



May, 2003

OrchidView

Sarasota Orchid Society

Sarasota Orchid Society
Cultural Workshop and
Regular Meeting
Monday, May 5, 2003
7:30 p.m.
Marie Selby Botanical
Gardens Activities Center

Featured Speaker:
Bob Hague
of Tropiflora

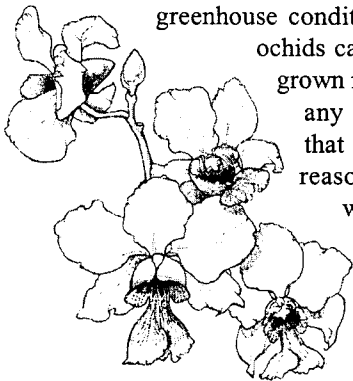
April & May... The Kindest Months

Spring is the kindest season for the Florida grower. The weather in April is definitely settled into warm, with passing cold fronts only adding the delight of pleasant change in temperature. The clean bright days brimming with abundant sunshine and low relative humidity create the high drying potential that orchids love. Now we can get our orchids off to a great start on the growing season by practicing our very best watering skills under ideal conditions. Water heavily when you water and allow the plants to dry thoroughly before watering heavily again. Drying "hard" in the spring will produce benefits all season.

With increased light and heat and the onset of growth the use of fertilizer becomes more crucial. A balanced fertilizer such as 20-20-20 can be applied to most genera at the rate of 2 tsp. Per gallon every two weeks. *Vandas*, *Ascocendas*, *Aerides*, etc. will benefit from a full tablespoon of 20-20-20 weekly. April and May are the classic months to catch up with all the repotting which you meant to do in the winter. New roots form fast in spring...don't rot them off by overpotting or break them off by allowing the plant to wiggle in the pot. Tie them up! Tie them down!

A few more words about potting media... Under totally controlled greenhouse conditions,

orchids can be grown in nearly any substrate that provides reasonable water holding



capacity and reasonable drainage. Unfortunately, since south Florida growers typically grow orchids without the protection of a covered roof such indifference to the choice of potting media is not an option. Great care must be taken in choosing the sub-strata that we pot our orchids in. Our tropical rainy season provides little latitude for growing media that holds too much water for too long. Worse, the prolonged heat, which accompanies the rain, can turn many organic media to mush in short order. Media that is suited for greenhouse production such as sphagnum, peat/perlite mixtures and fir bark are recipes for disaster in the wild free Florida environment.

Free drainage must always take precedence over water retention in choosing a growing media. With nature frequently delivering enough or frequently too much water from the skies, quick draining, swift drying media are not merely desirable but essential. Orchid media for our climate must have a large volume of air relative to the total volume of the media in the container to allow the roots to dry rapidly and not rot during patches of very wet weather.

A concept closely connected to the airiness and free draining of orchid media is its durability. Many materials such as fir bark start out with the desirable mix of light water retention and free drainage but undergo a rapid change in the hot wet conditions of south Florida. As organic materials decompose they hold more water. They also fragment as they break down, filling the original air space with silt. The two media of choice for commercial mass producers of orchids is peat/perlite mixtures and sphagnum moss. These are famous for turning into muddy mush in less than a season under the battery of our Florida heat and rain. Much harder, more durable, long lasting materials are required for growing orchids successfully in South Florida.

The old standard for orchid potting material outdoors has long been tree fern fiber. Shredded, the roots of tree fern trunks produce water-resistant fibers that can last many years even in tropical rains. Light, durable, airy, organic...tree fern fiber approaches the ideal medium for most orchids grown in the south. Alas, tree fern becomes harder to find and more expensive with each passing year, as itself is an endangered species. Many growers mix the fiber with hardwood charcoal or redwood chips to open and aerate the resulting mixture to add to its durability. Not a bad thing making a virtue of the necessity of conserving tree fern!
(Reprinted courtesy of Dr. Martin Motes of Motes Orchids.)

(I note Dr. Motes does not mention coconut husk chips. From personal experience I know that the plants containing coconut chips did not need to be repotted this spring whereas all of the plants that were potted in bark last year are now in very sad shape with mush around the roots. Thanks to Jeff Higel of Orchids Etc, who showed us how to repot with coconut chips, I am repotting, and repotting and repotting...the editor.)

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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. 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.

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Minutes of the April 7th meeting

President Monroe Kokin presided at the meeting. President Kokin said we would have the installation of the new officers at the May meeting, because our new President, Sam Boyd, needed to be with his wife, Pat, who had surgery early in April. President Kokin announced there was no other new or old business that needed to be discussed, so he asked Jeff Higel, of Orchids Etcetera, to do a culture session. As usual, Jeff did a fantastic job! After enjoying all the delicious snacks provided by our mem-

bers, President Kokin introduced Stig Dahlstrom, who did a most enjoyable and very humorous slide presentation of one of his orchid hunting excursions to Ecuador. Stig also passed around a sign-up sheet for people who are interested in a trip to Ecuador in Feb of 2004. Next, Jim Cope and Wes Higgins discussed all the beautiful plants our members brought in for Show & Tell. And last, but not least, Mike Strelec did the raffle table and turned in \$124.00 in raffle sales. Respectfully submitted, Jo Davis, Recording Secretary.

Spring Flowers

The *phalaenopsis* should be in glorious bloom by now with a few late bloomers just beginning to open their first flowers. If trying to extend the flowering season for this type, try to find hybrids with a high percentage of *Doritis* (*Doritaenopsis*) background. These will likely be in the light lavender or pink color range although some of the striped varieties bloom later too.

Days have noticeably lengthened and spring flowering *dendrobiums* and members of the *oncidium* alliance should flower soon so look for emerging buds inflorescences. Some of the dormant type dendrobies, for example, *Den. nobile* (particularly the famous Yamamoto hybrids), *aggregatum* (*lindeyii*) (but not

the *var. majus* which flowers in late May), *pierardii* (*aphyllum*), *anosmum*, *farmeri*, and similar, should be getting more water to assist them in their blooming start up.

Spring will bring many *cattleyas* into flower too. Watch for *C. aurantiaca* (yellow orange blooms), *intermedia* and *loddigesii* (white to mauve), *mossiae*, *skinneri* (great starter plant), *schilleriana* and *walkeriana*. Many hybrids of these prominent species will also flower in the weeks ahead so look for their buds or try to find some additions to your collection from your favourite source. While *cattleya* flowers are generally not as long lasting as those of *vanda*, *ascocenda*, and *phalaenopsis*, it is not unusual to have these showy and fragrant treasures in bloom for three to six weeks.

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Treasurer's Report

Balance	03/21/03	\$10,982.00
Receipts		\$258.00
Expenditures		\$662.00
Balance	04/18/03	\$10,578.00

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Bits & Pieces & Odds & Ends

Introducing a new monthly column giving all members VITAL small bits of information. Subjects will be random but interesting.

- ☞ We all thoroughly enjoyed the wonderful refreshments that Geri Lindsey, Lucia Almquist, Dot Gunther and Freda Tanner brought to our April meeting. Phyllis Herrmann, Dan Beswick, and Betty Strelec will provide munchies for the May meeting. We need more men to help out on this important part of our meetings...are there any men that like to cook amongst our members? If so, please call Geri Reed at 360-0309.
- ☞ Lets talk about sales...The vendors who lecture at our meetings take up their valuable time and effort to educate us on orchid culture...in turn, they ask us to buy their plants especially if they are for sale at the meetings. We know that there is lots of places to buy orchids in our area, but as members of the SOS, we should really make a point of patronizing the speakers and advertisers when we buy new stock.
- ☞ The Marie Selby Botanical Gardens activities for May include a free day for Mothers along with folksinger

Mindy Simmons on the Sunday Afternoon Garden Music Series. May 11th.

- ☞ As of this date, we have 190 active members. Whether you have one orchid that you love and cherish, or one thousand plants, we invite you to our meetings as our guest. Hopefully you will like what you hear and decide to become a member. Membership is available to anyone who shows a sincere interest in orchids.
- ☞ The Redlands International Orchid Festival at the Redlands Fruit and Spice Park, Homestead FL. Is on May 16th to May 18th. 9 am to 5 p.m. Contact Bill Peters, 18755 SW 248th St. Homestead, FL 33031.
- ☞ To remove shoe odors, sprinkle kitty litter in them...and lock the cat in the basement.
- ☞ Bob Hahue of Tropiflora will be our speaker for May.... he will be bringing lots of goodies, such as unusual mounting material, as well as nice unusual plants so don't forget your checkbook . Its great fun when these items come to us instead of our having to go to the greenhouses when our time is so limited.
- ☞ THE ORCHID SHOW IS OCTOBER 18th & 19th. NOW is the time to be thinking about fertilizing your fall bloomers and taking a good look at

their direction of growth...stake those little shoots so that they grow straight and tall. If we are to have a spectacular and educational exhibit we need many different kinds of plants, not just the same old favorites...The number of plants for last years exhibit was very sparse and we had to appeal to our vendors to fill in the space...with our 200 members all co-operating and growing with the show as a goal we should have a really nice exhibit next October. We also need a theme for the show...if you have any ideas, please mail them in or call Monroe Kokin, 918-4414, as he is the new Show Chairperson in charge of the next orchid show.

- ☞ SOS gives a \$500 scholarship every year to a deserving student who is interested in botany or any other related horticulture study. All interested persons should contact Geri Lindsay. 922-1186.
- ☞ The June meeting will have a cultural workshop at 6.30 p.m. Jeff Higel of Orchids etc. will be happy to look at our plants and help us with them so if you have a problem with any of your plants bring them to the meeting. He also will have plants for sale just in case you have room for another one.
- ☞ The Venice Orchid club is having their orchid auction on May 7th.

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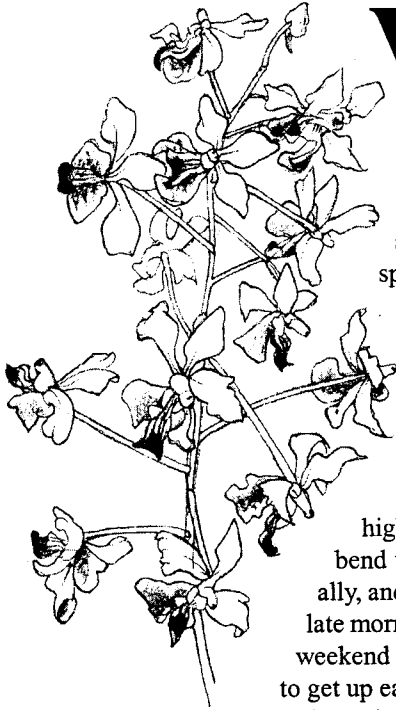
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Vandas In Spring



With vandaceous orchids grown in slatted baskets, most growers find that they dry altogether too well in April and May. Vandas can be watered almost every morning in the spring season. Indeed, a second light watering or misting in mid-afternoon in April and early May is often beneficial provided the crowns and leaf axils have dried by nightfall. Another strategy under high drying conditions is to bend the rules, at least occasionally, and water heavily in mid to late morning. Late watering on weekend mornings (you didn't want to get up early anyway) provide relief for plants that are more stressed on

weekdays with their owners absent. Very occasionally, one needs to break the rules absolutely and water thoroughly (not just mist) in the mid to late afternoon so that the plants can

slowly absorb the water during the cool hours of night. This is the season that one must be sure that Vanda roots have turned overall dark green when we have finished watering. Two applications of water to the point of run off spaced several minutes apart should accomplish the required color change from white to totally green. Saturated roots are absolutely necessary to provide plants with the moisture they will need to withstand the heat and dry air typical of April and May. Sometimes the roots will not change color even after the second or third application of water. This lack of response to water is because the roots have become so dry that they are repelling rather than absorbing water. They are behaving like a cork in a wine bottle. The grower must exert special effort to re-saturate the roots. Often this will require four or five waterings to the point of run off spaced fifteen minutes apart. Once the roots have been changed to the healthy overall green, normal applications of water should bring them around in the future.

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