

## Home and Backyard Orchid Growing

Maria Yessian, msyessian@yahoo.com

March, 2010

Maria and Richard Yessian grow a wide variety of orchids in the pool lanai at their home in Butler Beach. There are cattleyas, phalaenopsis, dendrobiums, bulbophyllums, oncidiums and a few more, all happy on benches and orchid trees under the covered roof between the house and the pool.

For winter protection, Maria stacks her plants in against the house wall and can close the hurricane sliding wall to isolate her plants from the outside cold air. Maria benefits from the microclimate provided in Butler Beach given that the Ocean and Intracoastal are heat sinks that keep the thermometer a couple degrees warmer than areas further west. She's also got a pool in the screen enclosure and that's another heat sink, particularly when she turned the pool recirculating pump on thereby raising the temps another couple of degrees. She needed it all during the cold, gray and wet weather this winter and her plants survived and are ready for warmer weather.

The area under the covered roof gets plenty of morning sun though it is a little shady after 11 am. Maria is planning to do a backyard survey with the light meter to see where the sun loving cattleyas and dendrobiums may enjoy the summer growing season, perhaps under the dappled light of the oak tree or simply moved out from under the covered roof within the screened enclosure so they will receive more light for a longer period.

Maria is planning her spring repotting marathon. She has orchids she's gotten from different vendors, the SAOS raffle table and auction, orchid shows, etc. and the plants are potted in a variety of potting mixes. Some plants are in sphagnum, some in cocohusk, some in bark and some in a coarse aliflor mix. This means that if she waters them all at the same time, some will be watered too frequently and some not enough. There just aren't enough hours in the day to evaluate each pot individually and see if it needs to be watered.

This year Maria is going to pot the cattleya and dendrobium orchids in a coarse, freely draining mix and the bulbophyllums and Phalaenopsis in a water retentive mix. After her spring repotting chores, she'll resume her summer watering and fertilizing schedule once or twice a week and wait for her reward, orchids in bloom.