

July 2007

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Submission Deadline

Articles, pictures, and other content to be included in the ROA Bulletin must be received by the 15th each month.

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Upcoming Events

July 8
Potting by the Tracks

August 12
Walter Off
Mini-cattleya Orchids and Their Culture

September 9
Charles Wilkins
Growing Orchids in the Home

October 14
Bob Gordon
Some Problems with Phalenopsis Culture and How to Solve Them

November 9-10
Merritt Huntington - Memorial Symposium

November 11
Roy Takanaga from H & R Orchids
Subject TBA

All ROA activities and speakers will emphasize the how-to and hands-on aspects of growing orchids.

ROA Bulletin



BLC. Dreaming

© Allen Black

Blc. Dreaming, hybridized by Allen Black

Potting by the Tracks

Yes, it's repotting time again and ROA will be right there doing what it did last year. July's meeting will be a repotting session on the tracks at the Science Museum (weather permitting), otherwise look to the atrium. We will not have a showcase table, but we will be able to judge what others have been doing.

Come down and help us out. We need assistance with repotting, plant sales (yes, we will have some for sale), the hospitality table and other needs. Do your part and call Bill Akin (378-0999) or Wanda Andrako (794-3240) and volunteer your services during this important event in the life of ROA. Those that volunteered

last year had a great time, not to mention the fun watching Wanda try to repot a silk plant that never seemed to fade but whose owner thought it was time to repot.

Repotting will be from 12noon thru 4PM. A fee will be charged based on the size of each plant being repotted. Bring your friends to look at plants for sale and to watch members "do their thing" as we provide a valuable service to the public. And don't forget your own plants as well.

Why do it yourself when it's so easy to have someone else doing the work and providing the equipment. ✨

See you July 8th at the tracks!

Oncidium Information

We have a useful chart for watering and caring for each of the main categories of oncidium if anyone is uncertain after the last talk. It is still under copyright protection so we can't print it here. I will supply it to anyone if they email me. Arnynderm@comcast.net.

Oncidium Program

Linda Wilhelm and her husband, Rolf, have a NC business specializing in oncidiums. They hybridize many different crosses. Linda showed pictures of many beautiful plants and told of their special needs for growing the best plants possible. Some culture notes follow:



Linda Wilhelm

- Equitant oncidiums (tolumnias) are easy to grow but need to know that they do not like salt on their roots, salts from fertilizer. They need water as pure as you can get it and suggested that as small as they are you can use bottled water for them. Of course, you do need to fertilize also. They grow best in small clay pots with no mix around them. The clay holds the moisture and they do well, but water daily.
- Mules ear oncidiums with large pseudobulbs should not be planted with the medium up around the pseudobulb or they will rot.
- The taxonomists are changing the names of the various genera around so that it is hard to keep track of some of the names. Sometimes they change and then revert to the original.
- *Oncidium onustum* has a tri-lobed lip that is dominant when used in crosses with other varieties and you can tell if it is in the back ground because of the tri-lobed lip.
- *Oncidium papillio* does not like to be repotted. She suggests that you use a medium that breaks down very slowly so that when you need to repot that you can just move it to a larger pot without disturbing the medium and put fresh medium around it. NEVER CUT THE SPIKE OFF. It will continue to bloom for some time. These have been known to bloom themselves to death!
- Hybrids are easier to grow than species. This is good to know as we choose our plants.
- Brassias have multiple spikes and many flowers. The flowers are large and fragrant. When used in hybrids they suppress color.
- Miltonias from Brazil are heat tolerant, grow in higher light, grow like weeds. They outgrow pots quickly, mounting on tree fern helps. These need lots of water while actively growing, but decrease water when not actively growing. *Miltonia spectabilis* is one of the notable varieties in this group. They are used to give brassias color when hybridizing.
- *Miltonia clowesii* is a sequential bloomer.
- *Miltoniopsis* or pansy orchids are not Brazilian. These should be repotted once each year, need good air movement and good bright, indirect light.
- Intergenerics are made of many different species and you must know what is in them in order to know how to grow them. They do not all have the same requirements. Side sheath leaves taps water against the pseudobulb and severe rot results. Cinnamon is an excellent antibacterial. Accordion pleating in the leaves is caused by inconsistent watering. Good water always improves the quality of plants. Hard water leaves an unsightly residue on the leaves and is hard to remove. It also increases the amount of fungal and bacterial problems.
- It is easy to grow oncidiums if you know what is in them and give them the proper care. Many beautiful plants have been ignored over the years because some of us did not know how easy they are to grow and bloom. Linda's presentation should take some of that hesitation away.

AMERICAN
ORCHID
SOCIETY

ROA is affiliated with the American Orchid Society. Memberships are \$60.00 per year and include the monthly magazine *Orchids*. Details are at www.orchidweb.org. AOS is a 501 (c) (3) organization.

June Showcase

Cattleya

Blue Blc. Ardmore grown by L.K.Harvie

Red BLC. Ports of Paradise grown by L.K.Harvie

Paphiopedilum & Phragmipedium

Blue Paph. Philippinense grown by Bayne Hawkins

Red Paph. No name grown by Thuyen Trevino

Yellow Phrag. Eric Young x Sorcerer's Apprentice

Oncidium & Dendrobium

Blue Brassia Eternal Wind 'Summer Wind' grown by Stuart Grandis

Red Onc. Lanceanum grown by L.K.Harvie

Yellow Bllra Marfitch "Everglades Galaxy" grown by Jim Culbert

Phalaenopsis

Blue Phal. Orchidom Harlequin grown by Jim Culbert

Red Phal. Little Emperor 'M' grown by Sue and Bill Akin

Yellow Phal. Carolina Goldcup grown by Jim Culbert

Vandaceous and Other

None

Novice

None

June Showcase: Blue Ribbons

Cattleya

Blc. Ardmore, L.K. Harvie

Buddy Harvie brought a cattleya with two large (six inches across?) white flowers with full almost floppy petals and a little color in the lips. The flowers were beautiful old fashion corsage orchids. His second orchid (red ribbon) consisted of a pair of emerald green flowers, also unusual but the stem had broken en route. This plant was a hybrid: brassia, laelia, cattleya.

Paphiopedilum & Phragmipedium

Paph. Philippinense, grown by Bayne Hawkins



Striking because its large yellow pouch (lip), maroon and white striped dorsal petal and the other petals pendulous, spiraling, and long. They like a fine bark mix in a somewhat deeper pot, replaced often, but should never completely dry out. Slow growing, it likes cooler nights to help set the long lasting blooms.

Oncidiums, Dendrobiums, and Others

Bras. Eternal wind 'Summer Wind', Stuart Grandis

Often brassias send out horizontal spikes

even when kept facing the same direction from the time they initiate the shoot. Stuart Grandis's plant had three vertical spikes full of flowers. There were a lot of pale green flowers for the size of the plant. They are often used with oncidiums to create interesting hybrids.

Phalaenopsis

Phal. Orchidom Harloquin, Jim Culbert

The phalaenopsis blooms were in a precise row of interesting bloom- white with big maroon blotches. According to AOS judge Nancy Mountford, much of the early Harlequin breeding was done by hobbyists rather than commercial breeders who are always concentrating on fast growing Phals. Various clones of the Phal. "Golden Peoker" have been used in the breeding of white, pink, and yellow Harlequins. Hundreds of hybrids(including well known Phals. like the Everspring group) have been bred with Golden Peoker to improve flower count, flower full round form (good face), distinctive blotches and/or stripes, depth of color and flower size. Many winning plants have been bred and study continues today. We had a few Harlequin Phalaenopsis in our auction this spring.



Phrag. Geralda

Merritt Huntington Memorial Symposium

November 9-10, 2007 in Williamsburg, VA

Make plans now to attend the 2007 Merritt Huntington Memorial Symposium, which will be held in Williamsburg, VA, at the Ramada 1776 at 725 Bypass Road. All members of the Alliance are strongly urged to attend what will be a wonderful event dealing with orchid culture and knowledge.

Friday evening beginning at 6PM will be attribute to Merritt who was so continuously supportive of all orchid interests in the area, this to be followed by Jeff Bradley speaking on Orchid Legends of America.

Saturday will be seminars from the best of orchid growers: Carrie Raven-Riemann on "Mini multi floral Phaleanopsis; Dr. Yin-Tung Wang on Nobile dendrobiums; and Dr. Norito Hasegawa on Paphs and their future.

This will also be the National Capital Judging Center November AOS judging, so bring plants for this event. The registration fee of \$35 for Saturday includes a great lunch, while the \$25 preview party fee includes heavy hors d'oeuvres.

Just to make it an event not to be forgotten, there will be plants for sale by H & R Orchids, Waldor Orchids, Orchidophile, Seagrove, Machodoc, Celebrate Orchids and the speakers as well. Interesting plants at good deals, but only if you are there.

This is an event not to be missed, probably the best group of speakers for any orchid presentation in many years. For further information call Bill or Sue Akin at 378-0999 or visit www.mycommunityis.com/tos/. See you in Williamsburg.

Growing Tips by Courtney Hackney

I have always been curious about what it would be like to grow orchids someplace where the humidity was very low. Extreme drought and low humidity these past three months have provided me with an experience that taught me a great deal about my normal culture and the importance of water to orchids.

Initially, I tried to outlast the drought and occasionally misted lightly with the limited water supply in my cistern. Not only did bulbs shrivel and roots die, but there was a covering of salt on the medium that continued to buildup. Eventually, it was necessary to



Bc. Wild Thing, hybridized by Allen Black

try something different. The key has been to water extremely thoroughly and often, which would not be possible in the normal summer's heat and humidity. Under drought conditions, which have included very low humidity, the medium dries very quickly allowing more frequent, but time

About This Bulletin

The Richmond Orchid Alliance meets at the Science Museum of Virginia, 2500 W. Broad Street, Richmond, at 2:00 P.M. of the second Sunday of each month from January through November. Yearly dues are \$20.00 per individual, or \$25.00 for a joint membership. Dues should be paid to the ROA Finance Director, Sue Akin, P.O. Box 8682, Richmond, VA 23226.

The Richmond Orchid Alliance is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization. Any donations to ROA are tax deductible. We are affiliated with Orchid Digest and a member of the American Orchid Society.

The ROA Bulletin is a publication of the Richmond Orchid Alliance and is distributed to the Society's members monthly, prior to all club meetings.

Submissions to the Bulletin should be sent to the editor early enough to arrive by the 15th of the month prior to a meeting.

Address Changes

If you have moved, changed your telephone number or email address, please email Richmond Orchid Alliance with the change at 2ROA@comcast.net or to P.O. Box 8682, Richmond, VA 23226.

We don't want your Bulletin to be delayed or not received. This is an important part of your membership.

Growing Tips

consuming watering, which works to keep my orchids alive, at least until the rains come.

Clearly, it is extremely difficult to grow orchids well without good water. Good water contains few dissolved solids; these are mostly salts. The amount of dissolved solids are measured with a simple instrument that measures the amount of current water will carry; i.e. more dissolved stuff in the water equals more current. Pure rainwater or distilled water contains 0 parts per million (ppm) dissolved stuff, while seawater contains 35,500 ppm.

Recall that most orchids in your collection are derived from ancestors that grew attached to trees, so their only water source was rainfall, and their primary nutrient source was dust that falls on the leaves of trees and drips down with each rainfall.

Most orchids evolved in this nutrient poor environment, which is why they are very intolerant of water with lots of dissolved minerals. When we add fertilizer to our water we raise the dissolved solids in the water because fertilizers are nothing more than nutrient salts. Most commercial orchid growers try to add 100 ppm of nitrogen when they fertilize. Fertilizers typically also contain other nutrients, e.g. phosphorus and potassium, further raising the dissolved nutrient levels. My primary water source is normally rainwater collected from the greenhouse roof. There are always a few dissolved solids, but rainwater flowing into my underground cistern is still very pure, usually between 10-20 ppm dissolved solids. When I add fertilizer, my water contains about 280 ppm dissolved solids.

Under the present weather conditions my rainwater already contains 250 ppm dissolved solids because less than 1 inch of rain has fallen over three months, and

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Brassia Eternal wind 'Summer Wind', grown by Stuart Grandis

numerous ocean storms have caused heavy surf, putting lots of salt in the air and on my roof. Worse yet, these salts are mostly sodium chloride, both of which are very toxic to orchids. What is an orchid grower to do?

The only other source of water available to me is from a community well, which is 360-380 ppm. Fortunately, most of the stuff dissolved in this water consists of calcium, magnesium, and iron. These salts are not toxic at these levels but do leave unsightly residue on leaves. This water is also extremely basic, which severely limits the ability of orchids to absorb nutrients.

Some orchids in my collection have surprised me and thrived because they are not epiphytes and instead were derived from orchids that grew on the ground, notably Paphs. Many paphs grow in limestone rich soils and have thrived in the basic well water. Others have done very poorly, most notably phrags and some pleurothalids. They need very pure water and could not tolerate hard water.

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Growing Tips

Much to my delight, and surprise, almost all the cattleyas, phals, and vandas are growing extremely well despite the high dissolved solid content of the water using the following process. First they are watered thoroughly with well water. This dissolves any salts that have accumulated on the medium since that last watering,

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but does render the medium surface basic. Then the surface of the medium is misted lightly with my very limited supply of rainwater to which fertilizer had been added. Most high nitrogen fertilizer is acidic, neutralizing the well water. This does, however, take a lot more time. ✿

