

Tucson Orchid Society Newsletter

September 2015

Monthly Meeting: Wednesday, September 16, 7:30 PM



The Orchids of Borneo

Mary Gerritsen, Ph.D.

Join Mary on a virtual adventure to discover orchids in their native habitats on the island of Borneo! Mary visited the states of Sabah and Sarawak (Borneo) for nearly a month in November of 2009, and again in 2011 with the primary objective on both trips of seeing the **orchids and carnivorous plants** in their native habitat. Her presentation will cover a little about the geography and geology of Borneo, more about orchid habitats, and **lots of photos** from her treks to Mt. Kinabalu (see photo below), Mt. Alab, Poring, Long Pasia, Mulu National Park, the caves of Sarawak, and Bako National Park.

Mary has been interested in plants for most of her adult life, and has been growing orchids on and off for the last 35 years, despite several cross country moves as part of her “other life” as a biomedical scientist. Her passion for orchids was rekindled when she moved to the San Francisco Bay area in 1997 and **attended an orchid show**. Returning home with a few plants, she decided to join a local orchid society to learn more about taking care of them, and from these beginnings, her current passion grew exponentially!

Now Mary truly has put her roots down, and has orchids in two greenhouses, three lath houses, her front porch, sun room, and anywhere else she can. Her collection of about **two thousand plants**, mostly species, is rich in masdevallias and other miniature orchids of many different genera. She has co-authored three botanical books with co-author and photographer Ron Parsons “*Masdevallias, Gems of the Orchid World*”, “*Calochortus, Mariposa Lilies and their Relatives*”, and most recently, “*A Compendium of Miniature Orchid Species*”. Mary is also an occasional contributor to the AOS magazine *Orchids*, and *Orchid Digest*. See photo at right: Sego Lily (*Calochortus nuttallii*).



One of Mary’s favorite pastimes is to travel to exotic (and some not so exotic) places to see **orchids in situ**, and to gain a better understanding of their varied habitats. Thus she has visited Costa Rica, Panama, Ecuador, Peru, Colombia, Venezuela, Brazil, Mexico, Germany, France, Luxembourg, Crete, Rhodes, Mallorca, Australia, Singapore, Borneo, South Africa, Thailand and Sulawesi (Indonesia) on orchid “field trips”, as

well as various sites in the US and Canada to see the North American native orchids.

Mary is an active member of the Peninsula Orchid Society, having served as a director, vice-president, president, and show chair. She is a past-president of the San Francisco Orchid Society, and the treasurer and one of the directors of the Orchid Conservation Alliance.

President's Corner

Hi Folks!

Well, September is here and soon the monsoon will be gone and the dry weather will be back. I am looking forward to the cooler days ahead in October.

It is time to start thinking about what plants you want to donate for our annual Auction coming up the first Wednesday in November. We have had a successful auction every year for a good number of years. I have gotten a lot better about worrying if we will have enough plants. Go through your plants and cull a few from your collection or divide big plants now and make a division for the Auction.



If you did not come to the August meeting, you missed a very skilled Arizona Orchid expert. Ron Coleman is one of our long time members and he presented orchids found on the sky islands in the Catalina's and the Santa Rita's. It was interesting to know that Arizona native orchids are growing so close to Tucson. It was a very informative talk and maybe the society can get Ron to take some of us on an orchid safari in the Catalina's.

Please come to the September meeting - Mary Gerritsen is presenting The Orchids of Borneo. Don't miss it!

Shortly we will be putting together a committee to ask people to volunteer for Board Positions in the society. It is getting to be time to offer a slate of officers. Some will remain the same but there needs to be some new people as well.

Happy Growing, Mike Barretti

Barry's collection

Barry McCormick, an expert grower and long time member of Tucson Orchid Society, has been **phasing out his orchid collection**. He is selecting a few plants each month that are ready for re-potting. Then he bare-roots and divides them, bringing the ten or twelve best divisions to our meeting. He tags them and provides an information sheet with a picture and blooming data for each. The **photo at right** shows the plants raffled off at the August meeting.

The Gift That Keeps On Giving



We **raffle them off at the meetings for free**, BUT you must be present to win! The collection that Barry is giving us is a wonderful gift. Please grow them well and make divisions to share, as well, for a gift that keeps giving. **Please thank Barry personally for his contribution.**

Greenhouse Tour Scheduled

The next greenhouse tour is scheduled for **Saturday, September 19** from 1-4 PM at Ron Coleman's home. His address is [11520 E Calle Del Valle, Tucson, AZ 85745](http://www.google.com/maps/place/11520+E+Calle+Del+Valle,+Tucson,+AZ+85745). Ron will have printed maps on how to get there at the September monthly meeting.

Show and Tell

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 August meeting**.



Cookie List

Sep 16, 2016 Carolyn Addotta
Oct 21, 2015 Beth Woodin
Nov 4, 2015 Tony Knight (Annual Auction)
Jan 20, 2016 _____

Be Prepared!

Judy Forester will be asking everyone to do an *Orchid of the Month* article, so think about which of your plants you want to write about. If the plant is in bloom at the time, so much the better. Stay with orchids that grow well and flower here in southern Arizona, either in a greenhouse, on a window sill, or outdoors. **Please volunteer your candidate plants!**

Book Review

Orchid Fever by Eric Hansen

In keeping with this month's speaker, *Orchid Fever* starts out with some of the perils of orchid hunting in Borneo. **A horticultural tale of love, lust, and lunacy.** The characters are colorful, and if you have been growing for a while, you may actually know some of them!

Education Corner by Marie Hirsch and Doug Forester

What Does That Orchid Word Mean?

Agar (AH-ger)

Agar is a gelatinous substance derived from certain seaweeds and red algae. It is used as a solidifying agent in culture media for germinating orchid seed and meristem tissue. Agar was discovered around 1658 in Japan by Mino Tarozaemon, an innkeeper who was said to have discarded some surplus seaweed soup and noticed it gelled. Agar was first used in microbiology in 1882 by German microbiologist Walther Hesse. Throughout history up to modern times, agar has been chiefly used as an ingredient in desserts throughout Asia. Agar can be used as a laxative, appetite suppressant, a vegetarian substitute for gelatin, a thickener for soups, ice cream and other desserts.



Backbulb (BAK-bulb)

An old pseudo-bulb, often without leaves but still alive and bearing one or more eyes behind the growing portion of a sympodial orchid. Planting the backbulb is an easy way to reproduce another identical plant.

Back Cross (BAK-krawss)

Crossing a hybrid with one of its parents or an individual plant genetically similar to one of its parents. This done in order to achieve offspring with a genetic identity closer to its parent. This method is used in horticulture and animal breeding.



Calendar of Events

Sep 16 meeting - Mary Gerritsen of San Francisco Orchid Club - The Orchids of Borneo

Sep 19 Ron Coleman greenhouse tour. Saturday, Sept 19, 1-4 PM.

Oct 21 meeting - Graham Wood on Paphs

Nov 4 - Club auction

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 Miranda

Orchid of the month

Sid Henderson's Rupicolous Laelias



Rupicolous orchids grow on the semi-xeric mountains of Brazil, in cracks and fissures where detritus builds up. They bake in the sun during the day, but in the afternoon are blanketed by heavy coastal fogs blown in from the sea. By nightfall, humidity rises to around 100%, and the root system is soaked in a blanket of condensation.

These orchids make a terrific choice for a windowsill. They provide attractive, bright colors on naturally upright flower spikes, and



because of their semi-xeric habitat they can tolerate low humidity. These succulent Laelias take up very little space, often preferring a 2" terracotta pot. I can line up all eight of them on my windowsill, and they only take up about a yard of space. I've also found that primary hybrids can grow outside like weeds and flower for months!

Plant characteristics:

Height: Sizes vary - 6" is the average maximum height. *L. liliputana* is less than 1', while *L. angereri* is about a foot tall.

Flower Colors: Red, orange, yellow, white, white and yellow, pink, pink and white, lavender, lavender and yellow.

Flower size: 1-2 inches depending on the species.

Difficulty: I find the primary hybrids very easy to grow. Species are more fussy about temperature and humidity.



How to grow:



Media: I use a terracotta pot, with 50% medium grade pinus radiate bark, 50% pumice and a teaspoon of very course sand. Grow them in as tight a pot as you can. They can grow outside during the spring, mild parts of the summer, and fall. When they're outside I keep them inside a second white plastic pot lined with sphagnum moss. The moisture held by the moss is wicked through the terracotta, keeping the insides of the pot cool and humid.

Sunlight: High. South windows in winter, east/west in summer, 50% shade cloth outside. On hot dry days (above 105) you have to bring them in. They grow like weeds outside under 50% shade cloth. I shade them with neighboring plants in the afternoon during the summer. If they're getting enough light, they'll develop very succulent leaves with a cranberry colored tint to the undersides and tips.



Watering: Rainwater or RODI (+some fertilizer). Tap water is OK if you're in a pinch, but not a good idea for the long term. In nature they get watered every evening, so I spray them every evening in the summertime, and soak them 2-3 times per week depending on how hot / dry it is. During the winter, its cold, so I switch to mornings to avoid root problems, and reduce watering to once every 10-15 days.

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. 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

President	Mike Barretti	mbarretti@msn.com
Vice-President	Jim Santino	jimmys1321@gmail.com
Treasurer	Jim Wilcoxon	jfw@theriver.com
Membership	Mary Ann Albano	albanom@comcast.net
Newsletter	Judy Forester	judyf.ccn@comcast.net
Program Chair	Wes Addison	wesadd@cpatucson.com
Show Chair	Wes Addison	
Auction Chair	Mike Barretti	
Webmaster	Doug Forester	webmaster@orchidsocietytucson.org