

Orchid Society of Santa Barbara



Meeting: Wednesday, May 8, 2002

Louise Lowry Davis Recreation Center
1232 De La Vina (at De La Vina and Victoria)
Meeting begins at 7:30 pm

PROGRAM

Norito Hasegawa of Paphanatics
will speak about
New Trends in Paphiopedilum Breeding

Come hear an internationally known orchid authority speak on the latest in a hot segment of the orchid world. Norito Hasegawa is an orchid judge, co-owner of Paphanatics, and in demand as a paph speaker all over the world. If you want to know what paph crosses to look for at the July Orchid Fair, this is your opportunity to find out what is new and interesting. Hasegawa will provide the plant table, so bring your wallets to purchase raffle tickets!

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

- Carmel Orchid Society MayFaire** May 4-5, 2002
Crossroads Shopping Center, Highway 1 at Rio Road, Carmel, CA
- UCI Arboretum Annual Spring Flower and Orchid Show** May 4-5, 2002
UCI Arboretum, corner of Campus Drive and Jamboree Rd., Irvine, CA. No AOS judging.
- Native Orchid Conference** May 17-20, 2002
Greensboro, North Carolina. Two days of lectures (\$60 registration fee). Two days of field trips to Blue Ridge

Parkway and Green Swamp Preserve. Contact Mark Rose at (336)656-7991 or nativeorchids@yahoo.com

2nd Orchid Digest Summer Institute
2002

June 22-23, 2002 and July 6-7,

Huntington Botanical Gardens, San Marina, California. See Announcements section for more information.

Summary of the April 2002 Meeting

- President Jeff Thompson welcomed guests and new members, including Phil Rietz from Lompoc.
- President Thompson reminded everyone to wear their green name tags. In addition to helping out all of us who are forgetful about names, a green society name tag earns its wearer a free raffle ticket. Winner of the "name tag" raffle gets first pick of the plant table. Just don't get confused and pick from the show table instead!
- The membership was informed that long-time member and orchid grower Red Marsh passed away. His wife Trudi asked that in lieu of flowers, donations be made to the Orchid Digest Corporation.
- President Thompson noted that the April meeting was the first in the new location, Louise Lowry Davis Recreation Center. He asked for feedback on this new location for our monthly meetings; feel free to call him or one of the other OSSB board members.

Program

Our April speaker was Peter Baxter, former sales manager and hybridizer of Stewart Orchids. (Stewart Orchids recently moved to Mississippi; previously, it was located in Carpinteria.) Baxter shared his expertise on Brazilian cattleya species.

Brazil is a large country with many microclimates from humid tropics to chilly high elevations. Most cattleyas of Brazil are from humid tropical regions. In general, they prefer slight drying in the winter and warmer temperatures, though a few species, such as *C. intermedia*, will survive brief freezes.

Many species come into our collections as bareroot imports. To revive these, Baxter advises soaking for an hour in warm water with a pinch or brown sugar or molasses and a little Superthrive. To pot, he places these plants in the smallest pots in which the roots will fit, then keeps them shady for a month, with little water but heavy misting.

Here is a list of species discussed by Baxter.

C. aelandiae – from low elevation, hot, humid forests. Summer to fall flowers. Resents disturbance so prefers slab or basket culture.

C. amethystoglossa – four foot bifoliate (two leaves)

from warm coastal regions. Six to eight flowers in fall to winter.

C. acuensis – warm, shady and humid grower with 3½ inch starry flowers.

C. bicolor – tall bifoliate of limestone outcroppings. Prefers intermediate to warm temperatures but will tolerate chilly winters. Several varieties, including alba and semi-alba.

C. dormaniana – prefers hot, humid weather with fairly dry winters.

C. eldorado -- from Amazon lowland rainforests. Five inch summer flowers.

C. forbesii – lowland coastal marshes with high light. Will adapt to cooler conditions. Yellow flowers summer to fall.

C. guttata – warm, coastal sand dunes. Blooms in summer from a green sheath.

C. leopoldii – often confused with *C. guttata*, but generally taller and blooms in winter from a dry sheath.

C. intermedia – plant of coastal sand dunes with many color forms, including *var. coerulea* (blue) and the famous *var. acquinii* (peloric or splash petalled). Tolerates cold winter temperatures.

C. harrisoniae (harrisoniana) – from warm and humid coastal marshes, but will adapt to cool conditions. Flowers spring to summer. Often confused with *C. loddigesii*, whose habitat it overlaps.

C. loddigesii – winter bloomer with several well-known varieties, including a *coerulea* form and *var. estriada*, which shows streaks as if virused but tests clean and breeds patterns into its progeny.

C. granulosa – three to four foot plant from coastal swamps of northeast Brazil. Peppery fragrance. Used in green hybridizing.

C. schofieldiana – similar to *C. granulosa* but with more spotting and a different lip structure.

C. labiata – "Queen of the Brazilian cattleyas".

Many color forms. Blooms in fall. *C. autumnalis* is a synonym. Does not prosper in cool weather.

C. warneri – summer bloomer with large flowers. Grows in high cliffs.

C. walkeriana – grows on small branches at edges of savannahs in river valleys. Prefers warm days and cooler nights. Many color forms.

C. nobilior – often confused with *C. walkeriana*, but blooms from the base of the growth. Native to hot dry regions and often overwatered in cultivation. Plants to best on slabs or in baskets in a high, semi-

forgotten corner of the greenhouse.

C. schilleriana – grows on cliffs in seepage areas at cool high elevations (1600 to 6000 feet).

C. velutina – tall, delicate plant from very warm

lowlands. Difficult in cultivation.

C. violacea – from the warm, humid Amazon basin. Resents disturbance, so mount or place in basket.

Difficult in cultivation.

A Ramble Through the Orchid World of the 19th Century

By Heidi Kirkpatrick

I saw them at Trader Joe's for \$14.99. Orchids in bloom, their exotic flowers beckoning to shoppers who waited in line with melting groceries. I saw them at Home Depot, ready to lure an aspiring plantsperson into the addictive and consuming hobby of orchid growing. I saw them at local orchid nurseries, where ordinary, everyday people shed their working personas to explore with delight and avarice.

Orchids, orchids everywhere! Today, even people of modest means can buy a few to decorate their homes.

How very different the orchid hobby was in the nineteenth century. Ordinary folk could not afford them. Orchids were a craze of wealthy, landed Europeans. Only the delight and avarice have remained constant.

The British in particular fell in love with exotic plants, building huge conservatories to house them. In 1833, the Duke of Devonshire's head gardener oversaw a 90 x 20 meter glasshouse – over an acre! Those in contact with orchids were wealthy estate owners, exclusive nurseries, botanists and taxonomists like Lindley and Reichenbach, and the collectors who stripped plants from their natural habitats.

There were, of course, native orchids in Europe.

The classical Greeks produced the name "orchis" for the testicle shaped tubers they knew. Orchids were used medicinally by ancient Greeks and Dark Age Europeans alike. Other cultures exploited their native orchid populations, too. Turks and Arabs consumed salep, made from ground orchid tubers. The Chinese wrote the first book on orchid cultivation a millenium ago.

What was different about the 18th and 19th centuries was the European (and particularly English) passion for all things foreign and exotic. Native orchids were left to the notice of the naturalists, like Darwin. The wealthy wanted plants from the mysterious jungles of South America or India.

Some explorers were gentlemen collectors, such as Friedrich Heinrich Alexander Baron von Humboldt and Aime Bonpland, who traveled through South America in the early 1800s in immaculate clothing and impeccable style. Others were hired explorers. Carl Theodore Hartweg sent materials to the Royal Horticultural Society.

The famous nurseries, such as James Veitch & Sons or Stuart Low & Co., sent collectors all over the world. Some wealthy hobbyists hired their own explorers.

It was no easy life. Intrepid explorers faced rugged terrain, hostile natives, and the threat of disease. The famous George Ure Skinner crossed the Atlantic some 39 times, shipping many orchids to Europe, before succumbing to yellow fever in Panama in 1867.

If life was difficult for the collector, it was worse for the plants and their habitats. Collected plants were carried to river barges by mules. Barges took them to ocean ports, where they were packed into dark holds or

secured on the open deck for the lengthy journey to Europe.

Those that survived the journey in the early 19th century faced the rigors of the British "stove house." While John Lindley of the Horticultural Society is rightly esteemed as the father of orchid taxonomy, his cultural advice was responsible for the deaths of many orchids. He wrote that most orchids were found in "damp sultry woods of tropical countries." To produce dark, hot, steamy conditions, growers in the British Isles constructed heavily shaded greenhouses against the brick walls of furnaces that produced tremendous heat. Pity the *Odontoglossum* languishing in such an environment!

Eventually, someone threw open the glasshouse windows and an *Odontoglossum crispum* bloomed. Every owner of a big, private estate had to have the latest color form, or the most recently discovered new species.

In the jungles of Asia and particularly South America, orchid hunters vied for the best discoveries. To reach epiphytes high in the tree branches, they commissioned their local guides to cut trees in large sections of forest. Hunters sorted through the bounty and burned whatever was left behind rather than risk anything being found by the competition. To the dismay of modern taxonomists, many of these collectors were less than forthright about the locations of their discoveries for fear that the competition would profit from correct knowledge.

Reading the names of the intrepid explorers and wealthy growers of the time is like finding a chart of some of the familiar orchid names. Lindley's wealthy patron was William Cattley. Sir James Chamberlain made his fortune from screws and spent some of it on a huge orchid collection. Lord and Lady Rolle of Bickton, Sir Jeremiah Colman, Charlesworth & Co. – these and other names from the era have survived in orchid names.

As the century drew to a close, the era of the orchid hunter was on the wane. Propagating plants by seed, which had been purely a matter of chance germination in the pot of the mother plant, was better understood with the realization that orchid seeds will germinate in association with a microscopic fungus. By WWI, nurseries such as Charlesworth & Co. were beginning to sow seed in flasks with fungus cultures.

Moreover, the dawning of hybridization transferred orchid passions from exotic species to novel hybrids. In 1858, Veitch and Sons' foreman, John Dominy, produced the first hybrid, *Calanthe Dominyi*. (Lindley supposedly said to Veitch, "Why, you will drive the botanists mad.") By 1913, the best in show trophy at an international orchid show in New York went to Sir Jeremiah Colman's plant of *Odontioda Bradshawiae* 'New York Triumph'. (Colman wrote, "Yachtsmen, please note, I took the Americas Cup the first time.")

There were, of course, orchid hunters in the 20th

century, but the era of heady discovery and infatuation with foreign species was over. With the development of mericlone, the orchid hobby is no longer the exclusive provenance of the wealthy and their growers. Today, I can spend several hundred dollars on a prized orchid, or

give a \$15 plant as a present to a non-orchid grower and count it cheaper than a bouquet of flowers.

References available on request from Heidi Kirkpatrick

Announcements

- **Preorder from Upcoming OSSB Speakers!** Our program chair, Frank Methmann, continues with interesting speakers for June and July. We can receive a group discount on plants from their respective nurseries if we order in May. For more information or to preorder plants, call Frank at 566-0839.
- June* – past AOS president Milton Carpenter of Everglades Orchids will speak to us on warmth tolerant intergenerics from the odontoglossum/ocnidium alliance. If we preorder by May 20, we can receive up to a 30% discount. Check out the Everglades website with lots of easy-to-grow intergeneric hybrids at www.evergladesorchids.com
- July* – Stephen Champlain of Floralia will speak to us on Laelias of Brazil. Floralia always has lots of interesting goodies at the spring show and the Orchid Fair. OSSB can receive a discount if we preorder by the end of May. Check out the Floralia website at www.floralia.com.br/orchids/index.html
- **2nd Orchid Digest Summer Institute.** Two, two-day, intensive study courses are again offered by the folks at *Orchid Digest*. For more information or to enroll, mail to The Orchid Digest, Huntington Botanical Gardens, 1151 Oxford Road, San Marino, CA 91108, or check the website at www.orchiddigest.org
- Part I. Tropical Forests: Their Epiphytes and Their Conservation.* June 22-23, 2002. Lectures and video presentations on the ecology of forests, how orchid make a living in them, and current efforts at orchid conservation. \$125 for *Orchid Digest* members and \$175 for non-members. Cost includes two luncheons and snacks. Limited to 75 enrollees. Instructors: Harold Koopowitz and Tito Marchant.
- Part II. Slipper Orchids in Depth.* July 6-7, 2002. Understanding, growing and breeding the Slipper Orchids. Course includes laboratory examination of the structure and microscopic anatomy of various slipper orchids. \$250 for *Orchid Digest* members and \$300 for non-members. Includes two luncheons and snacks. Limited to 30 enrollees. Instructors: Harold Koopowitz and Norito Hasegawa.

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