perhaps a few of my readers, I am going to review some of the advice I have gathered over the years

Show culture begins long before the show with healthy, well-grown plants. But many prize-winning orchids outshine their peers with the presentation of their flowers. Expert growers suggest staking flower spikes early and often. (I, of course, cram a stake into the pot that night before the show and hope I don't break any spikes or bruise any flowers in the process.)

For a bushy plant like a masdevallia, managing inflorescence growth may be as simple as rearranging the spikes amidst the foliage or rotating the plant to encourage spikes in all directions. Plants with tall spikes should not be moved during spike development; judges tend to be unimpressed with the contorted inflorescence twirling in a drunken search for sunlight. Staking has the additional advantage of protecting the spike during transportation to the show.

Some growers also manipulate flower buds, although there always is the risk of accidentally breaking one. I know several cattleya growers who train stems apart with foam or cardboard so that the flowers in a cluster are not too crowded. I have heard that some award-winning flowers were gently tweaked in bud every day, encouraging them to open with a perfect presentation.

Watering potential show plants can be a tricky issue. To avoid bud drop, plants should not get too dry. But many plants resent water collecting near developing buds; be careful with water in paphiopedilum crowns and cattleya sheaths. Worse yet, a perfectly delightful open flower may succumb to unsightly fungus spots. This is of particular concern to outdoor growers in our rainy winters. If you can, shelter your blooms from the rain. It is disheartening to have a perfectly good light-colored cymbidium turn into a dark-spotted novelty.

In a perfect world, our well-staked, well-

flowered, unspotted plants have been grown in an environment relatively free of pests and diseases. (If my poor orchids could read this, they either would be laughing or weeping.) In the real world, a few critters or dead leaves may linger. Before you bring your plant to a show, look it over a bit. Remove those dead leaves and pseudobulbs. Do an insect inspection. Not only is it embarrassing to arrive with an infested plant, but your fellow growers will not thank you if your plant shares its pests with their prized orchids.

Many growers use rubbing alcohol diluted with water to kill aphids, mealybugs and other pests.

However, use it with care, as it can damage flowers and can be toxic to plants in high concentrations or areas where the fumes cannot disperse. Some expert exhibitors use an application of horticultural oil spray on plant leaves at the rate of one teaspoon per gallon. This treatment gives the leaves a subtle shine and helps the plant maintain moisture. As with rubbing alcohol, some plants may be sensitive to oil sprays, and no plant likes receiving such sprays while in direct sunlight. Finally, remember to remove the insect corpses afterward, which also gets rid of the evidence of your cultural faux pas.

Now you have a plant that is almost ready for the show. Before you bring it along to mingle with hundreds of other orchids, remember to put your name on the pot. Masking tape and magic marker work nicely. If you are lending the plant to the society display, have pity on your fellow members installing the display; make sure the plant has a complete, legible name tag.

While many of us love to display our blooming treasures, we should remember that shows are, in reality, very harsh environments for our plants. Some of the most delightful displays I have seen have consisted of plants inside Wardian cases complete with tiny fans and misting systems. The rest of us who do not have the resources or energy for such complexity instead mist the exhibit during the show and take care to keep plants far enough from hot spotlights. While styles vary from show to show, it is always in good taste to disguise your cheap plastic pots with baskets or cachepots or other props in the display. Just remember that your perfect plant will attract the judges, so make it easy for them to remove the plant from your display for judging!

Announcements

- **OSSB Dues!!** It is time to renew your membership for the 2002 calendar year. The membership fee is \$20 per household. Checks should be made payable to OSSB. Treasurer Carole Cowan will accept your renewals at the January meeting, or you may send your check to Carole at 209 Cedar Lane, Santa Barbara, CA 93108. Make sure your address and telephone number are correct for the society member roster. *If corrections need to be made to your name, address or telephone number, PLEASE notify Carole Cowan.* Remember that your renewal entitles you to receive the monthly newsletter and to participate in society sponsored events, such as the annual summer BBQ. Your dues support the society and your generosity with donations provides the funds to attract high quality speakers to our monthly meetings.
- **27th Annual Congress of the Cymbidium Society of America.** The CSA congress will be held in conjunction with the Santa Barbara International Show. Registrants attend six lectures on cymbidiums, paphiopedilums and zygotetalums given by internationally known speakers. Full registration also includes free admission to the show, admission to the Friday evening show party, a buffet luncheon, an evening banquet, an auction, and a commemorative pin. Early registration is \$100. Registration after February 8, 2002 is \$125. For more information or a registration form, contact Al and Sandy Svoboda at 969-4536 or stillisch@pol.net
- **Master Gardener Home Gardening Helpline.** This public service is cosponsored by Santa Barbara Botanic Garden and University of California Cooperative Extension. Free assistance for gardening questions is available:

at the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden	at the University of California Cooperative Extension Office, Ventura	Monday and Friday, 1 - 4 Wednesday and Thursday, 1 - 4 p.m.
p.m. and Saturday 10 a.m. - 1 p.m. ext. 117	Tuesday and Thursday, 1 - 4 p.m. (805) 645-1455	(805) 682-4726 You may call at any time and leave a message with your name and telephone number and the Master Gardener will return your call.

See OSSB on the web at www.west.net/~orchidsb

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