

Vancouver Orchid Society since 1946

Volume 3 , Issue 5

February 2013

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

O rchidflora



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February 11, 2013 Culture class 6:30 pm- 8:30 pm Cedar room, VanDusen Gardens. Phragmipediums.

Upcoming Meeting : February 27, 2013

February's Speaker will be Jenifer Penny, a conservation officer who will discuss our indigenous orchids !

<http://www.geog.ubc.ca/biodiversity/eflora/>

Orchid Shows Coming up !

Victoria Orchid Society Show and Sale, Student Union building, University of Victoria, Saturday March 2, 9am - 5 pm, Sunday March 3, 10 am to 3 pm

Vancouver Orchid Show, Preview night March 22; March 23 & 24 open to public

Central Vancouver Island Orchid Show, April 13 & 14 open to public

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

Dear fellow orchid lovers,

It is early February, and my scented orchids are cheering me up my overcast morning!

At the moment I am enjoying the delicate perfume of *Dendrochilum glumaceum*, an orchid which produces small flowers along a relatively long inflorescence.

Less scented, but still rewarding is *Amesiella monticola*, a white orchid with a long spur: big flower compared to the plant size. It has been in my collection for 3 years, and it has finally rewarded me with 4 flowers. Orchids are for the patient...

At the last monthly meeting, the subject of a trip to Vancouver Island and / or Saltspring was raised. Mr. Poul Hansen, aka known as "Mr. Miltonia", has offered to open up his greenhouse to visitors from our Society; he lives close to the ferry, on Prospect Lake, and his greenhouse has produced many an award winning orchid!

There was great enthusiasm for a visit to Fraser Thimble Farms, on Saltspring Island. This local grower of rare and unusual garden plants is holding their Orchid Mania Festival from May 1st to May 7th (in conjunction with their "Going Native" event), with the hopes that many hardy orchids will be in flower in that period. If we want to organize carpools for either a Saturday or Sunday (May 4-5), it would helpful to know who has a keen interest (and which day works best).

In all likelihood we would have to leave very early from Tsawwassen to catch both locations, given the ferry schedules (e.g. the ferry returning from Saltspring to Tsawwassen leaves Long Harbour at 3:35 pm on a Saturday). Please email me at margaretprat@shaw.ca if you are interested.

Our library use is an ongoing project. At last month's meeting, the straw vote indicated some interest for beginners and advanced books. This topic will continue to be explored by your executive, and we will endeavour to make the library more relevant to Society members. Of course, in the meantime, there is the internet. Although I have personally found it helpful for some very exotic orchids, a well written manual by an expert gathers all the information in one book - a much more efficient strategy when trying to grow a particular class of orchids.

Gardenworks is holding an Orchid Festival at their 3 locations (North Vancouver, Mandeville, Lougheed) on February 16-17 and I want to personally thank all the devoted members who volunteered to speak to the public at this event. This is an outreach activity that raises our profile with the growing public. And it helps promote our show.

And soon, the public will find us on our new website. Work on this initiative is going very well, and it will present a fresh new face to "browsers".

Remember to mark your calendars for the Victoria Orchid Show (March 2-3) and our own Annual show (March 23-24). Those dates are fast approaching, and we need your blooming orchids, and your help!!! I will be gathering up orchids for the Victoria show after our monthly meeting on February 27th, so if you are feeling generous, send your orchid on a little trip to Victoria.

Orchidly yours, Margaret

Minutes from the Meeting: Wednesday, January 23, 2013

Meeting was called to order: 7:30 PM

President's Report: Margaret Prat

New Members: Wantian Sun and Calvin Wong.

Margaret reminded Members that it is now time for membership renewals and stressed the importance of attracting new members.

Website Changes

Jennifer Fabre gave an update on changes to the Society website. The intentions of the changes are to give the website a fresh, modern, relevant look with the hope of attracting more visitors to the site. Jennifer noted that we are also offering corporate memberships and asked the Members to provide names of businesses who would be interested. Jennifer also noted that there will be a marketplace section at the new website. Members were asked if they could get one new member signed up – corporate or individual – and forms were provided.

Recent Passings

Margaret noted the passing of Dr. Wally Thomas on January 15. Donations in memory of Dr. Thomas can be made to the Bloedel Conservatory care of VanDusen Botanical Association, 5251 Oak Street, Vancouver B.C. V6M 4H1.

A Member also noted the recent passing of Pat Withner, wife of the late Dr. Carl Withner.

VOS 2013 Annual Show

Members were reminded that our Annual Show is coming up on March 22-24. Preview night tickets are now available from Stella Li (li.stella@gmail.com) and ribbon awards can be sponsored by contacting Erik Nilsen (enilsen@shaw.ca).

Members were advised that sales tables for the 2013 Show are sold out. However, Members were advised to contact Wayne Riggs if they still wished to apply for a table as it is possible that additional space may be found.

Margaret advised Members that Fay Kunz had volunteered to design the Society's display for the VOS March Show but asked for volunteers to provide assistance with the actual set-up

2013 Victoria Orchid Show

Margaret advised Members that the Victoria Show is coming up on March 1-3 and asked members for plants. Margaret advised that she would be doing the set-up.

Margaret also advised members that she had access to high quality Spanish cork and interested members were asked to contact her.

Culture Class:

Margaret noted the small turnout at the January 14, 2013 culture class and advised that it had been decided to not have a culture class in January in future years due to the unpredictability of the weather in that month. Next month's culture class will be on February 11 and the topic will be Phragmipediums. Margaret also noted that the March culture class topic will be repotting and Ray Swords will be asked if he would demonstrate repotting Disas.

Bloedel Conservatory:Members were advised that the Bloedel Display will be May 24 – 26, 2013.

Library: Members were polled with regards to the library. 8 Members responded affirmatively that they would use beginner books. 12 Members indicated that they would use more specialized books. 3 Members indicated that they would use the current journals (Orchids and Orchid Digest). 8 Members indicated that they would use other journals not currently subscribed to by the Society.

Open Greenhouses Members were advised that Paul Hansen had offered to give a tour of his greenhouse as well as several other greenhouses. A significant number of members expressed interest in visiting greenhouses including Fraser's Thimble Farm on Saltspring Island.

Next Month's Speaker Next month's speaker (Penny) is a Conversation Officer and she will be discussing B.C.'s 40 indigenous orchids.

Volunteer for Coffee/Tea Margaret advised that the Society currently needs a volunteer to prepare the coffee/tea at the monthly Member's meetings.

Raffle:

Thank you to contributors to the raffle: Elizabeth McLean-5 orchids and 2 packages of sphagnum moss; Cecilia Lee 2 orchids; Fay Kunz-2 orchids; Rob Elvidge-1 orchid. There was also an anonymous donation of 7 plants and a blue spectrum bulb.

Meeting Adjourned: 8:00 PM



Flower Quality, Hybrid, Oncidium Moon Shadow 'Tiger Tail'
Grower: Eugene Bazingar



Flower Quality, Hybrid, Vanda Patchara Blue 'M'
Grower: Eugene Bazingar



Plant Culture, Hybrid, Dendrobium Yellow Purple Freckle Lip
Grower: Carla Bischoff



Flower Quality , Hybrid, Paph Bengal Lancer
Grower: Hazel Stewart



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



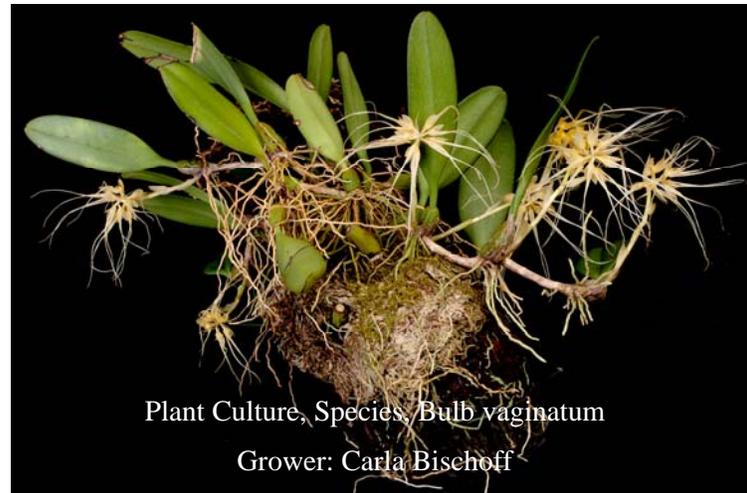
Plant Quality, Species, Den tanya lawseii x congavissinum
 Grower: Carla Bischoff



Unusual Species , Species, Encyclia rhynchophora
 Grower: Hazel Stewart



Flower Quality, Species, Paph sukakuli
 Grower: Carla Bischoff



Plant Culture, Species, Bulb vaginatum
 Grower: Carla Bischoff

RIGHT Unusual Species , Species, Pleurothallis megalops
 Grower:Margaret Pratt



Vandas – Anyone?

During the past summer and fall I noticed that there were more than the regular number of flowers on our vandaceous plants than in other years. Some plants that had never before put out any flowers finally did “show their stuff”. I suppose that the reason for this was our long-lasting, hot summer and the abundant sunshine that our Northern latitudes cannot provide every year.

I decided to read up on Vandas; there are quite a number of them. There are related genera like *Aerides*, *Arachnis*, *Ascocentrum*, *Renanthera*, *Rhynchostylis*, *Trichoglottis* and many others. There are, of course, hybrids between the species and between many different genera, resulting in *Aeridovanda*, *Ascocenda*, *Ernestara*, *Mokara*, *Renantanda* etc. The natural home for all of these can be found in Asia and the tropical Pacific Islands. That covers a large area and if you want to learn anything about your particular plant, you must try to find out where exactly this plant would grow in nature. This curiosity can take the inquirer on many interesting journeys – in my case, the journeys go through books and other publications, all from the safety of my armchair.

One of the most impressive tales I found is the story which tells of the discovery of *Vanda sanderiana*, or better: *Euanthe sanderiana*.

It was in the early spring of 1880, when Mr. Frederick Sander from St. Albans (England) asked one of his collectors to go to the Philippines and try to find rare orchids. This particular collector was Mr. M. Roebbelen, born 1855 in Switzerland. When he arrived in the Philippines, it was suggested to him to explore the Southern islands, particularly Mindanao, to look for a red *Phalaenopsis*, later found and named *Phalaenopsis sanderiana*. Roebbelen had also been told of an orchid that grows on tall trees in coastal swamps that are full of disease-ridden mosquitoes. This orchid was said to have flowers “as large as dish pans”. The very hostile natives there had by now been kept somewhat in check by the Spanish colonial government and regular trade and transportation services were possible, at least along the coast. Roebbelen was allowed to accompany a Chinese trader, but he was told that under no circumstances should he explore further inland, because of those hostile tribes. It must have been very frustrating for him to just explore the settled coast while the trader pursued his own business to the fullest.

Eventually, the trading party arrived at Lake Magindanao and when a storm came up, they were all saved by some friendly villagers. Then it turned out that these “friendly” villagers had been dealing with the Chinese merchant before and were quite unhappy with his unethical methods. Soon the battle lines were drawn. The one event that prevented a bloody fight was the surprise attack by some enemy Bagabos; now everyone had to join forces to defend the village against these villains. By the time the enemy was driven off, it was dark and the chief invited Roebbelen to join the village men in their sleeping hut. This hut had been built high up between branches of a very large tree, partly to be safe from surprise attacks and partly to be safe from the mosquitoes. Warily, the Swiss orchid hunter climbed the crude ladders to his bed in the tree and fell asleep immediately – the day had been long and full of dangers.

During the black jungle night, Roebbelen was awakened by a great shaking of the tree-house, the sound of rushing winds, of breaking bows and splintering timbers, of people stumbling about and falling screaming out of the tree. The shrieks of the injured mingled with the moans of the dying. The explorer realized that an earth-quake was going on and in order to save himself from being thrown to the ground during this upheaval, he strapped himself to a large branch with his belt. He dozed off when the shaking subsided but soon the rising tropical sun woke him again. All was quiet and still in the tree-house; he was all alone. There was destruction everywhere, nothing but splintered wood and gaping holes instead of walls and floor. And there, through a hole in the roof, silhouetted against the rosy morning sky, there was a huge spray of rosy-pink flowers, sprinkled with cinnamon brown flecks. This rosy vision was almost close enough that he could touch it — YES! It was an orchid! an orchid that had never been seen in Europe.

Of course, Roebbelen managed to collect several of the wonderful plants. Sadly, they never lived to arrive in England; the earth-quake had destroyed all the shipping sites. He managed to bring back drawings of his discovery, but at first no one would believe his wild story. A few years later, some of these plants did arrive in England alive and when they blossomed, both Roebbelen and Sander were vindicated. This marvellous orchid was later named *Vanda sanderiana*.

How do you grow Vandas? Well, generally they need to be very, very warm, very humid, very sunny and get lots of water. Of course – they also need very good drainage and often do better when you can hang them up or put them on a slab and accept the fact that their roots will – must – hang all over the outside of their pots, baskets or slabs. If you have any species that come from an area very close to the equator, like *V. sanderiana*, they like little changes in temperatures, both day/night and summer/winter. Many of them like a little drier rest between July/August. Species like the famous blue *V. coerulea*, from higher elevations in Thailand (and now on CITES Appendix I), like hot summers and cool winters. The hybrids in this group are more accommodating (like most hybrids) and will thrive in captivity, as long as they get enough light and water. Remember, most of our orchids will do better when we give them a bit of cool rest in the winter with less water and fertilizer.

If you want to read this tale in different versions, you can find it written up by F. Boyle, Dr. J. Fowlie, W. Richter, A. Swinton and probably others and of course, the computer.



Vanda sanderiana

Repotting 101

By Don Bednarczyk

First of all, there is no one best way to repot. Every experienced orchid grower has their own methods, rituals, and superstitions. So this is just the way I repot. Please modify things to suit your conditions and you can decide if wearing your lucky repotting shirt is really necessary.

Unless the roots are rotting or the media is really shot, the only time I repot any orchid is as the new roots are starting to grow. Note the fact that some orchids do not grow roots when they start to grow a new vegetative growth. When you see a tiny root coming from the newest growth, it is time. Do not wait until the roots are 1 or 2 cm long as you will damage them if you wait. All cutting tools are flame sterilized. I use a cheap garden pruner, which I sharpen with a triangular file, and an old dull table knife. I repot on a plastic tray which I sterilize with 99% isopropanol. A cookie tray works fine as does also clean newspaper. My media is fir bark, coarse perlite, charcoal, small lava chunks, and a bit of oyster shell all mixed in proportions suitable for the genus in question (I fake it a lot). Vancouver water is devoid of calcium which is also missing from commercial fertilizer. It seems calcium has a nasty habit of precipitating with the sulfate and phosphate found in fertilizers so the manufacturers leave it out. They figure you will get enough from your water. So the oyster shell which is calcium and magnesium carbonate adds calcium as it is dissolved by the acid produced by the decomposing wood. At the same time the carbonate reacts with the acid to neutralize it and keep the pH from getting too low.

I soak the plant in water for at least an hour to loosen the roots and hydrate the plant. Then I loosen the roots from the sides of the pot with a dull table knife and pry it out of the pot. If that fails, the pot is smashed (clay) or cut away (plastic). Experience has taught me that the roots need to be stimulated to branch and grow so I usually cut off the bottom layer of roots as well as any old, rotten ones, and ones sticking straight up in the air. The only time I do not cut the roots is if the plant is a rapidly growing seedling. I pot with dry media, as it is much easier to work with than wet media. Media is gently packed down the edges of the pot using the dull knife. You have to be careful not to bruise or crush the roots or they will die rather than branch and grow. Then the pot is rinsed to wash out any fines and dampen it. Then I do not water the plant for at least a week, or even two weeks for a larger plant, so the roots can heal. I am stingy with the watering and do not fertilize for about a month until I am sure those roots are growing, and then it is watering and fertilizing as usual.

What size pot should you use? Most of our orchids are epiphytes. Their roots need to dry out or they fall prey to fungi and bacteria. That is root rot. So pick a pot just a little larger than the one the plant just came out of. In fact, if the plant was not doing too well, you might consider the same size pot, especially for monopodial orchids. The roots have to quickly fill the pot to eliminate wet spots which turn into rotten media spots which become root killing sites. That is another reason I do not like to leave the roots undisturbed when I repot. The undisturbed root mass will often just sit there, doing what it was doing, and refuse to branch out and fill the pot with roots. Then the media sits there all wet and the rotting starts.

How much water you want your media to hold and how often you repot depends on where you are growing your plants and what kind of plants you are growing. Is it hot and dry, cool and moist, hot and moist? But generally the media has to dry out between waterings and if it is starting to take too long to dry (more than a week or so for say a 13 cm pot), it is getting to be time to repot. I probably repot less often than most people, because I use clay pots and coarse media, usually every second year. And for plants that get an extended dry period, I have gone 3 or 4 years.

I sterilize clay pots with heat. I usually do a pile of pots at once and find that using bleach is smelly and messy. And you have to make sure that all the bleach is rinsed out of the porous pot or it will burn new roots. So I wash the old algae and loose dirt out of the pots with dishwashing soap and a scouring sponge. Then I let them dry a couple of days. The reason I dry them is I once short circuited my oven controls when I put in too many dripping wet pots. Then I put them in the oven, set to 370 or 400 F, and bake for about an hour. Cool and reuse.

I hope that helps a bit. If you have any questions, comments, or complaints you can reach me at dbed@telus.net.

Listen to your orchids - part 1

By Don Bednarczyk

Orchids need the right amount of light and water and to be kept at the right temperature to flourish. But how do you know if that is what you are giving them? All three are interrelated and cannot be considered in isolation. So you do not get overwhelmed we will consider one a month and then bring them together again at the end. Hopefully, you will, in the process, get some hints at listening to your orchids.

TEMPERATURE

Temperature is the most often missed piece of the picture. Chemical reactions on average double their rate every 10 degrees Celsius you that the temperature goes up. All plants and animals are just big bags of chemicals reacting away. You and I are so adapted to living at 37 C and we would be on the limits of life itself if our temperature was raised or lowered 10 C. Plants are a lot more adaptable, but you can only go so far from the conditions they have evolved to grow in. We are all familiar with warm, intermediate, and cool growing plants. And we can push it a bit. But I cannot grow most *Phalaenopsis* in my house because it is just too cold in the winter. Someone else cannot grow a *Masdevallia* because their home is just too warm. That basic limitation we are all used to.

But a lot of growers do not recognize that plants need a daily rise and fall of temperature to thrive. Why is that? Plants basically convert carbon dioxide and water into sugar by photosynthesis. They do that using a lot of enzymes that have evolved to work in a specific temperature range. That is what makes them warm, intermediate, and cool growers. But at the same time they are making sugar, they are using the energy stored in that sugar to make proteins, pigments and structures such as leaves, roots, and of course flowers. They use that sugar day and night. They can only capture energy from the sun during the day. But they use the energy day and night. So simply put, if they use more energy than they store during the day, they do not grow well. So we need to slow down their metabolism at night by lowering the temperature. Usually a 5 to 10 degrees C drop works well. Remember, chemical reactions run slower at lower temperatures. I have tried to grow orchids at work where the temperature was 20 C, day and night. It was an exercise in futility. They kind of grew. They got weaker. They never flowered.

So how far can you push lowering the temperature at night? The answer is only so far. And to further complicate the matter, many of our epiphytic orchids do not actually produce sugar during much of the day. They have evolved a defense mechanism against drying out in the heat of the day. Their stomata, the pores that let carbon dioxide into their leaves, also let water escape. So they have evolved a metabolism which allows them to absorb energy from the sun while holding their stomata closed. Then as it cools off, the stomata open and carbon dioxide enters the leaf, and then sugar is produced. So they need a period of darkness which is warm enough to let sugar get produced. Many orchids from the tropics, where the heat lingers until late at night, have evolved this way. But even there, it is darn cool by morning. Most orchids from moist alpine areas, where it cools off as fast as the sun sets, did not evolve this way.

Part of your knowing how much and how fast to lower the temperature is knowing where the orchids came from in the first place. All orchids are not created equal. And hybrids, mixtures of genes from all over the place, come from nowhere. So what are you to do? If your plants are growing really slowly and the growths are long and thin, question if the night time temperature is too high. If the pseudobulbs are fat and hard, and there are little bits of honeydew on the growths in the morning, you probably have got it right.

And many orchids need a yearly temperature signal to tell them it is time to bloom. For some orchids the signal from changing light conditions is the strongest. Yet for others it is the signal from changing daily high and low temperatures that is the strongest. Some *Phalaenopsis* demand a cool night temperature for at least a month in the fall to set their buds. I know of people letting their *Phalaenopsis* sit at 12-13 C at night for several weeks in the fall. They reportedly seem to almost instantly bud up when returned to normal growing temperatures.

Some *Cattleyas* need both a light and a temperature signal to set their buds. If your plants are growing well and getting plenty of light but just will not bloom, consider looking into missing yearly temperature changes that are the problem. For instance, in the summer my *Cattleyas* grow in a greenhouse that goes from about 18 C at night to about 27 C by day (and up to 34 C on a rare really hot day). And it may be midnight before the temperature drops below 22 C. The temperatures slowly come down in the late summer and early fall and they get moved into my light room in early to mid October. There the winter temperature is 15 C by night and 23 C by day with a more rapid fall in temperature at night. That is not a huge change, but combined with a shorter (12-13 hour) light period, it seems to do the trick. Then in mid May it is back to the greenhouse and the cycle continues.

Please remember that the temperatures given here are AIR temperatures. The temperature at the plant may be quite different than the temperature on a thermometer at the other end of the room. A plant sitting in sunlight will be a lot warmer than the room. Likewise, a plant sitting on a windowsill at night will be a lot cooler than the room. Feel the plants at different times of the day. Or, if you are technically inclined, get one of those infrared thermometers and measure actual leaf temperature. It is the differential in temperature at the plant that you must consider. Room temperature is only a guideline.

Next month we will look at light, both natural and artificial. In the third month we will look at water and the things you add to it to perform their purported magic.

Library News - by Barbara Cable

THINGS I LEARNED FROM THE LIBRARY

The 2013 AOS Orchid Source Directory is now in the Library.

Orchids Magazine

Jan. 2011 - P. 40 - How to use carpet underlay as a potting medium

Nov. 2011 - P. 685 - Article on LED lights that was reprinted in FVOS newsletter

Jan 2012 - P, 42 - List of orchids suitable for a terrarium

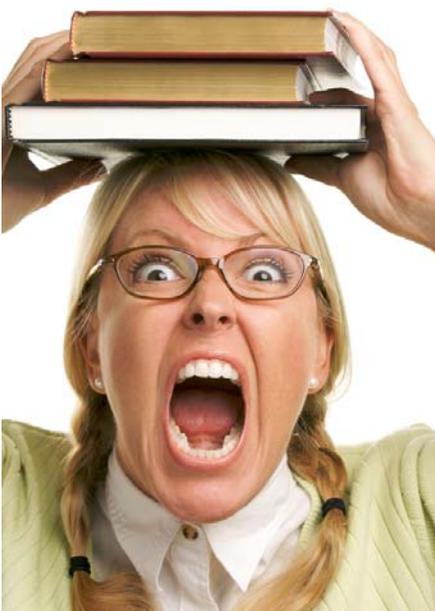
Feb 2012 - Pl 86 - How to customize your potting mix

Nov. 2012 - P. 658 - Plans for making your own Vivarium

Orchid Digest Quarterly

Oct-Nov-Dec 2012 issue is on all things Paphopedilium

A whole magazine devoted to Cynoches



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



Announcements & Upcoming Events

Time to Renew your membership for 2013!

IF you haven't already, don't forget to renew your membership ! If you can't attend the meeting, we would appreciate if you could download the membership renewal form from the website and send in your \$30 annual by mail. Many thanks to those who have already done so.

Monday March 11 Culture Class, Van Dusen Garden, Cedar Room 6:30 to 8:30 pm—repotting session— Ray Sword will demonstrate the repotting of a Disa, but we will report all sorts of orchids—hands on session, bring your plant and repotting media.

Pre-order Deadline for our March 27th Speaker, Sam Tsui of Orchid Inn

February 24th deadline to receive 10% discount for pre-orders. Email : orchidinnusa@gmail.com or samtsui@orchidsinnuse.com . If you did not receive the plant list that has been spent out, please email margaretprat@shaw.ca

Volunteers Needed ! Volunteers still needed for our Annual Show Mar 23—24. Sign up sheets will be available at the Feb 27th Meeting

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 if your are interested .

Our List of vendors for the Annual Show in March is now fully posted on our website. Many vendors are offering the opportunity to pre-order plants for delivery at our show. This the opportunity to order those treasured plants not commonly seen locally. Please visit our website for cute off dates and contact information. <http://www.vancouverorchidsociety.ca/>

For Sale

For Sale: Metal Halide light for sale \$100. Inquire with Chris either by email costenstad@shaw.ca or call 604-937-3810

Any members that would like to post a note in Orchiflora, please contact Chris Ostenstad costenstad@shaw.ca before the fifth of the month.
