



# Orchid Society of Santa Barbara

*Meeting: Wednesday, November 9, 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**

Our own **Phil Rietz** will speak about  
**Building a Backyard Greenhouse**

Want to hear some practical experience about building a hobby greenhouse. Our own Phil Rietz will talk about his experiences building his greenhouse. Rietz began growing when he was in the Air Force stationed in Okinawa, Japan. His wife bought him his first orchid, a white phal, at an orchid show, and he was hooked. In Okinawa, they grew outdoors. In Lompoc, he grows outdoors and in his greenhouse. Rietz is a founding member of the Coastal Valley Orchid Society and has served as its president since its inception in 2002.

**Fall Show Announcements**

With our fall show just over a month away, it is time to concentrate on preparing your plants for the show and signing up to help with the show. The following are some useful items of information.

- Theme: *A Holiday of Orchids*
- Set up is 12-5 on Friday, December 9. The society needs volunteers to be present at setup.
- See Angela Watt to receive your orange tags for selling plants. Tags should have: your initials, the price of the plant, and what number the plant is on the list of your sale plants you give to Angela.
- Volunteers are needed for the information booth.
- The society will be installing a display, so we need your plants for the show!

## Summary of the September 2005 Meeting

- **President Phil Watt** welcomed guests Bob Asbell, Tom Miller, Ralph Kashima, Marian Kauffman, Bettie Dullea.
- **Fall Show News:** President Watt reminded the membership that this year's show is themed "A Holiday of Orchids." See the announcements section for more on the show.
- **Paul Gripp** reported on the results of the nominating committee, which consisted of Paul and of **Randall Umland**. The nominees for OSSB officers for 2006 are
  - President: Don Brown
  - Vice President: Josh Davis
  - Treasurer: Angela Watt
  - Secretary: Heidi Kirkpatrick
- Thanks to the Carters, the Claytons, Carrie Brown, and Angela Watt for refreshments.

### Program

Vice President Don Brown introduced our October speaker, Weegie Caughlan, award-winning cymbidium hobbyist. This four-time SBIOS Grand Champ winner spoke to us what makes a winning cymbidium. Caughlan described herself as a totally passionate cymbidium grower, and noted that, "You're never too old to have a passion."

Caughlan began by addressing what makes a cymbidium a winner. This is not as straightforward a subject as it might seem. Judges have different standards from hobbyists who have different standards from commercial growers. Hobbyists often are attracted to a wide variety of plants, while novice hobbyists are pleased with anything that grows. Commercial hybridizers are driven by profit, and they know that color is the first thing people usually see.

Caughlan, however, looks at form first. To her, the form of a cymbidium flower is paramount. Cymbidiums should be saucered as opposed to cupped, or species. (Saucered means the lip is visible from the side.)

Then comes color. Caughlan likes to be able to name the color of a flower, e.g., rose, white, green. Overlays are fine, but must be clear. If the color is so muddy that it is difficult to describe, Caughlan is unimpressed.

For the presentation of the whole plant, Caughlan likes to see flower counts of at least eight per spike; ten flowers are preferable. The stem should be tall enough to lift the flowers over the foliage. Pendulous flowers should be separated,

rather than forming a clump.

When Caughlan exhibits, she tries to present something the public will like and something the judges want to see. However, she acknowledges that she prefers to bring prized plants to a judging center; it is too easy for good flowers to get overlooked in a large show.

Judges are supposed to judge orchids by predetermined standards. AOS judges look for progeny that are improvements over the parents. The CSA judges to perfection. Unfortunately, it is a fact of life that judging is not always consistent and that different judges in the same judging system often are attracted by different qualities.

Caughlan showed a number of slides of awarded plants of the past 15 years, noting that the last five years of cymbidium breeding seems not to have brought particular improvement, with the possible exception of what is coming out of Australia and New Zealand. For example, awarded orchids in Japan tend to have flowers rather close to the foliage that are crowded on the stem and often do not have good form.

From Australia, Caughlan showed award winners such as *Cym.* Spotted Leopard 'Jack' which had nice color and form. Caughlan noted that any awarded *Cym.* John Wooden is fine. This flower has spots and stripes on a relatively flat flower.

The American awards from the last five years were a mixed bag. Caughlan pronounced *Cym.* Pepperpuss and *Cym.* Mem. Giam-tuiyen Wong as unawardable; the latter was pretty and floriferous, but with starry flowers. *Cym.* Cranberry Velvet 'Gidget' had one of the roundest flowers and was not cupped. *Cym.* Royale Fair 'Number Five' was a "gorgeous, clear green." *Cym.* Kirby Lesh 'Cinnabar' with its huge flowers and "great color" has just been meristemmed.

Looking back to the 90s, Caughlan found far more attractive breeding. She described the large-flowered *Cym.* Icho Tower 'Trinity' as a great parent. It has yellow flowers with a red lip. *Cym.* Dorothy Stockstill earned accolades as the best pendulous red. Caughlan considered *Cym.* Little Black Sambo 'Bob' better than other red minis of the 2000s.

There are a number of unawarded plants that Caughlan considered very good. She described *Cym.* (Via Ambarino x Icho Tower) as a "dynamite" yellow that produced 14 flowers on a first bloom seedling. *Cym.* Via Del Playa 'Cinnabar' blooms in December with small but lovely round flowers, white with pale pink stripes and a dark lip.

{For a complete list of Weegie Caughlan's slides, contact Heidi Kirkpatrick, [hkorchid@juno.com](mailto:hkorchid@juno.com).}

## The 2005 Orchid Digest Speakers Day, Part 3: Phillip Cribb on Orchids in China

By Heidi Kirkpatrick

Harold Koopowitz, who is editor of the beautiful *Orchid Digest* magazine and no slouch in the orchid department, described the keynote speaker of the 2005 Orchid Digest Speakers Day as a taxonomic botanist who is enormously influential in many aspects of the orchid world. Phillip Cribb is Deputy Director of the Herbarium at Kew, Director of the Orchid Herbarium, and on many international committees.

I have been fortunate enough to hear Cribb speak twice now and have enjoyed his lectures enormously both times. He is a very polished speaker with a great deal of information to convey. I came away from both of his talks with the sense that I had learned a great deal.

Cribb spoke in July about orchids (and plants in general) in China. He was first invited to China as a scientist in 1983 and has been back several times since then, making him an expert not only on the orchids found in China but on the sort of habitats where they are found.

He began his lecture by answering a question I've long had about China and horticulture, which may be why I have a bit of a tendency to gush about him as a speaker.

Why the heck is it that so many of the prizes of horticulture seem to come from Asia? Was it the boredom of familiarity that drove the Europeans all over the globe in search of plants in the 1800s? Admittedly, China is big - 5000 km north to south and 5500 km east to west. But is it really so interesting horticulturally, or has its isolation given it the desirability of the unobtainable?

It turns out that China really does have a lot to lure the plant lover. Its flora are twice as rich as North America's (including Mexico) and three times as rich as Europe's. The British Isles, of which Cribb is a native, boast 1400 native species of plants. China dwarfs this number with 25,000 species of higher plants; 1300 of these are orchids.

Why are the flora of China so very diverse?

Ice Ages exterminated many species in other parts of the world. But China's topography is one of deep valleys and rugged mountains. Elevations can go from 600 meters to 6000 meters in a mere 20 kilometers. The great rivers of China carved deep valleys through the mountains, and these valleys protected many species during the Ice Ages.

The many river valleys also mean many different habitats, each slightly different than the next. Some plants are widespread through China, but many are endemic to small regions, even single valleys. North-south mountains in some areas block monsoons, leaving wet valleys on one side and arid

valleys on the other.

Genetic drift is also evident among species in Asia. It is not uncommon to find populations of an orchid species separated by 100 miles; often the two different populations have begun to look rather different from each other. Today, they might be considered forms of the same species. In the future, perhaps they will be considered separate species. For the taxonomist, as Cribb reported, seeing the variation in a species in its natural habitat allows a better understanding of the limits of what makes that species.

Orchids in many parts of China and Viet Nam are often found in regions of limestone cliffs, which are alkaline. And yet, in the Jade Dragon Mountains, which reach 5000 meters and more, there are abundant rhododendrons, known in horticulture for loving acid soil. Cribb's visits to the area taught him that the area has abundant rainfall, which tends to produce acid soil. Orchids in these areas, like the rhododendrons, are growing in the acid soil atop the limestone mountains.

Among the many orchids discussed by Cribb are the cypripediums, cold weather relatives of the paphiopedilums. In one valley in northwest Yunnan, there are twelve cypripedium species, including *Cyp. guttatum*. This species is also found in Alaska, and is pollinated by a solitary bee. China is also home to the rarely seen *Cyp. palanshonense*, a five inch tall plant with wonderful plum colored flowers.

Pleione populations in China exhibit much more color variation than seen in Europe or the US. Some such as *Pleione aurita*, with its showy pink flower, even grow as epiphytes. Cribb noted that the bicolors and yellows and other novelties found in Chinese pleione hybrids should intrigue horticulturists in the West, for whom pleiones are already popular garden plants.

Warmer regions in southern China are home to dendrobiums, such as *Den. nobile*, now rare because it is collected for medicine (cough problems). Growing on limestone cliffs is *Den. loddegesii*, also heavily collected for medicine.

Near Burma, Cribb encountered populations of *Paph. bellatulum*, *Paph. armeniacum* and *Paph. malipoense* on unstable limestone mountains. Five or six paph species can be found on the north slopes of limestone pinnacles in southern China, growing amongst rhododendrum scrub. Some species are heavily collected for international trade. The most common still found in the wild, cascading on limestone cliffs, is *Paph. hirsutissimum*. Second most common is *Paph. concolor*, often growing with their roots in narrow cracks in the rock. *Paph.*

*henryanum* and *Paph. helenae* often grow together in deep shade on vertical cliffs, though the latter has been mostly collected out.

Some paphs are fortunate; a government mandated orchid preserve contains a population of 10,000 *Paph. hirsutissimum* plants. The newly

discovered *Paph vietnamense* is not so lucky. Populations of this striking species were some 35 km from Hanoi and remained undiscovered until four or five years ago. Now, those plants have been completely stripped from the wild.

#### CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

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

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

**December 10-11, 2005 Orchid Society of Santa Barbara Orchid Show and Sale.**

At the Museum of Natural History. There will be volunteer, plant display, and plant selling opportunities!

- **October Show Table Winners.** First place went to James Merriman's gorgeous comparison of *C. Portia* and *C. Porcia*, both *C. bowringiana* hybrids. Josh Davis won second place with his *L. pumila*. Third place was a four way tie between Bryan Davis (*Onc. Jiyhbao Gold 'Tainan'*), Norm Wieder (*Epi porphyreum*), Ed and Shirly Carter (*Vanda rothschildiana*) and Don Brown (*Pot. Coral Queen x Ctna. Keith Roth*). Thanks also to Jeff Thompson and Eugene Hagerty for bringing plants to the show table.
- **Refreshments for November.** Thanks to Ed and Shirly Carter (drinks) and Marie Sue Parsons (snacks) for volunteering to bring the November refreshments.
- Check out our web site! [www.west.net/~orchidsb](http://www.west.net/~orchidsb)
- OSSB Officers for 2005:      President - Phil Watt      Vice President - Don Brown  
   Treasurer - Angela Watt      Secretary - Heidi Kirkpatrick