



# The Informer

Newsletter of the Greater Omaha Orchid Society

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

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**November** Informer: October  
31, 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)

### October 12, 2011

7:00 PM New growers group  
7:30 PM Program - Orchids of Mexico, - Dave Taylor  
Refreshments: Sandy Rome & Elsie Snowdon  
Greeter: Dick & Carol Behrens

### October 26, 2011

**7:00 PM**  
Board Meeting, location TBD

### November 9, 2011

7:00 PM New growers group  
7:30 PM Program - Orchid Conservation  
Refreshments Marie Anne Smith  
Greeter: Sandy Rome

## EVENTS

### 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.

### October 15-16, 2011

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

### November 12-13, 2011

Michiana Orchid Society Show, Holy Cross College, 54515 State Road 933 N, Notre Dame, IN. Contact: Sandy Ohlund; 3888 East 600 North, Rolling Prairie, IN 46371; (219) 778-4457; sohlund@csinet.net.

### February 4-5, 2012

Orchid Grower's Guild Orchid Quest, Alliant Energy, 1919 Alliant Energy Center Way, Madison, WI. Contact: Judy Stevenson, 222 S Kenosha Dr., Madison, WI 53705; (608) 231-3163; judy\_steveson@sbcglobal.net

### February 18-19, 2012

Batavia Orchid Society Show, DuPage County Showgrounds 2015 Manchester Rd., Wheaton, IL. Contact: Mike Rollinger, 23625 Andrew Rd., Plainfield, IL 60585; (815) 254-2207.

## TAKE A TRIP SOUTH OF THE BORDER

Take a trip south of the border to Old Mexico during September's meeting. Dave Taylor will give a talk on orchids of Mexico. Dave lived in Mexico some years back as part of his job; it's where he encountered some of his first tropical orchids in the wild. Dave is a biologist working for the USDA in Lincoln, NE. David's professional interests are in evolution and population genetics, and he is currently working on flies and their impact on livestock production. In the orchid world, he is a student in the American Orchid Society judging program. Dave is an excellent orchid grower with a large collection of many interesting species.

## PLANTS FOR SALE AT THE MEETING

Dave Taylor will have divisions and seedlings from his collection for sale at the meeting. Come prepared – he has some hard to find plants.

Additionally, the Society will have Bletilla Yoko-hama for sale at the meeting at \$10 each. The plants have grown nicely through the summer months – one is even in bloom now. Since many of these have not shown signs of going dormant for the winter, it might be best to keep them

indoors through the winter months rather than planting them outdoors.

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## 2012 CALENDARS

The new year, 2012, is only a couple of months away. It's time to get calendars of the new year and perhaps even use some as gifts. The society will be ordering American Orchid Society 2012 calendars. These are actually 14 month calendars, so you get more than the usual 12 months. This year's theme is "Itsy Bitsy Teenie Weenie Orchid" – each month features a miniature. Information is provided about each plant, including the award, the grower, photographer, and cultural. They may even be available at the October meeting – price \$12.50 each. If not, put a deposit on one at the October meeting to reserve yours, supplies are limited.

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## 2011/2012 BUDGET

On the agenda for the October business meeting is the budget for the current fiscal year (September 2011 - August 2012).

## NOTES GLEANED FROM SAM'S TALK

Here are some notes from Sam Tsui's talk at the September meeting on growing multifloral Paphiopedilums. The plants thrive best under warm conditions with high humidity and high light. If you are growing under lights, to get blooms, use high pressure sodium bulbs, metal halides should be used for seedlings, and fluorescent bulbs for small seedlings. Limestone as a top dressing to the media or incorporated in the media is highly recommended.

For water, rain water is best or use RO (reverse osmosis) water. The water

should have less than 200 parts per million (ppm) of dissolved solids. If you use RO water you should add micro-nutrients to the water. Watering should be done during the beginning of the lighting cycle, with a frequency of every 3 to 7 days.

For fertilizer, he recommends a high nitrogen fertilizer (30-10-10) for spring and summer and a balanced (20-20-20) fertilizer for fall and winter. To help with flowering he recommends a "bloom" fertilizer (high phosphorus (the second number)). The fertilizing should be done weakly, weekly – at 1/4th the recommend strength. During the watering and fertilizing process, he waters first with just plain water and then waters with fertilizer. Flush the pots once a month with water only.

Temperatures should range between 60 to 85 degrees (max – 95, low limit 50) with a 10 degree drop for the night. Humidity should be between 50 – 70% with plenty of air movement. Yellowing of lower leaves is an indication of root rot.

For potting mix he recommends 4 parts bark (medium or fine, depending on pot size used), 1/2 parts sponge rock, 1/2 parts charcoal (#3 or #4), and 1/4 cups of Dolomite lime to a 10 gallon mix of potting material. He recommends wetting the bark overnight before using and he uses New Zealand pine bark (actually it's from *Pinus radiata*, Monterey Pine, a pine native to the California coast but grown in tree farms in New Zealand for lumber (and now orchid bark)). Repotting should be done every 12 – 36 months. Never over pot; use plastic pots; avoid damaging the roots during the repotting process – if necessary leave some of the old mix there if removal would damage the root.

## IPA JOURNAL NEWS

The latest (2011 third quarter) issue of *Phalaenopsis*, Journal of the International Phalaenopsis Alliance is out and should be available at our meeting for your perusal. This issue has some interesting articles.

One article, Judging Phalaenopsis, The Basics, by Tom Harper gives some insights as to how the flowers are evaluated during the American Orchid Society judging process. (Our annual shows have AOS judging as well as ribbon judging. Additionally there are monthly judging sessions at the Mid-America Judging Center in St. Louis, MO.) The article discusses how the flower shape, the relationships of the various flower parts to each other, etc. And there are photos to help the reader along through the process. At the end of the article the author (who is also president of the IPA and who has over 44 years of growing experience) gives some observations for Phalaenopsis culture, for improving the appearance of the flower spike, and for minimizing the potential for damaging the plant during transport to a show. Phalaenopsis growers, check it out.

In another article, Fred Bergman of Kansas City discusses the amount of light needed for growing Phalaenopsis. He found that increased light levels produced plants faster that were bigger and had more growths and blooms. Additionally the plants produced more side shoots and keikis. There also seem to be better utilization of the fertilizer. He goes on to discuss how light can be increased under various growing environments (greenhouse,

window sill, under lights). He sums up his recommendation "provide your plants with all the light the can use, which is considerably more than generally recommended."

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## AOS ORCHIDS WITH A COVER FIT FOR HALLOWEEN

The latest (October 2011) issue of *Orchids*, the Bulletin of the American Orchid Society, is out with a cover appropriate for the Halloween season – a photo of *Dracula Raven 'Lenore'*, AM-FCC/AOS. It is nearly all black, with a pale pink lip. An accompanying article discusses the quest for a black orchid. The parents of *D. Raven* are *D. vampira* and *D. roezlii*.

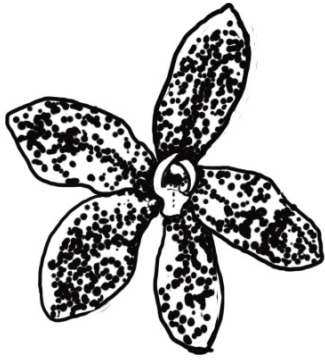
Another article (by Robert Dressler and Franco Pupulin) goes on to discuss the *Phragmipedium* species in the section *Phragmipedium* which includes all of the *P. caudatum* type of plants. There are some new names for old plants – it was only a few years ago that some were renamed from something else.

The name changes also go on in the *Cattleya* alliance. What was once called *Cattleya skinneri*, var. *autumnalis* and then *C. deckeri* is now *Guarianthe pantinii*. Charles McCartney guides the reader through the thicket of names.

For the really unusual there is an article (by Thomas Mirenda (our guest speaker for September 2012)) about orchids in the genus *Disa* – a large and diverse genus of terrestrial orchids, mostly from South Africa. Some have very exacting cultural requirements so they are rarely seen in shows.

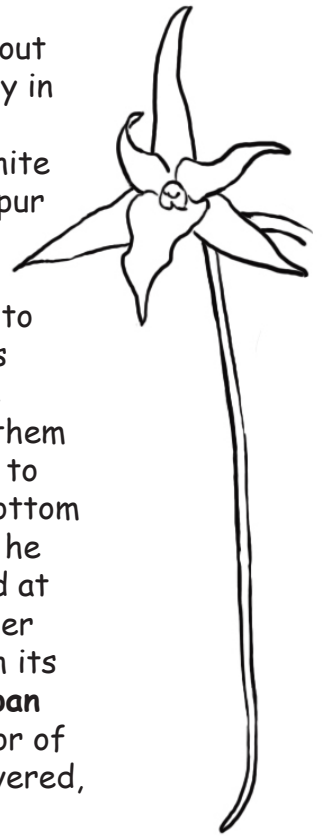
And there are other articles, one on *Dendrobium bensoniae*, a monthly checklist, etc. Check it out.

# Orchid Fun Facts!

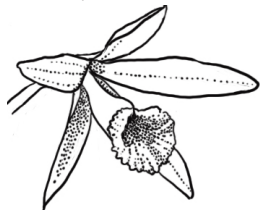


**Grammatophyllum speciosum** is said to be the **largest** orchid in the world. It can weigh over a ton when fully grown. Because of the yellow and dark red flowers its nickname is the "tiger orchid." Even though orchids have dustlike seeds, the flowers can be up to 13 inches in diameter!

Charles Darwin learned about a new orchid that lived only in Madagascar, **Angraecum sesquipedale**. The huge white flower had a nectar-rich spur that was almost 12 inches long! He told his scientific colleagues that there had to be a moth with a proboscis (think of it as a straw-like tongue - butterflies have them too!) that was long enough to reach the nectar at the bottom of the tube. Respected as he was, his colleagues laughed at him! Twenty-one years after his death, the moth (which its discoverer named **Xanthopan morganii praedicta** in honor of Darwin's hunch) was discovered, proving Darwin right!



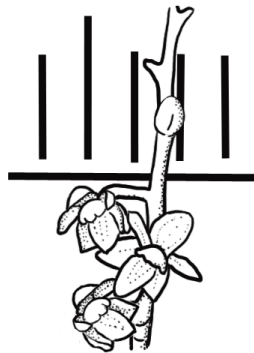
The **longest** orchid vine is our favorite ice cream orchid, **Vanilla planifolia**, which can grow up to 100 feet long! The flowers in commerce have to be hand pollinated (since they have been transplanted from their native habitat where



the pollinators once lived) shortly after they open, because the flowers are only open for a few hours and then they fade. Vanilla is made from the dried

seed pods. It takes months to cure the vanilla pod so that it's ready for your ice cream, and the best techniques are top secret! (Our liquid vanilla is an extract from the cured pods.)

The world's **smallest** orchid is so new it hasn't even been named yet! It was discovered by researcher Lou Jost in Ecuador, nestled in the roots of another plant. The flowers are just over 2 millimeters (0.08 inches) across and practically see-through, with the exception of a small yellow patch on the lip. The petals are only one cell thick! (It has been provisionally put in the *Platystele* genus for now, just to keep taxonomists happy.)



The tallest orchid in the world is **Sobralia altissima**, (altissima means **really tall!**) which was discovered in Peru and can grow to be over **forty feet tall!**



There is a parasitic leafless orchid that grows entirely underground - even blooming there! - **Rhizanthella gardneri** (discovered in 1928 in Australia). There are very few completely parasitic orchids - this one is unusual in that it depends exclusively on the broom honey myrtle bush and a fungus that provides its nutrition from the shrub.



Thirteen species of orchids live north of the Arctic Circle and some live in southern Tasmania, not far from Antarctica, disproving the common belief that orchids are only tropical. In fact, more than 50 species of orchids have been documented from Illinois alone! **Nematoceras sulcatum** was recently discovered on Macquarie Island, about halfway between New Zealand and Antarctica, in the Southern Ocean, making it the **southernmost** orchid species in the world.

## Novice Culture Sheet



### Watering Know-how

More orchids are killed by incorrect watering than by any other reason. There are two separate components to proper watering; when and how. The vast majority of orchids grown by hobby growers are naturally found on trees above the ground where the light is more plentiful. These plants (epiphytes) are adapted to having their roots exposed to light and air so in addition to water, orchid roots need air.

**When do I water?** Orchids should be watered just as they begin to dry out. This rule applies to all orchids with slight variations depending on whether your plant has the ability to store water or not. Orchids such as cattleyas and oncidiums should be allowed to dry completely between waterings while orchids such as phalaenopsis and paphiopedilums that have no water storage organs should be watered before dryness occurs.

There's is no magic formula for how often to water. This is because your growing area is different from anyone else's. Temperature, humidity, air movement, potting mix (type and age), and light levels all play a role. There are several ways to determine when a potted orchid is almost dry: 1) the surface of the potting mix will appear dry when the potting mix is moss; 2) dry pots will feel lighter when lifted. After a few watering, you will be able to tell by the weight of the pot whether or not it is time to water again. If in doubt, wait a day. 3) clay pots feel dry; 4) a pencil or wooden skewer inserted into the potting mix will come out almost dry. If in doubt, a finger inserted into the potting mix is perhaps the best tool to determine the moisture content of the potting mix; it causes no harm to the plant. A bark mix dries out faster than a moss potting mix.

It is best to water your plant in the morning to give the moisture on the leaves time to dry during the day. If any water remains in the crown (where the leaves join in the center) use a paper towel to blot the water to avoid crown rot.

You should water more frequently when the temperatures are warm and decrease watering

when temperatures are cool. Keep in mind that temperatures close to the window on a windowsill will be colder or hotter than your general house temperature. Avoid having the plant in the direct line of the heat or air conditioning ducts.

**How do I water?** When orchids are watered, they should be watered copiously. Place your plant into the sink and let the water run freely from the drainage holes for about a minute. Do not use salt-softened or distilled water. Allow the plant to drain completely. This is an opportunity to examine how the potting mix behaves. If you cannot pour water rapidly through the pot, the potting mix is too dense and you run the risk of starving the roots for air. If you see finely divided material that looks like coffee grounds in the water coming from the drainage holes, your potting mix is breaking down and it's time to repot into fresh mix.

Finally a couple of notes about mounted plants and plants grown in baskets without additional potting mix. Avoid dunking the plants in buckets of water. This practice very easily spreads diseases. Two short waterings a few minutes apart are much more effective than one long watering. Once water runs off the plant, the roots will have absorbed essentially all they can at that time and excess water simply runs off to the ground. Water your plants and then a few minutes later water them again, always beginning with the first plant you watered. This allows time for the roots of the last plant watered to finish absorbing water before you wet them again. Roots that are completely saturated will be a solid color while those that are not will appear mottled.

You will find lots of specific information regarding growing orchids at the American Orchid Society's website at [www.aos.org](http://www.aos.org).



Web site [www.aos.org](http://www.aos.org)

## MONTHLY REPORTS

Greater Omaha Orchid Society General Meeting, September 14, 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 introduced our guest speaker, Sam Tsui of Orchid Inn USA.

Sam gave a program on multifloral Paphiopedilums. He also had plants for sale.

After the program there was a business meeting.

The minutes of the August meeting were approved.

Sandy Rome reported that the Treasurer's books were sent in for their annual audit.

Budget. Roberta advised the membership that the budget was not yet ready for discussion and would be discussed at the October meeting.

Election. The slate of officer candidates was given: Roberta Ginavan, President; Eric Stoiber, Vice President; Sandy Rome, Treasurer; and Jim Pyrzynski, Secretary. There were no nominations from the floor. The slate of candidates was approved via voice vote.

Meeting adjourned.

Jim Pyrzynski, Secretary

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Greater Omaha Orchid Society Board Meeting  
September 28, 2011

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

September meeting review. The September meeting was discussed in some depth, in particular the mess found in the kitchen (left by the previous users) and the lack of coffee (which we are required to purchase from the Extension Office). Sandy suggested further discussions with the Extension Office. Jacque said we needed a stronger advocate in our group. The possibility of relocating to another location was discussed. Additional equipment might be needed (projector and screen). Jacque had noticed some ads on Craigslist. And there were other possibilities but they might require a day change for the meeting and this would have to be approved by the membership. A committee, comprised of Jacque and Linda, will look for alternate locations. Requirements/concerns: space for 45 or more people, tables & chairs, parking, hours (7 – 9:30, second Wednesday of the month evening), kitchen facilities, screen, projector, & PA, restrictions on sales and/or raffles, costs.

Budget. Adjustments were made to the proposed budget. Due to the number of times we needed an Extension Office person present (the requirement is for a Master Gardener to be present at our meeting, An Extension Office person can substitute but compensation is required. Vicki Shallow is our Master Gardener). There was discussion on how to handle bills that are generated in one fiscal year but the bill is not given to the treasurer until the close of the fiscal year (e.g., having a speaker in August (the last month of the fiscal year) could mean that the bill would not be given to the Treasurer until September (the beginning of a new fiscal year). Sandy said that these costs could be annotated in the books.

Plant donations from grocers, etc. A question arose on donations of plants by stores to the society; the thought was it would be best to hold until our 501(c)(3) paperwork is approved.

Speakers/2012 programs. Eric suggested that Eric Michel (Michel Orchid Nursery) would be a good speaker – he has a variety of topics but his schedule is tight. Eric will follow up. Tom Mirenda of the Smithsonian will speak in September. Roberta discussed a Russian Speaker she heard at the recent MAOC. His talk was about Vietnamese orchids. She suggested we might consider a Saturday speakers day with another speaker. Jim suggested we could have a Paradigm Gardens rep come in and talk about their new induction lighting systems. Sandy said she would attempt to contact Ann Antlfinger (UN O) to talk about Spiranthes.

Board vacancy. With the September election, Eric Stoiber (who was a board member) became Vice President. That leaves a vacancy on the board. A couple of suggestions were made; Roberta will contact the individuals to see if they are interested.

Business Card. A sample GOOS business card was shown at the meeting. It was favorably received.

MAOC. Roberta discussed a suggestion she heard at the MAOC meeting regarding members who provide plants for displays at other shows. The suggestions was to acknowledge and publicize their participation.

Meeting adjourned.

Jim Pyrzynski, Secretary