

# Orchid Society of Santa Barbara



**Meeting: Wednesday, August 13, 2003**

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

## Program

\*\*\*\*\* *Special International Speaker!* \*\*\*\*\*

**Olaf Gruss** will speak to us about phragmipediums

Our August speaker is the renown German orchid expert Olaf Gruss. Gruss is internationally recognized for his work with paphs, phrags and phals, including a book on the genus *Phalaenopsis*. He has authored or co-authored descriptions of a number of orchids, such as *Phrag. richteri*, *Phrag. dalessandroi*, *Paph. vietnamense*, *Paph. hangianum*, *Paph. tranlienianum*, *Phal. bastianii*, and *Kingidium hookerianum* – these are some of the hottest of the newly discovered orchids of our current era. He is a member of the editorial board of the journal of the German Orchid Society, “Die Orchidee.” Gruss resides in Germany and lectures throughout Europe, Japan, Taiwan and the US. We are particularly fortunate to welcome him as our guest speaker for August. Bring yourself and your friends to this special lecture. And don't forget your wallets! The raffle table will be supplied by Paphanatics.

## Announcements

- **Santa Barbara County Horticultural Society's Annual Plant Sale** will take place on September 11 at MacKenzie Park, from 9 am to 4 pm. Our own Don Brown and Norm Wieder

will be selling plants at the "hort sale."

- **Open House at OSSB member nursery Orchids of Los Osos** on August 30-31, 2003. The Orchid House, across the street from Orchids of Los Osos, also will have an open house.
- **AOS Judging** occurs three times a month in Southern California: First Monday at Quail Gardens in Encinitas; Second Monday at Huntinton Gardens in San Marino; Fourth Monday at Long Beach. Karen Muir, Pacific South Judging Region Chair, would like to remind us that anyone can bring plants to be judged at these venues in addition to at shows.

### Summary of the July 2003 Meeting

- President Jeff Thompson welcomed visitors and reminded everyone to donate to the special speakers fund.
- Michael Ling reported on the audit he and Joyce Wieder performed on the society's books, which were, of course, in order. The audit was from January 2000 through November 2001. Ling noted that he and Joyce were in awe of the diligence of our treasurer, Carole Cowan. The membership added their appreciation with a round of applause for Carole.
- AOS representative Al Svoboda reminded everyone that AOS members receive a subscription to the magazine *Orchids*; your editor notes that with its recent revision, *Orchids* has become a beautiful, glossy publication full of wonderful photos, interesting articles, and tempting ads.
- Need a 2004 calendar? Al Svoboda announced that the 2004 orchid calendar with photographs by Greg Alikas will be offered to societies at a 25% discount if purchased in a quantity of 25 or more. Talk to your society officers if you are interested in a calendar.
- For those who like to travel to see orchids, Al Svoboda has information on two upcoming orchid tours, one to Australia and the other to Ecuador. For more information, call Al at 969-4536.
- Thanks are due to members who brought plants for the OSSB display at this summer's Flower Show. Thanks to Jeff Thompson, Norm Wieder, Carole Cowan, Don Brown and Donna Grubisic.

### Program

Vice president Phil Watt introduced our July speaker, Michael Glikbarg of Orchids of Los Osos. Glikbarg bought a small nursery in 1979, specializing in miniature cymbidiums. Since then, he has diversified into odonts, Mexican species and zygos, with assorted other orchids in the mix. Glikbarg is a member of the Orchid Society of Santa Barbara.

Glikbarg spoke to us about fragrant orchids, which are particularly popular today. The key to fragrance at his nursery is that most are native to Mexico. In our region, most of these plants are best grown outdoors.

He began with an orchid familiar to many as the "coconut orchid," so called for its fragrance. *Maxillaria tenuifolia* can be a prodigious grower, but performs best outdoors in our area. In fact, Glikbarg noted that this species does not bloom well in the greenhouse. However, it will tolerate high summer temperatures (to 110F in the shade) and will come back after nights in the high 20s.

Another easy plant to grow and bloom is *Encyclia cochleata*. Glikbarg considers this a good beginner orchid as it will grow indoors or outdoors and blooms every four to six months. Several other encyclias do well outdoors, including the fragrant *Enc. radiata* (similar to *Enc. fragrans*) and the bright orange *Enc. vitellina*. The hybrid of these two species produces a yellowy-orange flower on an easier-to-grow plant.

Odontoglossums and their relatives are a specialty of Glikbarg's because they will bloom every six to nine months, even in the summer when little else is in bloom. The hybrids *Burr. Stephan Isler* and *Burr. Nellie Isler* are good growers, with the latter possessing a nice daytime fragrance. A more challenging former member of *Odontoglossum* is the renamed *Cuitlauzina pendula*. This plant with pendulous spikes of fragrant blush white flowers likes to be grown hanging in pots. Though it is tough to bloom every year, it is very hardy, tolerating down to 18F.

Zygopetalums are particularly fragrant orchids that make good companions for cymbidiums. Glikbarg says the key to good rebloom is location. Zygos need lots of air movement and slightly more shade than cymbidiums. They thrive on copious water and fertilizer. Zygos generally initiate spikes in July, so repotting must be done before then. In late summer, plants may benefit from the cooling of a late afternoon watering.

Glikbarg grows a number of beautiful paphiopedilums, but most prefer indoor or greenhouse conditions. However, complex hybrids, sometimes called "bulldogs," will grow outdoors if sheltered from frost.

Culturally, Glikbarg notes that orchids will grow in almost anything. However, he prefers bark mixes. He finds that silica is too heavy and stays too wet, coconut breaks down too quickly, and sphagnum dries out too much and makes repotting

tricky. His two keys for a good bark mix are obtaining quality bark (harder and harder these days) and using #3 perlite, which aerates the mix and does not break down.

Glikbarg fertilizes with Gro-More 6-30-30 or 20-

## The Genus *Orchis* and the First Orchid

By Heidi Kirkpatrick

This month's commentary concerns a genus not one of us in Santa Barbara grows or probably will ever grow in our collections. (Okay, some intrepid grower is about to email me about how wrong I am.) *Orchis* is a genus of almost 40 species that grow terrestrially in the temperate climates of Europe, the Middle East, north Africa, the Himalayas to Japan, and North America.

Why should you be interested in an orchid you may never see, much less grow?

Well, the flowers of many *Orchis* species are particularly interesting, the petals and sepals curling together like a hat and the complex lip reminiscent of the arms, torso and legs of a person.

But what sets *Orchis* apart is its distinguished role in orchid history. It is from this genus that the orchid family takes its name.

These species are deciduous plants that grow in woodlands and meadows. Spikes carry 5 to 20 flowers and appear in spring to early summer. Collectors grow them successfully in alpine conditions.

What caught the attention of the Greeks and their successors was the paired underground tubers, one currently blooming and one growing for the following year. These ovoid tubers looked like testicles to the ancient Greeks, whose word for testis was "orchis."

The "father of botany," Theophrastus (c. 372 – c. 287 B.C.), described an orchid he termed *orchis* in his *Enquiry into Plants*. Given the abundance of members of the genus in the Mediterranean, the plant under his consideration probably was what we today call *Orchis*.

The name stuck. Rather amazingly, it stuck for over two thousand years! Voila! The first orchid.

In all fairness, I must admit that *Orchis* was not the first orchid to appear in written literature. It was the first to be described in the West. The writings of Confucius (551 – 479 B.C.), however, reveal that orchids were familiar to the Chinese before the time of Theophrastus. According to Chinese folklore, orchids appear in even earlier works, now lost. Supposedly, the 28<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Emperor Shen Nung wrote a work on the use of plants, describing a bletilla and a dendrobium. Unfortunately for the Chinese, the names they chose did not filter into Western botany.

After Theophrastus, orchid history was not quite ready to relegate *Orchis* to the sidelines. In

20-20, both with micronutrients. He uses 1 tablespoon per gallon every 10 to 14 days. Every three weeks in the summer, he adds an ounce (two tablespoons) per gallon of Gro-More Seaweed Extract.

the first century A.D., the Greek botanist Dioscorides described some 500 plants in his *Materia medica*. Two of these he termed *orchis*, after Theophrastus.

As a surgeon in Nero's army, Dioscorides's chief concern was the use of plants to treat humans.

Treatment should be determined – so he believed – by what plant resembled the ailing portion of human anatomy. *Orchis* – testicle ... you can guess how medical practitioners viewed orchids!

Given the reverence of European philosophers for their Greek predecessors, this Dioscoridean "Doctrine of Signatures" held sway in Europe into the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Orchids, as represented in Europe by the genus *Orchis* and related genera, were thought to stimulate lust and aid male potency. Men who ate plump tubers supposedly had sons, while women who ate withered tubers had daughters.

This link between orchids and sexual intercourse was elaborated upon by Bock in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Growth of plants from seed was not understood. Bock asserted *Orchis* and similar genera arose from seminal secretions spilled in fields by mating animals.

Athanasius Kircher (1601 – 1680) got even more detailed. Since it was believed that bees came from excrement and carcasses of bulls, Kircher speculated that orchids resembling bees came from bull semen. Wasps supposedly were generated by horses, as were wasplike orchids.

The first English herbal, written in 1568 by Turner, and subsequent works, such as Langham's 1579 *The Garden of Health*, extended the use of *Orchis* or "Adder Grass" beyond matters sexual. The genus, particularly *Orchid odorata*, was good for consumption, fistula, flux, inflammation, conception, sores, and generating or quelling lust. One shudders to imagine what their concoctions tasted like, although Turner suggested the soaked tuber was quite palatable.

Eventually, the Doctrine of Signatures fell into disfavor and *Orchis* was off the hook as a medicine. The Turks continued to use the tubers to make a drink called salep, with the result that Turkish wild populations became overcollected. Europeans moved on to showier, more exotic plants from the tropics. But today we still call these plants "orchids" after a genus that first earned its name over 2000 years ago.

## **CALENDAR OF UPCOMING SHOWS**

The fall show schedule for the Pacific South Judging Region is out. Here is a list of AOS Judged shows for Fall 2003. Note that our show is on this list, too. If you cannot attend any of the others, be sure at least to support your society by coming to our show!

- **Autumn Splendor Fall Orchid Show – Cymbidium Society of America**  
*September 27-28, 2003* South Coast  
Botanical Gardens, Palos Verdes. Chair: Chuck Spain (562) 531-3018.
- **San Diego International Orchid Fair**  
*October 11-12, 2003* Del  
Mar Fairgrounds, Del Mar. Show Chair: John Walters (619) 286-1976.
- **East-West Orchid Show** *October*  
*17-19, 2003* New Otani  
Hotel & Garden, 120 South Los Angeles St., Los Angeles. Show Chair: Doug Conkin (810)  
585-1233.
- **Redlands Mall Orchid Show** *November*  
*8-9, 2003* Redlands Mall, 100  
Redlands Blvd., Redlands. Chair: Sandy Smith (909) 794-7426.
- **Orchid Society of Santa Barbara's Fall Orchid Show**  
*November 15-16, 2003*  
Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, Santa Barbara. Show Chair: Tom Ball (805)  
867-3503.

OSSB Officers for 2003

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

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