

The Houston Orchid Society, Inc.



A non profit organization established in 1945, HOS is a recipient of the American Orchid Society's Distinguished Affiliated Societies Service award



Please Welcome New Members:

Evalie (Janette) Grossmann
Erik Abrahamson
Carmen Flores
Toan K. (Tom) Huynh

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The Houston Happenings



Volume 45, Issue 7

July 2015

July Program: Bulbophyllums

By Derek Lowenstein, VP Speakers & Programs

Our speaker in July will be our own Jay Balchan.

Jay says:

"I bought my first orchid from the Home Depot when I moved to Houston in 1992. I have always had a "green thumb" and I saw this crazy plant and just had to have it. Well of course I watered it too much and within a month it was stone dead. That just encouraged me to buy another one and learn more about these plants. I bought lots of books (remember the old "Ortho" books?) and I actually remember going into the magazine section of a big book store to see if there were any orchid magazines for sale. Of course I later learned that the AOS has a wonderful subscription magazine... And Orchid Digest an even better one!

Anyway, I had been growing orchids for about a year when I visited Julia and Charles Wilson's nursery. It was Julia who encouraged me to attend my first HOS meeting which I did in prompt order. I guess it was like an AA meeting but in reverse. They wanted you to get addicted and did everything they could to do that. Seeing Bob Swearingen's massive plants on the show table was what knocked me over the edge. Stephen Moffitt was my Newcomers chair (aka "the pusher"). I've now been involved with the HOS for over 20 years, have held every position in the book multiple times and it has been a fantastic experience.

I'm going to speak at the meeting on bulbophyllums. They are very easy to grow and are



Jay Balchan

wonderful companion orchids to grow with a larger collection of cattleyas, phals, or other orchids. Many bloom in the fall so you can have blooms when many other groups are not in bloom."

Presidents Post

By Mary Gunn, President

Our Summer Workshop will be August 7th and 8th on the St. Thomas campus. John Stubbings and Ted Baenziger are the co-chairs and have another great line-up of speakers. On Friday night there will be AOS judging, a reception, silent auction, and first chance to purchase orchids from the speakers. The series of lectures by our guest speakers will be on Saturday along with break out sessions on a number of orchid topics. The workshop

is a lot of fun and it's one of my favorite events in HOS. I encourage you to go, no matter what your level is in orchid growing. It's a great opportunity to learn more about orchid growing, spend time with other orchid enthusiasts, add some orchids to your collection, and take a cool indoor break from the Houston summer heat - all while surrounded by blooming orchids! There will be a silent auction on Friday night to bene-

fit the Judging Center and another silent auction on Saturday with proceeds going to HOS. The Friday night reception, continental breakfast on Saturday, and lunch is included in the price of the workshop. Please register early. It really helps us out in organizing the event. You can mail your registration or bring it to the July meeting and turn it in to me. I'm handling registration and need a few volunteers to help on Friday

Presidents Post - Continued

night and Saturday morning. The schedule and registration forms are on the HOS website and we'll have forms available at the July meeting. Don't miss this

opportunity to hear world-class orchid speakers, get your specific culture questions answered by these experts, purchase some orchids for you collection,

and have fun with the rest of us. Our monthly meeting is on July 2nd. Be sure to include it in your 4th of July activities.

June Plant Table

By Loren Neufeld, Photos by Malcolm McCorquodale



Above: Hybrid Winner (Tie) Laelia Latona
Presented by Tan Tran

Below: Species Winner Phragmipedium pearcei Little Angel
Presented by Rick Hepler

There were 19 hybrids and 22 species entered

Below: Hybrid Winner (Tie) Slc. Jungle Beau
Presented by Tan Tran



Volunteer Of The Month

By Mary Gunn, President

Jay Balchan was our volunteer of the month for May. Jay has been a member of HOS for over 20 years, and has been a very active volunteer in our activities and events over the years. He is chairing the Intermediate Group again this year and has put together some very interesting and fun meetings for us. He can always be counted

on to do a presentation when we have booths at shows. He has served as HOS President twice as well as VP positions, and has been on the HOS Board many of the years he has been a member. Jay is one of the people we can always count on as a volunteer. Jay, thank you for your many years of service in HOS.



Cultural “Quick Tips”

By Jay Balchan

A few newsletters ago I shared a tip to build a wire “U” shaped rack out of left over bench wire as a way to hold your plants in a nice, neat row. These racks can either be nailed to the edge of an existing wooden bench or you can attach a wire hanger to them so they can be free standing.

Another variation on that same theme is to use pre-made aluminum gutters as a rack to hold plants. Below are pictures of Calvin’s greenhouse showing this in action. One significant advantage of using a solid gutter over open wire in this situation is that when you water, the excess water drains out via the gutter and does not fall on the plants below. This helps lessen the spread of bacteria, fungus and rot spores from plant to plant. It is also a very clean look in the greenhouse. You could easily nail a brown gutter like this to a cedar fence and have it blend right in!

You can see that Calvin has gradually staggered the gutter rows (bottom rows closer to the walkway) to allow for easier access to the plants and for better light exposure on the lower ones. Also notice he’s also got vertical wire above the

gutters so in a narrow space, he has a high density of plants without any of them being crowded. If you want to use smaller pieces of gutter to hang plants outside, be sure there is a way for the water to easily drain out (leave the sides open using just a piece of wire to block off the ends. With all the rain we’ve had, a closed in gutter will fill up in no time and you’ll have more rot issues than we are all already having!



By Hook Or By Crook: The Plunder of Orchids From The New World

By Victoria Zemlan

CONSERVATION CORNER

On my most recent trip to the Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden Conservatory, I tried to remember what it was like to see a cascade of *Oncidium* orchids for the first time, and wondered what it would feel like to walk through a forest and suddenly come across the dramatic sprays of delicate yellow blooms in the wild. When Europeans saw orchids for the first time, it set the botanical world on fire, igniting an obsession that continues today. Now, we can buy inexpensive orchids in almost any nursery, home improvement center, or grocery store, but 19th century orchids were an extravagance reserved for the nobility. The danger and expense of finding and shipping the blooms from far-flung corners of the world added to their mystique. In 1818, when a plant shipped to England by explorer William John Swainson flowered into *Cattleya labiata*, demand for the showy, exotic plant gave birth to the professional orchid hunter who made his living finding new orchids to feed the European market. The most famous of these was Czech gardener Benedict Roezl.



Benedict Roezl

As a plant hunter, Benedict Roezl was inefficient, even wasteful. He was harried, easily distracted, careless, and illogical. Still, he was the best: if Frederick Sander's nurseries made him the King of Orchids, Roezl, who did the dirty work of travelling the world to collect Sander's orchids, was the Prince. The most accomplished plant hunter who ever lived, Roezl was a trailblazer whose passion drew Sander into the orchid business in the first place, a bulldozer of a man who travelled and collected specimens alone, unarmed, and mostly on foot. When he met Sander, Roezl was already a famous traveller, but that's not how he started out. His former life as a planter had ended abruptly when he tried to mechanize the process of extracting fiber from his textile plant, *Boehmeria tenacissima*. The machine Roezl invented, pushed beyond its limits at an exhibition, crushed one of his arms in its gears. The limb was replaced with a prosthetic, an iron hook, which made farming impossible but gave the six-foot-two blond a look of rugged distinction. So Roezl started over as a plant collector, and the hook impressed the people he encountered in his travels throughout the Americas.

Discovering 800 species of flowering plants and trees that had never been seen outside the New World, including many orchids that he sent home to Sander and other patrons, Roezl was celebrated but never amassed much wealth. He never published, either; his life can only be pieced together from his letters and a handful of campfire stories. In these stories, Roezl emerges as a man distracted by his passion for the hunt.

In the nineteenth century, an orchid hunter's job was to



A South American *Oncidium* orchid from the Lewis Ginter Botanic Garden's Orchids Galore! exhibit.

scour the world's jungles, forests, and mountaintops to collect and ship new species to Europe to be sold for profit. A plant hunter, or traveler, stripped areas bare of entire populations of orchids to prevent them from falling into a competitor's hands. In some ways, the orchids exacted revenge: a traveler rarely made enough money to live comfortably and often met with a grisly death by wild animal, a slip off a rocky cliff, or murder by locals. More than half of the harvested orchids perished from disease, pests, and exposure to seawater before reaching the nursery or botanical garden that sponsored their voyage, and as many as 20,000 plants could be lost at once in a shipwreck. Sander was forever worrying over the status of the orchid shipments en route to his nurseries as Roezl raced around North, South, and Central America at high speed, never staying in one place long. Dr. Heinrich Gustav Reichenbach, the German orchidologist responsible for identifying and classifying many of the orchids arriving in Europe, criticized Roezl for his carelessness in packing plant specimens, which made it difficult to draw accurate diagrams of new spe-

(Continued on page 5)

Orchid Plunder - Continued

cies. Sander also expressed displeasure in Roezl's sloppiness. The director of the Zurich Botanical Garden, which received many of Roezl's plants, condemned his wasteful collection practices, believing them to be outdated and environmentally irresponsible. Roezl seemed singularly interested in the discovery of exotic new plants and not at all concerned about their preservation, a sentiment his fellow orchid hunters probably shared. The work was dangerous, but Roezl carried no firearms and was constantly robbed and prone to serious lapses in judgment. Passing through Denver, the story goes, Roezl gave his life savings to an innkeeper for safekeeping and was surprised when he returned from a mountain expedition to find neither hide nor hair of the innkeeper or the money. In another vignette, a jaguar wandered into his tent and Roezl was convinced that the cat did not eat him because he did not have a gun to shoot at it. Furthermore, his stubborn refusal to travel with other plant hunters left him totally dependent on the kindness of local people for food, guidance and protection.

Sander made a fortune funding these orchid-hunting expeditions. Though the risks were great, the returns on investment could be jaw dropping. Orchids sold like jewels. At the height of the mania, Sander made £2000 with the sale of one *Cattleya warscewiczii* f. *sanderiana* specimen. Millions of orchids passed through Sander's hands. His nurseries in St. Alban (purchased in 1876), Bruges (founded in 1894), and New Jersey (set up and sold within a few years in the mid-1890s) dwarfed every other orchid operation in the world. As Royal Orchid Grower to Queen Victoria, Sander dazzled her

majesty with opulent bouquets of orchids from every corner of the British Empire.

He honored the Queen by dedicating to her volume one of his *Reichenbachia*, a collection of exquisite life-sized orchid illustrations (chromolithographs of which Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden has had the honor of exhibiting on loan from Dr. Arthur Burke, an expert grower of rare and unusual orchids, and friend of the Garden). Turn-of-the-century auction houses offered wild orchids in lots of hundreds or thousands to the well-heeled elite. More importantly, however, Sander's grand-scale domestic orchid propagating gradually made orchids affordable to the middle class.

Roezl died in 1884 at home in bed, with no jaguar in sight. Sander partnered with new plant hunters. Orchid mania waned as the domesticated version became more accessible and wild orchid hunting became increasingly unnecessary. Sander lived until 1920 and his nurseries at St. Alban and Bruges remained profitable until after World War II, at which point they closed their doors. Orchids haven't lost their allure — Americans now spend more on orchids each year than on any other houseplant. Botanical gardens provide the opportunity to experience hundreds of orchids from around the globe and learn how they made the journey from jungles, forests, and mountaintops to American homes.

Though 19th century plant hunters like Roezl wreaked havoc on wild orchid populations by taking as many plants as they could get their hands on, nurserymen and botanists on the receiving end in Europe made the most of the orchids that survived the journey. Through propagation on a mas-



A cattleya illustration from the *Reichenbachia* collection at the Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden

sive scale, Sander was able to make orchids inexpensive and widely available without further endangering wild populations. Victorian plant hunters sacked Earth's jungles in blissful ignorance, but in this more enlightened age, strict conservation laws protect orchids in the wild. Mercifully, the days of savagely pillaging entire populations of orchids for the mass market are long gone. Few known species are endangered today — none on display at Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden are threatened with extinction, though many are rare. The Garden shares the goals of Orchid conservation organizations worldwide of protecting endangered orchids and conserving their unique natural habitats. Ninety percent of all orchids are now grown in nurseries, says Kew Gardens, whose experts also suggest we

(Continued on page 6)

Orchid Plunder - Continued



A Phalaenopsis at the Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden

have probably seen the end of new orchid discoveries. The golden age of orchid discovery, led by romantic explorers, is past. The age of conservation is still in its infancy, however, and that's a movement that's up to all of us to lead. □

For Further Reading:

Coats, Alice M., *The plant hunters: Being a history of the horticultural pioneers, their quests, and their discoveries from the Renaissance to the twentieth century.* New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970, c1969.

Lyte, Charles, *The Plant Hunters.* London: Orbis, 1983.

Tyler-Whittle, and Michael Sidney, *The plant hunters: being an examination of collecting, with*

an account of the careers & the methods of a number of those who have searched the world for wild plants. New York: The Lyons Press, 1997.

Swinson, Arthur. *Frederick Sander, The Orchid King: The Record of a Passion.* London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1970.

"Orchid Discovery." Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew. <http://www.kew.org/plants/orchids/orchiddiscovery.html> (retrieved 4/11/12).

(Victoria Zemlan is the Visitors Center Asst. Coordinator at the Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden in Richmond, Virginia. Victoria can be reached at: victoriaz@lewisginter.org)

Stay-At-Home Orchid Wonders

By Susan Dally, Editor



Three photos were sent in this month as Stay-At-Home bloomers. At left we have *Galeottia grandiflora* which is being grown in a semi-hydroponic container. Below that is *Paph. niveum* and *Cattleya Green Emerald* (C Elizabeth Mahone x C. Thomspol Spot) These photos were sent in by Judith Neufeld.

Thank you Judith for sharing your orchids with us.

I know there are huge numbers of orchids blooming ever month in our members homes that we never see. Please consider sharing your beauties with us. Email photos to Susan at editor@houstonorchidsociety.org.



Houston Judging Center

By Don Maples, Photo by Malcolm McCorquodale

The Houston Judging Center has been busy this spring despite the rain, floods and whatever. On May 16th at our regular meeting, *Den. shixingense* received a CBR and was exhibited by David Hunt. On May 30th, the New Orleans Orchid Society Show was judged. Two Awards of Merit and one Highly Commended Certificate were given in addition to the AOS Show trophy and a Silver Certificate for an outstanding exhibit. On June 12th, the judges traveled to Lafayette, LA., for the Acadian Orchid Society Show. Three awards were granted as well as an AOS Show Trophy and a Silver Certificate. *Paph. Uneme* was awarded an HCC of 75 points and belonged to Don

Ghiz. *C. harrisoniana* belonging to Ted Joubert received an HCC of 76. *Gal. dives* received an AM of 82 points and belonged to Tin-Wein Yu. On June 20th, *Encyclia bipapularis* received a CHM of 82 points and was exhibited by David Hunt. At the business meeting, Marvin Gerber was recommended for Emeritus Judge status. The AOS Trustees will consider our recommendation later this year at the fall meeting. Please congratulate Marvin who has worked hard for the AOS, the Houston Judging Center and the Houston Orchid Society! Join us for the next judging session at the St. Jerabeck Center (room 202) on July 18th.



Encyclia bipapularis



Encyclia bipapularis

Photo by Malcolm McCorquodale

July 2015

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2 <i>7:30 PM</i> <i>HOS Meeting</i>	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18 <i>HJC</i> <i>Judging</i>
19 <i>2:00 pm</i> <i>Newcomers</i>	20	21	22	23 <i>Newsletter</i> <i>Content is Due</i>	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

Newcomers Group

By Amy Colville

The Newcomers will be meeting at the University of St. Thomas on July 19th at 2:00. I will be sending an email to all Newcomers with the class room location soon. We will have a presentation on an orchid species.

July Raffle Table

By Elayne Duncan

Summer is upon us and once again you can win the beautiful orchids from the HOS Raffle to add to your collection. You may purchase the raffle tickets using cash, check and credit cards. Also don't forget to pick up your bonus tickets for wearing your badge, bringing in your box tops for education and first time attendees. See you soon!



REFRESHMENT CORNER

The Refreshment Committee had 7 people sign up to bring snacks for the July HOS meeting. If anyone else would like to bring snacks please do.

Thanks to Allen & Bente Davies, Don Ghiz, Midge Gorman, Sandra Higham, Rupa Kota, Cherie Lee, Denise Mitchell, Stacey Pauley, Betsy Robinson, Mary Rogge, Sandy Stubblings, Winnie Yap and anyone else who brought snacks to the June meeting.

Thanks,

Margaret Mahoney & Sandra Higham

Upcoming Events

Jul 10 - 12

Baton Rouge Orchid Society Annual Show & Sale
 Baton Rouge Garden Center
 Baton Rouge, LA

Aug 7 - 9

Houston Orchid Society's 36th Annual Summer Workshop
 Jerabeck Center, Univ. of St. Thomas
 Houston, TX

Sep 26-27

Greater North Texas Orchid Society Fall Show & Sale
 Southfork Hotel, 1600 N. Central Expwy.
 Plano, TX
<http://www.gntos.org/node/28>

Oct 2-3

Central Louisiana Orchid Society Show & Sale "Orchids on the Plantation"
 Kent Plantation House
 Alexandria, LA

Oct 24-25

Fort Worth Orchid Society Show "An Orchids Autumn"
 Ft. Worth Botanical Garden
 Ft. Worth, TX

HOS Officers and Committee Chairs

Officers

President	Mary Gunn
VP - Speakers	Derek Lowenstein
VP - Shows	Kar Chong & Winnie Yap
VP - Membership	Natalie Istin
Treasurer	Rick Hepler
Recording Secretary	Tom Durrett
Past President	Mary Gunn

Chairs

Conservation	Marianne Walker
Display Table	Loren & Judith Neufeld
Guest Hospitality	Steven Ramirez & Lorraine Hughes
Happenings Editor	Susan Dally
Intermediate Group	Jay Balchan
Newcomers Group	Amy Colville & Calvin Starr
Parliamentarian	Marvin Gerber
Photography	Malcolm McCorquodale
Plant Raffle	Elayne Duncan & Sara Bentley
Refreshments	Margaret Mahoney
Silent Auction	Frank & Cherie Lee
Spring Show	Holly Miller & John Stubbings
Summer Workshop	John Stubbings & Fr. Ted Baenziger
Webmaster	Tom Durrett

Directors - Two Year Term

Fr. Ted Baenziger	Holly Miller
Amy Colville	Stephen Moffitt
Marvin Gerber	Calvin Starr

Directors - One Year Term

Jim Butler	Sandra Higham
Susan Dally	Lakshmi Narayana
Don Ghiz	Marianne Walker

Representatives

AOS Representative	Don Ghiz
IPA Representative	Fr. Ted Baenziger
ODC Representative	Michael Mondville
SWROGA Directors	Sandy Stubbings & Lauri Skov



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month, 7:00 pm
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