



# Orchid Society of Santa Barbara

*Meeting: Wednesday, July 12, 2006*

*We have returned to*

## **Louise Lowry Davis Recreation Center**

**1232 De La Vina** (at De La Vina and Victoria)

**Meeting begins at 7:30 pm**

### **PROGRAM**

**Brian Gerhard** from Down Under Native Orchids will speak about  
**The Ease of Growing Australian Native Dendrobium Hybrids and Species Orchids**

Much of the orchid growing climate in Australia is similar to what we have here in Santa Barbara. As a result, Australian species and their hybrids make excellent plants for Santa Barbara. Come hear an expert in this wonderful group of orchids tell us what is easy for us to grow. Brian Gerhard, with his wife Phena, owns Down Under Native Orchids, one of the leaders in breeding Australian species and their hybrids. Gerhard, who will be at the Orchid Fair, will tell us about some of the delightful orchids being produced in the Southern Hemisphere. Be sure to save some money for the meeting, because Gerhard will be bringing sales and raffle plants. This month's program is supported in part by the Special Speakers Fund.

### **Calendar**

*July 7-9, 2006*

#### **26<sup>th</sup> Annual Santa Barbara Orchid Estate International Orchid Fair**

Earl Warren Showgrounds, Fri & Sat 9-5, Sun 10-4. Free admission, \$5 parking. [www.sborchid.com](http://www.sborchid.com)

Be sure to visit Cal-Orchid and Fair sponsor Santa Barbara Orchid Estate, which will be open during the Fair.

*July 11, 2006*

#### **Santa Barbara Cymbidium Society Monthly Meeting**

This meeting is on a special day to accommodate Ross Tucker of Tuckers Orchid Nursery in New Zealand.

Meetings are at 7:30 pm at the Carpinteria Public Library, 5141 Carpinteria Ave., Carpinteria.

## Summary of the June 2006 Meeting

- **President Don Brown** thanked Lana Rose and Art Denk for bringing refreshments to the June meeting.

### Program

Vice President Carole Thompson introduced our June speaker, Hendrik van der Hoven of South Africa, who spoke to us about wild orchids from the Cape Peninsula and Table Mountain. Van der Hoven has traveled all over his homeland in search of wild orchids, and his photographs of unusual species were a treat.

The Cape Peninsula is a region of predominantly winter rainfall and dry summers. Annual rainfall can range from five to one hundred inches depending on location. Since the region used to be wetter and more tropical in the distant past, the orchids may be relics of this wetter era. Many orchids are bee (not honeybee) or fly pollinated, while a few are moth pollinated. And there are a great many terrestrial orchids found in South Africa - some 250 species.

Most are deciduous, like the many bulb species that share the area. Some, like a number of disas, find summer moisture by living in or near streams of mountain snowmelt. Other species depend upon periodic brush fires and do not bloom well if fires do not clear their habitats every fifteen years or so. Van der Hoven noted that some experiments suggest plants respond to chemicals in the smoke from brush fires and to the surge of phosphates that leach out of the soil in a few seasons.

Unfortunately, many habitats have been lost to farming, but wild orchids can still be found. Van der Hoven noted that one can begin a search for orchids from the roadside. Among the many species and genera he discussed are the following:

- The genus *Disperis* - *Disperis capensis* is one of the first terrestrial orchids to bloom each season. *Disperis cucullata*, like others of the genus, is small and can be hard to find among dense vegetation. *Disperis purpurata* is a two inch plant that produces brilliant fuchsia flowers with tiny emerald-green spots; it can be found under bushes.
- The genus *Satyrium* - *Satyrium corrifolium* is a large, easy-to-find plant with flowers ranging from bright yellow to deep orange. In contrast, *Satyrium pumilum* flowers at ground level. Its fly pollinators are attracted by its foul smell. After the flowers are pollinated, the spike elongates. *Satyrium ligulatum* looks wilted even when the flowers are in their prime, but *Satyrium carneum* as attractive, large, shell to dark pink flowers. This species is difficult in

cultivation because though plants are dormant in the summer, they cannot dry out and require just enough moisture to prevent this. *Satyrium erectum* produces its pink flowers in dry areas; it hybridizes easily with other species, particularly *Satyrium cordifolium*. The rare *Satyrium candidum* is noted for the purity of its white flowers. *Satyrium rhyncanthum* only flowers after a fire.

- No talk on South African orchids can be complete without the showy disas, but Van der Hoven considers many of them, the most unforgiving of all orchids." To add to naming confusion, several genera have recently been added to *Disa*, including *Amphigena*, *Pentea*, *Herschelianthe* and *Monadenia*. While there are a number of South African *Disa* societies, Van der Hoven noted that waning interest in disas has led them to include any terrestrial.

Nevertheless, disas are very striking, including *Disa cornuta* with its dark purple-blue dorsal. *Disa bracteata*, formerly *Monadenia bracteata*, propagates easily; it has become invasive after being introduced to Australia. *Disa* (formerly *Herschelianthe*) *spathulata* has a bizarre lip, while *Disa purpurescens* and *Disa graminifolia* are notable for their blue colorations. Another bluish disa is *Disa maculata*, found in reasonable abundance on damp, shady rocks with organic material and some sand.

Among the wet root types is the bright orange flowered *Disa cardinalis*. Summer temperatures in its semi-arid habitat can reach 120°F, but it survives with its roots cold mountain streams. *Disa ferruginea* flowers and the end of summer, producing a hot red flower dusted with gold. *Disa racemosa* is difficult in cultivation and reluctant to flower; seedlings must be deflasked in the winter.

- The genus *Pterygodium* - *Pterygodium catholicum* produces cream flowers with a distinctive pungent smell and can be found along road cuts. *Pterygodium acutifolium*'s bright yellow flower is produced only after a fire. *Pterygodium volucris* has an absolutely amazing, multilobed lip one a large flower for the three inch plant.
- Among the assorted other species mentioned by van der Hoven was the gorgeous *Barthelina ethilea*, having a pale pink flower with a white lip having a starburst of dangles. *Schizodium bifium* has a spike the thickness of cotton thread. *Eulophia aculeata* is an evergreen species with wide distribution in areas of summer rain or winter rain; it produces lovely white flowers. *Bonatea speciosa* is a South African terrestrial known in cultivation in the US. It has variable flowers and can be found in areas of winter or summer rainfall.

## Report on the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Orchid Digest Speakers Day

### Part 1: Marni Turkel on Deciduous Species

I love orchid lectures. In all likelihood, I have written that statement, or something like it, in previous newsletters. It still stands as true. Orchid lectures are full of gorgeous photos and useful information. There are very few lectures during which I find neither a tidbit of useful, intriguing information nor a lovely flower to admire.

The lectures at the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Orchid Digest Speakers Day were no exception. Over the next few newsletters, I will attempt to convey some of the more useful or interesting facts I heard from the distinguished speakers in attendance.

The first speaker, whose lecture is the topic of this essay, was Marni Turkel, who is known on the orchid world both for her fabulous specimen plants and for the beautiful pots she makes for them. Turkel was a charming, unintimidating speaker who commented with humor, "Everybody is entitled to my opinion whether they want it or not." Turkel entitled her talk "Give It a Rest," and spoke on dealing with deciduous and other dry rest species.

Indeed, this topic applies mostly to species, Turkel noted, since most hybrids are not as sensitive to dormancy needs. Exceptions to this rule include, for example, the *Dendrobium nobile* type hybrids.

The first step in understanding plant dormancy is to understand a little about the weather driving that dormancy. For example, the India-Asia land mass heats in the summer. As air rises above it, moist air is pulled from the Indian Ocean. That air rises over the Himalayas, cools, and drops its moisture as a monsoon. In the winter, air movement is reversed and the land mass stays dry. Thus many plants from this region experience dry winters. South Africa and Southern California are examples of the opposite trend of winter moisture and summer dry.

How does one determine if a species needs a dry rest? Often, the plant itself will tell its grower. Plants languish, new growth rots, flower spikes rot, unusually numerous keikis are produced. If water quality, light, fertilizer and temperature are not to blame, then perhaps the plant needs a dry rest. If the plant comes from a deciduous forest, a grower might consider a dry or semi-dry rest in winter.

It is important to research the habitat of the species to determine what sort of dry rest the plant may require. Turkel recommended checking weather tables to determine monthly variations in temperature and precipitation. A good source for this information can be found online at [www.orchidculture.com](http://www.orchidculture.com), the website of well-known orchid species author Charles Baker. Your humble editor perused the site and

found a number of free culture sheets on a wide range of species, such as *Angraecum leonis*, *Cattleya skinneri*, *Cymbidium erythrostylum*, *Laelia pumila*, *Masdevallia strobilii*, *Neofinetia falcata*, *Psychopsis papilio* and *Zygopetalum mackayi*. Other culture sheets can be ordered at 10 for \$10 or 30 for \$25. (Seem expensive? How much did that plant cost?)

How does one time a dry rest? Turkel sometimes times dry winter rests by calendar, e.g., Halloween to Valentine; those plants are grouped separately so they don't get water. Plants needing dry rests are color coded to help keep track of them. Light levels often change along with moisture levels. Plants from deciduous forests will get more winter light.

Ultimately, it is the habitat of the individual species that determines the nature of its dry rest. Turkel spoke about a number of species in particular, including the following:

- *Coelogyne cristata* - from the Himalayas. Needs a cool, dry, bright winter. Will get botrytis with winter watering. Needs copious water and fertilizer in summer while growing.
- *Cym. tigrinum* - A totally dry rest from November to February yields great blooms. No dry rest produces great growth but the spikes damp off. This is more obvious in some clones than others.
- Asian pleiones - Many need no winter water. *Pleioine formosanum* blooms on the emerging growth. May blooming *Pleioine hookeriana* comes from Bhutan at 3000 m elevations. Turkel keeps *Pleioine humulis* in her refrigerator for several months for a cold winter dormancy. *Pleioine maculata* blooms in November and does well with bottom watering late February or March.
- *Cuitlazina pendula* - From Mexico and Guatemala. Dry rest from from November to late April gives a great bloom. Dry rest from November to mid January gives one growth and no bloom. Dormancy requirements often depend on the clone.
- *Dendrobium harveyanum* - Deciduous species with pretty golden yellow flowers. Withhold water till flowers appear.
- *Pterostylis nutans* - A terrestrial dormant from late June till September-October; December bloom.
- *Barkeria spectabilis* - From deciduous oak forests; rain from May to October, peaking in summer, and little rain in winter.

Other species that may appreciate a dry rest include: *Baptistonia eichinata*, *Calanthe ssp.*, *Lycaste aromaticum*, *Phal. gibbosa*, *Rossioglossom grande*, *Sarco. ceciliae*.

## Announcements

- Orchid Conservation. Help save orchid habitats from habitat destruction! The Orchid Conservation Alliance creates orchid habitat reserves in the Ecuadoran Andes; their goal for 2006 is to raise \$10,000 to purchase 100 hectares of undisturbed orchid habitat in Ecuador. Alliance memberships start at \$25. The Orchid Conservation Alliance is endorsed by *Orchid Digest*. For more info: [www.orchidconservationalliance.org](http://www.orchidconservationalliance.org)
- Orchid Species Web Site. Many of you already know about [www.orchidspecies.com](http://www.orchidspecies.com). This is Jay Pfahl's homage to orchids: his list of orchid species. It contains 6090 species in 611 genera. Many have a photograph and some basic cultural or descriptive information. For another view of the amazing lip on *Bartholina ehtelae* in our June meeting, check the photo on this web site. Delightful!
- The Orchid Society of Santa Barbara thanks Cal-Orchid for its \$50 donation.

### Show Table Results

In June, first place went to the *Coel. pendulata* of Bryan Davis. Jeff Thompson's *Rhyncostylus retusa* earned second. James Merriman's *Psychopsis papilio* won third. Thanks to everyone else who brought in plants: Randall Umland, Don Brown, Josh Davis, Carole Thompson.

May's show table results: 1<sup>st</sup> - Josh Davis, 2<sup>nd</sup> - James Merriman, 3<sup>rd</sup> - Don Varner. Other exhibitors - Jeff Thompson, Dick Swain, Al Svoboda.

April's show table results: 1<sup>st</sup> - Bryce Augustine, 2<sup>nd</sup> - Dick Swain, 3<sup>rd</sup> - Jeff Thompson. Other exhibitors - Myrna Smith, Josh Davis, Bryan Davis, Eugene Hagerty.

- Check out the society web site! [www.west.net/~orchidsb](http://www.west.net/~orchidsb)
- OSSB Officers for 2006:  
President - Don Brown                      Vice President - Carole Thompson  
Treasurer - Angela Watt                      Secretary - Heidi Kirkpatrick