



The Keiki



Volume 22

September 2013 Issue

September 12, 2013

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September 21 meeting of Orchid Lovers Club of Spring Hill

Please join us on Saturday, September 21 at 1 PM at the Partners Club, behind Oak Hill Hospital, 11735 Cortez Blvd., Spring Hill. Famed Bulbophyllum hybridizer Bill Thoms will be the guest speaker. Mr. Thoms has won nearly 100 American Orchid Society Cultural awards and has been growing orchids in Florida for over 40 years. Guests are welcome to attend and view the member's bloom table, purchase orchids, and enjoy free refreshments. Visit club Website at www.springhillorchidclub.com or call Linda Roderick 597-3736 for more information.



September Guest Speaker: Bill Thoms.

Bulbophyllums; the Incomplete Guide, From A to WHY? Bill Thom's is the author of this whimsical book on Bulbophyllums, the largest genus in the orchid family. This covers every aspect of growing and hybridizing with plenty of non-nonsense tips to help the grower overcome any obstacle and produce the most flowers and the largest growth possible in the shortest time. Also included are chapters unraveling some of the identification mysteries that have been problems to growers for decades. With over 380 photos of species, new hybrids and culture, this book should help the grower of any genus, especially BULBOPHYLLUMS.

Bills lecture will be on Bulbophyllum Culture.

This is the WAFL-HS program of general orchid culture with the emphasis on bulbophyllums, the largest genus in the orchid family; as a live demonstration of how-to-grow tips, or PowerPoint programs covering many aspects of growing bulbos with many shots of some of the neatest species and hybrids, as well as culture and growing tips.



Treasure's Report

By
Helen Battistrada

Balance 07/20/13	\$ 3484.93
Receipts	\$ <u>0.00</u>
Total	\$ 3484.93
Disbursements	\$ <u>147.88</u>
Balance 08/17/13	\$ 3337.05



Upcoming Speaker Program

By Ed Bugbee,
Program Coordinator

September

Bill Thoms

Bill is renowned in the orchid world for his vast knowledge of the Genre Bulbophyllum – The largest in the Orchid World.

October

Club Picnic

Membership



By Linda Meyer & Sarah Hart
Membership Coordinators

90 Paid members.

40 Members August attendance

13 Guest

Our meetings are held the 3rd Saturday of each month starting at 1:00 P.M. We usually have an informative speaker at each meeting, a show table of orchids grown by our members and orchids for sale. We meet at the ; Partners Club of Oak Hill Hospital 11361 Cortez Blvd Cortez Blvd. Brooksville, Florida

ORCHID LOVERS' CLUB OF SPRING HILL MINUTES OF THE MEETING AUGUST 17, 2013

- President, Geary Harris called the meeting to order at 1:05 pm.
- Greeting of new members and visitors.
- The speaker for the September meeting will be Mr. Bill Thomas.
- Vera Wells spoke about the October 19th picnic. It will start at 1:00 p.m. A sign up sheet was passed around for salads & condiments.
- Helen Battistrada read the Treasurer's report
- Linda Meyer reported on the membership. She also spoke about name tags and the embroidery on shirts.
- The annual auction is on November 16, 2013. Preview at 11:30 a.m. Auction starts at 12:00 p.m.
- The Christmas party will be on December 14, 2013.
- Our sympathies were extended to Barbara Brillinger whose husband passed away.
- Judges chosen for show table.
- Break.
- Show table.
- Speaker Louis Del Favero spoke about bare root orchids.
- Raffle was held.
- Meeting adjourned at 3:20 pm.



Minutes submitted by Sue Caparbi-Taylor

Please welcome our newest members;

Dorothy Cleary
8515 Fleetway Ave.
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**Refreshment
Reminder**

By

Eleanor Szarzynski,
Refreshment Coordinator
352-688-3887

October

Laurie Ciannamea

Thomas Gavin

Donna Fazekas

Soft Drinks

Eleanor Szarzynski

Sonia Terrelonge

Show Table Donations

Louis De Favero	7 orchids.
Judy Smith	3 orchids.
Pat Dupke	2 orchids
Gary Gethen	1 orchid

Thank you all for your generosity.

**ORCHID AND CLUB NAME
EMBROIDERED ON YOUR
SHIRT**

Have 'your' shirt embroidered with our club's name and a beautiful orchid. Information will be at the attendance desk each month. Orders must be pre-paid. Shirts must also be pre-washed. When we have a reasonable size order it will be sent in. Hopefully by October.

Sonia Terrelonge

plant to be nice and green.

He picked up a plant that had lots of green leaves on it but there were no live eyes on that division so it's garbage and goes in the trash - although you could keep it and see what happens if you want. Sometimes by some miracle you may find a secondary eye further up the bulb that might put out some growth and it might be fair to give it a chance but it's a rare thing and if the plant is not special then toss it out because it's usually not worth the effort. If there are no viable eyes it's worthless.

A member said that she had a plant so overgrown in a wire basket and she needed to divide it. Louis said give yourself plenty of time, get yourself a nice pair of clippers, set up a nice work area, don't get into a rush, maybe pour yourself one of those adult beverages and don't give yourself a time frame otherwise you'll waste a lot of plants. Approach it like

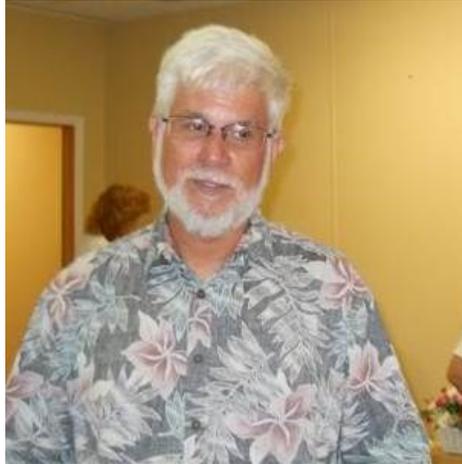
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GUEST SPEAKER SEGMENT

by Delia Dunn



It was with great pleasure that we welcomed back Louis del Favero who has spoken to us many times before and is one of our vendors at our annual orchid festival in the spring. His interesting history and contact information is online on the home page of our new website www.springhillorchidclub.com



Louis del Favero

His nursery is located in rural Tampa where he has over 13,000 sq. ft. of greenhouse space open to the public. He has something for everyone, importing species from their native countries, warm tolerant as well as cool growing orchids, and such a diverse assortment such as Dendrobiums, Encyclias, Oncidiums and both compact and large flowered Cattleyas.

His talk was on how to grow an orchid from bare roots and how to buy them, but before he could get started he wanted to comment on a couple of 'seasoned' buttonwood mounts on the Show Table, which Gary had brought in. They were large and caused quite a stir as each one had several different species growing on them, a perfect example of 'bare root' and Louis said they really were fantastic and so rare today to find buttonwood.

Louis said that bare root plants are an economical way to buy from a nursery or a show. It usually costs much less than if a plant is potted or in bloom. Sometimes the way it's being sold is not the way it works for you in your environment so bare roots let you decide how you want to grow them.



(These were not the plants Louis had)

He had a Cattleya division a little bit shriveled up, but acceptable - he said that you want a few live white roots and a primary eye, which is found at the base of a pseudobulb where new growth comes from and new blooms. And you want the



The Presidents Message

By Geary Harris

Today, I want to talk about family and how to get along. I'll give you an example. I have a rat terrier mix puppy who thinks she is the boss of all our pets but she does not get along with our seven year old female cat which causes problems in the family.

Our orchid club is like a family but, sometimes we cause our family problems when we can't get along with those who help run our family.

The solution is to let those who try to help keep our family together through the hard work they do letting them know just how much they are appreciated. Then our family will grow and even become a more productive club.

See you in September with speaker Bill Thoms.



Vera Wells

Orchid Lovers Club Picnic October 19th 2013

Will be held at Vera & Michael Wells Home

16139 Sam C Rd

Brooksville FL, 34613

Phone: 352- 345- 4318 Time: 1pm to 4pm

By Vera Wells



Michael Wells

Directions from Oak Hill Hospital SR 50 East past the Suncoast Highway about ¾ mile to Fort Dade Avenue make a left onto Fort Dade Ave (Race Track Gas Station is on the corner). Proceed ½ mile to Sam C Rd (2nd left). Take Sam C Rd past the right hand bend in the road. Home is the second on the right with paved driveways, yellow home.

Meats served will be Brats, Italian Sausage, Polish Sausage on Cuban Bread, and Sloppy Joes.

Meats, Cuban bread, buns, and paper goods will be provided by the Society. There will be Lemonade and Green Tea provided by Vera Wells. Membership may also bring their own drinks.

A sign up sheet was passed around to the members. Note, members bringing items to picnic should bring enough to serve at least 12 people.

We are still in need of some items: baked beans, cookies, sliced tomatoes, onions, green peppers, and ice.

There will be a raffle held at the picnic.

Set up and clean up will be done by the food committee: Vera B. Wells, Jean Cucchio, and Donna Fazekas. Set up members to arrive at picnic venue early at 1030 am. Clean up approx. 1 /2 hour after end time.

Shopping to be done by Vera B. Wells, society to reimburse cost. Plant stands to be brought in by society president.

(Continued from page 3)

you're a surgeon, more or less - follow the rhizomes where they're going and figure out where to cut it carefully. If you rip and tear and destroy it you'll have four or five good pieces and a whole bunch of one or two bulb pieces. Louis says he doesn't usually like to take on jobs like that for people because they take so long to do.

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A Friend Indeed (Orchid BFFs)

by
Jeff Rundell

As you know by now, I leave most of the advice on how to raise orchids to others. I'm always afraid someone will show up at my door with tears in their eyes and hang a dead plant around my neck. It's the side stories that peak my curiosity and, come to think of it, maybe they aren't so irrelevant anyway. No organism exists by itself in nature. The web of interdependence that extends to us also wraps around orchids. Our orchids, resting comfortably in their pots, seem to be outside that web but look a little closer and some fascinating stories appear.

I have to admit one of my least favorite members of insectia are ants. It's a fact that they outnumber us and outweigh us on this planet and they will probably be here long after we are gone. They have been working hard for millennia to form solid alliances with other species and that includes orchids. These are called mymecophilus relationships and are usually mutualistic but may progress toward forced mutualism. The poster child for this bizarre marriage is the Coryanthes orchid I got from Don Stoner last year. As their back bulbs dry, swell and become hollow, the welcome mat is rolled out for the ants. To sweeten the deal the orchid offers extra floral nectar and the ants provide a robust defense along with a dash of bitter formic acid. Invaders are stung, bitten and sprayed by the new tenants. If you have ever had contact with an "ant plant", you know how incredibly sudden and aggressive these critters can be.

There are other fascinating ant plants including over 100 genera. Like the orchid many contain domatia, which are cavities to shelter and protect the stinging hoard. Along with the extra floral nectaries, ants can relax to a life that other insects would envy.



Coryanthes

Of course the really amazing part of this story is that the orchids are manipulating many insects. The male stingless Euglossine Bee is the "sucker" in one of these marriages. These bees get turned on by the scent of the osmophores deep inside the flower. Now the bees get incredibly excited, but instead of love they fall into an insulting bucket of fluid beneath them and, upon crawling out, deposit any pollinia they are carrying and pick up a new load from the flower. The bees do seem to benefit by collecting these fragrance crystals but no one seems to know why. Maybe

for the same reason I bought bottles of "English Leather" cologne when I was in high school? These same bees also are obliged to pollinate Gongora species but have different structures on their bodies in different places to keep things separate. Incidentally some of these "love potions" bear a chemical resemblance to Vicks Vapo rub and wintergreen oil.

If you have grown any Angraecums you probably are aware that many night flying moths also have an intimate relationship with orchids. Darwin was the first to note this and guess about a pollinator for the incredibly long nectary of Angraecum sesquipedale. Here is his original text:

I fear that the reader will be wearied, but I must say a few words on the Angraecum sesquipedale, of which the large six-rayed flowers, like stars formed of snow-white wax, have excited the admiration of travelers in Madagascar. A whip-like green nectary of astonishing length hangs down beneath the labellum. In several flowers sent me by Mr. Bateman I found the nectaries eleven and a half inches long, with only the lower inch and a half filled with very sweet nectar. What can be the use, it may be asked, of a nectary of such disproportional length? We shall, I think, see that the fertilisation of the plant depends on this length and on nectar being contained only within the lower and attenuated extremity. It is, however, surprising that any insect should be able to reach the nectar: our English sphinxes have probosces as long as their bodies: but in Madagascar there must be moths with probosces capable of extension to a length of between ten and eleven inches!

Of course it took years to finally discover the Hawk moth with the tongue to do the job. Lots of these blossoms are white and very fragrant at night and sadly almost everything, except people, is endangered in Madagascar.



Angraecum

Let's now travel to the south Pacific and the island of New Guinea, which is the center of diversity for the strangest group of orchids -the Bulbophyllums. The BFFs here are the order diptera - flies - and not just any flies, but ones that love rotting flesh, wounds, urine, carrion and, occasionally fruit. The Bulbophyllums manage to attract blowflies and flesh flies by not only duplicating these fetid odors but also the look of things like an open wound so

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September In Your Orchids

Based on AOS monthly checklists by Robert Scully and Ned Nash & James Rose, adapted to St. Augustine by local growers. Re-printed by permission of the St. Augustine Orchid Society

General Orchid Growing Tips

The welcome transition to fall is upon us. Once the temperature and humidity mediate, you'll notice many of your plants putting on a second growth spurt. Reward them by watering a little more frequently with dilute fertilizer. You can expect the emergence of buds on many orchids from the cattleyas, evergreen dendrobiums and vandas to cynoches, catasetums and miltonias. Select the ideal spot for the plant and place pendulous bloomers atop an inverted pot. Support the inflorescence as it emerges and open the sheath to prevent the accumulation of moisture around the developing buds.

Cattleyas

Despite the shortening days and lowering angle of the sun, you will see a flush of new root tips. Keep water and fertilizer in balance with heat and light. Check plants for potting needs for the last time. Any in dire need should be repotted as there is just enough of the growing season left for plants to establish before the days get short and cold. The spectacular, multiflowered *C. bowringiana* should be in sheath. Observe the puffy sheath structures often, they may need to be opened at the tip to encourage evaporation of condensation that forms around the buds. *C. labiata* and its hybrids will begin to flower this month along with the spectacular and fragrant forms of the species *C. percivaliana*.

Cymbidiums

Through diligent breeding programs, the cymbidium season gets stretched longer and longer. *Cym. ensifolium* hybrids will bloom first with the winter blooming standard sized hybrids soon to follow. Stake inflorescences and move plants to a shadier location to help the flowers develop.

Dendrobiums

This is the season for the phalaenopsis and canaliculatum type dendrobiums. The long, arching sprays of flat dark red-purple to white or pink saucer-like blossoms provide weeks of satisfaction. Fertilize with low nitrogen fertilizer for the best flowers. Nobile-type hybrids should continue to be maintained on a nitrogen free fertilizer program. You can start to gradually reduce watering frequency on the winter dormant dendrobiums.

Oncidiums

Of the three popular pansy orchids *Miltonia xbluntii*, *roezlii* and *spectabilis*, the latter is probably the most showy. The reddish purple flowers of *Milt. spectabilis* var. *moreliana* usually appear singly and last for weeks.

Paphiopedilums

Standard green-leaved paphiopedilums began to show their bloom sheaths this month. Late season heat waves can blast these early sheaths, so provide proper cooling and air circulation.

Phalaenopsis

The bulk of this season's growth is being ripened this month. Begin to watch watering more carefully and reduce feeding proportionately with reduced watering needs. *Phal. hieroglyphica* flowers reliably in the autumn. Its fragrant pale yellow flowers are distinctively marked with well defined brown lines on the sepals and petals. *Phal. equestris* and *Phal. lindenii* may also show their best now, the former may be everblooming through spring and the later will arouse curiosity with its attractively striped lip.

Vandas

This is the principal blooming season for *Euanthe sanderiana* (syn. *V. sanderiana*) and the foundation for large flowered modern vandaceous hybrids. Position plants so the inflorescences will grow out of the leaves toward the light. Help uncooperative types by placing a thin bamboo stick between the emerging inflorescence and the flattened form of the leaves, thereby forcing the raceme outward.

Miscellaneous Genera: Catasetum Relatives

Autumn is typically the end of the growing season for the catasetum relatives. Plants may produce flowers from pseudobulbs with leaves, or in some instances, from bulbs that have already lost their leaves. Watch the undersides of the leaves to control spider mites which seem to find these delicacies just as the foliage reaches its prime or plants are about to bloom. Support the basal racemes of catasetums as they emerge and consider placing the pots on inverted pots to provide room for them to hang freely.

(Speaker Continued from page 4)

He told us a story about a lady who came and gave him a large *Rhyncolaelia digbyana*, a slow growing plant, but it was a nice thick clump, to divide for her. It was her deceased husband's plant and it took him over an hour to do it. He got six nice plants and some extra little pieces and she told him he could have them and they did grow. But the interesting thing was that in the main plant Louis found a clay shard which had a label stuck on it that had been made on a label maker and the label showed the plant was potted in 1977 so it was a really old plant and he was really happy to have divided the plant for the lady.

He held up a *Dendrobium farmerii* from India - all dried up and not looking good. Sometimes when you get plants in from overseas they can look really beautiful and sometimes they can look really horrible. He said he'd give them a good bath or soak in Super Thrive growth stimulator water for about an hour 10 drops to 1 gallon. That helps to revive half dead plants and eyes to swell and form new growths. He said if you are community dipping make sure there are no black spots on your plants or bacteria or viruses can spread to all the other plants.. (Community dipping is when you fertilize all your orchids in the same water.)

He showed us a plant that was nice and green, had nice fat bulbs, a little growth starting and the roots were alive. That's something you wouldn't have a problem buying from someone. It had no problem whatsoever.

If you have an orchid that you don't have many of and you want more, like his *Encyclia cordigera*, rather than repotting the orchid and taking the whole thing out of the pot, he's going to cut off the front piece that's hanging out of the pot and mount it - it's a good viable plant - *Encyclia* is always better mounted than potted - and leave the back bulbs in the pot even though the bark is rotting and it needs repotting badly, but it does have live roots on the back division. He cut it where he did because he saw an eye on a bulb that's actually starting to sprout so he'll one day have another plant possibly from that back division. This way he'll end up with two plants instead of having to probably throw out the two back bulbs if he'd repotted. If it's something special that you want to propagate, that's the way you'd want to do it.

A *Rhyncolaelia glauca* needed repotting but he doesn't want to make a bigger plant; he wants to make more plants, so he cut off at the edge of the pot, bulbs that had lots of roots hanging loose and he trimmed the long leaves back. They're totally alive but just too long and don't do any good, and he'll mount it on a piece of driftwood, cypress or

cedar and by next winter, he said, it'll be in bloom.. He'll leave the rest of the plant alone to make more plants, especially if it's planted in Aliflor or some kind of rock that is not going to rot, . He called 'giving it a haircut', every year going around trimming the plant and getting new divisions.

You can mount it the simple way with the wire just wrapped several times around the plant and the mount or you can do it the more artistic way by drilling a couple of holes through the mount at the place where the plant will be attached so that a wire can run through the first hole and around the plant and through the second hole and repeated as necessary and tied at the back. Then a hole closer to the top is drilled to hang it with.

He held up a bifoliate *Cattleya*, which had been in a pot, which bifoliate don't particularly care for, and it needed repotting and all the roots were outside the pot so he pulled it out maybe three weeks previously, slapped it onto a piece of cork and now the roots are already attached to the cork. If you get it at the right time it's vitally important when you're either potting, mounting or making divisions, to catch it when there is a new flush of roots coming out then they're not going to miss a beat. The worst thing you can do though, is if you do it in the winter when the roots are not growing and it's cool, your plants will actually be damaged and they're not going to be able to re-establish and they're going to sit there until spring. If you have a real mild winter that's one thing but if you don't you compromise the root system and the plant won't establish quickly.

Someone asked how late repotting should be done and he said years ago he'd close the greenhouse up by late September but lately it's stayed warm so now he keeps it open through October.

He told us when we're out shopping to always be suspicious of good looking plants wrapped in moss or bundled somehow. He held up a bundle of lots of green leaves that looked great but he said it could be all separated pieces with no roots when you get it home and open it up. And look for brown rot on the base which means it's deteriorating already. The top may look OK. He's had shipments come in that died rotten and he has to get them replaced. He said not to be afraid to ask the vendor 'what does it look like inside?'. It depends on what it is and how much it is; sometimes he can make it work and other times, no.

If you're going to a big International Show like at Redlands, the vendors who are coming from other countries are not trying to do it on purpose or rip you off by selling you

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(Speaker Continued from page 7)

cool growing orchids, but there are people from all over the country buying orchids at those shows - people from California or up north who can handle cool growing orchids. But we can't have cool growing orchids here in Florida so we don't need to buy them. You need to know it's not something you want to buy here in Florida.. If you're interested in a plant it's always smart to ask at what elevation does the orchid grow in its native country. 3,500-4,000' elevation is the maximum you'd want for Florida. Just be careful. If you want to take a chance and risk the money that's up to you. Louis says he does that a lot to see if it'll grow and sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't.

He showed us a couple of Brassavola cucullata hybrids that were in pots and do OK but do a lot better mounted and he brought one that he'd ripped out of the pot, didn't cut hardly any roots off it and it had been mounted on a piece of scrap teak flooring not even a year ago, and it was looking good.

Another one he mounted 5-6 months ago and it's really starting to get established. He did the same thing - drilled a couple of holes and tied the wire back; you don't see the wire wrapping around - nothing to it - tied onto the mount with a little tiny blob of sphagnum moss. If it's in a pot it needs water maybe every two or three days but if it's mounted it can hang with the Vandas and get watered daily. Certain orchids prefer being mounted rather than potted.

The very very best wood is the buttonwood that you can't find much anymore. Cypress, driftwood, cedar is good too. Always weather your cedar mounts for about 2 months so that the cedar oils on the surface of the wood do not burn your root system.. Grapevine is good to mount on, bamboo is great. Cork is excellent but very expensive and hard to find. He uses a tropical hardwood and flooring scraps work beautifully but just don't use pine or oak as it will rot too fast. The real thick bark of oak is good but not the wood itself. Bamboo works fine he said and takes forever to rot. There were many questions from members about mounts. Gary mentioned that his experience with grapevine was that after four or five years it crumbles and is on the ground.

A member asked what happens if the bare root is not looked after - If the plant is on a bench with no water then it's a slow painful death but if they're getting regular water the roots will attach to whatever they are on (ie) the bench.

He had an Encyclia, which had been in a pot the previous week, on a piece of cypress from the sawmill. The bark had

sloughed off. The plant is now happier and looks better. He'd left a lot of the roots on it as they looked alive with good root tips and said the plant will get more hydrated still and probably it will take 6 months for the plant to look half way decent.

Nobile hybrid Dendrobiums are fantastic on mounts. He had some on tree fern and some on wood and he got 20 or 30 flowers the first year and the next year he had 150. Dendrobiums are beautiful mounted
Cattleyas are beautiful on mounts if they're watered enough.

Miltassias mounted will need water two times a day.
Oncidiums are better in a pot or a basket. He uses sphagnum moss as he can't keep them wet enough when mounted. They have to be watered twice a day to keep them happy.

In response to a question he did say that the area in which you live is also important in deciding what to grow and how to grow. He sells plants for everyone from Miami to Jacksonville. He has the same orchids displayed in several different ways. He explains that here in central Florida we can do it all pretty much.. People from south Florida don't want to see a plastic pot - they want clay pots, baskets and mounts. If they get a plastic pot they pull the plant out as soon as they get home. But if he does a show in Jacksonville where it's cooler, and everyone is growing in a greenhouse then all bets are off, he said. They want mostly pots and those who are more experienced want mounts. Cold water in the winter would not be good for mounted plants so that needs to be a consideration. They need to be well watered more than once a day and that would not be suitable for someone in a very cold winter environment where the plants might freeze or not tolerate the cold water temperatures. And he said your growing area is important too - if you're growing a lot of mounted, you need to have a growing area that you can make a big serious mess in because he finds a lot of plants people bring in to him that are really dry because they've only been misted. Ideally your best bet is to make a place where you can get the hose and give them a bath like they're getting rained on. If you can't water adequately in the winter they'd slowly decline a bit - they won't die on you but they won't be quite as happy AS IF YOU WERE able to keep them all plumped up over the wintertime.. Someone mentioned lukewarm water but you can't get that outside; it would only work if you had a few plants you could bring inside.

Someone asked what is the normal mixture to grow in - there is no normal. Everyone has their own preferences. ☺

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(Speaker Continued from page 8)

For those growing under a solid roof can use fir bark mixtures, Hydrotone, charcoal, bark, sponge rock, Aliflor or any variation. Oncidiums like a lot more water so he adds sphagnum and leaves out the rocks. If you're growing outside in the spring you can't use fir bark as it rots too quick so you need inorganics; go heavy on the Hydroton* or some kind of rock or charcoal. The real high priced stuff is tree fern fiber which lasts several years without rotting, and

Aliflor, both are beautiful for growing outside and in the rain.

A member's question about snow mold - it is the soft white looking stuff found on old wet bark - he says if you have snow mold get rid of all the mix, trim all the roots and use fungicide otherwise the roots will decline and there goes the plant.

Rhizotonic is even better than Super Thrive.

(Orchid BBF Continued from page 5)

their flowers are frequently in shades of red and brown. Somewhat easier to imagine, but not to see are a huge group of infrequently grown orchids called the Pleurothallids. I



Pleurothallid

I visited an orchid "museum" just outside the entrance to the Monteverde Cloudforest reserve in Costa Rica that had almost 1,000 plants within but took up an area only about the size of two living rooms. You were handed a magnifying glass upon entering and many of the plants were thumbnail size. Their pollinators were tiny flies you could barely detect around flowers which were the size of a grain of sand.

When orchids live at higher elevations with cooler temperatures, they face another problem: a lack of insects. They need something warm blooded and birds, especially hummingbirds, are happy to oblige. This is called "ornithophily" and it is a costly strategy for the plants. Many of these orchids are shades of red which insects do not see well and their pollinia are dark blue or grey instead of yellow. The reason for this is so that the pollinia that collect on the beak are the same color as the beak. If they were yellow the bird, who has great color vision, would notice, clean them off and discard them. These pollinia are also much stickier and the flowers have strong narrow openings. The strong folds require the bird to peck to get entrance. Nectar is an expense so the sweetness of high altitude orchids is much more dilute than what insects get at lower elevations.

Ever since 1889 when Noel Bernard discovered orchid seeds germinating under a forest log, we've known how

essential fungi (mycorrhizia) are to orchid seed germination. It's one sweet relationship starring the fungi as providers of essential nutrients. Nobody really knows how mutualistic the marriage is, but we wouldn't have an orchid club if it had never been discovered. Most of kingdom fungi are loaded with extracellular enzymes and we have all seen their ability to turn a good apple into a slimy smelly liquid lump that appeals only to them. In the case of orchids those enzymes are harnessed to break down huge molecules into smaller nutrient molecules just like what happens in our own gut. I've had my problems with the evil side of fungi turning an orchid into mush especially with the wet weather that we have had recently. But research has shown that it's not just germinating orchids that have fungal friends. Wild orchids plucked from the trees have a whole host of fungi accompanying them. What I'm about to suggest probably has crossed minds much greater than mine. I have used various orchid "tonics" like Super Thrive and others in hopes of duplicating the results their advertising claims. There is good evidence for some of their ingredients (trace minerals and plant hormones) but not much for the rest of their additives especially all those human vitamins. I take a "probiotic" tablet every day to strengthen my immune system. It, along with yogurt and other cultured foods helps us maintain good health. My question is when we grow orchids devoid of their native fungi and bacteria, are we weakening their immune system? Are there probiotics for orchids? The people at the hydroponics store down on Rte 19 believe it. They brew up a tea concoction from compost they claim helps all plants resist attack. Would material scraped from the trees where orchids live contain the beneficial "probiotics" that could strengthen their immunity? I cannot find any research to validate this idea. Maybe you can?

At the start of this article I promised to focus on the positive relationships orchids have with other organisms. So I refuse to digress into the evil relationship of my most hated associates like scale insects and mealybugs. Just the

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thought of them sucking the life out of a plant ruins my dinner. Instead let's focus on some of the little friends I've invited into my lanai to help protect my plants. Among my favorites are those adorable little jumping spiders (Salticids).

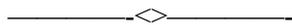


Jumping spider

There are close to 100 species in Florida and I love to watch them sneak up on some

hapless fly and jump several inches landing on their victim. Take a closer look and you will see their huge frontal eyes and the beautiful iridescent carapace as they dance side to side looking for a meal. There are loads of other "helpers" that can easily be mistaken for the enemy including: Ladybugs (technically lady bird beetles) and their larvae who love to dine on scale insects, beautiful metallic tiger beetles, mantids, predatory wasps, centipedes, lacewings, parasitic tachinid flies, shieldbugs, rove beetles, and robber flies. I admit that I have captured a few lizards and released them inside my lanai. They are the Brown Anoles introduced from Cuba and the Bahamas in the early 1900s. They have largely replaced the native green Carolina Anole that used to be much more common. Their tails are fat which proves they've managed to find plenty of prey among my plants.

My last suggestion for an orchid companion is, perhaps the most obvious: another orchid! I think this was beautifully demonstrated at our last meeting by Gary Gethen with his two large mounts he called Adam and Eve. Both these large Buttonwood mounted collections had many plants attached and growing vigorously. Most of us traditionally isolate our plants in separate pots but by mounting them together we could save space, have a progression of bloom and, in my view, turn orchids into an art form just as the bonsai growers have done for centuries with their miniature worlds. For many years I've broken the rules by placing Tillandsias (bromeliad "air plants") in many of my hanging basket and mounted orchids. They add interest, color and, as I've said, "orchids need friends too". I'd love to hear your ideas on any of these subjects especially if they show orchids as a part of the natural communities they once lived in. So go out and find some friends for your orchids.



Cymbidium iridioides



Miltonia candida



Vanilla humblotii



Catasetum saccatum —illustrated by Sertom
Orchidaceum (1838)

Show Table

The show table featured many beautiful orchids this month. All who brought their favorite plant to showcase for the rest of us are to be commended for their efforts. If you have an outstanding orchid you would like to share with the rest of the club, I encourage you to bring it in for all to see. (In no particular order.)

Blue Ribbon (s)			Gary Gethen (23 yr.) Dale Story (18 yr.) Collectively these growers have 113 growing years experience.	Ascd. Valentine Ascd. John DeBiase Fuch's Indigo FCC/AOS Den. Specie C. Lutea Specie Sns. Fragrans Ascoda. Crownfox Magic #2 Rhy. Coelestes
Pat Dupke (22 yr.)	Paph.	Moquettianum 'Pine Knot'		Lc. Long tone x Netgsri Lc. (no name) C. Summer Rhy. ?
Gary Gethen (23 yr.)	Pot.	Susan Fender 'Cinnamon Stick'		
	V.	Rev. Masao Yamada 'Hawaii'		
'Moreliana	Milt.	Spetabgalis		
Jeff Rundell (30 yr.)	Spec. E.	Doritis Pulcherima 'Gindy'		
Honorable Mention				
Pat Dupke (22 yr.)	Ascd.	Gua Jia Long		
Delia Dunn (20 yr.)	C.	?		
Jeff Rundell (30 yr.)	Spec.	Phal. Fasciata		

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