

September 2006



OrchidView

WITH FOND MEMORIES AND A HEAVY HEART...

This article came from Dennis Cathcart of Tropiflora CARGO REPORT
June 2006

Verona Warkentin Simmons, former publisher of and constant art contributor to the Cargo Report has passed away. This is a time when words truly cannot express the great sadness and sense of loss that we feel. Verona became associated with Tropiflora and the Cargo Report with our first issue, sixteen years ago. Her company, Studio Graphics in Sarasota, was our first publishing company. In those days the Cargo Report was basically hand written and delivered to Verona on assorted scraps of paper and was left to her to make sense of and set to type. Many rewrites were necessary to fit all copy, and the path between Tropiflora and Studio Graphics became well worn. From issue one, Verona hand illustrated the stories and plants. Sometimes her printing studio looked like a greenhouse with dozens of plants awaiting her creative pen. Trained as a fine artist with paintings hanging in prestigious galleries around the country, this sort of illustration was certainly a step down for a person of her talent. But Verona took it in stride, sometimes creating genuine works of art to illustrate our varied plant products. Many of the persons mentioned in the Cargo Report over the years also had their likeness or caricatures done by Verona to illustrate a story. To them and to us, Verona was a part of the Tropiflora family.

In the early days Verona not only did the illustrations, typesetting and printing, but would also proof my writing and struggle to improve my grammar and spelling. Our collaboration over the many years was phenomenal at least and a life changing experience and privilege for me. When I would write an article like the "A Funny Thing Happened" series, I would provide Verona with the story and allow her creativity to take over to interpret it in her own way through her illustrations. The results were always a surprise and I rarely asked for a change. We would laugh and laugh over the often-silly situations she illustrated. In sixteen years Verona created hundreds and hundreds of illustrations, and was in fact part of every single Cargo Report issue, even after she retired from printing and we changed to color photos a few years ago. To say that she will be missed would be a feeble way to express our gratitude for her immeasurable input to the Cargo Report and would trivialize the camaraderie and friendship we had with and the love and respect we had for Verona. She will leave emptiness in the pages of the Cargo Report but will forever fill our hearts with happy memories. Farewell Verona.

SARASOTA ORCHID SOCIETY

Monday September 4, 2006

Annual Labor Day Picnic
6:30 PM

No Cultural Study Class

Marie Selby
Botanical Gardens
Activities Center
811 South Palm Ave.
Sarasota

VERONA

The Sarasota Orchid Society wishes to express their sympathy to the family of our Newsletter Editor,

Verona Simmons. In gratitude, our 50th Anniversary Orchid Show will be dedicated to her.

Verona did much more than the newsletter for the society. She worked tirelessly for the organization.

She was our artist in residence, member of the Board, and close friend. Verona will be sorely missed by all.



VERONA AT WORK

The Sarasota Orchid Society Inc. (SOS) meets on the first Monday of each month at Selby Gardens, 800 South Palm Ave., Sarasota, FL. The SOS Inc., 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—\$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.

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Treasurer's Report

Balance 7/15/06 - \$6390

Receipts \$451

Expenditures \$525

Balance 8/14/06 - \$6316

September in your Orchid Collection

July and August are the two most similar months in South West Florida. Most of the advice on watering, disease and pest control in last month's calendar still apply but subtle changes are taking place. Although it may not seem so, as temperatures climb into the low nineties most afternoons, summer is in retreat: each day a little shorter, each night a little longer. With shorter days the importance of watering as early in the morning as possible comes to the fore. With less hours of sunlight to dry the plants, extra care should be taken in choosing when to water. Back to the basics of the classic saying : 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. If plants are still wet even from an early morning watering, allowing them to dry a bit harder before the next watering is always a good idea.

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 a leg up on their mortal enemies, the fungus, before the drizzle of September switches the advantage to our adversaries. August is definitely not the month to over indulge in water. September, the soggiest of months, is next up. The corollary to this calculated drying is the concept that when watering in August above all water thoroughly. If watering is necessary be sure that the roots and medium are totally saturated with the application. The drizzling rains of September are so detrimental precisely because they keep the foliage of the plants wet unduly long. We want our plants which are still growing to receive plenty of water but also plenty of drying time.

Good air circulation and proper watering are the keys to disease prevention. Remember that your plants will have increased considerably in size by this point in the growing season. They have added extra growths and extra leaves across the summer. August is a good time to evaluate the spacing of our plants. Remember the old Florida saw that one needs a cat to grow good orchids because when properly spaced a cat should be able to navigate the benches between plants without knocking them over. While *we* can not recommend specific chemicals, the county agent recommends *Banrot*, a convenient combination of Thiophanate-methyl and *Truban* which controls a number of leaf-spotting diseases and soft rots, for home owner use. A combination of Thiophanate- methyl and mancozeb has also been recommended. This can be found pre-packaged as Duosan. If one can overcome the aversion to chemicals and can learn the safe application of them, they are valuable tools to better orchid growing. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure especially before the soft, slow drizzle of September sets in.

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 like 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 an additional application of potassium nitrate and Epsom salt (1TBS each per gal) instead of the balanced 20-20-20. Vandas will respond well to this also, as several of the parental species of our hybrids produce blooms on shortening day lengths and lower levels of nitrogen in their fertilizer seems to egg them on. As explicated in the last newsletter, modern research indicates that orchids require less phosphorous than previously thought. This concept should lead us to more judicious use of phosphorus. Fertilizer high in phosphorus may still be of some value at the end of the growing season. 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.

Snails can be somewhat of a problem in August too, but left to multiply they will be in their full glory when those slow unrelenting rains of September set in. Control them with baits in pellet or liquid/paste form. Remember, these are baits, the pests are drawn to them. Therefore apply lightly, but frequently. Because they wash away in the heavy rains, baits should be reapplied every two weeks. One pellet every two to three feet will do the job, but one application will not. Given a choice, the smallest pellets baits are best. They keep us from over applying and also pose much less threat to neighborhood pets. A small bait in a Vanda crown is a nuisance , a large bait can be a disaster.

If you have been waiting to make cuttings of the terete vandas or reed stem epidendrums, you can wait no longer. The potting season is drawing absolutely to a close. Pot up those overgrown phals before they even think of spiking. Re-set those strap leaf vandas early in August whilst they still have just enough time to re-establish themselves in the September humidity and before the cool weather arrives and their root growth slows or stops. As in all seasons be sure that the plants are firmly set in their containers. There is no "wobble room" this late in the growing season to restart tender roots that have been chafed off a loosely set plant. As the cooler weather approaches try to give plants that have been repotted late more protection from the first cold snaps.

Watering

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?" In a very significant sense 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 in an evolutionary struggle with their mortal enemies: 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 quickly and thoroughly. Fungus can not survive sharp 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 fatal to most other plants and that is totally intolerable to fungi. This evolutionary strategy allows orchids, small, slow growers as plants go, 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 orchid 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. The focus of the grower's attention should be on the degree of drying that a particular genus requires. The standard advice is always to err on the dry side. This advice is particularly cogent in the torrential rains of a typical South 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.

The ubiquitous and affordable *Phalaenopsis*, which is frequently the beginner's first orchid, appears at first glance an exception to the rule of drying. They are in fact the exception that proves the rule. Although frequently compared to African violets as plants who require constant moisture, *phalaenopsis* nonetheless require the slight but significant drying of their roots which is provided by the large air spaces in the open but moisture retentive media that are typically used to grow them. This need for air at their roots is critical. When the air spaces in the medium are filled with water for too long the roots can not dry and they rapidly rot. This phenomenon is why *phalaenopsis* in most media perish so quickly when novices attempt to grow them outside in our wet summers. The same fate awaits *phalaenopsis* grown in sphagnum moss under cover if the moss is not changed annually. As the sphagnum breaks down the air spaces provided by the fine hairs of the moss collapse leaving the orchid's roots to rot in a wet mass without sufficient air to permit the roots to dry as they require.

Cattleyas, *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 South Florida summer these plants rarely require much additional water. That said; 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 three or four 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 receipt for fungal problems particularly here in South Florida. Many successful growers actually tolerate a few weeds in their pots of sympodial orchids as indicator plants. When the broad leaved herbs are wilting, it's time to think of watering. Remember, again, that nowhere is it more true than in S. Florida that "When a *Cattleya* looks like it needs water, water it tomorrow!" *Vandas*, which relish watering on most days, also need to dry out. The universal rule of *Vanda* watering states that when *Vanda* roots are white, they are dry and should be watered until they turn overall dark green. When they turn white again the process should be repeated in 12 to 24 hours. While this rule holds regardless of relative humidity, temperature, air movement or light intensity, the exception is during periods of prolonged heavy rains such as are typical of South Florida summers. 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. *Vanda* roots that have been dried hard will need to be re-hydrated with several applications of water spaced a few minutes apart. Most frequently nature takes care of this detail for us and then some with the next major thunder storm whose rains will wash over the *Vanda* roots for a solid half hour! Remember also, that during the summer in particular *vandas* are heavy feeders. They will appreciate the

GO FOR THE GOLD

SAVE THIS DATE !!

Our 50th Annual Orchid Show will be held on January 6th and 7th at the Sarasota Municipal Auditorium. Co-chairmen are Monroe Kokin & Jo Davis. Set up will be on January 5th.

We need volunteers for various committees. Brisa has a sign up sheet. Please call her at 925-4349. We need all members to help.

A sponsor/donor committee has been established. Sam Boyd & Al Langdon are responsible for the committee. If your company would like to be a sponsor or if you would like details, please contact Sam at 923-7610 or Al at 907-4161.

The society has been working to update our membership list and email list.

Anyone with a new email address, phone number or address change please notify Jim Smith at jimithii@tampabay.rr.com or call at (941) 907-0746

September Meeting information:

We are having our annual Labor Day picnic on September 4th. Please contact Juanita Goolsby at 351-3019 if you are coming. Your last name determines what you get to bring --

A-G Salads

H-T Desserts

U-Z Drinks (non-alcoholic)

September President's Report

Folks, this is the time you should be growing your orchids at their best. Now that the days are long, young plants are hungry and thirsty. Don't be afraid to use a weekly feeding program. Thank goodness the rains have come. But a word of caution: If you have orchids outdoors in plastic pots, check the drainage and don't let them drown.

If you are not a member of the American Orchid Society, let me briefly tell you about the premier organization devoted to our hobby. The AOS is the world's largest specialty horticulture group and offers information not available elsewhere. The monthly magazine, *Orchids*, is the most highly regarded orchid periodical in the world. The photography and articles are outstanding. Membership entitles you to a 10% discount on publications and your dues support conservation and educational programs. The AOS also publishes the *Awards Quarterly* with detailed descriptions of almost 200-300 awarded orchids with color photographs. I eagerly await mine every three months.



P.O. Box 19895
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SPECIES OF THE MONTH

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MEMBERS CHOICE

Bulbo . Dasiy Chain

