

# Orchid Society of Santa Barbara



**Meeting: Wednesday, January 8, 2003**

**Franklin Center**

**1136 E. Montecito Street** (next to the Eastside Library)

*Meeting begins at 7:30 pm*

►► *Note the location change just for this month.* ◄◄  
*Next month, we will return to*  
*Louise Lowry Davis Recreation Center as usual.*

## **Program**

**Dan Dickey**

will speak to us about

**Orchid Culture**

Culture talks are always popular, and with good reason. We're all looking for that special trick or extra edge to help our plants grow and bloom closer to their potential. Come hear some words of cultural wisdom from a hobby grower who has demonstrated that he knows about orchids. Dan Dickey is the outgoing president of the Orchid Society of Southern California and has grown orchids since childhood. His annual displays of (mostly) cattleyas in the Santa Barbara spring show and the East West Orchid Show have earned him many awards and recognition as one of the premiere growers and exhibitors in Southern California.

## **CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS**

***Fascination of Orchids Show***

February 6-9, 2003

South Coast Plaza, Crate and Barrel Wing, Costa Mesa. [www.ocorchidshow.com](http://www.ocorchidshow.com) or (714)964-3265.

**San Francisco Orchid Society Pacific Orchid Exposition**  
Festival Pavillion, Fort Mason Center, San Francisco. (510)339-8626.

February 20-23, 2003

**Santa Barbara International Orchid Show "It had to be Orchids"**  
Warren Showgrounds, March 28-30, 2003. [www.sborchidshow.com](http://www.sborchidshow.com) or (805)967-6331.

March 28-30, 2003 Earl

### Summary of the December 2002 Meeting

December's meeting was our annual holiday potluck. This year, it was organized by Art Denk, Vice President of the Santa Barbara Cymbidium Society and member of the Orchid Society of Santa Barbara. All auction proceeds went to the Santa Barbara Cymbidium Society.

Paul Gripp presented the Laelia anceps Perpetual Trophy to Don Brown for his *L. anceps* 'La Reina' that was displayed at the Fall Show. For those of you who are unfamiliar with this award, it is sponsored by Paul Gripp and presented to the best *L. anceps* at our society's fall show. The trophy itself is a beautiful crystal vase that is kept by the recipient until it is awarded again at the next show. By recognizing excellence in *L. anceps*, this trophy encourages growers to maintain in their collections a species that grows beautifully outdoors in our area.

After our dinner, we were treated to a presentation of artistic orchid photos taken by one of our members. Within several months of getting her digital camera, Meryl Wieder had taken some 5000 photos of orchids. Although your editor is in no way a professional photographer, I was very impressed with the artistry of the images on the screen. Many of us are accustomed to the standard AOS award type slide, intended to display a bloom in an analytical fashion. Wieder's artistry of angles and inventive choices of focal points displayed the poetic beauty of the flowers we love so well. As I watched the presentation (cleverly run through a laptop computer), I was reminded why I love to grow orchids.

Many thanks to everyone for all the wonderful potluck dishes!

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## The Orchid Family Tree

By Heidi Kirkpatrick

One hundred ten thousand years ago, Neanderthals were in their heyday. They were expanding into the Russian steppes. In what is now Israel, they were encountering our ancestors (*Homo sapiens*) perhaps for the first time. It would be another 80,000 years before the last of the Neanderthals succumbed to the Ice Age that blanketed Europe.

What is so interesting about a time 110,000 years in our past? Though soft-tissued orchids do not appear in the fossil record, DNA evidence suggests that orchids existed at that time. Orchids are an old plant family.

They are also thought to be evolutionarily advanced plants. Consider the amazing adaptations they have made to their environments. They have developed associations with fungi for nutrition and germination. They have fascinating root structures for attaching to host surfaces and for water intake. And they display a bewildering array of specialized pollination behaviors, often geared to a single species of insect pollinator that evidently co-evolved with the attracting orchid species.

These are fascinating plants that we grow!

Consider that the 30,000 some species of the orchid family make it either the most populous or second most populous flowering plant family in the world. (Some taxonomists think grasses are more populous, but we orchid lovers don't believe them, do we?) This brings them in ahead of the sunflower family (Asteraceae), the rose family (Rosaceae) and the legume family (Fabaceae).

Since the first recorded hybrid was produced in 1856, human lust for these magical flowers has added some 100,000 artificial hybrids to the orchid family. In the wild, orchids are usually very careful to avoid hybridization by attracting different pollinators, flowering at different times, or producing specific flower structures to avoid hybridizing. But nothing in their evolution prepared these species for the mighty toothpick!

An aside: Can you guess at the first orchid hybrid? A cattleya? Cymbidium? Paphiopedilum? Nope. It was a *Calanthe*, a cross of the species *furcata* and *masuca* that

was named Dominyi after the head grower at the famous English nursery of Veitch & Sons.

So what exactly is an orchid? Simple, you say, and display a lovely cattleya. But what does that showy corsage orchid have in common with, say, a paphiopedilum with its slipperlike pouch, or a bulbophyllum rancid enough to drive most folks from the greenhouse?

It appears that defining an orchid is not so trivial, even to the taxonomic experts on whom we rely. They can't even agree on all the members of the orchid family. Some say the most primitive orchids such as *Apostasia* belong in another family; even more radical folks whisper that slipper orchids of the subfamily Cypripedioideae aren't really orchids at all.

Sacrilege! But then, I am a paph lover. (And, incidently, the one *Apostasia* of which I have seen a photo does look more "weedlike" than orchidlike.)

But humans are determined to classify and organize everything, orchids included, and to do so, they need defining characteristics. What distinguishes orchid flowers from virtually every other flowering family, at least according to biologists, is the fact that the male (stamen) and female (pistil) parts of the flowers are fused. Additionally, orchids produce seed by the millions. They are able to do this because, unlike other plants, there is no endosperm for nourishing the embryo; these naked embryos survive only by encountering appropriate fungi, from which they receive nutrients until photosynthesis begins.

As most of us know, classification gets no easier within the orchid family. Even the next step, the subfamily, runs into difficulty. Many follow Dressler's 1981 classification that lists six subfamilies: Apostasioideae (the primitive

orchids); Cypripedioideae (lady slippers); Spiranthoideae (terrestrials like *Spiranthes* and the jewel orchids); Orchidoideae (including terrestrials like *Disa* and the defining terrestrial *Orchis*); Vandoideae (Vandas, Phals, Cyms, Oncidiums, Maxillarias and so on); Epidendroideae (Bulbos, Catts, Pleuros, Dendrobiums and so on). Even at this level, taxonomists tinker with the classification. Some, for example, put the members of the subfamily Vandoideae into the subfamily Epidendroideae.

And you thought orchid genus and species names were confusing! Ah, but they are! Some of the most popular genera in cultivation are also under hot debate by taxonomists, who move species from genus to genus as these species are studied and restudied.

The framework of orchid classification, fluid though it may be, nevertheless allows us to divide the massive orchid family into slightly less massive, more easily studied groups. In the newsletters of the upcoming months, I intend to do just that, beginning with a browse through the second most populous genus in the orchid world. Though the genus *Bulbophyllum* contains more species, *Dendrobium* comes in second and certainly is cultivated by more people.

In the meantime, consider this thought. When Neanderthal and Cro-Magnon shared Europe, was the genus *Orchis* already populating the meadows in some form similar to today's species? And if so, did these early humans and their cousins stop to admire a pretty flower? Or did they simply eat them?

Pester me if you want to know about my references. I've got them!

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## Announcements

- **2003 AOS Members Meetings.** Interested in seeing a show out of our local region? Consider attending one that coincides with an AOS Members (formerly "Trustees") Meeting. These always are big affairs with lots of good speakers, terrific vendors and an interesting show put on by a local society determined to impress everyone
- Hilo Orchid Society's 51<sup>st</sup> Annual Show, March 19-23, 2003. This show will host the AOS Members Spring 2003 Meeting, the International Phalaenopsis Alliance, the Orchid Digest Corporation, the Odontoglossum Alliance, and the Pleurothallid Alliance. Registrants can receive discounts at the show hotel (Hawaii Nanihoa Resort) and on airfare (via United Airlines). For information on registration fees and the show in general, go to the society web site at [www.hiloorchidsociety.org](http://www.hiloorchidsociety.org) or contact Richard Smith, P. O. Box 816, Holualoa, HI 96725, (808)322-8084, email: [rsnls@aloha.net](mailto:rsnls@aloha.net)

- Sacramento Orchid Society Show, October 22-26, 2003.

[www.sacramentoorchids.org](http://www.sacramentoorchids.org)

- **New Orchid Specialty Group.** A glance at the American Orchid Society web site reveals the creation of a new specialty group, this one devoted to Encyclias and called the Encyclia Enthusiasts. Check them out at [www.Encyclias.org](http://www.Encyclias.org)

**Finding Orchids on the Internet** I admit it. I am a pathetic computer person. Nevertheless, I have fielded questions recently about how to find various orchid sites on the internet. The sites I prefer either provide a great deal of information in one spot or give me convenient links to other sources I'd like to visit. Below are my top three starting points.

[www.orchidmall.com](http://www.orchidmall.com) -- This collection of links to orchid related sites is my favorite launching point. Can't remember the web site for the San Francisco show? Look it up under the societies section. Want to check out the site for a vendor you've seen at the spring show? Check out the list of vendors. The Orchid Mall contains links to useful reading material (such as Harold Hoopowitz's list of paph species) and beautiful pictures (check out Greg Allikas's orchid photos). It contains links to research sites like the Missouri Botanical Garden or to international societies like the Australian Orchid Council. This is a neat place to start a leisurely internet browse.

[www.orchidweb.org](http://www.orchidweb.org) -- Can't find your latest *Orchids* magazine? Pop over to the American Orchid Society's site. In addition to the calendar of events, which I use when I can't find my *Orchids*, the official AOS site has information about the society itself, about AOS judging and about numerous other items of interest in the orchid world.

[www.orchidspecies.com](http://www.orchidspecies.com) – If you just purchased a new species and can't find anything about growing it, check out this site. Jay Pfahl has assembled photos and basic cultural information on 3850 species in 482 genera.

*Do you have a favorite orchid site? Let me know! I'll publish it in upcoming newsletters to share with our fellow OSSB members.*

### **January OSSB Meeting Location Change.**

Don't forget to go to Franklin Center, 1136 E. Montecito Street (next to the Eastside Library) for the January meeting. The February OSSB meeting will be at Louise Lowry again, as usual.

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