



# The Informer

Newsletter of the Greater Omaha Orchid Society

PO Box 241871 Omaha, NE 68124 greateromahaorchidsociety.org July 2011

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**August** Informer: August 1,  
2011

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

### July 13, 2011

6:00 PM Box-lunch  
7:00 PM new growers group  
7:30 PM Program - Guest Speaker Doug Martin, President, Mid-America Orchid Congress "The Birds, The Bees and the Orchids"  
Refreshments: Linda Schroeder  
Greeters: Jack & Vi Thraen

### July 28, 2011

7:00 PM  
Board Mtg, location TBD

August 10, 2011

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

## EVENTS

### July 8-10, 2011

Santa Barbara Orchid Estate International Fair, Earl Warren Showgrounds, Santa Barbara, CA. Contact: Alice Gripp, 1250 Orchid Dr., Santa Barbara, CA 93111; (805) 967-1284; sboc@sborchid.com.

### July 31, 2011

Central Iowa Speakers Day, Camp Dodge Recreation Center, 7105 NW 70 Ave., Johnston, IA. Contact: Carson E. Whitlow, 22957 280 St., Adel, IA 50003; (515) 993-4841; slipperguy@aol.com.

### 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.

### 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.

### 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.

## JULY PROGRAM: THE BIRDS, THE BEES AND ORCHIDS

As the saying goes "Birds do it, bees do it ..." and even orchids (and for that matter other plants) do IT. It is reproduce. Most plants need an assistant in the process to get the pollen to the stigma – this is an attempt to ensure pollination. Some plants rely on the wind – think corn, maple trees, pine trees, ragweed (*achoo!*). But most plants rely on other agents, usually insects, but sometimes birds, and there are other possibilities. In some cases plants self-pollinate but this is not the norm since cross pollination means mixing of genetic material and that has the potential for more genetic diversity which usually means better chance for survival of the species. To ensure cross pollination orchids have evolved some elaborate devices. Come to the July meeting and learn more from our guest speaker, Doug Martin. Doug is the current president of the Mid-America Orchid Congress (MAOC) and past president of the Orchid Society of Greater Kansas City.

## MORE ON POLLINATION

Perhaps it was just a coincidence but the June issue of AOS Orchids is devoted to the topic of orchid pollination. Ron McHatton

starts the articles off exploring orchid pollination in general. He discusses the pollinators (the insects and other animals that carry the pollen), the floral attractions (the mechanisms), and floral mimicry (how orchids imitate some other plant or animal to lure the pollinators). The article is filled with excellent photos. Martin Motes follows with an article on Darwin's discoveries about orchid pollination. Motes examines some of the unique flowers found in the orchid family. Mario Blanco and Sebastian Vieira look at the pollination in the genus *Lepanthes*. Rudolf Jenny discusses the plant-ant symbiosis found in *Coryanthes*. In a 2-page spread Melania Fernandez, Ada P. Karremans, and Franco Pupulin examine orchid pollinaria (the complex structures orchids have for their pollen). Robert Pemberton looks at pollination in the genus *Phragmipediums*—a slipper orchids. All the articles have excellent photos and a wealth of information. Ask the librarian for a look at the Society's copy. Of course if you join the AOS you will find it in your mailbox each month.

## FINAL CALL CIOS SPEAKERS DAY

There is still time to make plans to attend the Central Iowa Orchid Society's annual Speakers Day, July 31. The event will be held at Camp Dodge, just north of Des Moines. It starts with a continental breakfast at 8 a.m. and includes lunch and dessert. Norito Hasegawa will discuss "What's New in Paphs" and "Multifloral Paphs" and Ivan Portilla of *Ecuagenera* will discuss the "Orchids of Ecuador in their Natural Habitat" and "Cattleya Maxima in

Its Different Forms." There will be plants for sale as well as a plant raffle at the end. All for \$25 in advance, \$30 at the door. See page 6 for directions and a registration form.

### INFO FROM FIRST RAYS

<http://www.firstrays.com/>

#### Choosing Potting Media Part 1

An attempt to answer the common question: "What's the best potting medium for my orchid?"

The correct answer to that is that there isn't a single, best medium! Instead, when choosing a medium, one has to take a "holistic" approach and look at a variety of factors, including:

1. The growing conditions the plant prefers.
2. The plant's water storage capabilities.
3. How well does the plant take to repotting, that is, being disturbed.
4. What kind of conditions are you easily able to provide.
5. How fastidious are you about watering and feeding, or at least what are your capabilities.

All of those factors should be considered when choosing a medium, and should be reconsidered for each type of plant you grow.

First of all, think about the conditions the plant experiences in nature (if it's a hybrid, think about the species in its breeding background, especially recent ones). Right off the top we may be baffled, as orchids in nature usually have no potting medium at all, but are epiphytes, living attached to the bark of host trees! Look a little closer though, at the environment those roots, dangling in air, see.

1. Water Supply: Is the plant from a rainforest, constantly bathed in rain or fog? Is it instead exposed to seasonal monsoons followed by relatively dry periods, or does it get typical, random rains such as seen in many temperate climates?

2. Air Movement: Heavy and wet, cool and buoyant, or parching, arid winds?

3. Growing Location: Is the plant from a bog, where it constantly has "wet feet," or is it in leaf litter on a forest floor, in a densely-leaved host tree, nestled in the detritus of fallen leaves, or up at the top where the wind and sun dry it out rapidly?

4. Typical Temperatures: Is the plant from a hot, intermediate or cool environment? (The choice of medium can help you grow a plant that otherwise might not do well in your environment.)

Next, let's look at the plant's physical structure, and how it relates to the plant's water storage ability.

1. Plant Structure: Those with pseudobulbs can generally store water for longer periods of time than those without. Take a close look at the leaves as well, before concluding your evaluation. Those plants having thin, strap-like leaves, such as *oncidium* and *cymbidium*, will lose their stored water faster than those with shorter, thick leaves, such as *cattleyas*. Plants that don't have pseudobulbs have in some cases developed thick, fleshy leaves (*phalaenopsis*, for example) as their water storage scheme, but that's obviously not as effective as pseudobulbs. Others that have neither pseudobulbs nor thick leaves, such as *phragmipediums*, are going to need a steady supply of moisture.

2. Root Structure is another important aspect in deciding on the medium. The factors

to consider are the extent of root growth (long versus short, branched versus single), the thickness of the roots, particularly that of the velamen layer. A very extensive root system suggests that the plant has to work hard for its water and nutrition, so wants to gather as much as it can when it is available. By contrast, a short root system suggests easy and/or frequent availability of them. Velamen - that layer of white that covers healthy roots - is actually dead tissue that acts as a sponge to rapidly absorb water and nutrients, so they can be passed onto the plant. Thick velamen is generally found on plants that like to grab a lot of water, but prefer to have their roots dry rapidly. Vandaceous plants are good examples.

Don't take that to mean that roots with thin velamen like to stay moist - you need to couple that with the plant's storage structure, mentioned above. *Oncidium*s, for example, tend to have thin velamen on thin roots, but their root systems are quite extensive, and they have pseudobulbs for storage, so they too, like to dry fairly rapidly. *Phalaenopsis*, with their minimal storage capabilities, tend to have thick roots to add to the "reservoir," so do well in a damp, but not sappy environment.

As to how well a plant tolerates repotting, that can generally be judged by the plant's growth rate, with slow-growers being less tolerant of disturbance than others. Some plants, notably *paphiopedilums*, seem to actually enjoy repotting, often putting on a growth spurt immediately afterwards!

Your growing conditions play a most significant role in deciding on a medium. If you have no problem providing a constantly humid environment due to your climate or if you grow in a greenhouse, the moisture retention on the part of your media is less of a concern. Ambient temperatures play a role here, as well, as warmer temperatures tend to increase the evaporation of water, and along with the dry-



ing rate of the medium.

Your personal tendencies, and how much time you can- or prefer to spend watering your plants is another significant factor in choosing a medium. If you're a "busy bee" who likes to pamper your plants, then an open medium that doesn't hold a lot of water may be a good choice. If, on the other hand, you have a large collection and don't have time for such individual attention, or if you travel a lot on business, it might be worth thinking in terms of a more stable moisture holding selection.

Part 2 next month

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## FROM THE AOS

### Archive of AOS

#### Beginner's Newsletters

##### Weeds

A weed is just a plant growing where it doesn't belong, although most weeds are also very prolific and multiply rapidly. They are also adaptable which allows them to grow under a broad range of conditions. In many instances weeds end up being labeled as "invasive species". Believe it or not, some orchids are considered to be weeds and in Florida and other semi-tropical areas of the US, some are on states' invasive species lists; *Oecelclades maculata* for instance. If you came to orchids from in-the-dirt gardening in USDA Hardiness Zones 3-8 you are pretty familiar with weeds. While dandelions, plantain and curly dock are unlikely to invade the orchids in your home or greenhouse (although they can be problematic if you summer plants outdoors), some northern weeds are the scourge of greenhouse orchid growers.

If a few weeds would remain a few weeds they would not be a problem. The fecundity of most

plants regarded as weeds will quickly turn "a few" into "a lot". If weeds are allowed to become established in an orchid's pot and left to grow, their roots will eventually take over the pot. While weeds will grow quickly on their own, they can be even more vigorous if you fertilize your orchids regularly as you ought to. Eventually the weed roots can completely fill a pot and use up all of the water and nutrients intended for your orchid. Additionally, the media will break down more rapidly. The weed will succeed while your orchid languishes. While weeds taking over a single orchid pot are certainly not a critical matter, many weed plants have the uncanny ability to disperse seeds over considerable distances. Some *Oxalis* species for instance, can shoot seeds for several feet when seed capsules ripen. Left untended, weeds in one orchid pot will become weeds in a whole orchid collection. When that happens, they can be extremely difficult to control. Seeds get down into the media, so just when you think you have a generation exterminated, new seedlings will be sprouting. The only way to eliminate a severe weed infestation in an orchid collection is to repot the whole collection...at the same time. Roots must be trimmed and rinsed under running water to eliminate persistently "sticky" seeds. Unless you have only a few orchids, repotting a whole collection in one fell swoop is not the way you want to spend a weekend. Like the other pests we have covered, and weeds are a pest, prevention and early control are the best solution to preventing a weed infestation.

Stopping weeds at the front door is the best way to prevent them from getting into your orchid collection. But it is not always easy

to know whether a newly purchased orchid, or gift division from a friend is weed-free. While weeds may not be visible above the media, seeds below may be ready and waiting to germinate. We like to put new orchids in a very conspicuous place for at least the first month. Seeing an orchid every day or so will alert you to latent weed roots or seeds because you will see them when they begin growth. Monitoring newly acquired orchids is good practice anyway to keep an eye on how they adjust to their new home. A large pair of tweezers can easily be poked into an orchid's media to grab a weed seedling with its roots intact. The best and easiest time to eliminate weeds is right after they sprout. The more developed their root system, the harder they are to pull out in one piece. Roots left behind will begin growth within a few days. If you do happen to leave roots behind when trying to pull a weed out of a pot, make a note to try again in a week when the weed has developed enough to remove.

There have been some reports of people applying weed killers to weeds in orchid pots using cotton swabs or a paintbrush. This seems like unnecessarily risky business to us and we do not recommend the practice. No matter how careful you are, splashed poison can damage your orchids. Damage to orchids from weed killers can be insidious and you may not even see symptoms until long after you have forgotten using weed killer.

Should proactive weed control get by you, the only way to effectively eliminate weeds from one or a hundred orchid pots is to repot the infested orchid in fresh media paying particular attention to trimming dead

roots and rinsing the old media off remaining roots under running water.

If you have been reading these newsletters for the past six months there should be one message that has been evident: treat little problems before they become big problems. Proactive pest control is in the end, far easier than eliminating an out-of-control infestation of insects or weeds.

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<http://aos.org/Default.aspx?id=73>

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### Quick Tips from Orchids Limited

Now is the time to start closely scouting your plants for insects as the temps are warmer and bugs really multiply in warm temps. Better to get things under control now rather than waiting until fall and discovering you have a big problem on your hands or worse yet, dead plants!

Depending on where you live, fungal or bacterial problems can also crop up unexpectedly in warm temps and if you are having a wet summer, it is best to have control products on hand.

Here are some plant control recommendations:

Bactericide & Fungicide  
Phyton 27

Flower Pharm (Pesticide)

Fungicide (Garden Safe) 3  
(Neem Oil)

Horticultural Oil - Insecticide (ready to use)

Insecticidal Soap  
Physan 20

Systemic Houseplant Insect Control

# AMERICAN ORCHID SOCIETY

## Monthly Checklist for July and August

### **Cattleya**

Cattleyas this month require careful attention to their watering and fertilizing needs owing to characteristically high temperatures. Evaporative cooling is a must in areas of the country where it is effective. Where it is not (the more humid regions), care needs to be paid to proper venting to keep temperatures within reason. Bottom vents in conjunction with top vents provide enough rising airflow to help keep plants cool. Increased air flow lessens humidity and dries plants out more quickly, necessitating more frequent damping down and watering, in areas where high humidity is not a problem. Higher light and heat indicate more fertilizer. The growths your plants are making now are the source of this autumn, winter and spring's blooms, so applying adequate fertilizer this month is the best way to ensure future blooms. Higher temperatures and humidity may also lead to fungal or bacterial rot problems, so it is important to closely observe your plants for any early indication of problems. Pests are also at a high point this month for the same reason.

### **Paphiopedilum**

Cooling and air circulation are especially critical in these two months to prevent stress and avoid disease problems. Watering needs to be closely monitored to ensure that plants do not dry out. Warmer-growing hybrids will be at the peak of their blooming, with attention needing to be paid to staking of spikes. Look for water lodging in growths, which can rot emerging spikes and lead to the loss of the entire growth.

### **Phalaenopsis**

Most, if not all, potting should be complete by now. This month and next are when these plants achieve their maximum growth. This growth will be that from which they set their spikes for the coming season. The more leaves the plants grow, the better potential for spiking will be realized. Growers in cooler areas such as the Pacific coast have the advantage this month, should they choose, of cooling for early season spikes. Lots of heat and light call for liberal applications of water and fertilizer.

### **Cymbidium**

Summer can be the most rewarding season for cymbidiums. Growth should be coming strong now. The leaves of the new growths are best when they are broad and fairly stiff. The color should be a light green to nearly yellow. Early flowering varieties should be showing flower spikes, so move the plants into a cooler area with lower light. For mid-season varieties, lower the dosage of nitrogen to assist in spike initiation.

### **High-elevation Plants**

For cooler-growing plants, such as masdevallias, other pleurothallids and the like, the next few months will be a challenge. During the hottest times, keep your plants more shaded and be sure to keep the humidity level much higher. Do not let plants dry out. Delay any potting until the weather cools.

### **Oncidium intergenerics**

Many of the intergeneric crosses between odontoglossums and oncidiums, such as *Odontocidium*, *Wilsonara* and *Colmanara*, will be blooming now. Take special care to train the spikes for best floral display. Keep plants under fairly shady conditions. Watch for snails and slugs.

### **Vandaceous**

Plants will be growing quickly now and really enjoying the hot humid days so similar to their native habitat. Watch for pests though, as many of these also enjoy the same conditions as the plants. Check flower spikes so that they can extend unimpeded for the best flower presentation later.

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

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## REPORTS

Greater Omaha Orchid Society General Meeting  
Jun 8, 2011

The meeting was called to order at the Douglas/Sarpy County Extension Office at 7:30 pm. There was a dinner in the extension office with the guest speaker, John Stubbings of Clown Alley Orchids, which was followed with a plant sale.

President Roberta Ginavan welcomed visitors and members to the meeting. New member Camden Alexander Smith was introduced.

The minutes of the May meeting were approved.

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

Roberta discussed the status of the paperwork for non-profit status with the IRS. A new EIN (employer Identifier Number) has been obtained (the old one was never properly activated) and work is progressing on the paperwork for 501(c)(3) status.

Coming events. Roberta reminded attendees of the Central Iowa Orchid Society Speakers Day in July and the Mid-America Orchid Congress (MAOC) meeting in Milwaukee in September. Jim Pyrzynski will email GOOS members the MAOC newsletter and registration form when he receives them.

Next months meeting also has a guest speaker, Doug Martin, current MAOC president. A pre-meeting dinner similar to the June meeting is planned; this time the meal will be from Jimmie Johns. Jim Pyrzynski will email the particulars before the meeting. Roberta also mentioned speakers and possible speakers for 2012. Tome Mirinda of the Smithsonian will be the speaker in September and there is a possibility of another guest speaker, Dr. Motes, for August.

Native orchids. Tim Janssen gave a report on recent activities. Tim and those who met him in the Columbus, NE area saw a lot of *Cypripedium candidum* (small white lady's-slippers). He also mentioned that he will inspect some prairies for *Platanthera praeclara* (western prairie fringed orchid) which should be blooming in the last half of June.

Program. John Stubbings gave a talk on the unusual relatives of Cymbidiums, including *Catasetums*, *Galenadra*, *Clowesia*, *Cynoches*, and *Mormodes* and their hybrids.

Refreshments were provided by Ann Donovan.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jim Pyrzynski, Secretary

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Greater Omaha Orchid Society Board Meeting  
June 22, 2011

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

July meeting. A backup program for the July meeting was discussed. Doug Martin plans to drive from the Kansas City area that afternoon (July 13) after class and return the same night for classes the next morning. Road closures due to flooding may make that impossible. It was decided that we would have 3 panels with an introduction before opening up the panes for individual person-to-person contact. Roberta will contact members who could serve on the panels. It was decided to stick with the Jimmie Johns box lunches for dinner. Jim will email the menu out and ask for a response by Tuesday before the meeting.

August 2012 speaker. The requirements for the August speaker (Dr. Motes) were discussed; these included airfare, car rental, and hotel. Based on the requirements and other factors (September meeting also has a speaker, August is a summer month with lower attendance, etc.) it was decided to not have Dr. Motes speak in August 2012.

Judging Center Donation. There was a discussion on how to show our appreciation of the support provided by judges from the Great Plains Judging Center (Oklahoma City). We have contributed annually to the Mid-America Judging Center with which we are affiliated but we have not made any contributions to the Great Plains Judging Center and the McCabes have been regular judges at our shows for several years and this year Max Thompson and Bryon Rinke also attended the show. All four have committed to judging our 2012 show. (The American Orchid Society Handbook on Judging and Exhibition, December 2009 Edition, paragraph 3.9 states: "Affiliated Societies in the area served by a judging center must provide financial and administrative support for operation of the center.... Affiliated societies may provide financial and administrative support for more than one center." The amount (\$125) for the Mid-America has been budgeted for but there no allowance was made for a larger contribution. A suggestion was made to have a vote by the membership for a similar donation to the Great Plains Judging Center. This would assist us in obtaining judges for our shows on a continuing basis.

Committee assignments. July will mean that there will be 2 committees which have to have members assigned: Nominating and Auditing, 3 members each. There was some discussion on eligibility of some officers to serve another term; a reading by the Parliamentarian would be needed. Due the personnel changes coming Jim suggested not publishing the yearbook until after the election in September; all agreed.

Non-profit status. There was lengthy discussion on the documentation requirements for obtaining 501(c)(3) status from the IRS. Roberta had compiled a chart which set the direction. Some suggestions were made and the issue will be discussed again at the next board meeting.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jim Pyrzynski, Secretary

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#### **Directions to Camp Dodge**

Because of road construction on Merle Hay Road, the following is suggested: From 1-35/I-80, take exit #129 (NW 86th Street). Go north approximately 2.4 miles to stop sign at NW 70th Avenue. Turn east (right) onto NW 70th Avenue. Go approximately 1.2 miles to stoplight. Entrance to Camp Dodge will be to the left. Once through the gate, follow signs to meeting place. Note: You MUST show a photo ID (driver's license easiest) to get onto Camp Dodge.

### **Central Iowa Orchid Society Speaker's Day, July 31st, 2011**

#### **Registration Form**

To help us plan for Speaker's Day, we encourage you to fill out this registration form and return it to: Central Iowa Orchid Society, c/o Leo Schlunz, 422 S. 5th Street, Chariton, IA 50049-2402. We would like these returned by July 17, 2011 if possible.

Please make checks payable to the Central Iowa Orchid Society. \$25.00 per person (\$30.00 at the door).

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ ZipCode \_\_\_\_\_