

Orchid Society of Santa Barbara

An Affiliate of the American Orchid Society



Next Meeting:

Wednesday, August 20, 2008

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

Meeting: 7:30 PM

Ken Jacobsen
will speak about
Cymbidium goeringii

Cymbidium goeringii is one of the miniature species receiving a good deal of attention recently. Come hear about this charming and graceful Asian native, its habitat, its culture and some of its hybrids. Ken Jacobsen has grown cymbidiums for over 35 years. He is judging chair for the Cymbidium Society of America, a past editor of the CSA Journal, and a probationary judge with the American Orchid Society.

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

Calendar

Sunday, August 17, 2008, 3:30 PM

Annual OSSB Picnic

Held at the Santa Barbara Orchid Estate. Enjoy our annual summer social. And bring a plant to donate to the auction! More details inside...

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: Shirlie and Ed Carter took this delightful photo of their lost-tag *Stanhopea*. They note that the individual flowers are six and a half inches from petal tip to the bottommost point of the complex lip.

OSSB Officers for 2008:
President - Randall Umland Vice President - Carole Thompson
Treasurer - PJ Sanderson Secretary - Heidi Kirkpatrick

Visit the OSSB Web Site!

www.orchidsb.net

Summary of the June 2008 Meeting

✿ Program

Editor's note - Thanks to Jeff Thompson for his comprehensive report, presented here with only a very little editorial tinkering.

Brian Gerhard of Down Under Native Orchids in Australia spoke to the membership about some of the dendrobium breeding he is doing at his nursery. Brian and his wife, Phena, were in California for the Orchid Fair and stayed in Santa Barbara a few extra days to speak to our society.

Brian spoke in particular on his new "Tropicool" line of breeding. The term "Tropicool" has been copyrighted by the Gerhards. A "Tropicool" orchid is a dendrobium hybrid with a percentage of *Dendrobium bigibbum* in its background. Some of the current hybrids Brian is producing contain only 3% of *Dendrobium bigibbum*, but still qualify as Tropicools.

The advantage of crossing *Dendrobium bigibbum* with dendrobiums with a cool-growing Australian ancestry comes in part from *Dendrobium bigibbum's* rapid maturation. Because the species blooms on immature growths, its hybrids will bloom as much as a year and a half more quickly than standard, cool-growing Australian dendrobium hybrids. A Tropicool will generally flower two to three years after pollination, a definite bonus for a commercial hybridizer.

In addition, *Dendrobium bigibbum* increases the size of the flowers in its progeny. It also lengthens the lasting qualities of the flower; Tropicool flowers sometimes last six to eight weeks in good condition.

Most cool-growing Australian dendrobiums bloom in early spring, while *Dendrobium bigibbum* normally blooms in autumn. Hybrids of the Tropicool line can bloom from spring to autumn. There are also often two definite blooming periods for Tropicools—one in spring and one in late fall or early winter. The peak blooming time of late January into early February (northern hemisphere) generally is superior than early spring, but

Tropicools can also bloom intermittently through the summer months. Off-season flowers are often smaller and of less intense coloration, but they fill a void in general orchid flowering very nicely.

Another advantage of having *Dendrobium bigibbum* in the ancestry of a hybrid is possibility for a spectacular specimen plant blooming. Up to six spikes from the same growth is possible over the life of that growth, which can make for a good show on a big plant.

Like many species, *Dendrobium bigibbum* is found to be difficult to grow by many growers. But, also like many species, its hybrids are more tolerant of varied cultivation. In the case of the Tropicools, the smaller the percentage of *Dendrobium bigibbum* in the background, the easier the hybrid is to grow.

Dendrobium bigibbum itself wants a dry winter rest. This means plants of the species are to have no water or moisture of any kind applied to their media for the entire winter. If water is on the plant in the winter, the roots will rot and then the plant dies. This mortality can be very rapid if water is applied to the plant during a winter rest.

For cultivation of Tropicools, Brian began by noting that DUNO is located a short two hour drive north of Sydney. This places the nursery at a latitude similar to that of Santa Barbara. As a result, Tropicools are best grown outdoors here in Santa Barbara.

Tropicools are best grown with full morning sun and 60% shade the remainder of the day. Plants should be grown on open mesh benches, rather than solid surfaces. This allows pots to drain well and gives better air movement to the roots.

When he waters, Brian likes to fill the pot to overflowing at the top, then let the water rush out the bottom of the pot all at once. As this happens, fresh air is drawn into the pot from the top. He feels fresh air is very important to the plants because this means a fresh supply of carbon dioxide, which can be taken up by leaves and roots of the plant.

Brian has two watering regimens, one for summer

and one for winter. In summer, the plants should not dry completely between waterings. If the weather is warm and dry, plants should be watered at least every two to three days, or even more frequently if the medium is drying quickly. However, plants should not have standing water at the apex of growths between noon and 2 PM on a hot day, as the water will heat up and cook the tender growths at the top of the plant. With this in mind, Brian waters either early in the morning to give the plant time to dry or in the evening around 7 PM. Evening waterings can be advantageous in hot summer weather because plants receive a good cooling for the evening and the roots receive a long period of moisture-laden air.

In the winter, Tropicools will experience a period of little or no growth, which translates to little watering. They should only be watered if they need it, perhaps once every seven to ten days. During periods of extreme cold, plants are best completely dry. If, during such cold weather, the bulbs start to wrinkle, then a good, very early morning watering can be given on all but the coldest days. But plants must be dry by early afternoon. If the bulbs are not wrinkling, they are not thirsty—don't water!

If, however, some rot does appear on a plant, Brian noted that a sterile cutting tool can be used to remove the rot. The plant should be cut two fingers' width below the rot to remove all the infected tissue. The cut surface can be dusted with ground cinnamon, then kept dry for several days. If a leaf needs trimming to remove disfigurement, wash the cut with mouthwash.

Correct fertilization is very important for Australian native dendrobiums. These species do not want high nitrogen fertilizer, as it leads to soft, fungus-prone growth and few flowers. Australian natives and the Tropicools are best fertilized with a high potassium formulation. A ratio of 10-20-30 is acceptable, but Brian prefers 8-5-25. He uses this at the rate of one teaspoon per gallon of water, and fertilizes every three weeks. He will also use a fish emulsion or seaweed extract on one of the waterings between fertilizing.

The most important aspect of potting is to avoid overpotting plants. One should allow for one year's growth, or at the most two. Brian's mix contains fine and medium pine bark with perlite. He does not use charcoal because it will hold salts and eventually causes root damage. He uses a treated pine bark, black in appearance, that will last a minimum of three years, and sometimes up to six years. He does not presoak and prefers to pot with dry bark, rinsing only to remove fine dust that might block drain holes in the pot.

Brian likes to use pots with small cones in the bottom. During his potting demonstration to the membership in July, he placed a small amount of medium in the bottom of the pot to encourage the roots to grow out rather than down. Then he placed the plant and filled the pot with medium, firming it with his fingers to make a good, tight, solid mass for the new roots of the plant. Brian noted that if the plant was not stable enough as potted, a stake should be inserted and the plant should be tied to the stake. Immediately after potting, Brian will place the plant on the bench and water it for ten to fifteen minutes to thoroughly wash away any fine particles.

Brian also showed a number of his Tropicool hybrids. Some of his hybrids can be seen on the DUNO website at www.duno.com.au.

❁ July AOS Judging Results

Your editor hears that the July judging at our Central Coast AOS Judging Center was very exciting. However, due to computer problems, I have not received the official list of awards. Next month's newsletter will contain information on both July's and August's judging sessions.

❁ Sad News

Tere Fighetti, wife of AOS president Carlos Fighetti, passed away suddenly in July. If you wish to express your condolences to the president of our parent organization, consider a donation to the AOS in honor of Tere Fighetti.

July Show Table Results

Editor's note: Thanks to our president, Randall Umland, for reporting on July's show table voting.

First place in the July Show Table voting went to long-time member Don Brown for his *Neofinetia falcata*. Second place was a three way tie between the following: James Merriman's *C. Hawaiian Wedding Song*; Don Brown's *Sarco*.

ceciliae; and Richard Brown's *Paph. rothschildianum*. James Merriman's plant of *Blc.* Eve Marie Barnett received third place in the show table voting.

Congratulations to these winners and thanks to everyone who brought a plant to show. Remember that we all learn from seeing plants in bloom, so the show table isn't just about voting; it's educational, too!

OSSB Annual Picnic, 3:30 PM, Sunday, August 17, 2008

It's time for our annual picnic! Enjoy a social afternoon with Santa Barbara Cymbidium Society members at the Santa Barbara Orchid Estate (thanks to Alice Gripp).

This picnic is also a fund raiser. Bring a plant or two to donate to support the society, and money to bid on auction plants. Gas is up, and so are speaker fees; help your society maintain its track record of wonderful speakers.

What to bring? Folding chairs/table or a picnic blanket. Utensils. Something to drink. And a dish to

share with six to eight people. Remember to keep it properly cooled or heated if you decide to come early to browse the Orchid Estate before we eat!

This is your chance to show off your culinary talents! Or perhaps you are better at hunting and gathering (i.e., picking up a tasty platter from the store). According to last name, here is what to bring:

A—I: dessert

J—Q: main course

R—Z: salad or side dish.

See you all there!