



Orchid Society of Santa Barbara

Meeting: Wednesday, September 14, 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 Kotsybar of Chaotic Exotics will speak about
Orchid Oddities and Evolution

It has been some time since Jim Kotsybar treated us to his delightfully entertaining discussion of blue cattleyas. At the September meeting, Kotsybar will investigate the wild and woolly world of peculiar orchids and how orchids have evolved so differently from other plants. Come learn about the family of plants we all adore. Kotsybar is co-owner of Chaotic Exotics, in Lompoc. They have a variety of different orchids, but specialize in blue cattleyas and slipper orchids. And don't forget to support your society: Buy raffle tickets!

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

September 21, 2005 **Santa Barbara Cymbidium Society Monthly Meeting.**

George Hatfield will speak on pendulous cymbidiums. 7:30 pm, Carpinteria Public Library, Carpinteria.

September 24-25, 2005 **South Bay Orchid Society Fall Show.**

South Coast Botanic Garden, 26300 Crenshaw Blvd., Palos Verdes. (310)883-1918 or marlacorey@sbcglobal.net.

October 12-16, 2005 **Sonoma County Orchid Society Show and AOS Members Meeting.**

Also Slipper Orchid Alliance, Pleurothallid Alliance, International Phalaenopsis Alliance, Orchid Digest Corporation. Register for lectures or just attend the show and sale. www.sonomaorchids.com or 707-528-1671.

October 14-16, 2005 **San Diego International Orchid Fair.**

San Diego Fairgrounds, Del Mar, CA. Contact www.qbgardens.org or 760-436-3036 ext.206

October 21-23, 2005 **Southland Orchid Show at The Huntington.**

The Huntington Library and Botanical Gardens, 1151 Oxford Rd., San Marino, CA. Contact 909-626-8244 or wardbrendar@hotmail.com

November 5-6, 2005 **Santa Barbara Orchid Estate Fall Open House.**

\$7.50 specials, cymbidium season kickoff, silent auction, *Laelia anceps* parade.

Summary of the August 2005 Meeting

- **President Phil Watt** welcomed guests and new members.
- **Refreshments.** Thanks to Loretta Berlin for bringing the drink supplies in August. Betty Watt celebrated her August birthday by bringing a cake for the membership!
- Member **Terri Mershon** is looking for repotting help and will share divisions with her helper. Call Terri if you can help (969-7350).
- The society's Special Speakers Fund will help pay for Weegie Caughlin, our October speaker.

Program

Our August speakers were our own Don Brown and Josh Davis, who spoke about some of their methods for successful orchid growing. Both of these hobbyists do quite well, as anyone who has seen their plants knows.

Josh Davis began by speaking on how he grows beautiful masdevallias and draculas outdoors here in Santa Barbara. He has been growing orchids for five years and was enticed into specializing in masdevallias by our own Norm Wieder, another marvelous grower.

Masdevallias and draculas are cloud forest natives that like to stay moist and cool. Josh has several tricks for making the most of his conditions. His best trick is that he uses good water, since masdevallias are very sensitive to salts and minerals in their water. He buys water from supermarket reverse osmosis machines at 25 cents a gallon. This water has less than 100 ppm (parts per million) of dissolved salts; as a result, Josh sees little to no salt buildup on his pots.

To raise humidity, Josh wets the floors with tap water every morning. He also has sheets of Spanish moss, purchased inexpensively from the farmers' market; these he also wets every morning to help provide humidity.

Plants are grown outdoors under shade cloth and potted in sphagnum moss. They receive less light than cattleyas. If a plant receives too much light, its leaves may brown a little, but Josh finds it still blooms.

Since masdevallias and draculas thrive in cool, wet weather, Josh does not shelter them from winter rains. When there is no rain, he waters two to three times a week, depending on how fast the moss is drying. If it dries completely, it is very difficult to rewet; Josh recommends dunking the whole pot and letting it soak.

Since these orchids do not receive many nutrients in nature, Josh does not fertilize often. When he does, he likes to use seaweed extract sparingly. Too much fertilizer can compromise the

potting medium. When repotting, Josh will smell the sphagnum to see if it has gone bad; if it smells good, he may not remove all the moss.

Your editor's favorite quotation from Josh: "What I've got is diligence." His plants demonstrate his attention delightfully.

Don Brown spoke about growing seedlings from flask without a greenhouse. His first attempt was notable for the speed with which the seedlings died, but now he finds he has about a 2% mortality rate from flask, compared to about 10% among those purchased as mature plants.

Why choose flasks? Don notes that they are cheaper per plant. A hobbyist who buys a flask is gambling on finding a really special plant in that flask, the kind of plant that is very expensive to buy once it has proven itself. Don also finds pleasure in seeing the variation of seedlings from a flask, in addition to a particular enjoyment in watching a seedling grow to blooming size. Finally, Don is convinced that very small orchids are more adaptable to diverse environments than fully matured plants.

To deflask, Don likes to open the flask up to a day early to allow the seedlings to acclimate. With some flasks, it is possible to get seedlings out by swirling some water into the flask to loosen the mass of roots and agar, then turning the flask on its side to tease the plants out. Other flasks need to be broken, such as with a clean steel rod pushed against the bottom of the flask from the inside. Don prefers to rinse off the agar (growing medium in the flask) to avoid mold. Note that flasks that have traveled by airplane probably have been contaminated by pressure changes and should be potted up.

Plants are potted together in three inch pots. Don puts a layer of non-biodegradable styrofoam at the bottom and uses a mix of fine bark, fine charcoal, and coarse perlite. The community pots (or compots) go into a clear plastic container one to two feet tall, with a clear lid to maintain humidity and allow in light. In the bottom of the plastic container are saucers of water for added humidity; the bottoms of the pots are raised above the level of the water.

Seedlings should be kept warm, at least at 72°F, which Don accomplishes by using heating mats, such as those found in Charley's Greenhouse Supply (pg. 79 of current catalog). In the spring and summer, compots stay in the plastic case in his house for about a month before Don shifts them outdoors. If the weather is getting colder, the compots spend the winter in the plastic case before moving outdoors.

Don picks flasks with no sign of rot in which seedlings show good leaf and root growth. He prefers larger seedlings. If agar has gotten onto the leaves, he deflasks.

Announcements

- **Welcome New Members!** The society is pleased to welcome the following new members. Bryce and Nancy Augustine, 5393 Agana Dr., Santa Barbara, CA 93111. Nicholas Perocco, 5731 San Simeon Dr., Santa Barbara, CA 93111, perocol@cox.net. Stephen Worthington, 1 Rubio Rd., Santa Barbara, CA 93103, telephone 965-8820. Please add our new members to your rosters.
- **Refreshments at Monthly Meetings.** The society would like to *thank* Elwira Paul for making a donation to the Refreshment Fund. September treats will be provided by Elizabeth Ralston and beverages by Ed and Shirlie Carter.
- **August Donations.** The society would like to *thank* several people for donating plants to the August raffle table. Visitor Norito Hasegawa of Paphanatics provided the flask broken by Don Brown during his talk; the plants went onto the raffle table and were won by a delighted Shirlie Carter. Jeff Thompson brought plants he has been housing since they were donated by vendors at the spring show. Don Thorn donated plants of his own to the raffle table. And thank you to our August speakers, Don Brown and Josh Davis, who gave us a delightful, informative lecture without damaging the society's speakers fee budget.
- **Moving Sale of Indoor Growing Setup.** Seller has \$5000 invested, but will sell for \$2500 or best offer. All items were used for less than a year. The setup includes one 1000 watt high pressure sodium lamp, complete; one 1000 watt metal halide lamp, complete; one 400 watt metal halide complete; one Sun Circle Light Mover with two arms; one Light Rail 2.5 light mover; one Green Air MCC-1 controller; one Green Air CO₂ monitor + controller; one Green Air CO₂ generator (nat gas); one Green Air CycleStat 4 w/sensor; one Green Air PH/PPM/TDS meter; one Agrosun gold MH to HPS conv bulb; one Sylvania Plantastar 1000W bulb; 16 water pumps rated 350 gph; Botanicare nutrients; extra bulbs; air pumps; growing media; more. Call 805-231-7541 for information.

A Report on the 2005 Orchid Digest Speakers Day

By Heidi Kirkpatrick

Okay, I admit it. I love orchid lectures. There is always something new to be learned, something exciting to try with my own orchids, something to put on my wish list -- even if I have no real expectation of getting it. I love the slides, I love the arcane discussions of breeding lines (whether I get lost or not), I love the contentious questions, I love the growing advice, I love the travelogues, I love the science.

The Orchid Digest 2005 Speakers Day had all of the above. Attendees heard about *Phragmipedium* breeding and about breeding trends in *Paphiopedilum* section *Brachypetalum*. We saw how slipper orchids are grown in Europe and followed one of the foremost orchid taxonomists on a scientific tour of China. And we heard some pointed questions when the Chief of Scientific Authority at US Fish and Wildlife Service tried to unravel the regulations governing orchid import/export.

Over the next few months, I intend to report some of the highlights from these lectures. This

month, I'll begin with Glen Decker's discussion of "Slipper Orchids in Europe."

Decker started his slide tour in Holland with a commercial grower that wholesales 40 million plants a year. Before being released, clones are subjected to 8 years of testing with different fertilizer programs. Only phalaenopsis crosses that produce two spikes, for example, are deemed worthy of wholesaling.

Greenhouses are all automated for optimum growing conditions and best sanitation, with no people necessary in the growing areas. Benches are moved by conveyor belt out of the growing areas to the people. Semi-automated potting machines allow three people to oversee the repotting of 3000 plants per hour!! A camera analyzes each plant and sorts it into one of five different sizes. Each bench is then coded for size, which determines when the plants are ready to ship. These orchids then go to smaller growers that finish the plants and move them to the flower markets.

Decker noted that at smaller commercial

growers in Holland and Germany, light levels are very low. In Holland, shading is at 95%, producing 550-650 foot-candles for paphs. But summer days provide 16 hours of daylight, which means the total amount of light per plant is high. Growers recommended 16 hour days when growing plants under lights.

Decker observed that European bark is horrible, worse than that found in the US. Repotting, however, is on a 9 to 12 month cycle. Some growers use cushion foam mixed with the bark to help aeration. Phrags often are grown in rockwool, which sometimes develops a layer of black slime on top. Some German growers are experimenting with young limestone rock. The renown Eric Young Foundation

grows paphs in bark and phrags in rockwool.

European growers seem particularly concerned with root growth. In paphs, they believe the root tips absorb most of the water, so lots of new roots allow the plants to absorb more water.

The central flower distributor in Holland is stunningly large -- in a warehouse a quarter mile long! This distributor supplies most of the European market. (For those of you who travel, Decker reported that there are tours of this flower market, which is only 20 minutes from Amsterdam.) European tastes tend toward compact plants. They are also growing a number of long-petalled phrag hybrids.

- **August Show Table Winners.** First place went to Jeff Thompson's *C. harrisoniana x L. sincorana*. Dick Swain's *Onc. flexuosum* earned second place honors. Third went to Jeff Thompson again, for his *Aerangis articulata*. Others who brought in plants to share included Josh Davis, Bryan Davis, Don Brown, and guest Norito Hasegawa. (Don't forget to sign up if you bring in a plant to show!)
- **August Show Table Report.** Guest Norito Hasegawa brought in a lovely sampling of *Paphiopedilum* hybrids. Note that in primary hybrids, *Paph. delenatii* as a parent knocks out yellows and greens, resulting in whites and pinks. The species *Paph. armeniacum* and *Paph. micranthum* tolerate freezing if the roots are dry. Dick's *Onc. flexuosum* will take to 23°F. Don Brown's *Paph. tigrinum* does well cool; Don thinks it grows further north than any paph. And don't cut the spikes of *Nagellia purpurea*; this species reblooms from the same spike!
- Check out our web site! www.west.net/~orchidsb
- OSSB Officers for 2005: President - Phil Watt Vice President - Don Brown
 Treasurer - Angela Watt Secretary - Heidi Kirkpatrick