



The Informer

Newsletter of the Greater Omaha Orchid Society

PO Box 241871 Omaha, NE 68124 greateromahaorchidsociety.org April 2012

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Submission deadline for the

May Informer: April 30, 2012

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

April 11, 2012

7:00 PM New growers group
7:30 PM Program - Annual
repotting program
Refreshments: Loris Purtzer
Greeter: TBD

April 25, 2012

6:45 PM
Board Meeting
Papillion Library

May 9, 2012

**NOTE: LOCATION
CHANGE TO PAPILLION
LIBRARY**

7:00 PM New growers group
7:30 PM Program - dividing
a compost
Refreshments: the Sorensons

EVENTS

April 25-29, 2012

Kansas Orchid Society Show
& AOS Members Meeting,
Hyatt Regency, Wichita, KS.
Contact: Max C. Thompson,
1729 E. 11th Ave., Winfield,
KS 67156, (620) 221-1856,
maxt@cox.net

April 28-29, 2012

Heart O' Texas Orchid Society
Show, Zilker Botanical
Gardens, 2220 Barton
Springs Rd., Austin, TX.
Contact: Geoffrey Frost, 1011
Strickland Dr., Austin, TX
78748-4847, (512) 413-3199,
geoffreyfrost@yahoo.com

April 28 - 29, 2012

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

April 28, 2012, 9 am - 4 pm

2012 Spring Affair Plant Sale,
LOCATION: Lancaster Event
Center, 84th and Havelock,
Lincoln, NE. The 25th Annual
Spring Affair again will
feature plants, programs and
demonstrations to help you
learn about updating your
garden spaces. This event is
free and open to the public.

May 19 - 20, 2012, 9 am - 5 pm

Spring into Spring, Lauritzen
Gardens plant sale. Members
have exclusive opportunity to
purchase plants Friday, May
18, 4:30 to 7 pm. Visitors
may choose from a variety of
plants grown and propagated
in the Lauritzen Gardens
greenhouses.

THIS MONTH'S MEETING: GET REPOTTED

The program for the April
11 meeting is our annual
repotting session. Orchids
generally need regular
repotting. Potting mixes
whether they are bark,
sphagnum moss, or other
media break down, result-
ing in media which holds
too much water for too
long of a period of time.
The result is root rot and
the eventual deterioration
of the plant. There are a lot
of media to choose from
(see the article on media
in this newsletter). We will
have our standard medium
and seedling potting mixes
available for sale. There
will be demos on repotting
and dividing plants. Bring
in your own plants, par-
ticularly those which you
have questions on about
the proper technique for
repotting. This is another
"get your hands dirty" ses-
sion with opportunities for
everyone to get involved.

**NOTE: this month's
meeting is at the Douglas/
Sarpy County Extension
Office, 8015 West Center
Rd. in Omaha. However
the May meeting will be
at the Papillion Library -
more information on how
to get there will be in the
May newsletter.**

SHOW RECAP

Our twenty-fifth annual
orchid show is history and
in doing so it really made
history. The Lauritzen Gar-
dens reported that 2,526
people attended the show.

Of those 1,214 were members of the Gardens. This was a record attendance for our show at this location. The vendors were pleased with the sales and the assistance that GOOS members provided during the course of the show. Our hospitality and assistance is very important and will keep them coming back to our shows in the future. We had a number of judges from out of our region and they were very impressed with the show. Mark van der Woerd, the AOS judge from Wellington, CO and former MAOC president, sent a card expressing his thanks for our hospitality and orchid show. He said he enjoyed the trip to Omaha and hope to visit again soon.

The winners of the Special Awards presented at the show are as follows: The American Orchid Society Show Trophy went to the Orchid Society of Greater Kansas City. The Greater Omaha Orchid Society Challenge Award went to Roberta Ginavan's *Dendrobium loddigesii*. The GOOS Best Exhibit Award was given to the display by John and Debra Dolen. John and Debra Dolen's *Lycaste Island of Takatsu* won the President's Award for best plant in the show. John and Debra Dolen's *Cirrhopetalum* (*Bulbophyllum*) *thaiorum* won the Drs. Lorrain Leiser and Dave Taylor Award for best species. The GOOS Memorial Award for best *Dendrobium* (sponsored by Marilyn Hawes) was awarded to Iowa Orchids' *Dendrobium Spider Lily*. The Dr. and Mrs. F. Miles Skultety Memorial Award for the best *Cattleya* exhibited went to Natt's Orchids *Rhyncholaeliocattleya* Se-

mantha Duncan 'Orange Tart'. The Mel Bates Award for best *Catasetinae* went to Fred Clarke's *After Midnight* which was exhibited by the Orchid Society of Greater Kansas City. The Jim Pyrzynski Award for best *Phragmipedium* went to *Phragmipedium Jason Fischer* also exhibited by OSGKC.

There were eleven American Orchid Society awards. John and Debra Dolen's *Bulbophyllum thaiorum* received a Certificate of Horticultural Merit (CHM) with 86 pts. Orchid Inn USA, LTD. had a total of 6 AOS awards: *Paphiopedilum Adducted Phillip 'Angel'* received an Award of Merit (AM) with 81 pts., *Paph. Yang-Ji Soaring 'Gigantic'* received an AM with 84 pts. *Paph. Fumi's Delight 'Chocolate Mousse'* received a Highly Commended Certificate (HCC) with 76 pts., *Paph. haynaldianum* var. *alba 'Albino Beauty'* received an AM with 85 pts., *Paph. Conco-bellatulum 'Full Moon'* received an AM with 83 pts., and *Paph. Fanaticum 'Perfect Color'* received an AM with 82 pts. Natt's Orchids' *Vanda Sarojini X Kasem's Delight* received a HCC with 76 pts. Alex McConnell's *Paph. Fumi's Delight 'Lone Jack'* received a HCC with 78 pts. Bryon Rinke's *Paph. Wossner Goldenegg 'Bryon'* received a HCC with 76 pts. *Ascocentrum christensonianum 'Max + Bryon'* (owned by Max Thompson and Bryon Rinke) received a CCM with 83 pts.

YEARBOOK CORRECTION

Please annotate your copy of the Yearbook to reflect the correct email address for Julie Hartman: Jeweliehartman@msn.com

NATIVE ORCHID SURVEYS

For those interested in native North American Orchids, we have some proposed activities. Nebraska has about 19 species of orchids. There are a number that occur in the Omaha and nearby areas. The season normally starts in May (who knows about this year) and ends in October. The orchids are found in the woodlands and prairies.

The first to bloom is the Show Orchid (*Galearis spectabilis*) which blooms in the woodlands such as Fontenelle Forest and Neale Woods. The population of this orchid seems to be declining. So rather than just a field trip to see the orchid in bloom, various populations should be tracked over a period of years to determine if they are declining and perhaps what may be the cause.

Barring a pouring rain, interested parties should plan to meet at the Fontenelle Forest parking lot at 9:30 AM, May 5 (those who are not members of the Forest should pay the admission fee). At about 10 AM the group will travel via cars to another location and then on a trail which will lead to a population. Participants need to be dressed for the occasion. It is quite possible that ticks may be out as well as mosquitoes – so be prepared. Also it would be a good idea to have a bottle of water to drink. We'll attempt to do

a survey of the population and document our findings for comparison in future surveys. The survey should take about 2 hours.

A signup sheet will be circulated at the meeting or you can contact Jim Pyrzynski (jpyrzynski@cox.net) if you are interested.

TEXAS STYLE INVITE

The Heart O' Texas Orchid Society has sent us an invitation to its 41st Annual Show & Sale, "Orchid Heaven," April 28th & 29th, 2012, at the Zilker Botanical Gardens Center, 2220 Barton Springs Road, Austin, TX 78746, (512) 477-8672, Show & Plant Sale: 10:00am - 5:00pm Saturday & 10:00am - 4:00pm Sunday.

"This year we are very proud to present the 41st Annual Orchid Show here in Austin, TX. Orchids are Mother Nature at her best, so come join us and check out all the beautiful orchids that will be on display. There will also be hundreds of blooming orchids for sale, as well as helpful information for growing these beautiful plants from the 8 vendors and society members. Need flowers for that special person in your life...orchids are becoming one of the most popular flowers in the U.S., so why not get an orchid this year for that special someone or special occasion. Admission to the event is free and the public is encouraged to attend. For a complete schedule of events, or for more information, please contact: Geoffrey Frost, 1011 Strickland Drive, Austin, TX 78748-4847 (Telephone (512) 413-3199; e-mail geoffreyfrost@yahoo.com), or visit our website: <http://www.hotos.org/>"

**CULTURAL INFORMATION FROM
FIRST RAYS LLC WEBSITE
www.firstrays.com/free_info.htm**

Choosing Potting Media

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.

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?

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

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?

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.

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.

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. Oncidiums, 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 drying 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.

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 use 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.

MONTHLY REPORTS

Greater Omaha Orchid Society General Meeting
March 14, 2012

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.

The minutes of the February meeting were approved.

Treasurer's Report. Treasurer Sandy Rome stated the Society's IRS 501(c)(3) application was nearly ready for submission.

Home & Garden Show. Jim Pyrzynski advised that there were a number of plants for sale at essentially cost, they are leftovers from the Home & Garden Show. A few plants were also on the raffle table.

Jim Pyrzynski circulated signup sheets for the annual orchid show March 24 – 25.

Show Hospitality. Jacque Lewzader discussed the needs for the show hospitality room and circulated a signup sheet for monetary or food donations.

Orchid Wear. The shirts were available at the meeting. However, they were short sleeve, not long sleeve. There was one left (a medium).

Lincoln plant rescue. Tim Janssen discussed the plants (all Phalaenopsis) that he obtained from Lincoln area vendors. He divided the plants between the Lincoln and Omaha societies.

Lauritzen Spring into Spring. The Society will participate in the event scheduled for May 17 (evening) and Saturday and Sunday. We will need some volunteers to staff the Society table.

Library. Robert Mann's back has mended sufficiently for him to resume his activities as assistant librarian.

Member update. Anne Vidaver recently had cataract surgery. Carole Behrens is still in isolation.

Program. The program was show preparation. Members assisted in bagging bark, marking prices on resale items and reorganizing the judging books.

Refreshments were provided by Ron and Julie Fechner.

Raffle plants were provided by Robert Mann and Jim Pyrzynski in addition to leftovers from the Home & Garden Show.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Jim Pyrzynski, Secretary

Greater Omaha Orchid Society Board Meeting March 28, 2012

The Greater Omaha Orchid Society Board met at the Papillion Public Library at 6:45 PM. In attendance were: Roberta Ginavan, Eric Stoiber, Sandy Rome, Jacque Lewzader, Linda Schroeder, and Jim Pyrzynski.

Annual orchid show recap. The letter from the Lauritzen Gardens indicated that the turnout for this show was the largest since we have been having it there. Attendance was 2,526 people for both days. Of those 1,214 held Garden memberships. There were 217 coupons for \$5.00 admissions redeemed. A number of members helped out the vendors with their sales and this was highly appreciated by them. It was suggested that future show vendor applications indicate that help is available during the course of the show. There were at least 2 suggestions to run the show longer on Saturday.

Show hospitality. Jacque Lewzader stated that everything in the hospitality was right on. The donations matched the expenses and the number and amount of donations were "super."

Shirt sale. The Society made about \$72 from the shirt sale. There was some discussion about possible unauthorized use of the Society logo. The logo is copyrighted and any unauthorized use of the logo is considered copyright infringement.

Other Ways and Means possible projects. A Society cookbook was discussed. Members could submit recipes that they have used for meeting refreshments and show hospitality. There could be accompanying photos. Jim has a sample greeting card he has developed and he is working on developing a set that could be used for sale as a group.

Lauritzen Spring into Spring. The dates for the event are May 19 - 20 and also the Friday evening prior to that (May 18). We will need more volunteers.

IRS 501(c)(3) application. The latest guidelines necessitated going back an additional year on financial information. How to cover the closing of an account caused some concern but Jacque suggested to go forward with the information at hand and if questions arose to answer them at then.

Upcoming programs. April is the repotting session. For May (which will be held at the Papillion Library) a couple of compots will be donated (by Jim and Eric) for members to pot up plants are grow them to more mature plants. The Society will provide the potting mix for the event, flats of pots will be provided by Jim and Eric. June is supposed to be Fred Clarke of Sunset Valley Orchids but there seems to be some confusion as to whether he will actually be here. He is supposed to talk first at the Judging Center in St. Louis but that is uncertain and then next at Kansas City. In July Doug Martin will talk on the sex life of orchids. August is the picnic/auction. September is Tom Mirenda of the Smithsonian. October may be Ann Antlfinger but her exact month could be changed. November is open but Eric suggested that he would fund having Howard Gunn talk on Bulbophyllums (the society would pay the airfare, he would cover the honorarium). But it would be better to have him come in October and move Antlfinger to November since she is local and Gunn, who is in his 80s, has to come from the West Coast and weather could present problems in November. December is the Holiday Party. Looking ahead to 2013, Eric mentioned he had discussed speaking possibilities with Matthew Wei-Yi Chen of Ten Shin Orchids.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Jim Pyrzynski, Secretary