

# Orchid Society of Santa Barbara



**Meeting: Wednesday, June 11, 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**

**Joe Karl of the Agricultural Commissioner's Office**

will speak to us about

### **Pesticides and Pesticide Safety**

Does your collection have more bugs than orchids? Are you looking to use a pesticide on your collection but unsure about safety? Joe Karl of the Santa Barbara County Agricultural Commissioner's Office will speak to us about protection for pesticide handlers, the general public, and the environment. Karl graduated in 1975 from UC Davis with a degree in entomology, worked in for public and private agricultural concerns, then settled in the Santa Barbara County Agricultural Commissioner's Office, where he has been for 15 years. If you want to know more about bugs, pesticides and pesticide safety and regulation, this is the talk for you.

**Potting Demonstration:** Not satisfied with the inferior quality of bark currently available to orchid growers? Come early to the June meeting to learn about one of the new alternatives to bark potting mixes. Don Thorn will do a potting demonstration using the new high silica growing medium from Australia. He has been using it for several months now and will report on some of his experiences.

## CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

### ***Santa Barbara International Orchid Fair***

July 11-13, 2003

Held concurrently with the Santa Barbara Summer Flower Show, Fri-Sat 9-5, Sun 10-4. Over fifty orchid vendors from around the world will be at the Fair. Santa Barbara Orchid Estate and Cal-Orchid will have open houses during the fair, featuring guest vendors. Interested in entering a plant or tabletop display in the Flower Show? Winners receive cash prizes. Call Jeff Thompson for details (563-4376).

President – Jeff Thompson Vice President – Phil Watt Treasurer – Carole Cowan Secretary – Heidi Kirkpatrick

## **Summary of the May 2003 Meeting**

- President Jeff Thompson welcomed guests from the Coastal Valley Orchid Society, who came with member Phil Rietz. President Thompson also introduced five new members (Christine, Diana, John, Jay and Carole) and reminded everyone to donate to the special speakers fund.
- Many thanks to recent volunteers who agreed to work on the Fall Show and the summer BBQ. We are all greatly encouraged by the number of volunteers who have stepped forward this year. But President Thompson reminded everyone that volunteers are needed for next year's OSSB officers and board of directors. If you are interested in participating, please tell Jeff. Remember that no position is sacrosanct. If, for example, you have a yen to try out being society secretary, this is your chance to have the membership vote you in for a change of pace on the newsletter.
- The Orchid Digest is soliciting funds for this year's special issue (volume 4). Every year, the OD publishes one issue a year devoted to a particular genus within the orchid world. Past issues on such subjects as papahs have been wildly successful. This year's subject is *Phragmipedium*. But the special issue, with its many color pages, is expensive to publish, so consider making a donation. Send donations to The Jack A. Fowlie Color Fund, P. O. Box 10360, Canoga Park, CA 91309-1360. For more information, check out [www.orchiddigest.org](http://www.orchiddigest.org)
- The Society's Fall Show is scheduled for 15-16 November, 2003. The BBQ looks like it will be August 9, 2003. Mark these dates on your calendar! Future issues of the newsletter will contain more information about how you can participate in these events. Last year's BBQ and Fall Show were both considered quite successful, so you won't want to miss out on the fun this year!
- Members were reminded about the upcoming Orchid Fair. Check out the first page of this newsletter for details.

### **Program**

Our May speaker was Mark Bentow from

southern Ventura County. Bentow spoke to us about his 1998 orchid hunting trip to Belize.

For those of you whose geography is a little rough, Belize is a Central American country on the Caribbean coast, formerly known as British Honduras. It is bordered by Mexico, Guatemala and Honduras. With dimensions of about 200 miles by 60 miles, the country is not large. But some 60% of its forests are untouched, whereas elsewhere up to 80% of the indigenous forests have been destroyed, primarily via slash and burn for pasture and farm land.

Despite its small size, Belize has several distinct orchid habitats. The Belize River valley of northern Belize is a lush broadleaf forest near sea level. Temperatures are warm, humidity is high, and rainfall is consistent. (For non-orchid-growing spouses, there are many pre-Columbian ruins in this region.)

Though elevations are never high enough for a cloud forest habitat, central Belize reaches some 4000 feet. Though humidity is high, less rain falls on these pine forests. Though orchids won't grow on live pines, some well-known species are found growing terrestrially, either on granite outcrops near rivers or amidst pine leaf litter in filtered shade. Some of the orchids Bentow found in this region include *Enc. belizensis*, *C. bowringiana* and *Sobralia macrantha*.

In west Belize, Bentow discovered *Epi. cochleata* and *Schom tibocinis*. The latter is known locally as the cowhorn orchid for the shape of its pseudobulbs. It is infamous in the orchid world for the biting ants that inhabit its hollow pseudobulbs.

Bentow found that other sites of high orchid density include old orchards (locals don't remove orchids from the trees) and Mangrove swamps. While the former are easy to explore, Bentow viewed the latter from a safe distance. Mangrove swamp inhabitants, such as *Schomburgkia* species, live in very warm, humid conditions.

Bentow noted that the rainy season begins in June, so better blooming occurs in May. Most roads in Belize are unpaved, so travel is a dusty process. Bentow noted that he felt safe amongst this English-speaking population, but that one is most likely to encounter aggressive panhandling and petty theft in Belize City.

For collecting, Bentow began with a US import permit, free to hobbyists. The Belize Bureau of Forestry gives collection permits to those promoting education, rather than to average hobbyists or commercial growers; by lecturing to orchid societies, Bentow qualified as promoting education about

Belize. When collecting, Bentow took small divisions of plants rather than stripping whole plants from nature. Collected plants required phytosanitary certificates and CITES certificates from Belize.

## Confessions of a Haphazard Orchid Grower

By Heidi Kirkpatrick

I may as well begin this commentary by addressing all the superlative orchid growers out there. You can stop reading now. This editorial is for those of us mere mortals who struggle to keep our plants alive, much less to get them to rebloom.

Originally, I intended to write about bulbophyllums, or perhaps about the seemingly arcane nomenclature rules of orchids. Half-finished articles on those subjects are waiting to make their appearances in upcoming newsletters.

But as I was repotting orchids today, I was thinking about whether I'd have anything to bring to the show table this month. Sure, I tell everyone that I rush to the meeting at the last minute with no time to peek in the greenhouse for a blooming plant. That is true, but in addition, my collection is sorry enough that I'm kind of embarrassed to bring in some of my plants.

Judging by the number of people who bring plants to the monthly show table, I'd guess I'm not alone in this feeling. I know we're all afraid of what everyone else would think but hopefully be too polite to say.

"That plant needs help."

"Doesn't this person know anything about repotting?"

"And he/she calls him/herself an orchid grower?"

Ouch!

And so I began to wonder if I really can call myself an orchid grower. Certainly, compared to some in our society (you know who you are and you really *can* stop reading now), I am more like an orchid killer.

You may find it incongruous for your editor, who writes with supposed authority about catasetum pollination or how to prep plants for a show, wonders if she can call herself an orchid grower. But I've always been good at "book learnin'" and absorbing material from lectures. I have learned enough from these formal sources and from my fellow growers to realize what would make my orchids happier than they are.

Number one on the list is time. Lots of it.

And I'd bet some of my fellow haphazard growers might cite lack of time as the primary enemy of their collections.

I used to be a better grower. I've even (gasp) received an award or two on my plants.

Back then, my orchids ran a close second to my spouse. Sometimes he probably wondered if they came first.

Then I had a child. The orchids dropped to a distant third. And I began to wonder if I had the right to call myself an orchid grower.

Some of you know how I feel. Perhaps you, too, have familial demands on your time. Perhaps you have a high-demand job. Perhaps you are caring for a sick relative. Maybe you, like me, have looked at your ailing plants and wondered if you should give up the hobby.

Sometimes I feel guilty when I walk into the greenhouse. Or I listen to a lecture on orchid care and think of all the things I should be doing for my plants. Or I read an article on orchid conservation and feel a twinge for every rare plant I've killed.

And then one of my plants blooms.

It's amazing how little keeps an orchid addict happy. A flower or two in my greenhouse and I find myself at the next show, lusting after something new. Good roots on something I'm repotting, and suddenly I'm brave enough to try a *Telipogon*. (Okay, I admit that was foolhardy.)

So am I an orchid grower?

Certainly, I am not producing prize-winning plants right now. And the healthiest plants in my collection are predominantly those I've acquired in the last several years, although I'm proud to say the second cattleya I ever bought is alive and well. (Number one hardly counts; it succumbed to novitiate overwatering.)

But today as I pulled old bark off roots, I thought about how peaceful and rewarding a chore repotting was to me at that moment. I looked at my orchids and remembered how I always called them my little green psychiatrists.

And I realized that not everyone has to aspire to awards or judgeship to enjoy learning about orchids. For many of us, a plant that stays alive and blooms every now and again is sufficient reward to keep us coming to meetings, going to shows, and buying other orchids to try.

Some of us enjoy our plants on a very personal level, rather than as something to wow the judges. This does not invalidate us as orchid growers. Maybe we're not great growers, but we're still faithful hobbyists, hoping someday to improve our culture while we manage to enjoy the plants we

have today. After all, a great deal of the orchid hobby is about hope for the future growth and bloom of our plants.

Those of us who might be counted as haphazard hobbyists just have more to hope for.

## **Announcements**

- **Wanted: Info on Pesticides, Fungicides, Potting Mixes.** I want to hear about what you do for your plants that works particularly well for you. I intend to write a survey of some of our members' growing practices and advice tidbits. (E.g., One of my favorite albeit too-late-for-me tidbits from Don Brown: make your greenhouse/shadehouse door oversized to allow passage of big blooming plants.) If I do not hear from enough of you to write a credible and interesting series, I will start pestering you at random. Call me, Heidi Kirkpatrick, at 563-2894, or email me at [g\\_pierce@juno.com](mailto:g_pierce@juno.com)
  
- **Orchid Digest Summer Programs.**
  - **First Orchid Digest Distinguished Lecture.** 4 pm, Saturday, June 28, 2003. Hear from one of America's greatest living orchid artists, Angela Mirro. Admission free while seating lasts. Friends Hall at the Huntington, San Marino, CA.
  - **An Evening of Orchid Entertainment.** 6 pm, Saturday, June 28, 2003. An elegant orchid dinner and *Orchids and Other Flowers in Three Dimensions, The Artistry of James Comstock*. \$75 per person. Tickets must be purchased by June 15, 2003. To purchase tickets, check out [www.orchiddigest.org](http://www.orchiddigest.org) or contact Simone Friend, Program Coordinator, 4349 Dogwood Ave., Seal Beach, CA 90740, email: [Orchidsimonef@aol.com](mailto:Orchidsimonef@aol.com)
  - **Third Orchid Digest Summer Institute: The Cattleya Alliance.** July 26-27, 2003. Lecture and hands on laboratory workshop on taxonomy, anatomy, microscopic structure and natural history. Class size of 30. Instructors: Harold Koopowitz and Paul Tuskes. Held at the Huntington ([www.HuntingtonGardens.org](http://www.HuntingtonGardens.org)). \$250 (\$300 non-members) includes two luncheons and snacks. Enroll on the web at [www.orchiddigest.org](http://www.orchiddigest.org) or contact Simone Friend, as above.

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