

CLUB NEWS



Dave Off

September 7, 2021 Meeting

by Janis Croft

Welcome and Thanks.

President Tom Sullivan opened the meeting at 7:00 pm with 48 attendees. Tom thanked Dianne Batchelder and Dottie Sullivan for the treats and coffee and reminded all to remember to Drop a Dollar for the treats.

Club Business.

Membership VP Linda Stewart welcomed

our four visitors, new member Christine Peterson, and returning member Steve Raibley. Linda then asked all September birthday people to raise their hands for their free raffle ticket. Linda asked that if you know of anyone in need of a cheering up or a get well card, let her know by emailing her at info@staugorchidsociety.org.

Mentoring Program – Linda said there is a sign up sheet for our Mentoring Program at the Welcome Table. If you are a new grower or new to St. Augustine, sign up for the mentoring program and we'll link you up with a Mentor that lives close to you. You'll be able to phone or email them with questions, visit each other's growing area and get general assistance. Sign up sheets at the Welcome Table.

Repotting Clinic — Last one of the year is October 2nd, from 9 til noon at the Memorial Lutheran Church Pavilion across from Back Parking Lot.

Orchid Shows in Florida this Month – Jacksonville Fall Orchid Sale will be at the Mandarin Garden Club September 11 and 12, Tampa Orchid Show will be September 25 and 26 and the Tamiami Orchid Festival will be held Oct. 1 through 3 outside at the Fruit and Spice Park in Homestead. Check website calendar for [details here](#).



Library— Librarian Howard Cushnir brought in a series of books from Jacksonville author Mary Noble entitled "You Can Grow Orchids," "You Can Grow Cattleyas," and "You Can Grow Phalaenopsis." He encouraged all to use the library collection



listed on our [SAOS website](#). If you would like a book or magazine, send a request to librarian@staugorchidsociety.org and he will bring the item(s) to the next meeting.

Supplies - If you need supplies, email info@staugorchidsociety.org. We have Potting Mixes, Butterfly Clips and Fertilizer Baskets. Terry has some new SAOS T-shirts featuring Toshie Aokie 'Pizzaz' for \$20.

Show Table. We will continue our Courtney Hackney led Virtual Show Table via Zoom. The next one will be September 15, which is the 3rd Wednesday this month. Send your photos by end of September so they can be included in the next newsletter and provide Sue time to prepare the presentation. Each month's Virtual Show Table is recorded and posted on our website.

Courtney Hackney with Sue Bottom started the Show Table discussion with two of Sue's plants from the same seed pod. One had yellow flowers and the other's flowers were a soft bronzy color. This demonstrates the variety one can achieve from the same cross. Next Courtney showed his plant that bloomed without the traditional petals, sepals and lip, a genetic mistake which just occurs occasionally. He next showed another plant with bulbs ready to bloom. He says that he often has to spray the buds with water to dilute the sap so the flowers can open. Oftentimes, ants eat off the sugary sap but he doesn't have enough ants in his orchid house to help this plant bloom. Next Sue showed an Epi. magnoliae with long inflorescences full of blooms. This is a native plant that grows on our oaks in with the Resurrection ferns. Courtney says he knows when to water his plants by the shriveling of the Resurrection ferns in his greenhouse. Then the Catasetum Jamie Lawson XXOO

Continued on page 3



CLUB NEWS



Upcoming Orchid Events

September

- 11 Florida North-Central AOS Judging, 1 pm
Clermont Judging Ctr, 849 West Ave.
- 11-12 Fall JOS Show
Mandarin Garden Club
- 14 JOS Meeting, Topic TBA, 6 pm
Repotting Workshop
- 15 SAOS Virtual Show Table, 7:00 pm
Courtney Zooms into Cyberspace
An Invitation Will be Sent by Email

October

- 1-3 Tamiami Orchid Festival
Fruit and Spike Park, Homestead
- 2 Repotting Clinic, 9 am til 1 pm
Memorial Lutheran Church
3375 US 1 S – by back parking lot
- 5 SAOS Meeting, Fragrant Phals, 6:30 pm
Phillip Hamilton, Bredren Orchids
- 9 Florida North-Central AOS Judging, 1 pm
Clermont Judging Ctr, 849 West Ave.
- 12 JOS Meeting, Topic TBA, 6 pm
Thanh Nguyen, Springwater Orchids
- 13 SAOS Virtual Show Table, 7:00 pm
Courtney Zooms into Cyberspace
An Invitation Will be Sent by Email
- 15-17 Orchtoberfest
EFG Orchids, DeLand
- 23-24 Gainesville Orchid Society Show
Kanapaha Gardens
- 23-24 Delray Beach Orchid Society Show
Fieldhouse at Old School Square
- 22-24 Ridge Orchid Society Show
IFAS Stuart Center, Bartow
- 28-31 East Everglades Orchid Society
RF Orchids, Homestead

November

- 3 SAOS Meeting, Cattleya mossiae, 6:30pm
Fred Clarke, Sunset Valley Orchids
- 6-7 Vanda and Slipper Orchid Symposium
Highlands Manor, Apopka

- 10 JOS Meeting, Topic TBA, 6 pm
Fred Clarke, Sunset Valley Orchids
- 11 SAOS Virtual Show Table, 7:00 pm
Courtney Zooms into Cyberspace
An Invitation Will be Sent by Email
- 13 Florida North-Central AOS Judging, 1 pm
Clermont Judging Ctr, 849 West Ave.
- 13-14 Deerfield Beach Orchid Society Show
Safe Schools Institute
- 13-14 Fort Pierce Orchid Society Show
Riverwalk Center

December

- 5 JOS Christmas Auction
Mandarin Garden Club
- 7 SAOS Christmas Auction, 6:30 pm
Memorial Lutheran Church

St. Augustine Orchid Society Organization

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CLUB NEWS

Continued from page 1

was shown growing in the bottom section of a plastic tea bottle with holes cut into it for drainage. Steve Hawkins brought in a beautiful *Habenaria Jiaho Yellow Bird*. This plant requires a total resting and drying period during the winter.

SAOS Program. Courtney and Sue both introduced Dave Off of Waldor Orchids along with his wife Sarah and sons, Daniel and Clayton. They represent the oldest family lineage still growing orchids with Dave being the third generation. Their nurseries are famous for being certified virus free since the sixties.



Dave's talk was on Breeding Orchids and he proceeded by asking why breed orchids? His answer was an attraction to certain characteristics in a flower. He then considers whether breeding for this characterization has been done before so he checks *OrchidWiz* or *OrchidRoots.org* to see what hybrids have been made from this plant. Once he decides what to breed, he then gathers a toothpick, razor blade, tissue, log book, ziplock bag, and letter envelope. Dave cuts off the flower segments which makes the flower more fertile. In a few days, he takes the toothpick and gathers the pollen from the anther cap and then rubs the pollen loaded toothpick in the stigma of either the same plant for a selfing or another to create a hybrid. Then he waits to see if a seed pod develops. If it does, he then sends the pod to a lab for flasking. One can go to *Orchid Mall* and find many flasking labs listed. Then he waits sometimes up to 2 years to get the flasks back and start to grow the new hybrid. Dave then asked the audience if we were now ready to begin breeding our own orchids and received a few enthusiastic responses while others were hesitant.

For the next part of the presentation, Dave showed slides of the crosses he has made and the varieties that appear from the first, second and subsequent bloomings. He showed six slides of first blooms of *Blc. Anthony Coppola* (a cross between *Blc. Malworth* and *C. Mrs. Mahler*) and each slide was a totally different flower color. This is the intriguing aspect of breeding that he enjoys. He

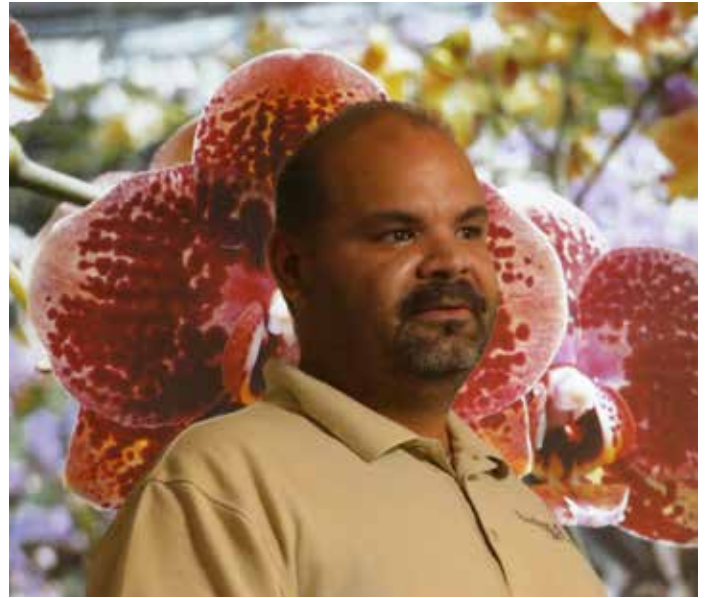


showed slides of orchid characteristics that he considers for breeding purposes. On a photo of *C. warscewiczii*, he pointed out the yellow color that resembles an eye on the lip and then followed that photo with slides of crosses that have an attractive "eyes" that has been bred to be more dominant in size and color. He then showed slides of orchid lips in big lip *phalaenopsis* compared to crosses where the lips are more sculptured and dramatic. Dave then asked if the audience liked *coerulea* orchids and of course, all responded yes. He then showed *Lc. Busy Bev 'Blue Jewel'*, a cross he developed for its blue color and commented how most breeders do strive to make crosses with striking colors as well as spots and fragrance. Other aspects of an orchid one might want to consider for breeding are the plants size, height and growth characteristics. Dave ended his presentation by showing the difference between meristems and seed sown orchids. Some of the *phalaenopsis* market today is the result of meristem propagation—mass-production of clones of a particular orchid that all look alike and are the same size. He then compared these to siblings from the same seed pod that reflect similar characteristics to the parents but each has a unique look. Dave encouraged all to breed, grow, flower and then register a plant.

Meeting Conclusion. The evening concluded with the Silent Auction and Raffle table. Thanks to the helpful hands that stayed to clean and store the tables, chairs and room.



CLUB NEWS



October 5 Monthly Meeting

Fragrant Phals
Phillip Hamilton, Bredren Orchids

Phillip will talk about novelty phalaenopsis. These often fragrant summer bloomers can be grown for their foliage as much as their flowers. Phillip grew up among orchids in his parents greenhouses in Kingston, Jamaica where his father's early orchid hobby evolved into one of the major orchid nurseries on the island, Hamlyn Orchids. Phillip has been collecting orchids since a young boy. He has a graduate degree in Environmental Horticulture from the University of Florida and is an AOS accredited judge. We'll have our normal raffle table and sales table at the meeting. Friends and guests are always welcome!

When: Tuesday, October 5, 6:30 til 9 pm

Where: Memorial Lutheran Church
3375 US 1 South, St. Aug 32086



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American Orchid Society Corner

Webinars

September 2, 8:30 pm, Everyone Invited
Greenhouse Chat, Q&A - Ron McHatton
September 16, 8:30 pm, AOS Members Only
Sarcochilus – Jean Allen-Ikeson

Orchids Magazine this month:

Measuring Artificial Light – Kelly McCracken
Epi. porpax– Judith Rapacz-Hasler
Paph. fairrieanum - Christelle Kapfer

Photos of Latest AOS Awards



INSPIRATION



C. Nancy Off 'Linwood' AM/AOS

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CULTIVATION



Orchid Questions & Answers

by Sue Bottom,
sbottom15@gmail.com

Q1. All six divisions I made of Rlc. Volcano Spring have 1 to 3 new leads. What do I do, if anything, with the floppy leaves and shriveled pseudobulbs? I presume they are nourishing the new growth, but not sure.



A1. You can stake them or use a wire halo to improve the appearance of the plant. Don't remove the pseudobulbs. If they look dehydrated, they probably are from the disruption to the root system. Use seaweed or root stimulators to get the plant reestablished faster.

Q2. This cattleya only opened a bit more than this a few days ago and now is dying. Do you have any idea what happened?

A2. The flower stem looks like it is yellowish and soft rather than firm and green. I'm wondering if the flower sheath was also that sickly yellow, in which case I would guess the flower started rotting in the sheath. When I see a sheath



with that coloration, I slit it open so the bud is open to the air. Otherwise, condensation inside the sheath can cause rotting.

Q3. I had this *Renanthera coccinea* where it gets bright, but not direct sun and every other day misting. What is happening?



A3. It looks like crown rot and bacterial blighting on the tender new leaves, particularly if it happened quickly. If the crown of the plant withers, perhaps it will form keikis at the base. I stopped using the overhead misting system in the greenhouse because I had too many rot problems, particularly in the summer.





Greenhouse Disasters by Dr. Courtney Hackney

Americans are very good at making something positive arise out of even the worst tragedy. In August, one of the best orchid growers in the Carolinas lost most of his *Cattleya* collection when a family of bluebirds shorted out the transformer supplying electricity to his greenhouse. For two hours during the heat of the day,

this now un-vented greenhouse did what greenhouses do so well, store heat. Temperatures in the greenhouse reached at least 130 degrees F; the highest the Max/Min thermometers could record, turning once luxurious leaves and bulbs into something resembling cooked celery. A collection that took 22 years to build was destroyed in a matter of hours.

Most long-time orchid growers have a story or two of some similar disaster or near disaster. The lesson all growers must take from this tragedy is one an old, plant ecology professor stated repeatedly. It is the extremes that determine survival or death of a plant, not the average. Just a few hours of no power and a freeze or burn kills orchids. The "Jurassic Park" phenomenon is that given enough time even the most unlikely event will occur. For plants that take seven years to flower, many more years to mature, and can live indefinitely, even the most unexpected event must be anticipated. The more automated a greenhouse, the more likely is an unexpected power failure.

With this tragedy in mind, now is a good time to think about what could happen in your growing area. Even those growing inside under lights need to consider the "what ifs". If a water line breaks in your greenhouse when you are not home and a neighbor tries to help, could he/she be electrocuted? All circuits in a greenhouse should be insulated, grounded, and be on a ground default circuit to prevent electrocution. If you have ground default circuits would such an event shut off vent fans? Inside growers too, must think about the danger of mixing electricity with water. What if a light fixture falls into your orchids? Can it contact water? Many under light growers have problems finding electrical connections with a ground. Use only grounded fixtures. Almost all electrical codes now require ground default features on any electrical circuit near water. These can be added relatively easily. Do you have children or pets than may be curious and go near electrical circuits in a greenhouse? What better reason does one need to

install appropriate electrical ground fault breakers?

How many lights do you have on one circuit? If the breaker on a circuit goes off every now it is a sure bet that the circuit is either overloaded or shorting out. Have it checked by a competent electrician.

Fires too can occur in greenhouses and inside. Basement systems often enclose lighted benches to conserve heat during winter. Care must be taken to prevent a heat buildup that can not only kill your plants, but also destroy a home or garage. Recently, I found some cotton material that had fallen on the timer that controls lights over my flasks. The material had become rigid from the heat and could have easily ignited. These are the types of things that need to be considered by every serious or amateur orchid grower.

Most hobbyists that have developed collections of exhibition plants realize the difficulty of planning for every possible disaster. To avoid the loss of prized clones, trading or giving divisions to other growers not only expands a collection, but provides some insurance than a prized clone can be retrieved if the worst case scenario occurs. Fortunately, the Carolina grower that lost his collection had been extremely generous over the years so that not all his unique clones were lost.

Hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, and even falling trees have destroyed orchid collections over the years. A number of famous commercial nurseries such as the firm of Lager & Hurel (power failure) and Jones & Scully (hurricane) have been lost. The first response to such disasters is, of course, sadness for the loss. The second, however, should be to realize that such events occur all the time and to use this tragedy to prevent one in your own growing area.

Cooler and hopefully, wetter weather is almost here. If your collection is small enough increase the time between watering for *Cattleyas* that have mature bulbs and keep fertilizing those that are actively growing new bulbs. Most *Cattleyas* love night temperatures in the mid 50s, but these same temperatures will tell *Phals* and *Vandas* to slow growth. *Phals* will stop growth and begin to grow flower spikes once they get a few cool nights. If possible keep *Phal* seedlings a little warmer so that they can put on a few more leaves before beginning their flowering cycle. And... watch out for those early, unexpected freezes even though they never happen in September.

Note: Dr. Courtney Hackney wrote a monthly column of his orchid growing tips for about 20 years; we are reprinting some you might have missed, this one from September 2002.



CULTIVATION

Cattleyas for Beginners - The Challenges

by Ned Nash, courtesy of the AOS

To paraphrase an old saying, all cattleyas are good. Some are just better than others. Admittedly, some are bad growers and there are those that are downright ugly, if only to the un-trained eye. Human nature dictates that as experience is gained, greater challenges are sought. That is, as a person learns more about growing and appreciating the *Cattleya* alliance, he or she naturally begins to seek out particular aspects that will continue to be both interesting and challenging. For some, it may be collecting the finest possible examples of the species and hybrids. For others, it may be the acquisition of the newest and/or most obscure members of the alliance. Still others find the greatest reward in growing and flowering their plants to perfection. If the plant(s) happen to be known as “difficult” so much the better. Thus do *Cattleya* growers show the true instincts of collectors everywhere.

In this last section of the series, we will discuss some of these aspects that represent the challenges in growing cattleyas. After all, it is the degree of difficulty that makes things interesting in this life. Part of the challenge in any new endeavor is to discover just what avenues are open to provide the stimulation desired.

Hybrid Seedlings. So many people start out with hybrid cattleyas that they can be thought to be almost mundane. This feeling is helped out by the fact that there really are a lot of mediocre hybrid cattleyas around. Why is this?

Just as in any population, in any given hybrid there will be a high percentage of clearly average flowers, some good only for compost and some few really worth keeping. Propagating and breeding with. Think of a bell curve.

In the days before tissue culture, these rare beauties commanded hundreds or thousands of dollars on the infrequent occasions that a division could be spared. Today, efficient meristemming techniques bring the very finest examples of the hybridizer’s art well within reach of just about any interested orchid grower. Indeed, “good” cattleyas are so common now that even the best are rendered “average” simply because they are seen so often at shows, in nurseries or on society show tables.

There is a type of *Cattleya*, however, that is just as rare today as it ever was, if not rarer. It is to this type that the real hybrid *Cattleya* lover aspires and will spend some great amount of time, money and effort to procure. “What is this rare beast? Where can I get one?” you are asking. This type of *Cattleya* is available from reputable hybridists, whether working with a nursery or on their own. It is available through mail-order orchid nurseries, at the nurseries themselves, at shows or at your society meeting.



*Beauty is, indeed, in the eye of the beholder. To the Cattleya connoisseur who favors the challenge of collecting and growing unusual species, the seldom-seen *Callleya araguaiensis* may be the loveliest of orchids. For others, the more classic features of *Brassolaeliocattleya Triumphal Coronation* ‘Seto’ may be preferable. It is this diversity of forms that makes the hobby of orchid growing so fascinating.*

In fact, this type of *Cattleya* is available just about anywhere cattleyas are sold - if you know what you are looking for!

Yes, quality *Cattleya* seedlings are widely available and relatively inexpensive. What is the challenge in that? Studying and researching the background of today’s complex hybrids is the only way to make the well-informed decisions necessary to acquire that most unique of cattleyas – the good one you flowered yourself that no one else has. Although few will admit it, there is an immense satisfaction in growing and flowering a hybrid seedling that is of sufficient quality to garner an award from the American Orchid Society, the more so if you are the only one in possession of this gem.

There are many published sources of information on

Continued on page 9



CULTIVATION

Continued from page 8

the latest trends in *Cattleya* hybridizing, not the least of which are the *AOS Bulletin* and the *Awards Quarterly*, where the hybrids that are actually getting the awards are listed. The *Bulletin* provides two great sources of data. The articles often deal with what the growers themselves feel are the “happening” crosses and the advertising shows what is currently being offered for sale. Unfortunately, both the editorial section of the *Bulletin* and the awards in the *Awards Quarterly* often are outdated by the time they are published. This is not to say that they are not published in a timely way but that the information is out-of-date by the time it is submitted.

How can this be? In the first place, no one (despite what advertisers may say to the contrary) can really say whether or not a particular hybrid is going to be a winner. For the most part, claims for the quality of a hybrid are speculation. In some cases, especially when dealing with a long-established breeding line and parents that have proven themselves, the speculation can be very close to the actual results.

In the second place, by the time a hybrid has begun to bloom and prove itself on the show table and these records have begun to be published, it generally is too late to obtain unflowered seedlings of the same cross. *Cattleya* seedlings from any given cross will usually flower over a two- or three-year period, with those coming later being less desirable, if only owing to their lesser vigor. If there are unflowered seedlings available, you can be sure that they have been well picked over by the grower, his regular customers and, in the case of the larger and better-known nurseries, by other growers.

How do you go about second-guessing the sources to obtain the newest and most desirable *Cattleya* hybrids? It is of primary importance to know your sources and their “track record.” Know what parents they have used with the most success and what particular lines of breeding they are best known for. Know when to listen to their recommendations and how to sort through the inevitable advertising hype to get to the core of information necessary to make the right selection. And don't be afraid to gamble. Remember that for the price commanded by a single selected variety, you can purchase more than a few seedlings and flower them yourself. It has been my experience that if a cross has any merit at all, it will give at least one keeper out of 10 seedlings. That gives you a good one and some giveaways with which to wow your friends and relatives.

Remember that the most highly awarded cultivars do not always make the best parents but that the parents consistently making the awarded crosses will. In researching any firm's offerings, certain parents will show

up time and again. These are the ones that the firm knows give consistent results and the ones you should look for in your potential acquisitions.

Finally, don't wait until your friends have told you about a new cross or until you see it on the society show bench. Make your choice and obtain the plants when first offered. You then will be getting the best growing plants - and getting the jump on the others who have waited. Time is of the essence in the acquisition of any orchid. (Remember that one you saw at the nursery yesterday and didn't buy, only to find on your return that someone else had as good taste as you and had gotten it?)

There are many dedicated amateur hybridists across the nation. These folks aspire to making their own winners. They provide a valuable service to the *Cattleya* world because they can grow on and flower crosses of unusual appeal or limited germination that a commercial grower could not afford to grow. From these dedicated hobbyists comes yet another source of the unique available only within their limited circle of acquaintance. Yes, it is one thing to flower the best out of a widely available commercial hybrid but quite another to flower that one good one to come from the largely unknown breeding of a friend.

You also may wish to create your own hybrids. This is something that every hobbyist owes to himself or herself to do at least once. Many of the most successful parents are available relatively cheaply. Or you may wish simply to experiment with your own unique varieties. A caution here is in order, though, because it often is forgotten in the heat of hybridizing that it will take some years before those plants begin to flower. Will you want to see them when they do? Your tastes will become more sophisticated as the plants mature and by the time they eventually do bloom, will you consider the space they take up to have been wasted?

Alternately, many choose to buy flasks of seedlings from reputable sources and grow these on to flowering. Growing seedlings from flask is not difficult. It just requires a bit of additional care. As long as you take into consideration that plants coming out of flask are accustomed to a very close, shady and humid environment and take care to introduce them gradually to the “outside world,” there should be no major problems.

One of the best methods I have found to begin the acclimatization of seedlings from a flask is to bend a wire loop (from a coat hanger) of approximately 8'-12" and insert it into the newly planted community pot then place a clear plastic bag over it after watering. This will create a sort of terrarium that can be placed in a shady spot in your growing area until the plants begin to show signs of establishing, which generally takes 4-8 weeks.

Continued on page 10



CULTIVATION

Continued from page 9

Another handy hint with seedlings is to “push” them a bit when young by giving additional heat, moisture and fertilizer. As they grow and near their flowering size, begin to move them into the same conditions as your mature plants, where they will flower. You probably will not see the flower to full potential on its first bloom but it generally will give enough of a showing for it to be judged as a keeper or not. To give its best, a *Cattleya* needs to be grown well and should be fairly mature.

Species Lovers. Diametrically opposed to the “hybrid people” are the “species nuts.” These people feel that the hybridists’ efforts have succeeded only in robbing a basically beautiful group of orchids of their charm and God-given distinction. Those who share this view vie with each other not for the biggest and best but for the newest and most unusual or most rare. Here we see the greatest appreciation for those flowers that might be considered “ugly” by the untrained. I must admit that I don’t always appreciate the intrinsic beauty of some of the newer *Cattleya* alliance species but readily admit that they have their place, if only for contrast.

The search for the rarest and most recently discovered species can be a frustrating one. Especially so since the search was made so completely around the turn of the century, when most of the readily accessible areas and their *Cattleya* species were found. Rare color forms and geographic races of the commonly known species are still being discovered — but understandably with decreasing frequency.

It is important to point out that, in an evolutionary sense, there are reasons for the rarity of any given organism. Relictual populations, specific ecological needs and basic genetic weakness are just a few. What this means to the potential grower of this type of plant is that they probably will prove more difficult to grow and will require more specialized and careful attention to their usually very specific needs.

The only general hint that can be given here is to study the plant’s native habitat and unique needs and try to duplicate these in your particular growing area. Also, whenever possible, obtain only the strongest undivided plants available, even if it means spending a bit more money. Bringing a weak plant “back from the dead” can be a long-term and frustrating task, the more so when dealing with a plant that may be genetically weak to begin with.

On a conservationist note, often the very best way to obtain and maintain the more difficult species is to be a little patient and purchase nursery-raised selfed or sibbed seedlings of the species. Not only does this save the plant from potential overcollecting but it almost always will give



Specimen plants need not take up vast amounts of space. A stunning display can be achieved in a very small space if you choose such Cattleya-alliance groups as Sophronitis or the rupicolous laelias. Sophronitis mantiqueira 'Cookie' AM-CCM/AOS proves the point. It was grown by Larry M. Heuer and photographed by Richard Clark.

a better and stronger plant than a collected one because it has been cultured in captivity, I would hope from a selected good-growing and good-flowering cultivar. Also, while it is true that collectors sometimes can save a new species from extinction by rescuing it from a forest area due for logging or slash-and-burn agriculture, it is more often the case that overcollecting of a new and desirable species is a real danger to its survival in the wild. The demand for collected plants is what determines the vigor with which unscrupulous collectors will pursue the most isolated habitats.

Specimen Plants. To me, the most personally gratifying pursuit in hobby growing is to cultivate plants into magnificent specimens. I feel that hobbyists almost always should grow their plants better than the commercial grower because they can give the individual attention that a commercial grower cannot. A commercial grower also generally is loathe to grow a good variety into a large plant because of the space it takes and because he cannot sell divisions from an undivided plant. Hobbyists, on the other hand, suffer from no such constraints and so should be able to grow their plants easily into big, beautiful specimens.

The quest for cultural excellence is really no more difficult than following some of the very basic guidelines set down earlier in this series. Careful observation of your plants and their needs and proper response to those needs will practically guarantee success.

What are some of the traits to look for when deciding whether a plant is a candidate for a specimen? Really, the same traits you look for when selecting any *Cattleya* are those used in this selection: compact and branching habit of growth, freedom of bloom and retention of foliage, among others. You also should take into consideration your own space limitations when making these choices.

Continued on page 11



CULTIVATION

Continued from page 10

Obviously, *Cattleya guttata* or *Cattleya bicolor* are not good choices for those with limited space. Neither are some of the schomburgkias. Excellent, showy specimen plants can be made from the smaller-growing laelias and sophronitis and will require no more than a 6" pot.

Maintaining plants as large specimens is not always just a matter of not dividing them. Indeed, those who have grown cattleyas more than a few years know that in many cases the plants will divide themselves when turned out of the pot. Alternately, the plant may not branch freely enough and will evidence a large "bare spot" in the center. Proper selection of variety will remedy this to some extent.

A real problem with cattleyas grown in larger pots is the potential for "dead" areas in the mix, especially right after potting, before the mix is filled with roots. This sodden area remains wet and airless and can lead to the rest of the mix breaking down prematurely. Premature mix breakdown is the number one enemy of specimen plants.

Dead areas can be avoided by using a pot proportionately short for its diameter or by placing a smaller pot upside-down in the middle of the larger pot before potting, thereby eliminating the central mass of mix that can become sodden.

It is even more critical to pot larger plants when they are rooting. Because they have proportionately larger foliage area to support from the leading growths' roots, they will decline much more quickly than will a smaller division.

Some cattleyas, especially species, simply will never reach a good size when constrained in a pot. The obvious solution is to mount them on a satisfactory and sufficiently large piece of mounting material. I probably would recommend cork oak bark, if only because I know that it is long-lasting and easy to obtain. Tree fern slabs or some of the deciduous tree branches available in the East may not hold up long enough to allow the long-term development of the plant.

I well remember Paul Bechtel's magnificent specimen of *Brassavola digbyana* grown on a horizontal piece of cork into which the original pot had been dropped. He had simply cut a hole into the piece of cork and placed the potted plant into it allowing uninterrupted growth. This seemed like such a good idea that I tried it with a plant of *Cattleya nobilior* 'Sally' AM/AOS and it worked like a charm. *Cattleya nobilior* and its relative *Cattleya walkeriana* are notoriously difficult to maintain in a pot.

The Final Analysis. The writing of these culture articles always gives me pause to think back over the years that I have grown orchids and the lessons I have learned. I think back to the days when no new orchid book went unbought (or read less than five or six times), no new orchid periodical



Some members of the *Cattleya* alliance will never reach their full potential in a pot and do better mounted. *Brassavola digbyana* 'Dragonstone' HCC-CCM/AOS (75 pts, 90 pts), which won the Butterworth Prize as the best specimen plant of 1985, is mounted on a piece of cork oak bark, a long-lasting material that is easy to obtain. The plant was grown by Dragonstone Orchids and photographed by Richard Clark.

survived delivery day unread, no new orchid catalog went unperused. Newcomers to orchids are no different today than in years past and study the written word endlessly in search of the perfect solution to their unique problems. As they mature in their avocation, they come to see that the "book learning" was no more than an introduction to the jargon of the orchid world and that their experience and that of others is so much more valuable than anything in writing. What once were thought to be problems of insurmountable complexity come to be seen as having the most simple explanations and, therefore, solutions.

The purpose of this series has been to introduce new growers to the culture of cattleyas and to do so in the simplest way possible. However, as in the physical sciences, the simplest method/solution is often the best. It is called elegance. Perhaps this series has been a bit short on hard and fast information ("Do this. Don't do that.") but that was intentional. The intention was to tell a few stories of experience, stories to motivate new growers to get out and do it, not only by actually growing the plants, by living with them and learning from them day to day, by really getting to know their habits, will anyone ever succeed at enjoying them the way they ought to be enjoyed. So, if no other message has been gotten across in the past few months, I hope that the sheer simplicity of growing cattleyas has. It is easy. You ought to try.

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Hybrid Hype

by Ken Slump, reprinted with permission

The first orchid hybrid was artificially pollinated in 1852. John Dominy, foreman at the English orchid firm of Veitch and Sons, performed the hand pollination with the assistance of a surgeon named Dr. Harris. That hybrid, *Calanthe Dominyi* (*nuisuca x jureata*) was named for him and flowered in 1856. The early orchid hybrids created considerable excitement at orchid exhibitions of the time. Nevertheless, the practice of orchid hybridization got off to a rather slow start. Dominy was the only orchid hybridizer for almost 20 years, during which time he created about two dozen hybrids.

Fortunately, the early hybridizers recognized the importance of good recordkeeping on the hybrids they made. Beginning in 1871, new orchid hybrids were published in the English magazine *Gardeners' Chronicle*. The *Orchid Review* also ran the listings when it began publication in 1893. However, Frederick K. Sander created the most comprehensive publication on the subject. It was simply titled *Sander's List of Orchid Hybrids* and was first printed in 1906. Numerous volumes of addenda were published at intervals by the Sander family until the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) assumed the orchid registration duties in 1961.

By 1890, 200 hybrid crosses had been registered. When the RHS began maintaining the registrations, the number of hybrids totaled about 35,000. By 1990, the number had climbed to nearly 100,000, and today there are more than 120,000 registered hybrids. It is invaluable that we have records of this important effort, but it should be understood that it is no more accurate than the humans who created it. Stories exist of hybridizers who misrepresented their breeding work in order to keep the key to their results a secret.

The myriad changes in orchid nomenclature through the decades can make it difficult to decipher a hybrid orchid's lineage in contemporary terms. Still, it is amazing to study various orchid pedigrees with the goal of appreciating how a particular hybrid came to be and what characteristics it received from the various species that created it.

First we should clarify what, exactly, is a hybrid. In its simplest terms, a hybrid is a cross between two species, a species being the basic unit of taxonomy. Each species is a group that appears to have common ancestry and characteristics that separate it from other groups.

A cross between two species is known as a primary hybrid. Such hybrids often manifest characteristics that are attributable to each parent. When primary hybrids are crossed with different species or hybrids, the progeny are

then known as complex hybrids. After several generations of such breeding, it may be difficult indeed to discern the contributions of the various species involved.

It is fair to ask why one would want a hybrid orchid over a species plant. The goal of most hybridizing is to blend desirable characteristics of each parent to produce a plant or flower that is an improvement over either parent. Such a goal might be to combine the size of the flower of one parent with the color of the flower of the other parent. Whether the resulting offspring are actually an improvement over their parents may be quite subjective. In many cases, only a small percentage of the offspring, perhaps one in ten, will be of superior quality.

Another benefit of the hybrid plant is that it is often easier to grow than its species ancestors. This is because a particular species has often evolved to thrive in a unique ecological niche, while hybrids may inherit the ability to tolerate a broader range of climatic conditions based on the combination of genetic material received from its unrelated parents. Indeed, the concept of hybrid vigor is a reality.

Hybrids are usually easier to flower than their species parents as well, because they may not have the genetically programmed response to bloom only when the conditions of a unique habitat are favorable. In fact, it is through hybridization that we have been able to produce orchids that reliably grow and flower more than once a year. Such orchids have usually lost the requirement for a dormant period in their growth cycle.

GREX. To provide some clarity to the plethora of hybrids, orchid nomenclature employs the concept of grex, a Greek word that means flock or herd. All of the offspring of a particular hybrid cross (and any subsequent crosses using the same parents) use the same grex name. In some cases, the individuals of a grex are quite similar in appearance, in others they may look very different from one another. The hybridizer who registers the cross has the right to name the grex.

Grex names are listed after the genus name. When in print, the genus is italicized, the grex is not. When a plant represents a unique cultivar of a grex, the cultivar name is listed following the grex name in single quotation marks. Awards may be listed after the cultivar name. For example, in the name *Cattleya Porcia* 'Cannizaro' FCC/AOS, *Cattleya* is the genus, *Porcia* is the grex, 'Cannizaro' is the cultivar, and FCC/AOS is the award it received.

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SHOW TABLE



Grower Walter Muller
Phal. Fortunes Choice



Grower Sherrie Jenkins
Prora. Rapeepath



Grower Sheila Nathanson
Milt. Binotii



Grower Bob Schimmel
Ctsm. Kidney Beans



Grower Steve Dorsey
Schoenorchis fragrans



Grower Sue Bottom
Dendrochilum magnum



Grower Debra Brandt
Phal. bellina



SHOW TABLE



Grower Sue Bottom
Stan. Bird of Prey



Grower Steve Dorsey
Epi. medusae



Grower Courtney Hackney
C. lueddemanniana semialba 'Flat Stanley'



Grower Leslie Brickell
Lc. Callistoglossa 'Taylor'



Grower Sherrie Jenkins
Blc. Amazing Thailand 'NN'



Grower Brandon Silvester
Paph. Greyi

Link to all Pictures. <https://flic.kr/s/aHsmWzGYQ5>

