

# Orchid Society of Santa Barbara



**Meeting: Wednesday, March 12, 2003**

**Louise Lowry Davis Recreation Center**  
**1232 De La Vina** (at De La Vina and Victoria)  
*Meeting begins at 7:30 pm*  
*Potting Demonstration begins at 7:10 pm*

## Program

Our Own **Betty Watt**  
will speak to us about

### **Successful Flower Arranging and Display at Shows**

With the spring show at the end of this month, this timely demonstration and discussion should help us display our flowers to their best advantage. For those of you installing a display or making flower arrangements for the spring show, or those considering it in the future, this is your opportunity to learn from a successful exhibitor at the spring show and the Horse and Flower show. Betty Watt has been a member of our society since the 80s and has installed exhibits and done flower arrangements for shows since then. Bring your questions and tap Betty's years of experience. And bring your money for the plant table. Your editor hears a rumor that the plants will be from the late Jerry Rehfield's collection.

**Potting Demonstration:** Last month's potting demo by Don Brown was a big hit. This month, come see how long-time grower Dick Swain pots his plants.

## CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

**Central Coast 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Orchid Show and Sale**

South County Regional Center, 800 W. Branch St., Arroyo Grande.

March 8-9, 2003

**San Diego County Orchid Society Show**  
2003

Scottish Rite Center, 1895 Camino Del Rio South, San Diego.

**Santa Barbara International Orchid Show "It had to be Orchids"**  
Warren Showgrounds, www.sborchidshow.com or (805)967-6331.

**SBIOS Preview Party**

6 pm to 9 pm. \$40 admission benefits diabetes research at Sansum Medical Research Institute. Call 682-7638 ext. 243 for reservations or Sandy and Al Svoboda at 969-4536.

March 21-23,

March 28-30, 2003 Earl

Thursday, March 28, 2003

**Summary of the January 2003 Meeting**

- President Jeff Thompson welcomed guests and reminded to **Pay your annual dues!** Dues are **\$25**. Checks should be made out to OSSB and mailed to Carole Cowan, 209 Cedar Lane, Santa Barbara, CA 93108. Or pay your dues at the next meeting.
- Al and Sandy Svoboda are cohosts of the Preview Party for this year's spring show. For the \$40 admission, Sandy promised lots of food and tours of the show. See the first page for more details. Al and Sandy also organized this year's 29<sup>th</sup> Cymbidium Congress. See the Announcements section on the last page for more information.
- Joyce Wieder and the society welcomed back Ed and Shirly Carter, longtime members who are attending meetings after a long hiatus.
- President Thompson reminded everyone about the upcoming show. The OSSB display will need plants and musical accessories. Call Jeff (563-4376) or Heidi (563-2894 or g\_pierce@juno.com) if you have plants or would like to help with installation.

**Program**

Our February speaker was Paul Storm of Sarasota, Florida, an expert on Schomburgkias. He spoke to the membership about members of this intriguing genus and their hybrids.

Schomburgkias are cattleya relatives bearing flowers with undulated petals. In the past, they have not been popular because most plants are large with tall spikes that often are passed to their hybrids. But new appreciation for these disease-resistant orchids has led to a new interest in the species and their hybrids.

Storm acquainted the membership with the 23 to 24 species of this new world genus. "Schoms" are found in Mexico and Central America down to Ecuador and Peru, with some species occurring on the Cayman Islands and Cuba. Most are temperature tolerant and will take temperatures to freezing, making them candidates for outdoor

growing in our area. Some species have hollow pseudobulbs often colonized by ants.

*Schom. thomsoniana* boasts yellowish petals and a purple lip. *Schom. brysiiana* is a brilliant, brown and burnt orange, the flowers displaying the lacquered sheen of many members of this genus. *Schom. wendlandii* is a tan flower but with a great lip that is transmitted to its hybrids. The lavender *Schom. superbiens* formerly was assigned to the genus *Laelia*. The red-pink lip on the dark maroon flowers of *Schom. elata* is quite striking. The smallest flowers are found on the species *Schom. rosea* and are a lacquered red with pink lip.

Though the genus is not thought of as a hybrid powerhouse, there have been 33 man-made genera involving a Schom. A few of the wonderful hybrids shown by Storm include *Smbc. Mem. Louise Fuchs* (*Schom. tibicinis* x *Catt. Bicolor*) with its red flowers on 14" spikes. The flower color is reflected by the name of *Smbdcr. Raspberry* (*Schom. lueddemannii* x *Diacrium bicomutum*). Seedlings of St. Paul Storm (*Schom. humboldtii* x *L. purpurata*) exhibit many color variations, while *Lyonara Red Head* (*Smbc. Diamond Head* x *Lc. Pixie*) produces stunning heads of red flowers.

Introducing more genera into a hybrid often means more variation in the progeny, with sometimes striking results, such as *Rebecca* (*C x Epi x L x Schom*) or *Izumiara Fujiko* (*C x Epi x L x Schom x Soph*). The ambitious genus *Yeeara* has plenty of spice for the genetic soup; hybrids belonging to this genus contain species from *Brassavola*, *Broughtonia*, *Cattleya*, *Epidendrum*, *Laelia*, *Schomburgkia* and *Sophronitis*.

For future hybrids, Storm sees work with tetraploids and a continuation of the effort to decrease spike size to something manageable in the average greenhouse. He reminded everyone of three very desirable Schom traits: they're hardy, disease-free, and resistant to bugs.

# A Glance at the Genus Dendrobium

By Heidi Kirkpatrick

Lindley, considered the father of orchid taxonomy, wrote in 1859 of *Dendrobium*, "In fact that whole genus, if it be one, is in extricable confusion." Perusing literature not only in another century but in another millenium, I find that the genus *Dendrobium* is not a great deal clearer. Take the following quotation from the Baker's esteemed 1996 tome on Dendrobium culture:

"We found 2425 *Dendrobium* names, of which 1230 appear to be currently valid. (The preceding statement was written on January 13, 1994 at 9:30 am. It was valid until we received a letter from Dr. Gunnar Seidenfaden at 11:30 am in which he shared a number of taxonomic changes that would be published in the near future.)"

Why the taxonomic disarray? Today, news of a new discovery travels at the speed of email and telephone. 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century orchid hunters did not have such rapid means of communication, with the result that Dutch, German and British taxonomists would describe the same new plant in ignorance of each other's work. Modern taxonomists attempting to sort through the confusion are further hampered by material lost during WWII.

Finally, sometimes it takes a while to understand how much variation a species exhibits. Taxonomists are infamous for disagreeing whether two plants are variants of the same species or different species.

I leave the arcane muddling through pollinia and the shape of the column to the taxonomists. Instead, I do my best to muddle through the names they have created.

The most important lesson I have found about the genus *Dendrobium* is not to believe the three sentence culture sheet for the genus. *Dendrobium* species are distributed throughout Southeast Asia to India, north to Japan and Korea, through the South Pacific and south to Australia. Boasting some 350 species, New Guinea is widely regarded as the center of distribution.

Winter temperatures throughout this range vary greatly, giving us cultivated plants like *Den. speciosum* that will tolerate a light frost versus *Den. phalaenopsis* and its many popular hybrids that prefer not to endure temperatures below 65°F. Furthermore, while some species are evergreen, others drop their leaves in winter in response to low or no rainfall.

The differences don't stop there. Plants range from miniatures that grow best on mounts to species with several foot tall canes determined to fall over on your greenhouse benches. A number of

species are pendant. Some are lithophytes (grow on rocks) rather than epiphytes (grow on trees). Light requirements range from 1000 to 4000 foot-candles.

In 1914, Schlechter tried to tidy the genus by subdividing it into some 41 sections. Though some have since become their own genera and others endure debate over which species belong to them, the sections sometimes are useful for describing broad types of cultural requirements.

Among the commonly grown species are members of the Callista group, with bulbous pseudobulbs and pendant inflorescences, such as *D. chrysotoxum*, *D. densiflorum* and *D. aggregatum*.

These like medium light with summer temperatures of 60° to 90°F. Winter watering decreases to just enough to keep plants from shriveling and nights drop to 50°F.

Antenna- or horn-like petals give the Spathulata group its nickname of "antelope." These large plants have evergreen leaves and can bloom several times a year. Spathulata species such as *D. antennatum*, *D. canaliculatum* and *D. discolor* prefer intermediate to warm temperatures year round. Plants of the Latouria section, such as *D. spectabile* and *D. macrophyllum*, like similar conditions but with a slightly cooler and drier winter rest.

Formerly section Nigrohirsutae, section Formosae species include *D. bellatulum*, *D. lowii*, and *D. sanderae*. This group is characterized by black hairs on the leaf sheaths of their canelike pseudobulbs and white flowers of good (some to 4") size. These species prefer intermediate to cool conditions year round, with nights of 50° to 60°F and days to 85°F.

The Dendrobium group consists primarily of pendulous plants that need warmth, copious water and fertilizer in the summer, and high light but virtually no water in the winter. Subgroup 1 species, including the infamous *D. nobile*, like very cool nights (40° to 50°F). Give winter nights of 55°F to subgroup 2 plants, including *D. anosmum*, *D. fimbriatum* and *D. parishii*.

A common cultural theme for potted dendrobiums of these sections and the many other species of the genus is to underpot and give good drainage. This is particularly tricky for tall, top-heavy plants, so many growers use clay pots. Pendant plants tend to be easier to manage on mounts.

Dendrobiums may produce keikis, baby plants that emerge along the nodes of the canes.

*D. kingianum* (Australian native good outdoors here) makes copious keikis irrespective of the culture it receives. Some growers remove these after they bloom to prevent the plant from getting weedy. If *D. nobile* makes keikis, the plant may have gotten too much nitrogen or too little light.

It is very easy to attend a show and be tempted by an exotic, unknown *Dendrobium* species – some of them are fragrant, which is my particular downfall. But what is a poor grower to do upon purchasing a member of this genus?

Ask and research. Ask the seller about the species' cultural requirements. Ask your fellow society members how they succeed with that particular species. Read about the species' native habitat; I highly recommend the Baker's Orchid Species Culture. Back issues of *Orchids* or *Orchid Digest* are also good sources of cultural information.

And if you are stuck, that three sentence culture sheet is not bad as a starting point: bright light; intermediate temperatures; copious summer water and fertilizer; and a drier winter rest.

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## **Announcements**

- **Sad News.** Jerry Rehfield passed away February 17, 2003, after a long bout with cancer. He is survived by his wife Louella, son Mark, daughter Diana, and three grandchildren. A memorial service will be held Saturday, April 5 at 1 pm at the Methodist Church on 305 E. Anapamu.
- **28<sup>th</sup> Annual Cymbidium Congress.** Saturday, March 29, 2003, at the Holiday Inn in Goleta. It is not too late to register. Registration forms can be found at [www.cymbidium.org](http://www.cymbidium.org). For more information, contact Al and Sandy Svoboda at 805-969-4536 or [stillisch@earthlink.net](mailto:stillisch@earthlink.net). Send registration to Cymbidium Congress, 231 Middle Road, Santa Barbara, CA 93108
- **Volunteers.**
  - Thanks to the members who volunteered to perform the audit of the OSSB books: Mike Ling, Joyce Wieder, Santos Ojeda, and Josh Davis.
  - Call Jeff Thompson (563-4376) if you are interested in a *L. anceps* mounting expedition at the zoo. Tentative date is still March 15. Many thanks to Norm and Joyce Wieder, who volunteered to monitor the condition of the plants, particularly important in the summer.
  - Jeff Thompson needs help picking up plants for the society exhibit at the spring show. Call Jeff if you have time and a good orchid transporting vehicle.
  - The society is looking for an organizer to make sure the annual picnic/BBQ happens this year.
  - The Fall Show needs chairs for publicity and judging.
- **Annual Dues.** Don't forget to pay your dues! Dues are \$25. Pay Carole Cowan at the meeting or send her a check, made out to OSSB, at 209 Cedar Lane, Santa Barbara, CA 93108

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