

*Vancouver Orchid Society since 1946*

**Volume 3 , Issue 7**

**April 2013**

Educating, growing &  
embracing the joy of  
orchids for  
68 Years

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# *Orchidflora*

**Monday March 11 Culture Class, Monday April 8, 6:30-8:30 pm,**  
Cedar room, VanDusen Gardens. Rafting orchids

## **Upcoming Meeting : April 24th**

**Speaker:** Dr. John Beatty from UBC philosophy on Darwin and orchids. A great deal of the “Origin of the Species “ revolves around *Angraecum sesquipedale*, from Madagascar.

## **Orchid Shows Coming up !**

**Central Vancouver Island Orchid Show,**

**April 13 & 14 open to public**

Nanaimo North Town Centre, 4750 Rutherford Road, Nanaimo

**Monthly General Meetings: 4th Wednesday of each month**  
(except July, August & December) at Van Dusen Floral Hall  
**Doors Open 6:30pm, Meeting starts at 7:30pm**

## *Message from the President*

To all my fellow orchid lovers,

Just back from our first full day of our show. It was great to socialize with the general public and talk to them about why orchids are wonderful and exciting (even mysterious). Many devoted members talked to newcomers and we have now many new members thanks to the efforts of everyone.

A big thank you to all volunteers who made it to the show, to the vendors who came out, and the show committee who did an outstanding job. Also, our hard working photographers were under pressure on preview night to create a wonderful 'slide show' to accompany our awards ceremony. Kudos to them for working superbly under such a tight deadline.

So a big welcome to our new members, and I sincerely hope that you find in this society something that will help you with growing orchids. If you have questions, do not hesitate, don't let the intimidating names that roll off the tongues of more experienced members prevent you from asking basic questions like "How can I grow that?" The society's purpose is the promotion and education of orchids, and although the names may sound arcane, the beauty and mystery of all orchids is something we all appreciate.

Our next culture class on April 8 (Cedar room at 6: 30 pm) will be about "Rafting orchids" (=mounting on a piece of wood or cork or webbing). Some orchids will not grow unless given the air at the roots that "rafting" allows (fortunately these are not the most popularly grown orchids). Although you may not have an orchid that requires this treatment, it is a valuable lesson on the role of air for the roots, and the wet/dry cycle that some orchids experience (and absolutely require). Again, culture class is not only about the topic for that day, but to answer all your questions.

This is also the time of year when I notice that the days are getting longer and the sun is more intense. If you grow your orchids in a south window, you might want to check if your orchids are getting too much light and/or too much heat. I will be putting my orchids further away from the glass, so they get less light. My miltonias and phaius were not made for the hot sun, no more than African violets. Filtered light is still what most orchids get in nature. Greenhouse growers know all too well how a few days in the spring can sometimes scorch plants when the shading cloth has not been added in time.

Don Harquail has kindly compiled a history of our society, from 1946 to the present. Not surprisingly, the Society started by meetings in members' home. Obviously, both the number of interested orchid growers and the number of activities that was done by these members grew with the decades. Now, we have the monthly meetings, culture class, international speakers, an annual show and an August sale, not to mention open houses, the newsletter, a website, a library, and displays at other Societies shows. The greater number of activities requires a higher level of organization and more volunteer time. And this is where there is a tension between our desire for these activities, the pace of modern life, and a digital life that takes a considerable chunk of our leisure time (ironic I should note this, as I type away at my computer). It is a bit of a conundrum, and I am not sure how to resolve it.

In closing, let me share a tip that Marilyn Light gave me when you have bugs hiding out in your medium, and there is not a pressing need to repot that orchid. Assuming the medium is still sound (not rotted), get the medium into a bowl, rinse the roots of your orchid, soak the roots in Safer's or some soapy water, and pour boiling water on the medium where the bugs are hiding out. Voila, not much survives boiling water. Let the medium cool to room temperature, and repot your orchid. This, of course, works best when you have only one orchid that has the problem. So happy growing, and may all your orchids flower!

Margaret.

## AOS 2013 Show and Sale

On behalf of the show organizing committee, a huge thank you to all individuals who volunteered to make our annual show and sale a great success. It takes many hours of work to put on the show! The preview party was very well attended thanks to the efforts of Stella Li and her team. We also need to recognize our president Margaret Prat for the many hours that she put in behind the scenes to have everything in place for set up and tear down, and Margaret Elvidge, Hazel Stewart, and Don Harquail for recruiting all of our volunteers. Also Jennifer Fabre, for taking care of all of the advertising and for getting BC Greenhouse Builders as a major sponsor for our show, and to Faye Kunz for the excellent job in creating the lovely VOS display; thanks to all VOS members who contributed plants to add to the wonderful variety and color!

Also sincere gratitude to Judy and Ed Higham for the photographic expertise – they have been wonderful supporters of our show for many years. This year we tried something new for the preview – having all of the photos projected for the ribbon judging awards – this was a great success. Thank you, Judy and Ed for all of the work that went into making this possible.

Very special thanks as well to the team of AOS judges – many of whom traveled considerable distance to be part of our show – there were 19 AOS nominations with 4 plants being awarded (see the report from Ingrid Ostrander for details).

As well we would like to acknowledge all of our vendors for coming and supporting our show – the variety and quality of plants available for sale was excellent – you play a very important role in the success of our show!

Forestview Gardens  
Willgro Products Ltd  
Paramount Orchids  
Tropical Gardens Orchids  
Ten Shin Gardens  
Western Orchid Labs  
Melanie Gallacher  
Cody Cruise  
P 'n' R Orchids 'n' Stuff  
Raymond Sword  
Rob Elvidge  
Don Harquail  
Rita Johnston  
Carla Bischoff  
Don Bednarczyk  
Ricky Leung



And while last, certainly not least – special thanks to all visiting societies (Fraser Valley Orchid Society, Victoria Orchid Society, Richmond Orchid Club, Okanagan Orchid Society, Central Vancouver Island Orchid Society), hobby growers, and the commercial vendors for their wonderful displays – this is what makes the show and profiles these gorgeous plants to the public.

Special recognition to our own VOS member Carla Bischoff for winning the COC medal for best display in the show – it was truly a beautiful (see photo above).

Best regards,

Wayne Riggs & Peter Hopkins  
Co-chairs, VOS 2013 Show Committee

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**The following AOS awards were given at the 2013 Vancouver show:**

*Phragmipedium Devil Fire 'Wendy'* AM 80 points, owned by Joe Chow of Victoria OS - no clonal name yet

*Phragmipedium Trudy Taylor 'Muir Life'* AM 80 points, owned by Joe Chow of Victoria OS - no clonal name yet

*Paphiopedilum hirsutissimum 'Big Show'*, FCC/AOS 90 points, owned by Cody Cruise of FVOS

*Bulbophyllum coweniorum 'C.R. Orchids'*, CHM/AOS 84 points - provisional, pending identification by SITF, owned by Dino Baisi, of the Okanagan OS.

Total number of nominations: 19.

The AOS judges present were:

Betty Berthiaume, VOS

Beverly Hansen – student, VOS

Poul Hansen – Vic.OS

Wayne Louie, FVOS

Ingrid Ostrander – Vic.OS

Margaret Prat – student - VOS

Abu Salleh - FVOS

Russ Volker, VOS

Deborah Ward – Vic.OS

Calvin Wong - VOS

Ryan Young – student, VOS

Diana Dunn and clerk Pat Dunn from Anacortes, WA, Mount Baker OS

Photographers were Judith and Ed Higham.

We thank the VOS and the members of the show committee sincerely for their hospitality and friendliness during our stay at this year's show.

The exhibits this year were very attractive with many well-grown and beautiful plants displayed.

Congratulations!

Kind regards, Ingrid Ostrander.

## VOS Best in Class Winners



2.18-2.20 Best Vanda *Sarcochilus hartmanii* 'Alice', Carla Bischoff



3.1-3.7 Best Pleurothallis *Dryadella edwallii*, Carla Bischoff



12.4 Best Orchid Grown Exclusively Under Artificial Light  
Paph Deperle, Don Bednarczyk



8.1 – 8.2 Best Coelogyne *Pleione Tongariro*, Melanie Gallacher



10.1 – 10.6 Best Dendrobium in Honour of Dr. Carl Withner AND Best Orchid Grown by a Vancr. Orchid Society Member – in Honour of Dr. Wally Thomas *Dendrobium densiflorum*, Carla Bischoff



12.2 Best First Bloom Seedling (not a mericlone) – Phalaenopsis only  
Phal Sunflower 'Golden Tree', Carla Bischoff



12.5 Best Orchid Grown on a Windowsill with No Artificial Light *Paph Kilopakingii*, Carla Bischoff

**Photographs by Judith E. Higham**

# Monthly Show Table



**Photographs by Judith E. Higham**

If you would like a picture of your plant,  
please email Judy,  
she will gladly email you the file [Higham@shaw.ca](mailto:Higham@shaw.ca)



Unusual Species, *Cynorkis calathoides*

Plant Culture, *Paph gatrixianum*  
Grower: Carla Bischoff



Plant Culture, Display, Den Rainbow Dance

Flower Quality , *Paph delenatii*  
Grower: Carla Bischoff

Akazukin Chan  
Grower: Melanie Gallacher



Flower Quality & Plant Culture, Paph villosum  
Grower: Carla Bischoff \*\* MEMBERS CHOICE



Flower Quality, LC Oreglades Grand 'Tian Mu'  
Grower: Melanie Gallacher



Flower Quality, Paph sukhakuli  
Grower: Eugene Bazinger



Phal with three Lips !  
Unknown

## *Library News - by Barbara Cable*

### THINGS I LEARNED IN THE LIBRARY

ORCHID BULLETIN MARCH 2013 - What so Orchids Eat?

And A View From the North – Part 4 – Building a Vivarium

Books

**Field Guide to Orchids of Britain & Europe** – If you're traveling in that direction this summer this would be a handy book to peruse before hand so you can identify some of the local Orchids

**Orchids for Dummies** – A good, easy to read book with the tips, technical stuff & fragrant flowers all marked. It also gives you the 10 easiest orchids to grow, 10 reasons your plants don't bloom & other interesting information – all laid out simply. Not many fancy coloured pictures but an easy book to read. Don't let the name put you off.

**Masdevalias Gems of the Orchid World** Everything you wanted to know about Masdevalias and then some. This is an ideal reference book for this species with thorough background information and colour pictures for each species as well as propagation and showing tips. A must read if Masdevallias are one of your passions.



**All VOS members please take advantage of your library, there are a lot of great books in our collection.**

*Thank You !! - Margaret Elvidge*

Many thanks to the following people who donated so generously to the Prize Draw which helped to make our recent show successful.

Calvin Wong - Orchid calendar

Roak and Peter - P n R Orchids and Stuff - Phal+

Rob Elvidge - Pleione bulbs

Ray Sword - Disas

Marlene of WillGro - Potting material and pots

Charlotte of Forestview - Orchid

Chuck of Paramount – Orchids

Ten Shin Orchids - Orchid

# Listen to your orchids - part 3

By Don Bednarczyk

## Water and Watering

Water gives life to orchids but it also can take it away. More orchids are killed by overwatering than any other way. Most orchids live where they are subjected to periods of drying out. The roots of epiphytic orchids, those growing on the sides of trees, are subject to drying winds and sun. They have evolved into much thicker roots than most plants. Thick roots do not dry out as fast. But the downside is that oxygen has a much harder time getting into the center of the root. This is not a problem on the side of a tree, but it is a problem in a pot surrounded by media.

As the media breaks down it packs down, and gets densely packed, inhibiting the flow of oxygen. The fungi and bacteria in the media slowly break down the bark, moss, or coconut husk turning it into a pile of fine particles. If this densely packed media is continuously wet, oxygen can only diffuse very, very slowly. The roots need oxygen to live. Without sufficient oxygen they die. And the fungi and bacteria, which can also attack the roots, grow better if there is plenty of water. So too much water means the process of media destruction is accelerated and roots suffocate and die.

This is true for lithotropic (living attached to rocks) orchids, detritus terrestrials (orchids that do not really put their roots into the earth but send roots through leaf litter), and moss layer epiphytes. True terrestrial orchids are found mostly in temperate zones or semi-arid zones and usually completely have their leaves wither part of the year and re-emerge from bulbs each year. Their roots are a bit more tolerant but still require special care when the vegetation is dormant.

Water quality is usually not a problem in Vancouver. Our water is very soft, having very low amounts of dissolved salts. Only the most finicky Pleurothallids seem to require distilled water. If you are worried about the chlorine in the tap water, let it sit out overnight, and the chlorine will dissipate. Do not add the chemicals you would add to fish tank water as they only make the problem worse by adding more dissolved solids. The pH of Vancouver water is also usually not a problem. Pure rainwater has a pH of about 5.7 due to dissolved carbon dioxide. Our tap water is usually slightly more basic with a pH from 6 to 7.5 due to very small amounts of chemicals added to protect our water mains and prolong the life of the chlorine. Almost all orchids tolerate this range well.

How do you know if it is time to water? Every grower I know has their own method of determining when their plants need water. Remember that most orchids need to dry out between waterings. Remember that the amount of water they use depends on how actively they are growing, temperature, and sunlight. Plants use carbon dioxide and water to make sugar and oxygen. They need water to perform photosynthesis. The warmer it is the more water plants transpire, that is, pass up from the roots and out the leaves to keep the leaves hydrated and cool. So when they are growing they need a fair bit of water. But when it is cool and dark they need relatively little. The most dangerous time for overwatering orchids is at the end of the growing season. We get used to watering for certain conditions and sometimes forget to modify our schedule to fit the lower water requirements. This is a recipe for root rot. So ease up on that watering when they are not actively growing.

Personally, I use the weight and shrivel technique. I judge the weight of the pot and look if the newer pseudobulbs are showing any sign of shriveling. That means some larger plants may only get watered once every two weeks or longer in the winter. Some use the bamboo skewer technique. They keep a small piece of bamboo skewer in the pot and remove it to test the pot. If it looks and feels dry, it is time to water. Some people just look at the growing conditions and modify their watering to match the weather. Just remember that trying to keep to a constant schedule throughout the year usually gets you into trouble sooner or later. Also remember that all orchids need to keep from totally desiccating during their dormant phase. Even *Dendrobium nobile* crosses need a tiny bit of water when they are dormant, just enough to keep them from shriveling too much. Usually a heavy misting that dampens the surface roots or a light watering every couple of weeks is sufficient.

## Fertilizer:

Orchids grow naturally with very little nourishment. So you only have to add a little fertilizer to get a big effect. Twice as much fertilizer does not give you twice the effect. And it increases the chance of blackened leaf tips, a sign of too much dissolved salts in your water. Most people use about a teaspoon per gallon (5 mL/4 L) every two or three weeks during the growing season. When they are not growing, orchids really need no fertilizer. And be sure to flush the pots out with clean water once or twice between fertilizations. Some people like the weakly weekly routine. They use about ¼ teaspoon per gallon per week. This works if you remember to flush out the pots with clean water in between fertilizations. Either way, do not let the fertilizer build up in the media or you will start having black leaf tips.

So which fertilizer should you use? All commercial fertilizers contain nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P), potassium (K), and trace elements. The composition is given as the N:P:K content. A fertilizer with a 15:5:10 rating contains 15 kg of nitrogen expressed as  $N_2$ , 5 kg of phosphorus expressed as  $P_2O_5$ , and 10 kg of potassium expressed as  $K_2O$  per 100 kg of fertilizer. That is the way things are expressed for historical reasons, but those are not the chemical compounds found in most modern plant fertilizers. Of these, only nitrogen can come in fertilizers in forms not useful to orchids. Nitrogen is absorbed into plants as either nitrate ( $NO_3^-$ ) or ammonium ( $NH_4^+$ ). Plants cannot absorb nitrogen found in the atmosphere, urea ( $NH_3CONH_3$ ) found in many plant fertilizers or pieces of protein found in fish emulsion fertilizer. These forms require the action of bacteria in the soil to convert the nitrogen to nitrate or ammonium. Orchid potting media usually does not contain sufficient amounts of these bacteria to accomplish this. So buy fertilizer designed for orchids or hydroponic culture to get **useful** nitrogen. The phosphorus and potassium found in any fertilizer is in the form that orchids can use and is not a problem.

Plants growing in bark or coconut fiber need more nitrogen than those grown on a raft or in an inert media such as perlite. This is because the bacteria and fungi growing in the bark are also using the nitrogen and can outcompete the orchids. You do not need to use high nitrogen fertilizer on plants grown on rafts. By high nitrogen fertilizer we usually mean something like 24:8:16 or 30:10:10. This is used at the beginning of the growth cycle. Nitrogen is necessary for production of protein and is necessary for cell division and growth. As the growths start to mature it is often useful to switch to a blossom booster formula which is high in phosphorus and low in nitrogen such as 10:30:20. This actually inhibits the growth of new vegetation and strengthens the current growth allowing for better flowering. Blossom booster fertilizers also usually have a larger amount of the trace elements necessary for good color development. High potassium fertilizers found in garden supply stores are good for growing fruit and vegetables which contain a lot of potassium, but do not do much for orchid culture. If you are growing your orchids in an inert media or on rafts you can use a balanced fertilizer like 20:19:18 in place of the high nitrogen formula. You can also use a balanced fertilizer as the growth is slowing down before you switch to a blossom booster. Then again, some people use a balanced fertilizer all the time for simplicity and get fairly good results. Orchids do not die from lack of fertilizer, but they can die from too much. And too much nitrogen can give you great growth with no flowers.

A special word is needed for calcium. Fertilizers usually do not contain calcium, even though it is necessary for plant growth, because it precipitates (forms a solid and falls out of solution) with the phosphate and sulfate found in the fertilizer. This is usually not a problem because tap water from most places contains dissolved calcium. In fact too much calcium is the main cause of hard water. However, Vancouver has virtually no calcium in its tap water. You can make sure your orchids have enough calcium in two ways. You can add a very small amount of crushed shells or bits of limestone to your potting media or you can add some chelated calcium supplement to your diluted fertilizer. Chelated just means the calcium is bound to another chemical which helps it stay in solution but does not inhibit absorption by the plant. Calcium is particularly necessary at the beginning of orchid growth. Once it is taken up by the orchid and used it cannot be moved around the plant so you need to supply it every growth cycle.

People always ask me what fertilizer I use so, OK, here is my commercial plug. I use Peter's fertilizers. I also use Grotek Cal-Max or Botanicare Cal-Mag as a supply of chelated calcium, magnesium, and iron. And I did notice a big difference in my plants when I started using it. There are other good products out there which do the same thing, but that is what I use.

### **Summary:**

Light, water, temperature and nutrition are all interrelated and cannot be separated. Your plants are telling you what they need and if you are doing something wrong. You just have to listen to them. Note leaf color, vigor of growth, root vigor, number of flowers and above all sudden changes. Good growing.

## *Announcements & Upcoming Events*

**Open House** Are you interested in visiting Poul Hansen's greenhouse (Victoria) and /or Fraser Thimble farm on Saltspring Island May 4 or 5th ? We are trying to see if we can organize carpooling. Please email [margaretprat@shaw.ca](mailto:margaretprat@shaw.ca) if you are interested .

### **April 12-14, 2013 Central Vancouver Island Orchid Society AOS show and plant sale**

Nanaimo North Town Centre, 4750 Rutherford Road, Nanaimo, B.C. Culture class: March 27th:

**April 28 VanDusen Annual Plant Sale** -Orchids will be part of the sale plants, organized by Gail Pearce, VOS member. There will be more than just Phalaenopsis.

### **Upcoming for May & June**

**May 22:** Topics Artificial Lighting (Sunblaster T5's)

June 26 –Speaker: Poul Hansen on Miltonia's

**June 26** is our Annual General Meeting when we elect a new executive. Nominations are being accepted by Don Harquail, Hazel Stewart, and Margaret Elvidge. You can self nominate, or have someone nominate you.

Remember you are always welcome to bring your orchids to the Pacific Northwest Judging Center for judging. Come and observe how the judges arrive at a decision what is an award winning plant. Judging happens every 2nd Saturday of the month (exception in April, judging will be at the CVIOS show, on Friday April 12, 2013).

Doors open at noon, when participants can bring their plants. After the business portion of the meeting, judging starts. It all happens in Richmond at the Sea Island Community Centre, 7140 Miller Road, Richmond, B.C. V7B 1L4.

Next meeting in Richmond will be **May 11**. Contact person is Russ Volker.

## **LOST AND FOUND**

"Does this belong to you? This collapsible portable suitcase trolley was left behind on the stage after the VOS show teardown on March 24. Please claim it!"



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### *For Sale*

If any member would like to post items for sale, please contact Chris before the 5th of each month, excluding July & August

[costenstad@shaw.ca](mailto:costenstad@shaw.ca)

