



September, 2003

Orchid View

Sarasota Orchid Society

ANNUAL LABOR
DAY PICNIC!

Monday,
September 1

Marie Selby
Botanical Gardens

Keeping Dry in the Rain

July and August are the two most similar months in South Florida. Subtle changes are taking place. Although it may not seem so as the temperature climbs into the low nineties, summer is in retreat; each day is a little shorter; each night is a little longer. The importance of early morning watering becomes necessary. With less hours of sunlight to dry the plants, extra care should be taken in choosing when and if to water. An old rule...if a vanda looks like it needs water, water it...if a cattleya or oncidium looks like it needs water, water it tomorrow...if a paph. or a phal. looks like it needs water, you should have watered it yesterday. August should provide numerous opportunities to dry each orchid to its desired level of dryness. Take the opportunity to dry your orchids "hard" at least once but preferably twice in August. This will give your orchids protection against their mortal enemy...fungus...before September when fungus has the advantage of soggy days. August is definitely NOT the month to overwater with the soggiest of months to come. The drizzling rains of September are so detrimental because they keep the plants too wet for too long. The standard advice is always to err on the dry side. This advice is always important in the torrential rains of a typical Florida summer. When a break in the rains gives us an opportunity to dry our plants, we must take it. Fortunately, July and August frequently afford us these not to be missed opportunities.

Lengthening nights in August mean cooler nighttime temperatures. Many sympodial orchids are reaching the end of their growing cycle and require less nitrogen. Cattleyas and oncidiums have maturing bulbs. Genera that become deciduous in winter, such as nobile dendrobiums, calanthes and catasetums should be given much less nitrogen in

August to prevent them producing an unwanted off season growth and perhaps forgetting to flower. Substitute a "bloom booster" high phosphorous fertilizer for the 20-20-20. We use Miller's Solugrow 8-46-12 because it does not have the horrible blue dye that will mark your blooms or your hands but any soluble fertilizer with a high middle number will do fine. Vandas will respond to this as well as several of the parental species of hybrids produce blooms on shortening day lengths and high phosphorous fertilizer seems to egg them on.

One or two heavy applications in succession, a week or so apart will certainly provide all the phosphorus and all the stimulus our plants require. Phalaenopsis appear to be an exception to the rule of drying. They are, in fact, an exception that proves the rule. Although compared to African violets as plants which require constant moisture at their roots, phals require the drying of their roots which is provided by the large air spaces in the open but moisture retentive media that is typically used to grow them. When these air spaces in the medium are filled with water for too long the roots



cannot dry and they rapidly rot. This is why phalaenopsis in most media perish so quickly when novices attempt to grow them outside in our wet summers. The same fate awaits phals. grown in sphagnum moss under cover if the moss is not changed annually. As the moss breaks down the air spaces provided by the fine hairs of the moss collapse leaving the roots of the orchid to rot into a wet mass without sufficient air to permit the roots to dry as they require.

Cattlyas, dendrobiums, oncidiums, and other types with heavy bulbs require abundant moisture during the growing season but need to dry out thoroughly between waterings. In a typical Florida summer these plants rarely require much additional water. They also should not be deprived of essential water or nutrients during this period of active growth. When these plants have not received a good rain in 3 or 4 days, the grower has an excellent opportunity to fertilize them with liquid fertilizer. Always substitute the liquid fertilizer for water. Never follow the bad advice of "watering before fertilizing"...a recipe for fungal problems particularly here in Florida. Remember, that nowhere is it more true than in Florida that "when a cattleya looks like it needs water, water it tomorrow!" Here, in the rainy season, vandas, too, benefit from an occasional hard drying. Three or four days without water relieves the vandas from much of the pressure from fungus which is more or less a constant in our summers. Most frequently nature takes care of watering details for us with the next major thunderstorm. Vandas are heavy feeders and will appreciate the substitution of liquid fertilizer for water on most occasional breaks in the rain when wetting the plants is required. Keeping all these cautions in mind will gird up our orchids for the onslaught of September's rain.

Courtesy of Dr. M. Motes

The Sarasota Orchid Society (SOS) meets on the first Monday of each month at Selby Gardens, 800 South Palm Ave. Sarasota, FL. The SOS, an affiliate of the American Orchid Society, is a nonprofit association with the aims of promoting the development, improvement and preservation of orchids through the dissemination of information concerning the culture, hybridization or development of orchids; and generally to extend the knowledge of orchids. Annual dues are \$15 for single or \$20 for family. Deadline for the newsletter is the 15th of the previous month. *Contributors to this newsletter give reprint rights of their work to newsletters of other affiliates of the American Orchid Society.*

Minutes of August 2003 Meeting

A culture study group was held by Jeff Higel in the back rooms with approximately 25 people in attendance. The president, Sam Boyd then called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. where Dan Bestwick introduced guests and new members. The president then discussed the incorporation papers and the changes in the by-laws and after the attorney makes the changes according to the Board. He will mail each member a copy for their review and future approval.

The President then discussed the Labor Day Picnic and handed sign up sheets for the number of people attending. Harry Luther of Selby Gardens spoke about

epiphytic plants and presented an interesting slide presentation. There was a break for refreshments but no coffee was served because no one had a key to the locker. Monroe Kokin then spoke about the upcoming Orchid Show and said he would have sign up sheets available at the September meeting. He also spoke about the judging and the way it would be conducted. Jim Cope discussed the plant table and the members voted for Members' choice, and best Species. Harry Luther gave the winner of the Speakers Choice award. Meeting closed at 9:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Jo Davis

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Treasurer's Report

Balance 07/20/03	\$8421
Receipts	\$1949
Expenditures	\$570
Balance 08/14/03	\$9800

Bits and pieces odds and ends.....

- ♦ **Winners of the August show table.**
Speakers Choice: *Mtssa Dark Star Darth Vader*, grown by **Fred Gilmartin**.
Popular vote: *Mtssa Dark Star Darth Vader*, grown by **Fred Gilmartin**.
Species: *Trgl brachiata philippinense*, grown by **Monroe Kokin**.
- ♦ **Walter Perrin of Orchids, Etc.** on Honore Ave. will give members a 10% discount on all purchases.
- ♦ **Men wanted!!** We no longer have the staff of Selby Gardens available to set up the tables and chairs for our meetings. So, we need help to set-up and break-down the tables and chairs. Many hands will make the job much easier. So, when you see the gals trying to pick up the tables and chairs, jump in and lend a hand, please.
- ♦ The delicious cheeses and fruit were supplied by **Marty Cooper, Leone Levy, Mecky Kreissler, Gerri Reed, and Winkie Engelf**. *Tasted great!* Upon request, Gerri will be handing out some recipes at a future meeting.
- ♦ Beauty is only a light switch away.
- ♦ **Camp Lot A Noise** will be hosting the 6th Orchid and Plant Fair on Saturday, September 20th and Sunday, September 21st. Hours 9 AM to 4 PM at the greenhouses, 4084 47th St. Sarasota. Tel. 941-351-2483. Nine vendors will be featured along with Tropic I and BJ Orchids. Refreshments will be supplied by the 4H Horticulture club. The Sarasota Bromeliad Society will be hosting their annual fall bromeliad sale at this location also.
- ♦ We welcome new members, **Frank and Sharon Fornery**. The August meeting was attended by 52 members with guests **Ed Laake, Bill and Barb Lanus** and **Alexandra Bell**.

♦ The Website Design Committee is making good progress with the website. The domain name "SarasotaOrchidSociety.org" has been purchased and we are moving forward with the layout of the site. A working meeting was held August 14th during which a good framework was created. We are hoping to have some beginning pages online sometime in September. We could use some creative help from someone with writing or artistic skills. If you can give us some help, please call **Dan Beswick** at 366-5875.

♦ The September meeting will be our annual Labor Day Picnic. An old fashioned potluck picnic! No charge, just fun with everyone sharing. The picnic starts at 6:30 p.m. Monday evening, September 1st. There will be the usual show table for judging so bring your plants. The raffle table will be filled with plants from Tropiflora, so plan on buying tickets, as usual. There is no scheduled speaker. **Monroe Kokin** will be discussing the upcoming orchid show and will be passing around sign up sheets for volunteers. The Society will be supplying the chicken and ribs and coffee. Members whose last name starts with A to C will bring the drinks, D to M will bring main courses such as pasta and salads, and N to Z names will be bringing the desserts. **GUESTS ARE WELCOME!** Everyone certainly has a favorite dish and the dish should serve at least 8 to 10 members. Should be a fun time!!

♦ **IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO COME TO THE PICNIC AND HAVE NOT SIGNED UP AT THE AUGUST MEETING, PLEASE CALL JO DAVIS AT 923-9337 BY SATURDAY, AUGUST 30TH SO WE WILL KNOW HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE COMING SO THAT WE CAN HAVE ADEQUATE CHICKEN AND RIBS FOR EVERYONE.... THANK YOU... JO DAVIS**

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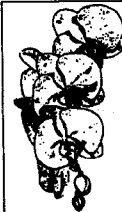
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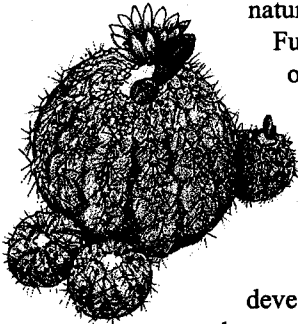
Orchids as Cacti?

Proper watering is easily the single most important aspect of orchid growing. Neophyte orchid growers most frequent question is "How often do I water this plant?" This is exactly the wrong question. A more illuminating query would be "How much does this orchid need to dry out?"

Epiphytic orchids are more like cactus than any other type of plant. Like cactus, orchids are locked into an evolutionary struggle with their mortal enemy...FUNGUS. This battle is why orchids took to the trees, rocks, and other generally harsh environments that they inhabit in nature. These desert like environments allow orchids to dry out.

Fungus cannot survive drying, therefore drought is the epiphytic orchid's best friend. Each orchid species has developed organs for water storage that permit the plants to withstand drying that would be intolerable to fungi. This strategy allows orchids to thrive in situations where few other plants could survive much less prosper.


Knowing the tolerance for drought of various types of orchids is the most essential knowledge that growers can have. Orchids are the largest and most diverse group of flowering plants. Each genus has developed its own techniques of coping with drying and each genus and species must be treated differently in order to maximize success. *Courtesy of Dr. M. Motes*



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