

Orchid Society of Santa Barbara



Meeting: Wednesday, July 9, 2003

**Louise Lowry Davis Recreation Center
1232 De La Vina (at De La Vina and Victoria)**

Meeting begins at 7:30 pm

Program

Our speaker will be

Michael Glickbarg of Orchids of Los Osos

Never been to Orchid of Los Osos? Come hear Michael Glickbarg tell us the latest about this OSSB member nursery. As of press time, the title of his talk is unavailable, but Glickbarg always the membership when he comes to speak. And don't forget to bring your wallets. As a reminder, raffle tickets are 3 for a dollar and many a plant on the show table began its association with OSSB on the raffle table. Money raised from the raffle helps support your society!

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. See the announcements section about the OSSB display in

this show.

Annual OSSB Picnic and BBQ
See the next page for full details.

August 9, 2003

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

OSSB Annual BBQ

August 9, 2003

4:00 p. m.

on the grounds of the Santa Barbara Orchid Estate

\$10 per person

Did you miss last year's BBQ? Did you attend the BBQ of 2002 and enjoy it? Our summer social is back again, held in conjunction with the Santa Barbara Cymbidium Society. The Santa Barbara Orchid Estate has once again graciously offered the use of their picnic area.

Attendees will enjoy tritip, chicken, beans, bread, non-alcoholic beverages and utensils. Bring folding chairs and tables if you have them. If you'd like to show off your prowess with desserts, this is your chance to wow your fellow orchid growers. And don't forget your wallets and sale plants, as there will be a silent auction.

To sign up for the BBQ: You must register in advance for the BBQ so we know how much food to order. Sign up at the July meeting or call Meryl Wieder (893-3664) or Joyce Tolle (965-0979). The BBQ is \$10 per person.

Hope to see everyone there!

Announcements

- **Summer Flower Show – OSSB Display.** Do you have plants for the show? Jeff Thompson is willing to install an OSSB display, but without your plants, there will be no OSSB display – and no opportunity to win cash prizes! Jeff will be installing the display, if there is one, during the day on July 9. Give him a call (563-4376) before the 9th if you have plants to lend! Last year, only two people lent plants for the display, though there were plenty on the show table at the meeting that night!
- **Officers and Board Members for 2004.** OSSB needs officers and board members to serve in 2004. Traditionally, the positions most difficult to fill are those of president and vice president. If you are interested in these positions or that of any other officer or board member, please tell Jeff Thompson! If you say nothing, the nominating committee won't know to ask you when they make their nominations in the fall!
- **No Report on the June Meeting in this Newsletter.** Apologies from your editor, who missed the June meeting; the customary report of last month's meeting is absent here.

What's In A Name?

By Heidi Kirkpatrick

When I first bought orchids, I looked at those name tags in disgust and threw them out the moment the plant came through my door. Who needed those stupid, confusing names anyway? I saw a flower I liked and I bought it.

It didn't take me long to realize that those nametags could be pretty doggone useful. Bargain hunter that I am, I saw that blooming plants were

more expensive. But without a flower to guide my purchase, I had to know something about the green leaves I was buying.

Suppose you want something similar to but not the same as one you have at home that miraculously survived six months of loving overwatering. You could ask the vendor/nursery grower for assistance in a conversation something

like this:

"I'd like to buy an orchid like the one I have at home, but in a different color."

"What kind of orchid?"

"Um. Well, it was really pretty. The flower was red."

"How about this?" Grower shows you a white phalaenopsis.

"No, I don't like those. My flower was smaller and a different shape."

"Ah. Do you have the name?"

"No. But it was red, a very nice maroony red."

Idiot, thinks the grower but smiles and shows you something else. (For those of you who see your beginning selves in this conversation and flinch at reading it, yes, I am flinching at writing it because I see my beginning self.)

Imagine instead that you'd saved the tag of your favorite plant. The conversation with your vendor might instead go like this:

"I have a *Paphiopedilum* Raisin Jack that I really like. Do you have something similar, but in another color?"

"How about this nice *Paphiopedilum* De Perle? It has creamy white flowers."

Of course those plant tags are useful!

Commercial growers could never keep their stock straight without some naming convention used by all the other commercial folks who buy and sell from them. If the convention seems arcane and cumbersome to novice amateur growers, it is only because they are unfamiliar with the rules, history and purpose. So here is the lazywoman's overview of orchid nomenclature.

The purpose of orchid nomenclature is to have an internationally agreed-upon name for each particular kind of plant. The rules that govern what appears on your plant tags are voluntarily adopted by growers and arise from a Botanical Code (all those Latinized names) and a Cultivated Code (hybrids and cultivars). As the orchid world got more complex, the International Orchid Commission on Classification, Nomenclature and Registration was established, with the first meeting in 1957 at the Second World Orchid Conference. The member list of the IOC is an international one; their work at World Orchid Conferences updates naming rules. They also produce a Handbook (my reference here is the 1993 edition) that is imperative for growers who want to register a plant and useful for the rest of us with insomnia.

But what about those words on the tag?

Genus Names

The first word or abbreviation is the genus or generic name. (Recall that a genus is a collection of species with similar characteristics and their hybrids. All roses, for example, belong to the genus

Rosa.) Many genus names are Latin-looking words like *Cattleya* or *Paphiopedilum* or *Dendrobium*.

These names were chosen either to honor someone (e.g., the rich 19th century guy who sent the orchid hunter into the jungle) or to describe the plants in question via botanical Latin.

But thanks to the hybridizer's toothpick, orchids are rabbits in the plant world. Many even breed with species of different genera. For example, a *laelia* crossed with a *cattleya* makes *Laeliocattleya*. This hybrid crossed with a member of the genus *Brassavola* makes a *Brassolaeliocattleya*. Throw in a *Sophranitis* and ... fortunately, no one wants to write "*Brassosophranitiocattleya*" on a bunch of tags. All hybrids containing four or more genera are given artificial genus names, or "condensed" names, consisting of a person's name with the appendix "ara." In this case, the genus is *Potinara* ... much more manageable!

Species and Grex Names

After the genus name, which is always italicized, comes a second name. Species have Latin names written in lowercase italics, e.g., *Cattleya skinneri*, *Paphiopedilum armeniacum*. Hybrids have capitalized non-Latin names that are not italicized, such as *Paphiopedilum* Winston Churchill or *Laeliocattleya* Puppy Love. In these cases, Puppy Love and Winston Churchill are the grex names, where grex is Latin for herd or flock. Grex is applied collectively to the progeny of a given cross.

Sometimes, the plant name may contain a single "x," as in *Paphiopedilum* x *fanaticum* or x *Laeliocattleya leeana*. These are natural hybrids, the progeny of two species breeding with each other in the wild.

Botanical Variety

At this point, you can pause for a sigh of relief. Many tags contain no more than the genus and species or grex. But some species names may be followed by a botanical variety name. Suppose, for example, you want the white variety of *Laelia anceps*. You are looking for *Laelia anceps* var. *alba*, where the "var" abbreviation indicates a variety of the species.

Cultivar Name

Suppose now, that you are a grower looking at a bunch of seedlings on a bench. One of them is on steroids. You want a special name to distinguish that one from its wimpier siblings out of the same cross. If it wins an award, you want to be able to make clones of that plant and sell them at a premium to buyers who lust over the sample plant. What you want is a cultivar name, such as *Laeliocattleya* Puppy Love 'True Beauty'. True Beauty is the cultivar name. It cannot be Latin or italicized and it must be surrounded by single (not double!) quotation marks.

After the cultivar name can come any number of confusing things that look like acronyms and refer to awards received by that particular cultivar, e.g., AM/AOS or BM/CSA. Sometimes you may see 4N appearing after the cultivar name, which means the plant is a tetraploid (doubled chromosome count).

Stop, stop! you cry. You don't care about all that other stuff. You just want another *Paphiopedilum*. You don't want to learn about breeding lines.

Shopping

You don't have to memorize lots of hybrids to get some basic ideas from a name tag, particularly if the grower conscientiously uses italics and upper/lower case. For example, if it is a species (second name in lowercase italics), there is a good chance it is harder to grow than a hybrid (second name capitalized, not Latin, and not italicized). If it has a cultivar name (in single quotes, not Latin, not italicized), it may be a choice plant, cloned if it is a cattleya or phalaenopsis type, really expensive if it is a paphiopedilum (paphs can't be cloned). 4N usually means the flowers will be better shaped, of a stronger color, and with a sturdier texture. An awarded cultivar is as close to a guarantee as possible that the green leaves you're looking at will make a nice flower, although remember that judging standards were different 100 years ago.

Hybrid Registration

So how does a plant get named? Suppose you have bloomed seedlings from an unnamed cross that the hybridizer has given you permission (preferably written) to name. You have to fill out a

form that asks for lots of information, including the parent plants of your new hybrid and 1st and 2nd choices for the grex name. This form gets sent with a small fee to the International Registration Authority for Orchid Hybrids, The Royal Horticultural Society, London. The International Orchid Registrar makes sure your form is complete and that you haven't chosen an invalid grex name.

What makes a name invalid? There are lots of rules. If you are serious about naming a plant or just seriously curious, check out the Handbook from the OSSB library. Otherwise, here are examples.

No Latinized names! Growers used to do this in the early days of orchid breeding (e.g., *Paph. Harrisianum* of 1869) until it was decided this was too confusing. No names containing utilitarian plant words like "grex" or "genus" or "species." No names that are too close to something already in existence, such as *Laelia* Gold Dawn and *Laelia* Golden Dawn. Long words or phrases are discouraged. But heck! Who wants a cattleya called Dimplomgartenbauinspektor other than the guy trying to name it after himself? (That is, by the way, a real example from the Handbook.) If you plan to name the cross after someone, be sure to get their permission or you might find them irate that you used the middle name they hate!

Even with all the rules and conventions, some orchid names can get pretty peculiar or entertaining.

Next time you're browsing at a nursery or show, take a look at a few tags. They might be good for some quick amusement!

Orchid Society of Santa Barbara
Heidi Kirkpatrick, Secretary
2687 Dorking Place
Santa Barbara, CA 93105