



# The Informer

Newsletter of the Greater Omaha Orchid Society

PO Box 241871 Omaha, NE 68124 [greateromahaorchidsociety.org](http://greateromahaorchidsociety.org) January 2013

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Submission deadline for the  
**February** Informer: February  
4, 2013

## **Omaha Orchid Society Mem- bership Information**

### **Annual Dues:**

Single: \$15.00  
Family: \$20.00

Annual dues are paid to the treasurer  
by January 1 of each year and are  
delinquent the day after the Febru-  
ary meeting. Dues for new members  
joining after July 31st are one-half  
the annual rate.

Dues should be made payable to  
G. O. O. S. and may be mailed to  
the G. O. O. S. post office box: G.  
O. O. S., PO Box 241871, Omaha,  
NE 68124.

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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS MEETINGS

### NOTE THE LOCATION CHANGES FOR EACH MEETING BELOW:

**January 9, 2013**  
**Extension Office**  
**8015 West Center Rd.**  
7:00 PM new growers group  
7:30 PM Program: workshop  
show preparations  
Refreshments: Jacque  
Lewzader

**January 23, 2013**  
6:45 PM Papillion Library  
Board Meeting

**February 12, 2013**  
**Extension Office**  
**8015 West Center Rd.**  
7:00 PM new growers group  
7:30 PM Program: TBA  
Refreshments: TBD

## EVENTS

### **February 7 - 10, 2013**

Spring 2013 Home and  
Garden Show. Century  
Link Center, Omaha.

### **February 8 - 10, 2013**

Kansas City Orchid Show  
The American Royal  
Center, 1701 American  
Royal Court, Kansas  
City, MO Contact: Doug  
Martin, 913-248-8669,  
[bethdoug@kc.rr.com](mailto:bethdoug@kc.rr.com)

### **February 16 - 17, 2013**

Batavia Orchid Society  
Show, DuPage County Fair-  
grounds, 2015 Manchester  
Rd., Wheaton, IL. Contact:  
Mike Rollinger, 815-  
258-0872, [mrollinger@  
mindspring.com](mailto:mrollinger@mindspring.com)

### **February 23 - 24, 2013**

Greater Lansing Orchid  
Society Show, Michigan  
State University Crop &  
Soil Sciences Conservatory,  
Contact: Pete Ostlund, 517-  
449-5248

### **March 2 - 3, 2013**

Greater Omaha Orchid  
Society Annual Orchid  
Show. Lauritzen Gardens,  
100 Bancroft St., Omaha,  
NE. Contact: Jim  
Pyrzynski, 402-734-4112,  
[jpyrzynski@cox.net](mailto:jpyrzynski@cox.net)

## THIS MONTH'S MEETING

It's prep time – time to  
prepare for our upcom-  
ing shows. First off, is the  
Home and Garden Show at  
the Century Link Center on  
February 7 – 10 (which is  
before our February meet-  
ing). Closely on the heels  
of that event is our an-  
nual show at the Lauritzen  
Gardens on March 2 – 3.  
The show is early this year  
due to the date of Easter  
and other scheduling con-  
straints. So at the January  
meeting our activities will  
be geared to preparing for  
those events: bagging pot-  
ting mix, pricing items for  
sale, re-arranging the judg-  
ing books, etc.

## HOME & GARDEN SHOW FEBRUARY 7 - 11

The Home and Garden  
Show at the Century Link  
Center presents an oppor-  
tunity for us to meet a seg-  
ment of the population who  
may not have really thought  
about growing orchids in  
the home. The attendees  
at our annual show at the  
Lauritzen Gardens are there  
specifically to see orchids.  
But at the Home and Gar-  
den Show they are there to  
look at a variety of vendor  
displays, much of it having  
to do with home improve-  
ment. Orchids in the home  
certainly can be viewed as  
adding to the décor of the  
home and we need to get

the visitors to the show to look at orchids in that light.

Our plant sales at this event have been down for the past few years, so we plan to try some other strategies. We've had some plants that were damaged by the cold during shipment and the selection was not something that the average public would be interested in. Another activity that we look to add to our booth is more interaction with the public by doing some demonstrations on general orchid culture during the Saturday show.

The H & G show also is our opportunity to publicize the activities of our society, especially our annual orchid show and sale which will follow the H & G show in less than a month – great timing. Thanks to everyone who signed up to help at the show.

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### **ANNUAL ORCHID SHOW MARCH 2 - 3**

Our annual orchid show follows shortly after the Home and Garden Show. It's scheduled for March 2 – 3 at Lauritzen Gardens. An early Easter date and scheduling conflicts for AOS judges were the main factors in moving the date to early March this year. We will need volunteers in a number of areas for the show; the show hours are 10 am – 4 pm, Saturday and Sunday.

Setup will be Friday, March 1 and will entail some early setup of tables on Friday morning; the bulk of the setup will be Friday evening and will involve assisting vendors and exhibitors as well as setting up the GOOS display.

Early Saturday morning (6:30 am) is the time for judging and we will need clerks for that event. Clerking is a great way to learn more about what to look for when you buy that orchid for your collection.

Sunday after 4 pm help will be needed with the tear down and cleanup. This also involves assisting exhibitors with the packing up.

Throughout the event we will need help at the information table, selling orchid supplies and books, giving advice about growing orchids to visitors, and signing up new members. Donations (food and/or monetary) will be need for the hospitality room too. The signup sheets will be circulated at the this month's and February meetings. Thanks for the help in advance.

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### **RENEWAL TIME**

It's that time of year again – time to renew your membership. A form is on the last page of this newsletter. You may mail your check to the address on the form or bring it to the meeting. We have some great plans for 2013 and would certainly be grateful for your participation.

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### **IPA JOURNAL**

The latest issue of the Journal of the International Phalaenopsis Alliance (Vol. 22 (3 & 4) 2012) has some interesting articles. One, single page article is on mixing your own potting mixes. GOOS still has a fair amount of bark potting mix available for purchase but maybe you would like to try your hand at making your own mix, a mix to match your growing regime and plants. Wesley Higgins, who worked at the Missouri Botanical Gardens as their interim orchid grower gives

the recipes for the eleven potting mixes that were in use during his stay.

For those tempted to trying a flask of some new Phalaenopsis hybrid, Dr. Devapratim Mohanty discusses the steps along the way from deflasking the seedlings (removing them from a flask), making a community pot (compot) of seedlings, to eventually potting each seedling in its own pot. A prize winning orchid may be in one of those compots, just waiting for you to give it a try.

The IPA journal should be available in the library, check it out.

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### **AOS ORCHIDS**

The January issue of Orchids is also in. Greg Allikas has an article on winter growing tips. And one of our recent speakers, Tom Mirenda, has some guidance for winter growing conditions, particularly in the area of spike support and watering.

One article "Species from the Dry Side," by Franco Pupulin and Diego Bogarin discusses the orchids which grow in a dry Costa Rican forest. Some of the scenes are not unlike that of the Central Plains of the US – without the orchids of course. The greenhouse pests have apparently invaded the Everglades. An article by Lawrence W. Zettler, and Jennifer A. Zettler discusses the invasion of the orchid habitat by the dreaded Boisduval scale. More Paphiopedilum charlesworthii hybrids are discussed in part IV of an extended article on the species. "Darwin's Orchid," Angraecum ses-

quipedale, the orchid that Darwin made famous by predicting that a moth with a proboscis at least long 12 - 13 inches would be its pollinator is the subject of an article by Chuck McCartney. The Angraecum typically blooms at this time of year and is fairly easy to grow and bloom, but care must be taken when repotting – a sidebar recommends rather than repotting, only portions of the old potting mix be removed and the filled in with fresh media.

For the botanical geeks, there is a Lindleyana section with a few articles. One discusses three new species from Colombia. Another article discusses some of the most primitive of orchids known to exist. These are in the Apostasioid subfamily and bear little resemblance to the orchids most of us are familiar with.

Don't say no one can grow and bloom a Ghost Orchid (*Dendrophylax lindenii*). Our June 2012 speaker, Fred Clarke of Sunset Valley Orchids, got one to bloom essentially by accident. A plant had fallen off a mount in his greenhouse and got lodged between a 2 X 4 and the polycarbonate side wall. The way he discovered it – it was in full bloom!

Again Orchids should also be available in the Library.

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### **CONSERVATION CORNER**

#### **Citizen Scientists An Orchid Recovery Project**

**Cathy Bloome**

Fifteen years ago I received a notice looking for volunteers to participate in a unique project to restore a native

orchid in northeast Illinois. WOW, since I freely admit to having an orchid addiction, this project was made for me! I attended the first training session and learned we would be working to restore the federally threatened *Platanthera leucophaea*, the Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchid. I had found lady slippers orchids on many camping trips but my true fascination with the family until then had been with tropical orchids. Before that day I had never heard of, let alone seen, this species.

Natural area restoration has been ongoing in the Chicago area since the mid-1970's due mainly to one man's curiosity, Steve Packard. In 1975 Packard discovered prairie remnants within the forest preserves of Cook County. Although they were strewn with garbage and overgrown with weeds, some prairie plants still survived. After doing much research, he was given permission by Forest Preserve management to begin restoration at one area using volunteers. In fact a book has been written about the early years of his restoration efforts, *Miracle Under the Oaks* by William Stevens. The recovery project for *P. leucophaea* is a byproduct of that restoration movement.

In the 1980's Marlin Bowles, a researcher with the Morton Arboretum southwest of Chicago, was studying this rare prairie species and met with Packard who saw the plants of *P. leucophaea* Bowles had been growing in pots, and was shown the technique used to pollinate them. Ironically, soon after that day, Packard receive a call from someone who had found what could be orchids on forest preserve land. Packard met with the caller and discovered a population of *P. leucophaea* and used his newly learned skills to pollinate them. These plants produced seed, which were later collected and introduced it into the area that he was restoring. A number of years later this effort was rewarded with blooming plants at that site. In the meantime Bowles had written a recovery plan for the orchid from his research and it was decided to expand the orchid's re-introduction into suitable natural areas throughout the Chicago region. Since money was limited for this project, it was decided to recruit enthusiastic volunteers to get the project going.

At the first meeting in 1993, the volunteers met at a site on private land where some prairie fringed orchid were in full bloom. We learned that *P. leucophaea* grew in moist to wet tall grass prairies and were shown the proper method to pollinate them. Due to the fragmentation of natural areas, the orchid's natural pollinators might be missing and the volunteers would hand pollinate. In that early evening we walked around with our new tools, toothpicks and a Styrofoam cup, collecting pollinia from one orchid and placing it on another. For the first time, I enjoyed the wonderful fragrance that the species releases in the evening to attract pollinators. We were given assignments of sites that already had the orchid present; had been a historic site; or had suitable habitat with known associate plants. I accepted 2 sites, one historic and the original site where Packard had first pollinated the orchids. We were to pollinate only 25% of the blooms. We tagged each plant with a numbered metal tag in the ground and marked the plants with a stake to find them later in the year. When we returned later in the season, we would discover if other blooms had produced seed capsules from natural pollination. Finding them proved to be the most difficult part of the project for they were easily camouflaged among the many prairie species. We would harvest the capsules when they just started to brown. Some seed would be distributed to other new sites and the rest were allowed to disburse naturally. From year to year we would keep track of plants that bloomed, produced only vegetative growth, or failed to appear.

The first year I received seed to put into my historic site. It was suggested that I mix the seed with an agent, such as sand or cornmeal to make it easier to distribute. Also I collected a bit of soil from the base of a blooming plant hoping that it might introduce the mycorrhiza that was thought to have a relationship with the orchids. I set up transect lines that traversed through different plant communities and moisture levels. In 1994, the second year sowing seed, I decided to disturb the prairie sod allowing the seed more contact with the soil. Believe me when I say prairie sod is THICK! What a sight I must have been to the traffic on the nearby road; using my trusty camping axe to chop through the thick prairie soil matrix. Seven years later, I was rewarded with one blooming orchid exactly on my transect line. Of course I did my little orchid dance! The plant was caged so not to become deer candy and the seed was left to disperse. Sadly, that plant has never been seen since.

Studies of this orchid are still continuing and at our annual meeting we hear of the new discoveries being made. Cathy Pollack with US Fish and Wildlife has been staying out in the field at night to determine which of the sphinx moths is the pollinator. Larry Zettler of Illinois College and his students have been working to discover the relationship mycorrhiza has with germination of the seed. Patty Vitt of the Chicago Botanic Gardens has studied the effects of pollination on the life of the orchid. Timothy Bell of Chicago State University and his students are researching germination and growth stages of seedlings.

Through the years many volunteers, now called citizen scientists, have continued to be devoted even with failure. A

few of sites that started with small populations climbed up to well over 500 orchids, while other sites, like mine, just barely seem to hang on. The drought the Midwest experienced 3 years ago took its toll on all the orchids but given time they may recover. Last year for instance, after 7 long years, I found a new blooming plant in an area I had never sown seed. Another orchid dance was done! I'm guessing it came from seed produced from the first plant I had discovered on my transect line. That day I also saw and photographed a sphinx moth pollinating a native phlox. Although it wasn't the correct species responsible for pollinating the orchid, I did get to see up close how they feed on the flowers nectar with their long proboscis.

Not long ago I read *An Annotated Flora of the Chicago Area* by Hermann Pepon written in 1927. It described a familiar area in Chicago that is now covered with homes and a shopping mall. Back then it was a prairie with hundreds of Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchids. That area can never be restored but wouldn't it be wonderful to see *Platanthera leucophaea* blooming once again in the remaining natural areas of our large urban setting. I'm hoping to do many more orchid dances in years to come. Orchid Conservation Coalition <http://www.orchidconservationcoalition.org>

This article first appeared in *The Native Orchid Conference Journal*, April-June 2008, pages 3-5

Editor's Note: The Western Prairie Fringed Orchid (*Platanthera praeclara*) (which is found in Nebraska and other neighboring states and Canada) is a close relative of the Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchid. In fact until recently all of the Prairie Fringed Orchids were considered to be the same species (*P. leucophaea*). Closer examination of the plants from the eastern portion of the range to those from the western portion of the range led to the determination that they were different species. *P. praeclara* blooms in late June and early July in Nebraska and it can be found in some of the prairies in the region. However, due to last year's extreme drought conditions it is doubtful that blooming plants will be seen in 2013.



Western Prairie Fringed Orchid (*Platanthera praeclara*) in an Otoe County, Nebraska prairie. NOTE: The Western Prairie Fringed Orchid is on the Federal and State of Nebraska Threatened Plant lists and is protected by law.

**AMERICAN ORCHID SOCIETY**  
**Monthly Checklist for January and February**

**Cattleya**

Watering and fertilizing will be at a minimum, as will potting. Be on the lookout for senescing sheaths on your winter-into-spring bloomers. Careful removal of the dying sheaths will still allow buds to develop without the danger of condensation-induced rot. Low light will lead to weak spikes, so, and as noted above, staking is critical. If you have a chance to get out to nurseries, there may still be a chance to acquire good plants in sheath for spring bloom. Getting them now not only ensures that you'll have them, but allows them to acclimate to your conditions and bloom at their best.

**Cymbidium**

We are well into the flowering season now. Outdoor growers should be cautious of freezing temperatures. Damage starts to occur below 30 F. Be diligent about tying the inflorescences for best arrangement of the flowers. Also watch closely for slugs and snails. If weather is quite wet, protect the plants from the rain and this will help to reduce the risk of botrytis spotting.

**Lycaste**

The most glorious of all orchids, Lycaste, will be moving toward their flowering season. Make sure the palm-like leaves do not interfere with the emerging inflorescences. Tying them loosely together often is helpful. Some growers cut the leaves off at the pseudobulb, but this removes part of the attractiveness of this elegant orchid. Resist picking up the plant to inspect those beautiful buds and then setting it down in all different directions as the flower buds will be forced to re-orient themselves to the light source each time and will not open as nicely as they should. Keep plants a little drier during the shorter days.

**Odontoglossums**

Odontoglossums and their intergeneric hybrids offer a great splash of color now. Though once thought of as being difficult to grow and requiring cool temperatures due to the emphasis on odontoglossum breeding, the new intergeneric hybrids made using *Oncidium* and *Brassia*, for example, are just the opposite. These plants are quite content in more intermediate conditions. New growths generally emerge in the spring, later forming beautiful plump pseudobulbs. Look for the flower spikes to emerge from the inner sheath of the pseudobulb. If your plant's pseudobulbs are shriveled, then the plants have been kept too dry or too wet. Inspect the roots to determine which condition prevailed. If the lead pseudobulb is large, plump and green (and back bulbs are shriveled) but no flower spike is evident, the plants may have been kept too dry.

**Paphiopedilum**

The standard Paphiopedilum insigne-derived hybrids, which are called "bull dogs" and "toads," are at their peak. Unlike most other orchids, they can even be potted while in bud. There really is no wrong time to pot a paphiopedilum, and no other orchid responds so favorably to fresh mix and a cleanup. Keep an eye on watering until roots begin to grow.

**Phalaenopsis**

Now is the peak of spike development, with the first plants in full flower. Staking and plant preparation is a must for those all-important spring shows. Correct staking now will give a better display and also make it much easier to transport to your society meetings and shows. Care with watering is vital to avoid mechanical damage to the flowers, as well as rot-related problems. Keep spent blooms cleaned up to avoid botrytis inoculation. Do not repot this month. Now you'll be seeing lots of phalaenopsis at orchid shows and sales.

**Zygopetalum**

For the most part, the flowering season will have ended for this group, providing the grower a chance to do some repotting. The plants will then have a chance to become well established before the hotter months of summer arrive. Most growers use bark mixes, but some exceptional results have been seen lately using rock-wool blends. You may want to try this mix, but do not change your whole collection over to this new media until you are sure it is right for you. First, experiment with a few plants to see how they respond.

The AOS thanks Ned Nash and James Rose for this essay.

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## MONTHLY REPORTS

Greater Omaha Orchid Society General Meeting  
December 12, 2012

Twenty-one people (GOOS members and their guests) met at Grisanti's restaurant in Omaha for a holiday party. The food was delicious and a fun time was had by all.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jim Pyrzynski, Secretary

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Greater Omaha Orchid Society Board Meeting  
December, 2012

Due to weather and the holidays the December board meeting was canceled. There was coordination via email on a response to the IRS questions concerning our non-profit application. A response to the IRS was mailed December 21 and received by the IRS on December 22.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jim Pyrzynski, Secretary

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### GREATER OMAHA ORCHID SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL FORM (2013)

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY/STATE/ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

SINGLE DUES - \$15.00 FAMILY DUES - \$20.00 STUDENT (18 YRS AND UNDER) - \$5.00

Make check payable to the Greater Omaha Orchid Society, and mail to:  
Greater Omaha Orchid Society, P. O. Box 241871, Omaha, NE 68124