St. Augustine Orchid Society NEWSLETTER
January 2013
Volume 8 Issue #1

Club News

January 3 Monthly SAOS Meeting

by Lola Stark, seacuter@bellsouth.net

Welcome and Thanks. President Jeannette Pacetti opened the meeting at 7:15 pm with 32 people present including 3 guests and new member Barbara Nailler. We have another new member, Coral Godwin, our youngest member who was busy catering to a new kitten. The president thanked absent Jeanette Smith for arranging for us to use the building without her being present. Shirley Bennett opened up for us and made coffee and Gene Johnson will make sure the building is secure when we leave. SAOS is very lucky to be able to use the Watson facility and we really appreciate it. Jeannette reminded those present to "Drop a Dollar" to help pay for the refreshments. Gail Marshall reminded those with birthdays in December and January to get their free tickets for the raffle. (Jack Higgins' birthday was in December and let it be known that he won the plant he wanted from the raffle table and then won the grand prize from all the raffle tickets with the same ticket - it pays to get your raffle tickets!) For those of you who missed the Christmas auction, we missed you and you missed out on a wonderful auction with lots of great plants, never mind the great food!

Janet Skinner, who is a member of SAOS and works at Hagan Ace Hardware has asked us to be on the lookout for one of Ace's cats who has disappeared.

SAOS Club Business. SAOS dues are now due for 2013. They can be given to Bill Gourley any time between now and April 1. Penny showed us several books she'd brought in and let us know that all books borrowed in 2012 have been returned in a timely fashion. (We'd been having a bit of trouble with this in the past. We'd lost several of our good books because the member who borrowed them either moved or dropped out and forgot they had our book).

The Keiki Club will resume on February 17. Those that attend learn hands on how to take care of our orchids. We have our potting supplies and fertilizer available every month at $5.00. We had several of our calendars featuring the monthly Member's Choice plants available, but all are now sold. What a beautiful way to remember 2012! Ace repotting and information will resume on March 2. Events around the state are listed on the website, including shows in Sarasota, Fort Lauderdale and Tamiami.

Program. Our program for the evening was a Panel Discussion with Sue Bottom and Josh Jones discussing the care of Orchids with Bob Schimmel moderating.

What do you look for when buying orchid plants. Look at how the plant is potted and what the roots look like, if there are any pests present and if it's blooming, are the blooms in good shape. (Sometimes the plants are labeled incorrectly!) Is there a name tag. Sue picks up the plant by the plant to see if it's firmly growing in the pot or if it's just been repotted. Look at the overall health of the plant. Are pseudobulbs present and if so, are they plump or wilted.

Vivienne talks about her growing technique.

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Club News

Upcoming Orchid Events

January

5-6 Sarasota Orchid Society Show
Sarasota Municipal Auditorium
8 JOS Meeting, Topic TBA, 7 pm
John Stubbings, Clown Alley Orchids
18-20 Fort Lauderdale Orchid Society Show
War Memorial Auditorium
26-27 Manatee River Orchid Society Show
Manatee Convention & Civic Center
26-27 Tamiami International Orchid Festival
Dade County Fair Expo Center

February

2-3 Venice Area Orchid Society Show
Venice Community Center
5 SAOS Meeting, 7 pm
Dr. Ruben Sauleda, Ruben in Orchids
Flasking and Propagation of Orchids
12 JOS Meeting, 7 pm
Dr. Martin Motes, Motes Orchids
Vanda Hybridizing
17 Keiki Club for Orchid Beginners, 1 pm
Getting Ready for Spring
Sue and Terry Bottom's Home
6916 Cypress Lake Ct. St. Aug 32086
22-24 Naples Orchid Society Show
Moorings Presbyterian Church

March

1-3 Tampa Bay Orchid Society Show
Egypt Shrine Center
1-3 Martin County Orchid Society Show
Martin County Fairgrounds
2 SAOS at Ace Hardware, 9 am til 1 pm
3050 US 1 S in St. Augustine
Repotting and Plant Clinic
5 SAOS Meeting, 7 pm
Dr. Hal Hills
Orchid Fragrances; Causes and Effects on the Orchid
9-10 Jacksonville Orchid Society Show
The Garden Club of Jacksonville
9-10 Port St. Lucie Orchid Society Show
Port St. Lucie Community Center
12 JOS Meeting, 7 pm, TBA
24 Keiki Club for Orchid Beginners
Spring Repotting
Sue and Terry Bottom's Home
6916 Cypress Lake Ct. St. Aug 32086
30-31 Orchid Society of Highlands County Show
Bert J Harris Jr. Agricultural Center

April

2 SAOS Meeting, 7 pm
Francisco Miranda, Miranda Orchids
Orchids of the Brazilian Amazon
6 SAOS at Ace Hardware, 9 am til 1 pm
3050 US 1 S in St. Augustine

St. Augustine Orchid Society Organization

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Josh doesn't buy seedlings, but Sue does. If you are buying by mail, be sure you buy from a reputable grower, preferably one who's been here and we respect. If you're buying off e-bay, check the grower. Both Josh and Sue have purchased plants from "Top Mac Sniper" with very good luck. Both have had good luck buying from the half price table at both the Ace on US 1 and the one on A1A on the island. Harry McElroy has purchased Cymbidiums from EFG by mail and also Carter and Holmes who sends out e-mails frequently.

Growing Environment. Your job in the winter is to keep your plants alive until you can return your plants outdoors when the weather warms. Some orchids are fine down to 35, but Vandas should be brought in at 50 to 60. Dendrobiums are a varied group, the phalaenopsis type dendrobiums don't like temperatures below 60F though the deciduous dendrobiums can tolerate temperatures as low as 35F. Water your orchids about half as much during the winter. Don't just mist them, it's a waste of time and your orchids need lots of water, not mist. Orchids probably started out growing on the ground but over time adapted to the fact that they needed more light, so moved gradually up the forest trees until they found a place that made them happy and then stayed there. Some stayed on the ground and others moved all the way to the canopy. They are epiphytes. They need light, breeze and water. Give them what they need and they will thrive.

Potting Mixes. Potting mixes vary all the way from straight charcoal, through straight sphagnum and lots of everything in between. Some people like to grow in combinations of coconut bark, sponge rock, aliflor, charcoal - some grow in rock. Fred Clark uses New Zealand Bark in his plants. What it amounts to is grow in whatever works for you!

January Show table had some excellent plants.

Try out several and see what is best for your environment.

Pot Selection. If you water a lot, then you should use clay pots. If you tend to forget to water, plastic is better as it retains the water longer. Mounting the orchids creates the environment they were meant to grow in. Be careful what you mount on. If the wood is from salt water, soak it, rinse, soak it again to get the salt out. Bob Schimmel bakes his mounts in the oven at 250 for an hour.

Fred brought a fine selection of blooming plants.

Water. Josh uses strictly well water on his orchids. City water may contain chlorine that can be harmful to your orchids. It is recommended that you flush your orchids once a month to take out the salts that accumulate in the pot. When it is above 70 at night, and humidity is low, it was suggested that you water your pots thoroughly at night and then fertilize in the morning.

Fertilizer. Both Sue and Josh recommend the fertilizers that we sell at SAOS. Josh adds Rootone about once a month. If you use slow release, they both recommended using Nutricote instead of Osmocote as it is more effective here. It is sold as Dynamite and can be used every three months.

It was a very informative and interesting discussion and many members chimed in to add their thoughts.

Meeting Conclusion. Following the intermission, Dick Roth announced that the unnamed Bulldog Paphiopedilum brought by Harry and Celia McElroy was the Member's Choice, it was HUGE! And did we mention that Jack Higgins won two plants on his single birthday raffle ticket?

Thanks to Watson Realty and Jeanette Smith for the use of their meeting space at 3505 US 1 South

Keiki Club to Resume Meeting in February

Our orchids have entered their winter rest period. We'll resume Keiki Club meetings in February when our interest and attention turns once again to orchids. We'll be repotting overgrown orchids, mounting orchids on sticks and slabs and talking about growing orchids at our monthly Keiki Club Meetings. The first meeting of the year will be February 17 when we'll talk about orchids in spring.

2013 Dues Are Now Due

Membership dues for 2013 are now due. We'll be collecting dues at the January, February and March meetings, after which we'll update our 2013 SAOS roster. Dues are $15 for an individual and $25 for a family. You can mail your membership check to SAOS c/o Bill Gourley, 807 Kalli Creek Lane, St. Augustine, FL 32080.

February 5 Monthly SAOS Meeting

Flasking and Propagation of Orchids

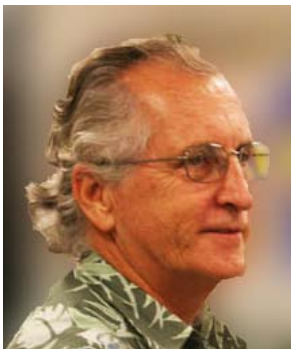
Dr. Ruben Sauleda, Ruben in Orchids

Dr. Ruben Sauleda of Ruben in Orchids near Homestead will give a presentation on the flasking and propagation of orchids at the February 5 meeting of the St. Augustine Orchid Society. Ruben and wife Claudia are a leading producer and supplier of orchid seedlings and tissue culture plants.

Ruben P. Sauleda, Ph.D. has been growing orchids since the age of 12. He started the family business in 1962, Ruben In Orchids. His main interest is hybridizing the unusual, specializing in Encyclia and Schomburgkia hybrids. In addition he propagates many species from seed, especially Florida Natives. Dr. Sauleda has a Masters Degree in Orchid Ecology and Taxonomy from Florida Atlantic University and a Ph.D. in Orchid Taxonomy from the University of South Florida. He has written several books and has published dozens of papers in scientific journals. He was Chairman of Education for the 19th World Orchid Conference as well as a speaker. Ruben in Orchids has exhibited at hundreds of national and international orchid shows winning countless awards.

St. Augustine Orchid Society Finacials - 2010 to 2013

	2010	2011	2012
INCOME			
Plant Raffle	$ 1,998.00	$ 1,534.00	$ 1,971.00
Plant Auction	3,105.99	2,568.00	1,660.00
Silent Auction	25.00	527.00	769.00
Dues	1,665.00	1,577.50	1,590.00
Supply Sales	1,087.00	1,604.00	1544.00
Donations	1.00	23.00	22.00
Awards & Prizes	-	-	25.00
Shirt Sales	-	-	-
Name Tags	56.00	-	56.00
Calendars	-	-	150.00
Savings Interest	-	7.40	8.84
Other	-	-	-
Total Income	**$ 7,937.99**	**$7,840.90**	**$7,795.84**
EXPENSES			
Plant Auction	$ 648.83	$ 1,127.17	611.00
Plant Raffle	350.00	240.00	270.00
Silent Auction	16.67	301.35	494.33
Speaker Fees	1,600.00	1,315.00	1,250.00
Speaker Meals	276.72	341.09	326.13
Speaker Lodging	-	-	-
Speaker Travel	159.00	395.00	374.00
Shows/Displays	-	166.32	562.99
Cultural Supplies	613.81	505.47	559.81
Library	64.97	58.00	36.00
Office Supplies	28.44	175.48	269.03
Copy Costs	-	26.12	15.65
Web Site	114.14	310.74	-
Shirt Cost	-	-	-
Insurance	198.36	195.50	195.00
Name Tags	62.93	-	55.11
Calendars	-	-	129.80
Other	461.20	602.58	377.17
Total Expenses	**$ 4,595.07**	**$ 5,759.82**	**$ 5,526.02**
NET INCOME	**$ 3,342.92**	**$ 2,081.08**	**$ 2,269.82**



Growing Tips for January

Dr.. Courtney Hackney,
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Dept. Biology, Univ. North Florida

Given the popularity of orchids, it is hard to believe that one of the biggest issues for orchid hobbyists today is obtaining media. Most of the difficulties I have had the past few years relate to poor quality media or to the unavailability of some previously popular media. Florida's warm temperatures pose problems for organic media and Aliflor and lava rock have proven to be ideal both for the climate and for my lack of interest in repotting. Aliflor is no longer available and I haven't found a substitute with the same qualities. Several friends have suggested various plastic products that shed water. Stalite is another product that has been suggested, but it does not come in a large size as its intended purpose is as a light rock to mix with cement. If nothing new is found before repotting begins in April, one of these products may be the solution.

One would expect that the use of sphagnum by the pot plant trade would mean that there would be a good supply of that medium. However, the quality has become so poor that finding good sphagnum has become difficult. The last bale of Chilean sphagnum looked fine, but disintegrated within six months while the previous year's sphagnum remained relatively intact on the same bench. Finally, I found a supplier for New Zealand sphagnum. It was three times the cost, but is clearly much higher quality. There is even better New Zealand sphagnum available if you are looking for the longest, freshest strands. If you are uncertain how to tell quality of sphagnum there are several things to look for. It should consist of strands of moss that are at least 6" long. If there are lots of tips or broken pieces you likely have poor quality material best used for garden

plants. Another technique is to just soak it for 24 hrs and then pull strands from both ends. Leave the material moist and test it each week the same way. The poor material I used offered no resistance after a month, however, New Zealand sphagnum remained strong.

Several commercial growers told me that they could not afford the high quality sphagnum and had switched to a mixture of charcoal and large sponge rock, which is a soil aerator. Plants I have had in this mixture are doing well after a year, but I have some issues with using charcoal derived from cutting and burning rain forest trees.

What is the ideal medium? A product that was inexpensive, decomposed slowly, if at all, and did not leach salts or produce extreme acidity or alkalinity in the pot would be nice. Ideally, it would be light, so that shipping would be less expensive and be useful in the garden when discarded. Where are the entrepreneurs when you really need?

The first incident of rot showed up last month on phal leaves. This is a common occurrence each year on new phals and even some newly purchased cattleya seedlings. Orchids grown under high nutrient conditions are prone to this soft rot, easily identified because affected tissues look watery. Such rots spread quickly and must be treated before reaching the meristem in the crown, which can kill the whole plant. Remove the infected area and be sure to cut well inside the healthy living tissue, to be sure the rot is removed. Put some cinnamon powder on the cut. After such an infection, I also spray the orchid and surrounding plants with hydrogen peroxide each time after I water to be sure there are no spores germinating. I do this for a couple of weeks after treating an active rot infection.

Your Orchids in January

based on Robert Scully, Ned Nash & James Rose checklists, courtesy of the AOS

General Growing Tips. Plants will continue to manufacture food during the winter, albeit at a reduced rate. Everything will occur at a slower pace until spring arrives so the need for water and fertilizer is reduced. Indoor growers: pull you orchid away from the window if its leaves are touching the exterior glass. Outdoor growers: keep an eye on the minimum projected temperatures.

Cattleyas. Tie up Cattleya pseudobulbs. Watch for signs of red spider mites on the undersides of leaves or scale in the sheathing on pseudobulbs. Remove the sheathing (cataphylls) carefully so as not to nick the soft tissue of the newest bulbs, which could result in rot or the introduction of disease.

Cymbidiums. Keep the humidity high around cymbidiums to prevent shriveling of the pseudobulbs and to prolong flowering. Later varieties are beginning to push up their inflorescences. Watering frequency and volume is important to support their development. Cool temperatures are beneficial.

Dendrobiums. Continue to water sparingly, or not at all, those dendrobium species that require a dormant period before flowering this spring (*Den. lindleyi* (syn. *Den. aggregatum*), *Den. chrysotoxum, Den. farmeri, Den. densiflorum* and *Den. nobile* or its hybrids). As the buds emerge, gradually increase the watering frequency and amount. Do not expose evergreen-type hybrids to temperatures below 60 F or plants in flower may drop leaves and buds.

Paphiopedilums. Do not allow the roots of paphiopedilums to dry out. On a windowsill, use a pebble tray, with water in the pebbles, to increase humidity. Keep water out of sensitive pouches. Accumulated moisture in the pouch shortens flower life. Watch for insects, particularly red spider mites, on the foliage.

Phalaenopsis. The phalaenopsis flowering cycle is about to start. Constant air circulation is essential to avoid Botrytis-spotted blooms. Water carefully to keep flowers dry and to minimize risks of soft rot in the fleshy leaves. Continue to use a dilute water soluble fertilizer. Monitor for scale and mealy bugs on the inflorescences and undersides of leaves.

Vandas. Many of the popular Thai hybrids and African angraecoids begin their winter flowering now. Watch for signs of inflorescences; help them away from the main stem of the plant to ensure proper display. Water the roots every other day and fertilize once or twice a week if light levels are sufficient.

CULTIVATION

Orchid Questions & Answers

by Sue Bottom,
sbottom15@bellsouth.net

Q1. I purchased a very nice Dendrobium amethystoglossum at the 2012 JOS Orchid Show. After the blossoms fell, I repotted it into Aliflor and dutifully placed it outside under "the orchid tree". All was well until the May monsoons, after which the orchid appeared to have died; by August, in spite of moving it to a drier location, all leaves had fallen off and the roots were all dead. Rather than throw away the "skeleton", I placed it in a pot with other dead orchids and left it in the greenhouse because the canes still had a slight bit of green. Seven months or so later, I've got buds appearing on canes that only have dead roots. I'd love to think I could resurrect this orchid, but what is the best method?.

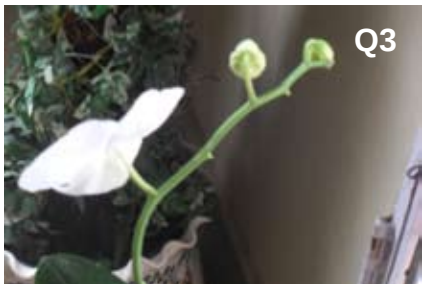
A1. Dendrobiums are very hardy critters. That plant has lots of flower buds, although it seems a tad early for it to bloom. The roots still look viable to me. I think I'd pot it back up in a small pot in a coarse mixture and see what happens. You may elect to abort the flowers to encourage the plant to grow vegetatively rather than waste its energy on blooms, though it may also be the plant's last act of defiance in which case you should enjoy the blooms. Pot it up and give it a fighting chance. It'll do what it's going to do!

Q2. I was wondering if you could kindly have a look at the pictures of the upper and lower leaf surfaces of my orchid and give me your verdict on what is wrong.

A2. That looks a whole lot like mealybugs. Get some Q tips and isopropyl alcohol and start wiping

away the white fuzz. The pests will hide in all the plant crevices, such as between the leaves at the base of the plant and below the surface of the potting medium. A drench with one of the Bayer products containing imidacloprid will kill them. If you find the Bayer product containing 1.47% imidacloprid, add 1.5 tsp into a quart of water and pour it over and through the mix to thoroughly drench the sphagnum moss. The orchid will absorb the imadacloprid through the roots into the leaves and kill the mealybugs from the inside out.

Q3. About 6 weeks ago, I bought a few orchid plants and two alternate buds dropped on my white phal.



A3. If you've just brought an orchid home, the most likely reason for bud blast is the damage to the sensitive bud from its being moved or radical changes in the amount of light and water the plant is used to. It can also be caused by watering: too dry and the moisture can be drawn from the sensitive buds or too much water can cause root rot and the plant can't sustain the emerging flower. Radical temperature changes can also cause it: drafts from an air conditioner or heater can cause bud drop and condensation from day night temperature changes can cause buds in the sheath to rot. Chemicals from fumes and ethylene from combustion engines can cause the buds to age and distort flowers. Insects like aphids and thrips can feed on the buds and cause them to drop or be deformed after opening. Other reasons include drying out from too low of humidity or being too close to grow lights and chemical damage from fertilizers. Sometimes bud blast occurs and there is no obvious reason for it.

Orchid Adaptations to an Epiphytic Lifestyle

Reprinted Courtesy of Wesley E. Higgins, Ph.D.
Marie Selby Botanical Gardens

The Orchidaceae originated as terrestrial forest under-story herbs approximately 100 million years ago. The transition to an epiphytic canopy habitat required adaptations in plant morphology. Orchids have specialized adaptations in the roots, stems, leaves, and seed. Epiphytic orchids have no vascular connection to the host tree. The host only supplies support in a habitat that has more sunlight than the forest floor. Orchids absorb required nutriments from the surface of the host and rainwater.

Orchid roots function as anchorage for the plant, photosynthesis, and water and nutrient uptake and storage. These adventitious roots typically arise from the rhizome. Orchid roots have a spongy layer of cells outside the exodermis known as the velamen that functions for temporary water storage. These cells rapidly absorb rainwater (and nutrients) and hold it until it can be translocated across the exodermis into the vascular system. Roots of epiphytic orchids are exposed to the light and the cells in the roots contain functioning chloroplasts. This is why wet orchid roots appear green in color. Velamen can also be found in Aroids that are adapted to an epiphytic habit.

Epiphytic orchids often have enlarged portions of the stem called pseudobulbs, which are used for water and carbohydrate storage. The pseudobulb may form in one internode or it can consist of several internodes. The pseudobulbs swell or shrink as moisture is stored or withdrawn. This adaptation allows orchids to flourish in areas with seasonal rainfall where the plants experience months without rainfall. The pseudobulbs and leaves have a thick cuticle to reduce moisture loss.

The leaves of a plant are the primary photosynthetic organs that are sometimes modified for water storage. Some orchids have thick succulent leaves and no pseudobulbs. Orchids have a modified photosynthetic pathway as an adaptation to the dry canopy habitat. The opening of the stomata to take up carbon dioxide is always connected with large losses of water. To inhibit this loss, Crassulacean acid metabolism (CAM) has a mechanism that allows the uptake of carbon dioxide during the night when relative humidity is higher. The prefixed carbon dioxide is stored in the vacuoles and is used during the daytime for photosynthesis.

Orchid seed are adapted for wind disbursal. The dust-like seed consist of a tiny embryo and a net-like testa. The seed lack endosperm, the 3N tissues that typically feed a developing embryo. In orchids when germination occurs a mycorrhizal fungi penetrates the testa and feeds the embryo. This symbiotic relationship also occurs in the seed germination of terrestrial orchid species.

Touring the Latouria
An Overview of New Guinea Dendrobiums
Reprinted with permission
Jim Freeman, The Dean Street Orchid Blog

Dendrobium is the second largest orchid genus after Bulbophyllum, with over a thousand species stretching from Australia to Northern India. The Latourias, aka the New Guinea Dendrobiums, are a small group of about 24 species, mainly from the warm, wet lowland areas of the island, although some species occur in the Solomon Islands, the Philippines and other nearby islands. They received their name from early orchid taxonomist C. Blume, who described Den. spectabile in 1850 as a new genus Latourea, which is no longer recognized as separate from Dendrobium. I prefer the term "Latourias" to "New Guinea Dendrobiums" because, obviously, there are plenty of other Dendrobium species from New Guinea, many with completely different growth habits and cultural requirements, and not all of the Latourias are from New Guinea.

They are related to the Australian Dendrobiums of the Dendrocoryne section (speciosum, kingianum, etc.), but do not interbreed well with them, or with most other Dendrobiums either. They usually have long, club-shaped pseudobulbs with leaves on the top, and one or two flowering spikes coming out between the leaves. The flowers are usually white, yellow or green, often with purple spots. They're not really huge, but they pack mass appeal when they reach mature size; multiple spikes per growth are not uncommon. Because of their remote habitats, very little was known about many Latourias until quite recently, when several species that had been 'discovered' early in the century and then pretty much forgotten were rediscovered and described in the 1970s and 80s. Hybridizing among the Latourias is likewise a recent phenomenon and still confined to just a couple of growers, mostly in Hawaii and Australia.

And yet there is every possibility that Latourias will join phal-type Dendrobiums as the most popular groups of the whole genus. Here's why: they're pretty easy to cultivate and flower, a bunch of them are minis or compact in habit, and in many cases their flowers can stay in perfect shape for 3 or more months! They flower quickly from seed, and are not seasonal in their flowering habit, so twice a year blooming is quite possible. Second generation hybrids are now coming onto the scene, promising even better flower colors and presentation on compact, fuss-free plants. You have to wonder why they remained little known for so long. One issue, as with so many new areas of breeding, is that not only were there few species in the hands of commercial growers, but the species and their breeding potential were not well known—and their relatively low fertility with other Dendrobiums made hybridizing look like a bad bet. Another is that Latouria species do have their bad points: their tall, narrow pseudobulbs make for ungainly plants that tip over if you breathe too hard on them, and the flowers can be hidden under the top leaves. These shortcomings are being addressed by both line-breeding of species and hybridizing.

As early as 1909, breeders were crossing Latourias with other Dendrobiums, but modern breeding within the section didn't start until the 50's and 60's, with only a handful of hybrids registered by pioneering Australian grower Hermon Slade and a few others. Then in the late 80's and 90's, hybridizers began hitting their stride. Roy Tokunaga, the 'R' in H & R Orchids and one of the top Latouria breeders, relates that he and others saw the potential of Latourias as specimen plants, and started looking for species that could grow well in warmer climates and were not too tall and spindly, with good flower counts and presentation.

Latouria Species and Hybrids

Let's look at the individual species and the magic they can make when crossed. Possibly the most popular species for modern hybridizing is **Den. atroviolaceum**; it's compact, has nice purple-spotted white flowers that are large for the size of the plant, grows easily and can remain in bloom for up to six months. A pretty plant in its own right, it is the parent of a number of well-known hybrids such as Andree Millar, Roy Tokunaga and Wonder Nishii. Roy Tokunaga went one better and found a particularly dwarf clone of this species, 'Pygmy', and is remaking old crosses with it to produce more compact plants, as well as new hybrids.

Next up is a charmer, **Den. aberrans**, a true mini with pseudobulbs only a few inches tall. From the tips sprout little white flowers, blush pink around the labellum; they last and last and last—some claim up to 9 months! Its primary hybrids Maiden Charlotte and Mini Snowflake, are near-perfect windowsill orchids, being under 6" high, with clusters of long-lasting pretty white flowers that dance above the leaves.

Den. alexanderae has red-spotted, twisted petals and a red-veined, dagger-shaped lip. It was once suspected of being a hybrid of Den. spectabile, but is now considered a valid species. It is one of the taller-growing species in the section, but its size

Den. alexanderae

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can be controlled in hybrids such as Green Elf and Spider Lily. It's also fragrant, with a warm, honey-like scent that may be passed on to its progeny!

Den. convolutum is the best known warm-growing, green-flowered species; many of the others come from high cloud forests and are more difficult to grow. It stands about a foot high, can flower any time during the year, and the flowers typically last 4-6 months. Growers use it to extend the flowering season and longevity in hybrids, although its green-to-chartreuse color combined with a wine-red lip is not everyone's cup of tea. Combined with Den. atroviolaceum it produces Andree Millar, and with Den. aberrans makes Aussie's Pixie. Other well-known hybrids include Gerald McCraith, Green Elf and Key Lime.

Den. johnsoniae may be the most gorgeous Latouria: its large white flowers have upswept petals and tepals like wings, and red lines in the lip. These qualities have earned it awards as a straight species, unusual for a Latouria; it's a parent of such distinguished hybrids as Roy Tokunaga and Stephen Batchelor. Its flowers also last for months and can occur in any season.

Den. macrophylllum

Den. macrophyllum is very common in New Guinea and surrounding islands; its wide native habitat means it grows well in a variety of conditions. It's one of the tallest, with pseudobulbs over 2 feet high. Like many Latourias, its flowers are covered with hairs on the backs of the petals and tepals. Flower count is up to 25 per spike, and its green-to-yellow flowers have a good size and shape. It was parent to many early Latouria hybrids, such as New Guinea, Nellie, and Caprice. It also appears to be more fertile with Dendrobiums from other sections, leading to interesting breeding possibilities.

Den. rhodostictum is another compact gem similar to Den. johnsoniae in size and looks: its white flowers have purple spots on the lip margins and are held above the foliage, they may have a light fragrance. Roy Tokunaga liked it so much he named one of its primary hybrids Nora Tokunaga after his wife; it's also the other half of the popular Maiden Charlotte.

Den. spectabile is weird. Really weird. Its flowers look like alien monsters, with bizarrely corkscrewed petals and sepals, yellow-green with heavy maroon spotting. It has a strong, sweet fragrance, rare in this group of species. It grows upwards of 2 feet tall, with spikes rising up above the leaves. As a parent, its twisted habit becomes more dramatic than grotesque in hybrids like Adara Nishii and Woodlawn. It appears to be growing more popular in the latest crop of hybrids, perhaps as growers look for something completely different.

Den. spectabile

One of the things that makes Latourias interesting to me is that their breeding potential has barely been tapped. The vast majority of registered hybrids are simple primary crosses, but more complex second generation hybrids are starting to show up. As with many orchids, a number of Latouria species show a lot of variation among seedlings, which growers like Roy Tokunaga are exploiting as they gain more experience with breeding and growing. Introducing parents from other sections has the potential to open up new colors, flower shapes and scents, much as the hot/cold Australian hybrids brought new shades and shapes to the tough, cool-growing Dendrocoryne species. The future is looking mighty bright for Latourias!

Culture

So, now how do you grow all these Latourias you're about to buy? The basic conditions are warm, humid, and evenly moist: they don't like daytime temperatures above the 80s or nighttime temps below the high 50s. They appreciate good humidity and air movement but tolerate dry air so long as they're well watered. Watering well means keeping the medium moist but not soggy; new growths are particularly susceptible to rotting if water gets inside the unfolding leaves, so be very careful when watering from above. Mounted plants need a good soaking 3-5 times a week, depending on conditions. Weak fertilizing once every week or so is recommended. Latourias do best in bright but not full sun; I have found that Latourias will get leaf burn in a south-facing window without adequate shading at midday; a sunny east or west window should do fine. The smaller species and hybrids are particularly fine candidates for growing under lights. All need a fairly loose, well-draining mix, so that roots stay moist but are well aerated; baskets or clay pots are best. I've seen very dramatic mounted Latourias, but keeping them moist indoors is likely going to be a challenge. As always, small plants in small pots need more frequent watering then specimen-size orchids in large pots.

My Favorite Orchid

My Favorite Orchid
By Dick Roth, rhroth405@aol.com

My favorite orchid… Wow, that is a hard choice for me. I have been growing orchids for over 50 years and have had so many great ones. Lots were awarded and some were spectacular and all were beautiful. A tough choice. What I really enjoyed most were the seedlings that flowered for the first time. You never really knew what you were getting, but all were exciting to see for the first time.

I have to think that in addition to beautiful I must add rewarding. Once that gets into the equation the choice gets much easier. In making the choice I am not slighting some of the great-awarded plants I had but tend towards one of my most recent orchids.

A few years ago I purchased a small seedling from Home Depot that is native to Australia, Dendrobium speciosum. It kept growing larger and larger as I had hoped. Finally the pseudobulbs were almost two feet long and a good two inches thick. I couldn't imagine what it was going to look like when it bloomed.

The first blooming was rather unspectacular with small yellowish flowers. But, on the second blooming it went wild.

It not only bloomed on the new growths but on almost all of the old growths, whether they had bloomed before or not. It wound up with 45 bloom spikes and 25 to 30 flowers on each spike. Conservatively that is 1,125 flowers as you can see in the picture. It was so big and heavy that I needed the help of Penny Halyburton's husband Michael to get it to the meeting for the show table.

As you can see, each flower in and of itself is not spectacular but as a whole it certainly is. It was so big and cumbersome that I could not get it to AOS judging that weekend but at least I was overwhelmed with it and the society got the chance to enjoy it. I guess you can see why it is my favorite orchid.

Show Table

Grower Yvonne & Bob Schimmel
Cym. Parish Elf x
Cym. Christmas Mint

Grower Bill Gourley
Paph. purpuratum

Grower Vivenne Rowe
C. Netrasiri Fireball

Grower Sue Bottom
Enc. cochleata

Grower Harry & Celia McElroy
Cym. Christian Heritage 'Andy's Gift'

Grower Bob & Yvonne Schimmel
B. Little Stars

Grower Sue Bottom
Blc. Destiny 'Green Daze' x Bc. Holfordii

SHOW TABLE

Grower Sue Bottom
Lc. Melody Fair 'Carol' HCC/AOS

Grower Harry & Celia McElroy
Paph. Unknown Bulldog

Grower Bill Gourley
C. trianae

Grower Yvonne & Bob Schimmel
Bc. Maikai 'Louise' AM/AOS

Grower Yvonne & Bob Schimmel
Cycd. Wine Delight 'JEM' FCC/AOS

Grower Sue Bottom
Clo. Jumbo Circle