



Orchid Society of Santa Barbara

Meeting: Wednesday, May 11, 2005

MacKenzie Adult Building

at MacKenzie Park

3111 State Street (at Las Positas)

enter parking lot on Las Positas

Meeting begins at 7:30 pm

PROGRAM

Jim Rowley of Redondo Beach will speak about
Growing Orchids Hydroponically

Ready to hear about a different way of growing your orchids? Want to cut down on water costs and labor in your orchid collection? Come hear Jim Rowley speak about growing orchids hydroponically. Rowley, who sells media and other supplies for hydroponic growing, will also give a demonstration of this method. Our Vice President, Don Brown, says the plant table, from Cal-Orchid, will contain orchids suitable for hydroponic growing.

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, May 26, 2005 Horticulture Consortium of Santa Barbara Membership Mixer

5:30 pm - 8:30 pm. Casa Las Palmas at Chase Palm Park, 620 East Cabrillo Blvd. Celebrate 10 years of promoting horticulture with professionals, hobbyists, students and local agencies. Food, wine, raffle, brief presentation. Free, but RSVP to hcsbrsvp@hotmail.com or 570-7142. For more info, contact Billy Goodnick at 729-1646 or billygoodnick@yahoo.com

July 8-10, 2005

Santa Barbara Orchid Estate International Orchid Fair -- Grand Anniversary!

Friday and Saturday 9 am - 5 pm. Sunday 10 am - 4 pm. Free admission; parking \$5. Earl Warren Showgrounds, Santa Barbara. www.orchidfair.com

Summary of the April 2005 Meeting

- **President Phil Watt** welcomed guests, including Amy Duran and Nicholas Perooco.
- **Fall Show Volunteers Needed.** It may seem early to call for volunteers for the fall show -- but not if the volunteer is doing publicity! President Watt announced that OSSB needs volunteers to handle publicity for our show, and someone to design the poster. Please call Phil Watt at 967-7565 if you would like more information or if you have some good publicity contacts for OSSB. For those looking ahead to the OSSB fall show, the theme will be "A Holiday of Orchids."

Program

OSSB member Bill Robson introduced our April speaker, Lance Birk. Robson described Birk as an orchid hunter who traveled with other orchid luminaries such as Gary Gallup, Ray Rands, and the great amateur Dr. Jack Fowlie (considered the leading orchid authority of the 1960s) during the 60s, 70s and 80s.

Birk calls himself the "last orchid hunter," which is also the title of a book in progress; he has authored three other books. He considers himself the last of the amateur orchid growers who populated the 20th century prior to the introduction of strict orchid importation rules. He and Fowlie and Dr. George Kennedy were amateurs who collected orchids to learn about them, not to sell them. There were other collectors, but many would go to "Manila or someplace" and buy their plants at flower markets or from a tracker. Birk found his plants himself, in the wild, often at great risk and expense.

Birk got started in orchids because he took his dog to Ted Fischer's dog grooming service. Fischer was an avid grower who liked the attention received by his catterleyas. Through Fischer, Birk became part of a small group of growers, including Catherine Adams and Larry Heuer. This group decided to form the Orchid Society of Santa Barbara. Thus, Lance Birk is one of the founding members of our society!

Birk began his orchid hunting trips by going to Mexico with Gary Gallup. Birk would consult Paul Gripp, whom he described the mentor of his early years, about where to find various species, then travel to Mexico and Central America to see them. Sometimes the trips were more than a little hazardous; at one point, the Guatemalan military shot at them. The Guatemalan Air Force almost arrested

them because they were talking with a Russian pilot - not long after the Cuban missile crisis.

At other times, Birk found many orchids. A trip along the Devil's Backbone in a Mercedes Gullwing resulted in three new orchid species. Under the direction of Dr. Fowlie, he found *Catasetum* (now *Clowesia*) *glauco glossom* in its natural habitat

After Mexico, Birk, Gallup and Fowlie traveled to Brazil, finding that rupicolous laelias did grow on rocks, but with moist pads of moss. In 1973, Birk and Fowlie went to Thailand, where they had the fortune to be hosted by Dr. Pisit, a personal friend of the king. This connection allowed them to travel to such forbidden places as the Birds Nest Islands.

At this point, Birk and Fowlie were interested in paphs, but the literature about them was poor, so the hunters were in search of paphs in the wild. After their experiences in Brazil with rupicolous laelias, they expected similar conditions for the rock growing paphs. They found paphs on moldy limestone with acidic moss, often on inaccessible islands undercut by the ocean into mushroom shapes.

Paph. bellatulum in particular interested them because few people could grow it. They discovered that the species grew at 3-4000 feet elevations in hot tropical days, but with cool to cold nights. They traveled upriver in search of paphs, but by the time they reached the Bhumibol Dam, Birk had contracted cholera. Fortunately for him, Dr. Fowlie was by vocation a medical doctor.

The next trip was to Sumatra, where Birk was on the alert for *Amorphophallus titanum*, producer of the world's largest flower ... that smells like a dead horse. Bob Reed, then curator of orchids at the Smithsonian, wanted one badly enough that he promised Birk anything in his greenhouse in exchange. When Birk found the plant, which had been lost for about a century, he was looking at something with a 15 foot stem and a 15 foot segregated leaf -- clearly not something easily transported. So he dug up three babies near the mother plant; he considers this one of his best finds.

Though he was by now an experienced orchid hunter, there was still personal risk in his trips. He met Dr. Fowlie in Thailand only a month after the US left Cambodia -- a dangerous time for Westerners in that part of the world -- and they found themselves hiding from military ships. On one of his last trips, to Peru, the mules of the muleteer he had hired were shot by terrorists before Birk could make use of them. Fortunately, Birk lived to tell his tales of orchid adventure!

Thanks to Our Donors!

As I promised last month, here is contact information for vendors who donated to us at the spring show. Look for them at the summer Orchid Fair!

Andy's Orchids Inc.
734 Ocean View Avenue
Encinitas, CA 92024
888-514-2639
www.andysorchids.com
open by appointment only

Aurora Media
2051 Shoreline Drive, Suite 115
Alameda, CA 94501
www.aurora-media.net
510-717-0843

Bangkok Botanical Garden
39333 Colleen Way
Temecula, CA 92592
951-699-2299

Best of Thai Orchids
33/111 Chan Rd. Thungwadorn
Sathorn, Bangkok Thailand 10120
562-440-6009 (USA)
email: boto2002@ksc.th.com

Blossoming Orchid Nursery
O. O. Box 96
Aromas, CA 95004-0096
831-726-2429

C. Grows
11545 Kagel Canyon St.
Lake View Terrace, CA 91342
818-890-9588
www.bestcymbidium.us

Carmela Orchids
P. O. Box 277
Hakalau, Hawaii 96710
808-963-6189
www.carmelaorchids.net
(Ask Heidi to see a copy
of their spring price list.)

Casa de las Orquideas
Loren and Nancy Batchman
858-755-7572
www.orquideas.com
open by appointment only

Down Under Native Orchids
PO Box 3630 Wamberal
NSW 2260
+61 2 4385-4552
www.duno.com.au

Ecuagenera Cia. Ltda.
PO Box 01011110
Cuneca - Ecuador
593-7-2255237
www.ecuagenera.com

Evergreen Agri-Tech Inc.
13166 East End Ave.
Chino, CA 91710
909-902-5988
email: egagtech@yahoo.com

Gibbel Nurseries
2046 Lomita Blvd.
Lomita, CA 90107
Th-Sat 9-4
310-784-0020
www.orchidadventures.net

Hatfield Orchids
Ventura, CA
805-644-8413
www.hatfieldorchids.com

J&T Tropical, Inc.
486 Ladera St.
Monterey Park, CA 91254
562-234-7779

J&M Orchids

Kawamoto Orchid Nursery
2630 Waiomao Rd.
Honolulu, HI 96816
808-732-5808
www.kawamotoorchids.com

Long N'Go Orchids
1118 W. 126th St.
Los Angeles, CA 90044
323-777-3400
ngobao@pacbell.net

Orchids of Los Osos
1614 Sage Avenue
Los Osos, CA 93402
805-528-0181
www.orchidsoflososos.com
M-F 9-4, Sat 10:30-3:30

SLO Gardens
955 Branch Mill Rd.
Arroyo Grande, CA 93420
805-489-3319
www.slogardens.com

South Pacific Orchids

Taeon Orchids
2801 Etting Road
Oxnard, CA 93033
805-986-0775
www.orchidsfarm.com

Tange Design
15939 Canyon Creek Rd.
Cerritos, CA 90703
562-607-8996
info@tangedesign

Tayama Greenhouses, Inc.
710 Requeza Street
Encinitas, CA 92024
760-753-6206
www.tayama.com

Valley Orchids, Inc.
635 Miramonte Ave.
Morgan Hill, CA 95037
408-778-3913
www.valleyorchids.com

Zuma Canyon Orchids
5949 Bonsall Drive
Malibu, CA 90265
310-457-9771
zumacanyonorchids@compuserve.com

Menifee Orchids

The Magic Recipe of Growing Orchids

Ultimately, we are all trying to grow our orchids in such a fashion that they 1) thrive and 2) bloom. Is there a magic recipe for this? Depends on which expert you consult. Our March speaker, Harry Phillips, prefers mounting orchids (and likes watering in the afternoon and evening to keep plants wet longer). Our April speaker, Lance Birk, visited orchids in the wild to see how they grew in nature. He published his insights on paph habitats and growing conditions in a delightful book that may be found in the OSSB library. My upcoming editorial articles will report on last year's Orchid Digest speakers day, during which several respected growers discussed their preferred orchid growing methods (sphagnum moss, diatomaceous rock). Many excellent growers still use bark, though they grumble about its lack of staying quality.

Is there a magic recipe? Probably not. But I would hazard to guess that all good growers share a common trait. They spend a lot of time tending their plants -- repotting, watering, fertilizing, simply observing. For those of us who don't have lots of time to give to our orchids ... well, we struggle along, and when something actually blooms, it is *really* special to us!

- One of our April visitors, Amy Duran, was wearing beautiful orchid jewelry of her own design. Check out her web site at www.orchidfreak.com.
- Congratulations to April show table winners: 1st-Jeff Thompson's *Ansellia africana*, 2nd-Dick Swain's *Cym. Valley Zenith* x *Cym. devonianum*, 3rd - Josh Davis tied himself with *Paph. rothschildianum* and *Masd. caudata*
- Check out our web site for Meryl Wieder's photos of the spring show! www.west.net/~orchidsb
- OSSB Officers for 2005: President - Phil Watt Vice President - Don Brown
 Treasurer - Angela Watt Secretary - Heidi Kirkpatrick