

# Orchid Society of Santa Barbara

An Affiliate of the American Orchid Society



Next Meeting:

**Wednesday, June 18, 2008**

Location: Louise Lowry Davis  
Recreation Center  
1232 De La Vina (at Victoria)

Meeting: 7:30 PM

**Eric and Christina Holenda**  
will speak about  
***Orchids in Borneo***

Members who have heard the Holendas before know we are in for an entertaining, vicarious visit to orchids in the wild, this time the wilds of Borneo, where the Holendas traveled last year. The Holendas met in 1996 on an orchid tour and married in 1999. Since then, they have traveled to Costa Rica, Madagascar, Indonesia, New Guinea, Alaska, Ecuador, and other orchid habitats. Christina photographs, and has documented most of the native orchids of the US and Canada. Eric grows, and is a past winner of the Best Orchid in Show at the Santa Barbara International Orchid Show.

**Setup Help:** President Randall Umland can use some help with setting up tables and chairs before the meeting!

OSSB Officers for 2008:

President - Randall Umland  
Treasurer - PJ Sanderson

Vice President - Carole Thompson  
Secretary - Heidi Kirkpatrick

Visit the OSSB Web Site!

[www.orchidsb.net](http://www.orchidsb.net)

## Calendar

**July 11-13, 2008**

**Santa Barbara Orchid Estate  
International Orchid Fair**

Earl Warren Show Grounds. David Du Puy will be the featured guest, promoting his new edition of *The Genus Cymbidium*. Local nurseries will have open houses, including Santa Barbara Orchid Estate, Hatfield Orchids, and Cal-Orchid.

**July 11, 2008**

**Santa Barbara Cymbidium Society  
Special Meeting**

David Du Puy will speak at a special meeting of the Santa Barbara Cymbidium Society—7:30 PM at Louise Lowry Davis Recreation Center.

**Wednesday, July 16, 2008**

**OSSB Meeting**

Brian and Phena Gerhardt of Down Under Native Orchids from Australia will speak.

*Looking ahead...*

**November 22-23, 2008**

**Orchid Society of Santa Barbara Fall Show  
"Galaxies of Orchids"**

Held at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History. Start thinking now about theme ideas for the society display or for your own display.

**Cover photo:** Vandas are not commonly grown in Santa Barbara, which is perhaps why this very round, pale greeny-yellow vanda hybrid struck me at the Santa Barbara International Orchid Show this year. One of the delights of going to a show is being able to see orchids one doesn't usually find at one's local meeting's show table.

## Summary of the May 2008 Meeting

### ❁ Program

Jim Kotsybar of Chaotic Exotics spoke at our May meeting while AOS judges examined plants in the back of the room. Jim, who is also an AOS judge, began with fascinating facts about orchids in general, then addressed AOS awards and some hints on how to present one's plant for judging.

The aim of orchids flowers is, of course, to get pollinated. The tricks and methods they use to accomplish this are varied and fascinating, perhaps more so than any other type of flowering plant. One of the methods orchids use to lure pollinators is "pseudocopulation". In other words, some species of orchids lure male insects, who think they are going to get lucky. A number of Australian ground orchids, for example, mimic the perfume lure of female wasps. They do this so well that the orchid lure is ten times as strong. Once the flower has been pollinated, however, the fragrance is that of a brooding (pregnant) female, which does not interest a male wasp.

Many orchids, in fact, are fragrant, although not always pleasantly, depending on what insect they are trying to attract. In addition, not all fragrances produced by orchids are detected by humans. Some orchids are many times more fragrant than roses, but not in fragrances that humans can smell.

Similarly, not all the patterns that attract insects to an orchid flower are visible to the human eye. Many insects see much further into the ultraviolet than humans do, and orchid flowers have adapted to take advantage of this. An interesting example of this is the spotted hybrid *Bc. Maikai* 'Mayumi'. The light spotting on the petals seems like something of a surprise, as neither parent (*Brassavola nodosa* x *Cattleya bowringiana*) is spotted—to the human eye. However, *Brassavola nodosa* is spotted in ultraviolet light.

Another method orchid employ to trick pollinators is pseudoaggression. Rather than attracting a pollinator with romance, the plant attracts it by seeming to be a rival that needs to be fought. Dancing Lady oncidiums, for example, resemble a rival bee colony to the bees which pollinate the flowers. In a twist on aggression, brassias look like a spider to a parasitic wasp that lays its eggs on a spider; instead of finding a home for its eggs, however, the wasp pollinates the flower. A more mutually beneficial arrangement can be found between *Schoburgkia tibbucinis* and fire ants; the fire ants colonize the hollow pseudobulbs, find shelter while effectively guarding the plant from predation.

For those who suffer from hayfever and other pollen

allergies, Jim Kotsybar noted that orchid pollen does not contribute to airborne allergens. Rather than being light and wind-dispersed, like "hayfever" pollen, orchid pollen comes in sticky clumps that must be transported by an insect (or a toothpick).

Of course, all this is to get pollinated and produce seed. Orchid seed is a naked embryo with virtually no food; seed from other plants carries nutrients to nurture a sprouting embryo until it can generate its own energy via photosynthesis. This means that orchid seed in the wild must find a fungus host quickly or it will die. In fact, most orchid seed never germinates in the wild, which is why a single orchid seed pod contains so much seed. A cymbidium pod, for example, can contain up to a billion seeds!

Orchids, Jim noted, "grew up in a tough neighborhood," and have adapted accordingly. The roots, for example, consist of a tiny filament inside a layer of spongy, white velamin which is adapted to pick up water immediately—great for a plant living out of the soil where water runs past it. A number of orchids have developed water storage a thickened stem we call a "pseudobulb." Note that the pseudo means it is not a real bulb.

Orchid plants can be very long-lived. They have adapted to make new roots each time they produce a new growth. Thus, they can live virtually forever. Of course, habitat destruction and overcollection can bring an orchid to extinction. Jim reported that *Paph. druryi* is not only extinct in the wild, but also the subject of a failed experiment in reintroduction. The first time the species was reintroduced in India, the plants were poached within two months. The second time, razorwire was erected around the plants and they were poached the next day.

Jim noted that an orchid plant will adapt to different growing conditions. Plants with dark, lush, green growth grow in heavy shade; they put all their energy into chlorophyll production, which makes the dark green color, but often do not bloom. He related the tale of a *Grammatophyllum scriptum* they purchased which adapted to their growing conditions. When they bought it, the plant had not been fertilized in a long time. It produced thin, needle-like roots in an upward "basket" that would, in nature, trap leaf mulch. Once they began fertilizing it regularly, the new roots were thick and pointed downward. Similarly, plants that survive a cold winter will produce tougher growths afterward.

There are, of course, limits to how much a plant can adapt. Orchid roots need air. Even paph roots prefer a loose

leaf mulch and will turn away from dirt in their natural habitats. Thus, roots that sit in water are prone to rotting. Unfortunately, these “rootless” plants often look the thirstiest; because their roots have rotted in a soggy mix, they are no longer absorbing water and nutrients. But the answer is not more water!

Growing an orchid in cultivation is best accomplished by paying some attention to its life in its natural habitat. Thus, because orchids in the wild receive few nutrients, orchid growers should beware of over-fertilizing. “Weakly, weekly,” is a good mantra, noted Jim. He recommended using fertilizer at a quarter of the recommended strength, then giving a good plain water flush every 5th or 6th week to avoid salt buildup. Salts are detrimental to orchids in that they dry up the plant. Similarly, plants should not sit in saucers of water. Jim noted that he likes hard plastic holders (available at his nursery) for three inch square pots; they lift the pot up, providing aeration and drainage, and prevent top-heavy plants from tipping over.

Tillandsias, a type of bromeliad, make good orchid companions because they grow in the same environments as many orchids. When cattleys were first discovered, the plant hunters were looking for tillandsias.

When bringing a plant in for judging, Jim’s first rule was, “Don’t bring it in with bugs!” He recommended cleaning the leaves with skim milk, which will help remove salt residue. Note that skim is best because whole milk will smell.

Even though judges have specific forms for point scoring, general impression is important. Staking a plant can help presentation, but the spike should not look unnatural because it gives a bad impression. Similarly, a flower that looks down, such as a paph flower, gives a better impression if it is staked to face the viewer. A masdevallia that is discreetly but individually staked is more likely to impress the judges, and a nice pot or cache pot helps the presentation.

When buying a plant, Jim noted that a clonal name usually means award potential. A clonal name is differentiated by single quotation marks and refers to an individual member of a grex or cross. Thus, ‘Mayumi’ is the clonal name of *Bc.* Maikai ‘Mayumi’. The Maikai cross or grex made many different sibling plants, but ‘Mayumi’ was a particular plant with that did in fact receive an award.

There are a number of awards given by the AOS. Jim noted that the AOS judges on “type and breeding.” This means they take the plant type into account when judging. Thus, brassias or spider orchids are not expected to form

a perfect circle. No matter what the flower type, however, judges want to see clear colors, not muddy ones.

Flowers that receive quality awards are graded on a point score. Highly Commended Certificates are awarded to plants with scores from 75 to 79.9. Plants scoring from 80 to 89.9 receive an Award of Merit. The mostly sought after quality award is the First Class Certificate, given to plants scoring 90 or more points. A group of 12 blooming seedlings from a cross may be eligible for an Award of Quality of one of the seedlings received a flower quality award.

In the “would you mow it or grow it” category is the Certificate of Botanical Recognition, given to species with odd or tiny flowers. A Judges Commendation recognizes a good trait on an otherwise unremarkable flower and is intended to encourage the hybridizer. For example, a true blue cattleya with crummy shape might receive a JC.

A Certificate of Cultural Merit goes to the grower of a plant (90 pts and up means it is a Certificate of Cultural Excellence). Note that if a plant is divided, it does not officially keep the CCM or CCE.

## ❁ May AOS Judging Results

- *Cymbidium canaliculatum* ‘Fortunato’—HCC of 77 points. 124 flowers and 163 buds on four inflorescences! Owner: Dick Swain.
- *Sarcophilus* Mavis ‘Santa Barbara’—CCM of 84 points. 645 flowers and 903 buds on 129 inflorescences! Your editor wonders if the judges (or, rather, a hapless clerk) really counted all those. Owner: Santa Barbara Orchid Estate.
- *Encyclia citrina* ‘Snake’—AM of 89 points. Almost a First Class Certificate! Owner: Larry Stabler (also a new OSSB member).

Congratulations to these award winners at our second American Orchid Society judging session. The summer months traditionally can be slow for flowers, but we hope quality plants like these keep coming in to our newly formed Central Coast Judging Center. Thank you also to the judges for attending the judging session.

Free Autoclave looking for a home. 805-563-2894 or  
orchidtrain@cox.net.

## A Look at Orchid Society History

*Shirlie Carter reports:* Ed and I went to Franceschi Fenzi Park where we remembered there was a memorial to Catherine Adams. She was a co-founder of the Society, which we now know was formed in 1966. At that time, she was also a Santa Barbara City Parks Commissioner. The first meetings were held in her home with just a handful of members. Early member Roger Harrell, now living in Georgetown, Florida, recalled the early members included Ted Fischer and Lance Birk. The goal was the same as it is now—the sharing of ideas and encouragement of others in growing these challenging, fascinating plants. Catherine Adams' memorial reads:

In Memory of Catherine Cochran Adams, 1895—1981  
Founding member of the Altrusa Club of Santa Barbara, 1936  
Member of Santa Barbara Parks Commission, 1955—1971  
Chairman, 1965—1971  
Founder of Santa Barbara Beautiful, 1965  
Co-founder of Santa Barbara Orchid Society, 1966  
Santa Barbara County Horticultural Society Member, 1972—1981  
“Bouquet of the Year” Award 1974  
“Her innovative ideas and boundless energies nurtured and enhanced the natural beauty of Santa Barbara”

## May Show Table Results

Our informal show table judging took a break in April in deference to the AOS judging session, but voting was back for May. Three plants caught the voter's attention. Receiving the most votes and first place was the Clayton's *Epi. parkinsonianum*. This plant has a lovely nighttime fragrance.

The remainder of the votes were split equally between two plants. Tied for second place were: Frank Methmann's *Sarco*. Kirra Lea and Dick Swain's *Cym*. Black Pearl 'Fortunato'. Also bringing plants to show in May were Jeff Thompson, Don Brown, and Jim

Merriman. Remember that members who bring a plant to show and register in the notebook will receive one point. First place earns 5 points, second place 3 points and third place 2 points. At the end of the year, the results are tabulated so we can announce the winner.

Of course, the winning plants were not the only interesting ones on the show table. Your editor was intrigued to learn that *Leptotes* has an edible, vanilla-like seedpod. The seedpods are smaller than vanilla, but are used for flavoring in some regions.