



# The Informer

Newsletter of the Greater Omaha Orchid Society

PO Box 241871 Omaha, NE 68124 [greateromahaorchidsociety.org](http://greateromahaorchidsociety.org) July 2011

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Submission deadline for the  
**September** Informer: September  
5, 2011

## **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 ratee.

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: All GOOS meetings  
are held at Monthly Meeting  
at the Douglas/Sarpy Cty  
Extension Office, 8015 W.  
Center Rd., Omaha, NE unless  
otherwise indicated)

### **August 10, 2011**

**6:30 PM**

Annual picnic and auction  
potluck dinner at 6:30 PM  
followed by auction at 7:30  
PM

### **August 24, 2011**

**7:00 PM**

Board Meeting, location TBD

### **September 14, 2011**

7:00 PM Plant sales

7:30 PM Program - Guest

Speaker Sam Tsui Orchid Inn  
Ltd.

topic: Multifloral Paphio-

pedilums and culture

Refreshments: Julie Weston

Greeeter: **TBA**

## EVENTS

### **August 5-6, 2011**

Houston Orchid Society  
Workshop, St. Thomas  
University, Crooker Center,  
3900 Graustark, Houston, TX.  
Contact: John Stubbings, 3701  
Coral Reef Dr., Seabrook,  
TX 77586; (832) 693-8140;  
[jdstubbings@comcast.net](mailto:jdstubbings@comcast.net).

### **August 17-18, 2011**

Wisconsin Orchid Society  
Show, Mitchell Park Domes,  
524 S. Layton Blvd.,  
Milwaukee, WI. Contact:  
Kusa Ann Haag, 1840 N. 23rd  
St., Sheboygan, WI 53081;  
(920) 980-6979; [tlhaag@charter.net](mailto:tlhaag@charter.net).

### **September 23-25, 2011**

Chicagoland Orchid Festival,  
Oak Hill Gardens, 37W550  
Binnie Rd., West Dundee,  
IL. Contact: Greg Butler,  
37W550 Binnie Rd., Dundee,  
IL 60118; (847) 428-8500;  
[oakhillgardens@sprintmail.com](mailto:oakhillgardens@sprintmail.com).

### **October 8-9, 2011**

Denver Orchid Society Show,  
Denver Botanic Garden,  
1007 York St., Denver, CO.  
Contact: Janine Ballentine,  
741 W. Mineral Ave. #2111,  
Littleton, CO 80120; (720)  
879-8886; [j9ballentine@gmail.com](mailto:j9ballentine@gmail.com).

### **October 15-16, 2011**

Illinois Orchid Society Show,  
Chicago Botanic Gardens,  
1000 Lake Cook Rd., Glencoe,  
IL. Contact: Jeanne Becker,  
901 Sunset Ct., Deerfield,  
IL 60015; (847) 945-8107;  
[beckerjeanne@hotmail.com](mailto:beckerjeanne@hotmail.com).

## IT'S PICNIC & AUCTION TIME

It's time for a picnic! Every  
year the Society holds a  
picnic and auction for one  
of the summer meetings.  
The picnic is a potluck  
affair. This year the board  
members will bring the  
main dish; members should  
bring side-dishes, desserts,  
etc. Guests are welcome  
too, so bring along a friend.  
The picnic starts at 6:30  
pm at our normal location,  
the Douglas/Sarpy County  
Extension Office.

The auction follows the  
meal. This year we will  
have a great selection of  
plants from Oak Hill Gar-  
dens, many in spike or in  
bloom. Oak Hills Gardens  
is one of the premier orchid  
growers in the Midwest and  
they also host the annual  
Chicagoland Orchid Festi-  
val in September. Members  
can donate plants are re-  
lated material to the auction  
so if you have something  
you no longer want or need,  
bring it along. Perhaps it  
has gotten too big, or it  
doesn't fit your cultural  
situation. But please ensure  
the plant is healthy and not  
carrying pests of one kind  
or another.

And of course be prepared  
to bid on the offerings. This  
is one of THE fund raisers  
for the Society. It helps  
make possible the speakers  
we have during the year and  
other functions. So bring  
your wallet or checkbook.  
See you there!

**PAPH GROWER  
SAM TSUI  
SEPTEMBER  
SPEAKER**

For the September meeting we have another guest speaker, Sam Tsui, owner of Orchid Inn in Bloomington, IL. Sam was born in Hong Kong on November 23, 1952. He traveled to the United States at the age of 22. He attended Illinois State University graduating with a bachelor's degree in computer science and a minor in accounting. He has since completed his MBA. While still an undergraduate student, Sam was employed by Country Insurance and Financial Services based in Bloomington-Normal, Illinois. He retired in January 2008 from Country Insurance and Financial Services as a Senior Software Developer in their Information Systems Division. Sam is now concentrating, full time, on his orchid growing business.

Sam met Jeanie Ting while studying at the university. Jeanie is also from Hong Kong. They were married in May 1983.

He began growing orchids in the early 1980's. After trying many types of orchids, he became a serious Paphiopedilum grower in 1985. In 1990, he began hybridizing with Paphiopedilums and continues that work today. As he became more involved with Paphiopedilums, he started selling commercially in 1995 as the Orchid Inn. He grew orchids in his basement and greenhouses attached to his house. As the business grew, in 2004, he purchased six acres of property and built his first commercial 6,000 square foot greenhouse. Currently

he makes over 300 crosses, produces 4,000 to 5,000 flasks or approximately 100,000 seedlings annually.

In the past 15 years, Sam has been very active in the orchid world by traveling to shows, promoting sales, and lecturing. Sam currently fills orders from around the world and attends over 20 orchid shows/conferences a year. He also does approximately 20 Paphiopedilum programs/lectures to orchid conferences, societies and groups annually in the USA, Canada, Japan, Australia and Europe. Over the past 12 years, he has judged at the Japan Grand Prix, the world's largest orchid show.

Hybridizing is Sam's passion. He emphasizes Paphiopedilum species, Brachypetalum, Parvisepalum and Multifloral hybrids. He only selects the best, most vigorous parent plants in his collection for breeding/hybridizing. He continues to improve his breeding stock by selecting plants or flasks from his fellow orchid growers that he believes are outstanding examples of their type.

As a result of Sam's breeding program, his orchids have been honored with approximately one hundred and eighty-one awards (as of April 30th, 2011) from the American Orchid Society, Cymbidium Society of America and European Orchid Congress. His most prestigious awards include nine First Class Certificate (FCC/AOS) awards; three Cultural awards including an 93 points Certificate of Cultural Excellence (CCE/AOS) award; and seven breeder Award of Quality (AQ/AOS) awards. All these awards are from American Orchid Society.

**PRE-ORDER FOR  
SAM'S TALK**

Sam Tsui will be bringing plants and flasks to sell at our September meeting. But you can pre-order plants from him and get a 10% discount (plus of course you don't have to pay the shipping and handling fee). Plants must be ordered 2 weeks before his trip, since we are at the tail end of his tour that means order NLT than August 29. To see what he has, visit his website [orchidinnusa.com/](http://orchidinnusa.com/). Orders can be placed by email to [samtsui@orchidinnusa.com](mailto:samtsui@orchidinnusa.com). You must specify plants are for Omaha and note that there is an item # that should be included to properly identify the plant you are interested in. Payment is due at the meeting. This is an opportunity to get some high quality plants from a great Paphiopedilum grower – and he does have some other orchids too, so check them out.

**OFFICER  
NOMINATIONS**

At the September's meeting there will be elections for the Society's officers. The nominating committee, comprised of Jacque Lewzader (chair), Sandy Rome, and Robert Mann, has identified the following nominees: President, Roberta Givan; Vice-President, Eric Stoiber, Treasurer, Sandy Rome, and Secretary, Jim Pyrzynski.

Alternate nominations may be made from the floor at the September meeting (the nominee must have agreed to serve). The vote will follow a call for nominations from the floor. The term of service is 2 years, from the September 2011 meeting until that meeting in 2013.

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**INFO FROM  
FIRST RAYS**  
<http://www.firstrays.com/>

**CHOOSING  
POTTING MEDIA  
PART 2**

OK, now that we have the background behind us, it's time to look at the various media ingredients that are commonly available, and their specific properties.

One of the more common media ingredients - used alone or in blends - is fir bark. Good quality bark is getting harder and harder to find, but the stuff that is available is typically steamed to extract the resins that could be toxic to your plants. The removal of that resin increases the water-holding capacity of the bark, but also shortens the life of it. The irregular shape of the pieces of bark can lead to excess packing, which may reduce the airflow to the root system. Fine grade is often used for small seedlings, and the coarser grades for large plants. Before using bark, water it with boiling water to facilitate wetting, then let it cool.

Coconut husk chips (CHC), made from the pithy covering outside of the spherical, hard coconut shell, is gaining popularity as a replacement for fir bark. It is readily available, relatively cheap, and wets and rewets better than bark. It also tends to be more regular in shape - chunks or

cubes as opposed to coarse flakes - so facilitates better air flow throughout the root mass. CHC holds a lot more water than bark, so keep that in mind when using it. It lasts considerably longer than bark as well, often going three years before decomposition becomes an issue, as opposed to a year for bark. A word of warning: despite claims otherwise, most CHC has a fairly high salt content when you get it, so it pays to soak and rinse it several times prior to use.

Coconut husk fiber is the wiry result of stripping and shredding the interior of the coconut husk, rather than chipping it. It is springy and flexible, and is often matted to form liners to hanging baskets, but it can also be used straight as a medium for plants that really like to dry out fast. If fairly tightly compressed, water will stay in pockets in the mass for a longer time period.

Coir, sometimes called "Coco-Peat," is the result of grinding the husk into coarse powder. It is often used as a substitute for peat moss in blends, but can be used alone for seedlings that like to stay damp.

Peat moss and its commercially available blends, such as ProMix HP, are sometimes used in the so-called "mud mixes," which hold water really well. Like coir, it can be blended with other ingredients to produce a good medium for terrestrial and semi-terrestrial species.

Osmunda fiber, the roots of a number of ferns from the genus *Osmunda*, used to be a staple in the orchid-growing community, but it is now difficult to find

a high quality fiber.. It is tough and springy, and requires vertical alignment in the pot to ensure proper drainage. In almost totally ensures that the plants' roots get all of the air they need, and as it decomposes, is an excellent source of nutrients, requiring little or no supplementation via fertilizers.

Tree fern fiber - the "trunks" of tropical tree ferns - has replaced most osmunda in orchid culture. It is very stiff and airy, and can be obtained as shredded fibers, chunks or slabs. It has little moisture holding capacity, so aerates media blends very well. The slabs are often used for mounting plants directly.

Redwood fiber, or "Palco Wool" as it is sometimes known, is a light, fluffy wood fiber that does not decompose, and is added as a moisture-retention aid and as a means of increasing the acidity of media blends.

Sphagnum moss is pretty much a standard in the orchid growing community, whether by itself or as a blend additive. Available in a wide range of quality - from the expensive New Zealand "Primo" and it's close-but-less-expensive counterparts from Chile, to some really lousy stuff (short strands, no "fluff"), - the good stuff is a great medium for plants that love constant moisture. Learning how to attain the proper packing density is a challenge, as it holds so much water that it can become sopping pretty easily. Generally, sphagnum becomes sour and in need of replacement in the 6- to 9-month range, although that can be extended by blending it with charcoal.

Hardwood charcoal is a very long-lasting medium ingredient having a moderate-to-low moisture holding capacity. Many growers of vandaceous plants use the coarse grade as the sole medium. Some claim that the charcoal "sweetens" the medium by absorbing some of the foul chemicals produced in the decomposition of other media components, or excess salts from fertilizers.

Perlite, often referred to as "sponge rock" for the coarser grades, is expanded volcanic glass, and is a great aerator of blends, but still holds enough moisture to be a fairly good substrate for Semi-Hydroponic culture.

Pumice is similar in nature to perlite, but with a higher density and lower moisture-holding capacity.

LECA, standing for "Lightweight Expanded Clay Aggregate," is a general term for any number of more-or-less spherical terra cotta pellets that were originally designed to be the aggregate in lightweight concrete formulations, but later diverted to horticultural use. There are many brands available, including Aliflor, Hydroton, PrimeAgra and others, and they vary greatly in their properties and applicability to orchid culture.

Diatomite is calcined diatomaceous earth muds. It is highly porous, and holds a tremendous amount of water. While it seems to be just too wet for Semi-Hydroponic culture, it has seen good application by itself for pot culture for plants that appreciate a damp root environment.

A few examples of the selections I make follow.

Keep in mind that I am growing in a greenhouse in southeastern Pennsylvania, so the applicability of these may differ from yours.

Many of my small species plants are grown mounted on EcoWeb slabs or on virgin cork oak bark from Portugal. In the greenhouse, I'm able to keep the moisture level high to sustain their health.

Vandaceous plants are, for the most part, grown in baskets of coarse charcoal, although I have been successful with PrimeAgra in pots - or no medium at all - as well.

Cattleya-types are either in PrimeAgra in clear plastic pots, or in a blend I refer to as "Husk Off." a blend of CHC, perlite and charcoal, with all particle sizes approximately in the medium grade, at equal proportions.

For the majority of my moisture-loving plants, I use Semi-Hydroponic culture, using PrimeAgra medium, as it provides a constant moisture and nutrient supply, while guaranteeing great air flow to the root systems.

I use sphagnum for small, moisture loving seedlings, but usually move them into S/H culture as they mature.

As you gain experience with your plants, you'll develop a "feeling" for their needs that will allow you to customize the medium for the plant. I have been known to use different media for different plants of the same species, just because they respond differently.

# Paphiopedilum

paff-ee-oh-PED-ih-lum

**P**aphiopedilums, the lady's-slipper orchids, originate in the jungles of the Far East including Indonesia. They are semiterrestrial, growing in humus and other material on the forest floor, on cliffs in pockets of humus and occasionally in trees. They are easy to grow in the home, under lights or in the greenhouse.

**LIGHT** is easier to provide for paphiopedilums than many other types of orchids. They require shady conditions, as in the home in an east or west window, or near a shaded south window. In the greenhouse, shade must be provided. Give about 1,000 to 1,500 foot-candles. In the home, fluorescent lighting is excellent; suspend two or four tubes 6 to 12 inches above the leaves.

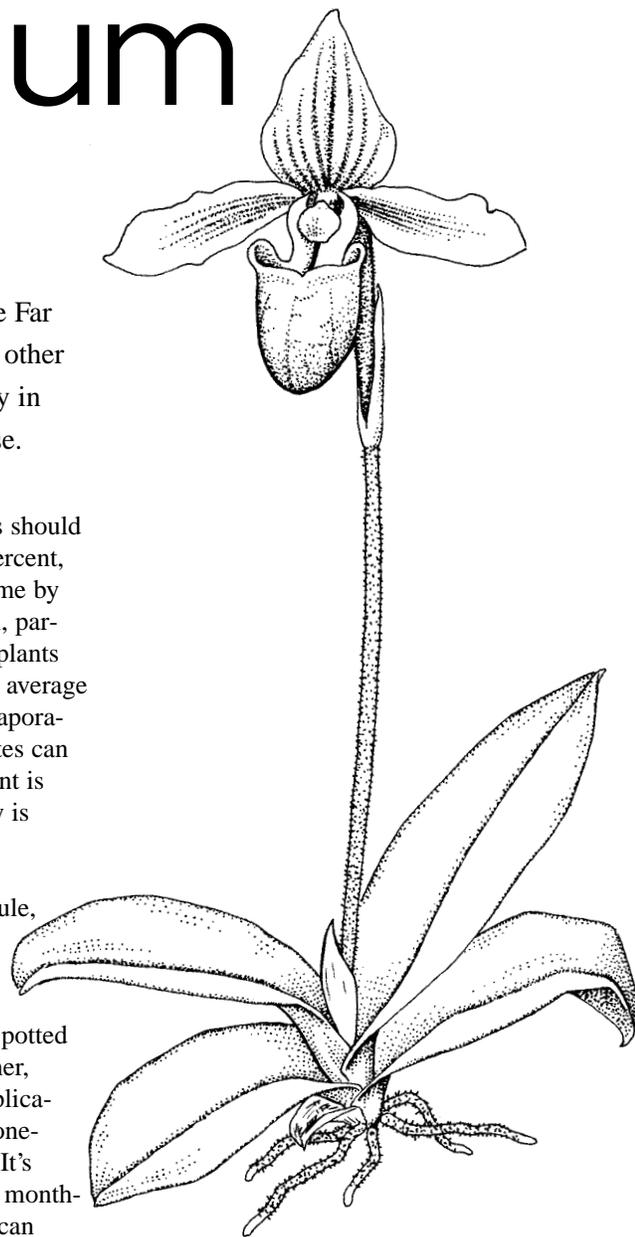
**TEMPERATURES** for paphiopedilums cover a considerable range. Paphiopedilums are traditionally separated into two groups: the warm-growing mottled-leaved types and the cool-growing green-leaved types. A third, increasingly popular group is the warmer-growing strap-leaved multi-floral paphiopedilums. Warm-growing types should be kept at 60 to 65 F during the night, and 75 to 85 F or more during the day. Cool-growing types should be kept at 50 to 60 F during the night and 75 to 80 F during the day. However, many growers raise all plants in the same temperature range with excellent results. The plants can stand night temperatures in the 40s if necessary (as when grown outside in mild climates), as well as temperatures to 95 F. Care must be taken to protect the plants from rot when cold (keep humidity low, and avoid moisture on leaves or in the crowns of the plants), and also to protect from burning when hot (shade more heavily and increase humidity and air movement around the plants).

**WATER** must be available at the roots constantly, because all plants in this genus have no pseudobulbs. All of these plants need a moist medium — never soggy, but never dry. Water once or twice a week.

**HUMIDITY** for paphiopedilums should be moderate, between 40 and 50 percent, which can be maintained in the home by setting the plants on trays of gravel, partially filled with water, so that the plants never sit in water. In a greenhouse, average humidity is sufficient. Using an evaporative cooling system in warm climates can increase the humidity. Air movement is essential, especially when humidity is high.

**FERTILIZE** on a regular schedule, but care must be taken to avoid burning of the fleshy, hairy roots. High-nitrogen fertilizers (such as 30-10-10) are recommended when potted in any fir-bark mix. In warm weather, some growers use half-strength applications every two weeks; others use one-quarter strength at every watering. It's important to flush with clear water monthly to leach excess fertilizer, which can burn roots. In cool weather, fertilizer applications once a month are sufficient.

**POTTING** should be done about every two years, or as the medium decomposes. Seedlings and smaller plants are often repotted annually. Mixes vary tremendously; most are fine- or medium-grade fir bark, with varying additives, such as perlite (sponge rock), coarse sand and sphagnum moss. Moisture retention with excellent drainage is needed. Large plants can be divided by pulling or cutting the fans of the leaves apart, into clumps of three to five growths. Smaller divisions will grow, but may not flower. Spread the roots over a small amount of medium in the bottom of the pot and fill with medium, so that the junction of roots and stem is buried  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch deep in the center of the pot. Do not



overpot; an average plant should have a 4- to 6-inch pot.

The American Orchid Society is the world's leading provider of information about and related to orchids. We invite you to join us and learn about the world's most fascinating flowers and plants. Your membership entitles you to our monthly award-winning magazine *Orchids*, a free copy of our cultural guide *Your First Orchid* and the *AOS Orchid Source Directory*, a 10 percent discount on items purchased through The AOS BookShop and Orchid Emporium, and free admission to the International Orchid Center in Delray Beach, Florida.

#### American Orchid Society

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## REPORTS

Greater Omaha Orchid Society General Meeting  
July 13, 2011

The meeting was called to order at the Douglas/Sarpy County Extension Office at 7:30 pm.

President Roberta Ginavan welcomed visitors and members to the meeting.

Roberta advised the attendees that the original program with guest speaker Doug Martin (MAOC president) had to be cancelled due to the flooding of the Missouri River (which had closed the interstate between Kansas City and Omaha).

The minutes of the June meeting were approved.

Sandy Rome gave the Treasurer's report. Filed for audit.

Guests. Jacque Lewzader introduced a guest visiting from California.

Committees. Roberta Ginavan named the people on the nominating committee: Jacque Lewzader (chair), Robert Mann, and Sandy Rome. A report of the nominees for Society officers is due at the August meeting. Roberta also identified the members of the audit committee: Dick Behrens (chair), Carol Behrens, and Julie Westman. An audit report is due in September.

Judging Center Donation. Jim Pyrzynski discussed our donations to the AOS judging centers. We have budgeted \$125 for donation to the Mid-America Judging Center (St. Louis) but we have been receiving support from the Great Plains Judging Center (Oklahoma City) for our shows for a number of years. He recommended that we also make a \$125 donation to the Great Plains Judging Center. A motion was made, seconded and approved.

Library. Robert Mann advised that he had developed some physical problems and his physician gave him some weight limitations to adhere to. Therefore he will be unable to bring in the library books for the meetings. Tim Jansen volunteered to replace Robert in this capacity.

Picnic/auction. Roberta discussed the August meeting which is the annual picnic/auction. The picnic will start at 6:30 pm and be followed by an auction. Plants will be purchased for the auction but members were encouraged to bring in plants and other related material to add to the auction. Board members will bring the main dishes for the picnic; other attendees should bring side dishes and desserts.

CIOS speakers day. Roberta also reminded attendees that there was still sufficient time to make plans to attend the CIOS speakers day on July 31.

The program consisted of presentations by three members. Carol Behrens discussed Cattleya culture. Tyler Bolamperti discussed how he grows Masdevallias. Marilyn Hawes discussed growing miniatures. The initial presentations were followed by question and answer sessions.

Refreshments were provided by Linda Schroeder.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jim Pyrzynski, Secretary

Greater Omaha Orchid Society Board Meeting  
July 27, 2011

The Greater Omaha Orchid Society Board met at Sandy Rome's home at 7:00 PM. In attendance were: Roberta Gi-navan, Sandy Rome, Marilyn Hawes, Linda Schroeder, Jacque Lewzader, Eric Stoiber, and Jim Pyszynski.

August meeting. The August meeting is the picnic and auction. The board members will bring the main dishes; a signup sheet was circulated for what dishes will be brought. Plants have been ordered from Oak Hill Gardens. There was discussion on the auction of a copy of OrchidWiz. It was decided to auction a copy with a starting bid of \$60.

Officer nominations. Roberta reminded that the officer nominations were due by the August meeting but since the meeting was also the picnic she was concerned that the nominations also should be ready for The Informer (August issue).

September meeting. Sam Tsui will be the speaker. Locations for dinner were discussed; a WestRoads restaurant was determined to be probably a good choice.

Programs for the remainder of 2011. October will be Orchids of Mexico given by Dave Taylor. November is scheduled to be on conservation but there was nothing specific. Jim suggested that he recap the native orchid activities that members have engaged in. There are still some orchids that will be blooming between now and the end of October that will provide additional field trip opportunities.

2012 show. Jim advised that Joe Lankton had given the show application to Craig Plahn, Mid-America Judging Center chair, a while back but nothing is listed on the AOS website. He will check further.

Annual reports. Roberta reminded that reports are due in September per the by-laws. She asked that they be submitted to the newsletter editor in time for the September Informer. Jim advised that the due date should be September 7.

Suggestions for discussion. Eric Stoiber had some suggestions that he wanted have discussed. One was for a "business card" for the society. The card would have information on the location, day (second Wednesday of the month) and time of the meeting, website address, mailing address, etc. The card would supplement the society brochure and could be something people would keep with their other contact information they pick up. This suggestion was met with approval. Another suggestion was to solicit raffle plants from vendors. In return we would give them an advertisement in the newsletter. This (according to Eric) has been done by some other societies. Roberta suggested getting more information from the societies on who they worked with, etc. This led to a discussion of throwaway plants from places that have orchids (Lowe's, Bakers, Whole Foods, etc.) to see just what they do with the orchids that have passed their prime. Lowe's apparently puts them on a sale bench, Home Depot might be just throwing them in the trash, etc. This will be researched further. Bark purchases were also discussed. Oak Hill Gardens is planning to close by the end of 2012. An alternate source needs to be found. Eric discussed a wholesale company and will research it further.

Budget. The budget for the next year was discussed. Sandy Rome provided income and expenses reports for the current year and then a sheet with budget projections for the next fiscal year. The issue of the donation to the Extension Office was discussed. Since we have to make a \$100 deposit for use of the kitchen, it was decided that the donation for the Extension Office should be \$400. And since Vicki Shallow comes to our meeting specifically to fulfill the need for a Master Gardener at our meeting (for access to the building) it was decided to invite her to our holiday party (at our cost). There was also discussion of how to proceed with development of a "Sam DiMauro" award. His widow specified that Sam wanted it to be to benefit something local and not leave the society.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jim Pyszynski, Secretary