

Tucson Orchid Society Newsletter

November 2015

Holiday Potluck and Annual Meeting

Sunday, December 13, Noon-4 PM

Where: [6650 N Los Arboles Circle](#)

When: Sunday, Dec. 13

Noon-4 PM

Our yearly holiday potluck will be hosted by Wes Addison and Sue Philips in their lovely home. They will provide the main dish and drinks. Please bring a favorite holiday dish to share. We will eat at 1 pm.

There will be a short meeting to elect board members following the meal. Wes' three greenhouses will be open so prepare to feast your eyes and drool!

If you have questions, call Wes at 742-7754.



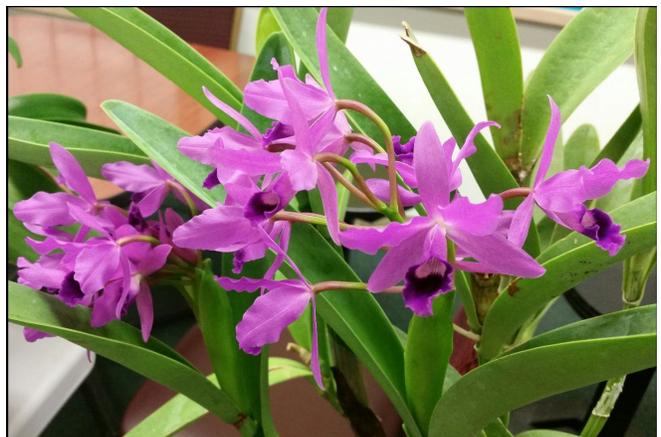
Annual Auction a BIG Success!

The auction this year was fantastic. We made \$2234! Thank you to all those who donated plants, bought plants, and helped with the auction - from the auctioneer to the plant runners to people who tallied and collected the money. It was a lot of fun for everyone!



Show and Tell at the Potluck!

If the weather is mild, please bring your orchids that are in bloom to show off! It's nice to share your pretties with everyone and talk about what works and doesn't work for you. Get tips from others to help your orchids grow better. Shown here are some of the orchids **shared at the October meeting**.



Orchid Care in the Desert for Fall and Winter

by Mark Dimmitt, with contributions from Sheri Musil

Weather changes dramatically during the autumn transition between summer and winter. Days shorten by several hours. The sun makes a lower arc across the sky; it's less intense because it shines through more atmosphere. Temperatures and humidity fall. Whether orchids are outdoors, in a window, or in a well-controlled greenhouse, they will respond to these changes. Growers should be aware of them and make appropriate adjustments to plant care.

GREENHOUSE

During the monsoon season, evaporative **coolers struggle to maintain comfortable temperatures** during the day because the humidity reduces their efficiency. Most greenhouses were probably in the 90s during the day. Summer overnight lows were in the high 70s and sometimes in the 80s for several weeks. This was great for warm-growing orchids like most of the Vanda and Catasetum tribes, but a little stressful for the intermediate growers. Once fall temperatures arrive and especially when the monsoon ends, it's **easier to maintain the mid 80s** during the day and allow the cooler nights that intermediates prefer.



Those plants often show a growth spurt during the first few cooler weeks. But soon most of the orchids we collect – both warm and intermediate growers - will respond to the fall weather's cooler temperatures and shorter days by slowing or ceasing growth.

Pay close attention to **watering frequency**. Plants use considerably less water during fall and winter because of the shorter days and cooler temperatures. Additionally, many orchids need a dry winter rest in order to flower. The more sensitive ones may die if watered at the wrong season. Be aware of their **natural cycles**.



The shorter days and the sun's lower path across the sky means **fewer sunlight hours and lower light intensity**. You may want to remove shading from part or all of the greenhouse if you have winter-growing, high-light-loving plants. Winter's lower sun angle may also put some plants in the shade of others. This is a good time to consider rearranging the plants on your benches. (The north bench of my greenhouse gets a few hours of 1500-2000 foot candles during summer days, while in winter the sun shines through a curtain of hanging plants and the bench receives a maximum of only 200 fc.)

During winter the cooling fans run much less during the day and not at all at night. The air can get very humid, even reaching saturation. Providing **good air movement with internal fans** is more important than during the summer to prevent diseases.

In dry tropical habitats many of the trees and shrubs shed their leaves during the winter dry season. **Orchids and other understory plants** native to these habitats may **get more light in winter** than summer. Another reason to be aware of where your plants originated. Some species and probably their hybrids are triggered to flower by the increase in light intensity.

INDOORS ON WINDOWSILLS OR UNDER LIGHTS

Winter preparations for indoor orchids are mostly the same as for those in greenhouses, with a couple of notable differences. Unless you have a humidifier, the heating system will make **indoor**



air drier than in summer. Humidity may be below 20%. Some orchids such as phals tolerate dry air very well. Others, particularly thin-leaved kinds, **may benefit from a room humidifier nearby.** (Forget about trays of wet gravel beneath the plants. They don't measurably increase humidity at plant level. Also, misting dissipates within minutes.)

As solar intensity and daylight diminish, plants in east- and west-facing windows may perform better if **some or all of the shading is removed** for winter. (If you're lucky to have a tree outside the window that drops its leaves at the appropriate time, the windowsill may actually get brighter.) On the other hand,

as the sun moves south for winter, south-facing windows get brighter and hotter. You may **need to add shade to prevent cooking your plants.** As a general rule, if the windowsill is uncomfortably hot to your hand, plants in that window are likely to burn. A fan to circulate air can help keep them cool, but do this only if you have moderate humidity or plants will desiccate. **North facing windows may not have enough light** in the winter even for low light orchids.

OUTDOORS

Many orchids will do well outdoors during the monsoon season, when temperatures and humidity are at tropical levels. Quite a few can be grown outdoors during the entire frost-free season, and some are frost-hardy. All of them need afternoon shade in our climate. Mesquite and palo verde trees provide ideal light for most. Watch for the south-migrating sun to begin shining beneath the canopy and burning plants. **October is the most sunburn-prone month,** when the sun is fairly low but still hot. Be ready to move plants indoors when nights begin to get too low for the tropics. Some of the **hardy orchids need a dry winter rest;** these should be sheltered from the rains.



Obviously, you need to know the basic cultural needs of your orchids in order to provide the proper care. There is a wealth of **cultural information available in orchid journals and online,** and of course from other local collectors. A few general tips:

Cattleya hybrids: Too many different types to generalize. Depending on parentage, some grow (and perhaps flower) year round, while others need a drier and sometimes a cooler rest in winter. The roots are probably the best indicator of need: If they have long green tips, the plant is active and should be watered. If there are neither green root tips nor tender new growths, the plant is probably dormant and should be kept drier.

Hard-leafed Encyclias and Oncidiinae: These are native to the dry tropics, so they need little or no water in winter. They may benefit from more sun in winter than in summer when they have tender new growth.

Thin-leafed Encyclias and Oncidiinae: Don't ask me; I can't grow 'em.

Paphs: Complex Paphiopedilum hybrids don't need a winter rest, but they do use less water.

Phalaenopsis: Keep warm and moist year-round. Experts often say that they need a **distinct cooling spell in the fall** to initiate flower spikes; some specify a couple of weeks of nights in the 50s F. But most of my phals showed new spikes by the end of September, long before the nights got that cool, so this may not be requisite for all modern hybrids. Plants may benefit from removing some of the shading for winter.



Vandas and Ascocendas: Warm and moist year-round, and very bright. The best cultivars will flower through winter if you can provide enough light.

Catasetums and Cycnoches: Winter-dormant; NO water even if they flower while leafless. Native to winter-dry habitats, they can tolerate lots of sun in winter. I've had serious losses from rot over winter. Fred Clarke recommends treating them with a copper-containing fungicide as the leaves drop.

Dendrobiums: More than 1000 species from every type of climate, and many more hybrids. Hot to frosty winters, wet to very dry, evergreen to deciduous. **You just gotta know what you have.** *Den. phalaenopsis* hybrids can grow and flower year round, but tend to be more quiescent in winter (especially at intermediate night temperatures). They should be kept fairly dry when they are not actively growing. *Den. anosmum (superbum)* is very tolerant. If watered through the winter, it's evergreen; if you stop watering near the end of the year, it will shed its leaves. Either way, you can't stop it from flowering in spring. The flowers are more showy when borne on bare canes. *Den. nobile* hybrids generally need cool nights (<55F) and little water in winter in order to set flower buds for spring bloom. But the newest hybrids are less fussy.



Cymbidiums: In general, **forget 'em**; even the "warmth-tolerant" hybrids are difficult for most people to flower here. My only notable exception is *Cym. canaliculatum* and its hybrids. They seem to need a few months of dry rest in winter to flower well. I have good success both in my intermediate greenhouse and overwintering them in an unheated patio as long as the temperature doesn't go below 25 F.

Orchid of the month Sheri Musil

BC Maikai 'Louise' AM/AOS is a vigorous orchid that reliably blooms twice a year and tends to create a specimen plant very quickly. The space between pseudo bulbs is very short, resulting in a pot packed full of upright growths. There are a number of cultivars of BC Maikai, so check out the options to see if you can find a color or shape combination that you like a little better. I've grown a



couple of varieties and think 'Louise' was the most vigorous grower.

The flowering is amazing once you get it to a big cluster, but it's also worth growing when smaller. Orchids that reliably bloom twice a year are little treasures, plus these flowers last for weeks. I've been able to bloom them indoors under fluorescent lights, but they prefer the stronger light in my greenhouse. Interestingly, the background color of the flower is much more intense when grown under higher light.

I've seen the cross listed as both *Brassavola nodosa* and *Cattleya bowringiana*, or *C. bowringiana* x *B. nodosa*. I don't have a way to verify which plant is the correct pod parent.

The only real downside I've seen with this orchid is that brown scale really like it. The standard remedies for brown scale will keep them under control.

Plant characteristics:

Height: 12"

Growth type: Long skinny pseudo bulbs and fairly narrow leaves with no staking needed. Easily grows into a specimen.

Spike: 4" to 6" long with 6 or so flowers which may flop a little. Once you get a cluster of growths, they produce so many flowers that you see a mass of flowers rather than focusing on just one flower.

Flower size: About 3" or so. I don't measure, I just enjoy them!

Flowers: Violet/pink with lots of purplish red spots

Bloom season: Winter and late spring.

Light: Medium to high light. If you see small red spots developing on the leaves you'll know that they are getting near the maximum amount of light.

Temperature: Intermediate to warm.

Water: Water well during the growth period, and then give reduced water in the winter. Don't stop entirely in the winter, but a light touch is good.

Humidity: Tolerant of lower humidity.

Pot size: 6" when you have a lot of growths. They want to dry out a bit between watering, and underpotting will help that drying happen. Use a plastic pot with coarse, well-draining media.

Potting medium: These plants appreciate good drainage, so I use medium fir bark with medium pumice (just medium fir bark is ok). This orchid is tolerant of a variety of media, but I think the real test comes when you've let it grow into a large pot and the media is starting break down. Fir bark with some coarse perlite or pumice seems to work best for me.

Re-pot: I'm a big fan of repotting just before root growth starts. I think these plants will stop flowering well when the pot is too full. So if you notice the flower count dropping, pot up into a larger pot or split the growths into several pots and restart growing towards that large specimen plant.



[Calendar of Events](#)

Dec 13 - Holiday potluck and annual meeting

Jan 20, 2016 meeting - Bob Fuchs of Fuchs Orchids in Florida

Feb 17, 2016 meeting - Ron Parsons

Mar 5-6, 2016 – 19th Annual Fiesta de las Flores. Mesquite Valley may have their new greenhouse facility open by then for us to display in.

Mar 16, 2016 meeting - Thomas Mirenda

Cookie List Jan 20, 2016 Mike Barretti

General Meeting Information

The Tucson Orchid Society regularly meets on the **third Wednesday** in January through October. Members are encouraged to bring orchids in bloom for **show and tell**. In November, the Society holds a fundraising **auction** of plants donated for that purpose. In December, we have a wonderful, relaxing **potluck** with a greenhouse tour, combined with a short business meeting and election of officers.

The monthly meetings are held at the [Gem & Mineral Society Building](#) (Adobe Bridge Club entrance), 3727 E. Blacklidge Dr., Tucson, AZ 85716 at 7:30 PM. From the intersection of East Ft. Lowell and North Dodge, go two blocks south on Dodge, turn left on Blacklidge. The building is on the north side of the street.

The Newsletter

The newsletter is published January through November, and sometimes in December. If you have something you would like to have published in the newsletter that is of general interest, don't hesitate to contact the newsletter editor, Judy Forester. The deadline is two weeks prior to the monthly meeting.

TOS Officers

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