

June
2017

The Orchid Grower

Orchid Growers' Guild of Madison
Website orchidguild.org



Meeting Dates

- June 11, Spring field trip
- June Picnic Saturday, June 17
- September 17
- October 15
- November 19
- December 17

Meetings start at 1:30 pm at Olbrich Gardens unless otherwise noted

Officers and Committees

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Nancy Thomas (2019)
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Carrie Weisman (2018)
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FROM THE PRESIDENT, ANNUAL PICNIC IS SATURDAY, JUNE 17th

Hello Orchid Lovers,

As a result of all your generous contributions and purchases at our May meeting, we earned \$404.00 for our Guild. Thank you, so very much for participating. We look forward to seeing those orchids at a future meeting when they are in bloom.

We also had elections in May and welcome two new Board members, Cynthia Wadsworth, Vice-President and Barb Soderling, General Board member. Keith Nelson will start a new term as Secretary. Please join me in giving thanks to our retiring board members, Sue Reed and Liz Wood, for sharing with the Guild their great ideas and energy on our Board of directors. We will miss you at the meetings!

June will be a fun month for us. We hope to see orchids in bloom on a **field trip** in Lake Mills, Sunday, June 11th. We will meet at 1:30 p.m. at the Glacial Drumlin Bike trailhead, 1213 S. Main St, Lake Mills. You can find directions via Hwy. 18 or the interstate. <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/parks/name/glacialdrumlin/?prompt=0>. Scott Weber suggested bringing binoculars if you have them.

Liz Wood has invited us to her home Saturday, June 17 at noon for our annual picnic. Her address is 233 S. Owen Dr. It is necessary to park across the street from her house. Please bring a chair and a dish to pass. We will have Orchata bark for repotting for a small fee. Bring your orchid and new pot. If you need to purchase a pot, please let Sue Reed know, so we can have pots available for you.

See you soon! Happy growing and repotting!
Lorraine

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Liaisons:
AOS: Nancy Thomas
MAOC: Keith Nelson
Orchid Digest: Open

it's a
POTLUCK

Bring something to share

Annual OGG Picnic!
Saturday, June 17 at noon
233 S. Owen Dr
Ribbon Judging!
Repotting with our very own
expert Keith Nelson

OGG Orchid Pot Sales

- Small green square (2x2" h), 5 @ \$1.00
- Small Clear square (2x3" h), \$.50 / pot
- Medium Clear square (3½x4" h), \$.75/ pot
- Medium Clear Round (4x4" h), \$1.00/pot
- Large Clear Round (6½x5" h), \$1.25/pot
- 3" Clay pot \$.50/pot

To order pots for delivery at the next OGG meeting, contact Sue Reed

greed@chorus.net

Members and their guests are invited to the Annual OGG picnic to be held on Saturday June 17, 2017 at 233 S. Owen Dr in Madison. The festivities start at 12:00 P.M. Please bring a dish to pass, and a chair. We will be in the backyard if the weather is good, or in the house and garage if it rains. There will be repotting for a nominal fee to cover the Orchidata bark, so bring a few overgrown plants. There is no street construction this year, but parking isn't allowed on my side of the street, so park on the opposite side, or on Upland Drive, the street that intersects Owen Drive right by my house.

Liz Wood

***Grammatophyllum scriptum* var. leopard 'nn'**

By Terri Jozwiak

I remember seeing a Gram [Gram. is short for *Grammatophyllum*] at a greenhouse in Hawaii over a year ago. I didn't see it in bloom but I remember the distinctive roots growing upward out of the pot. (They would not sell me one, they said it couldn't grow in Wisconsin). I bought this one at the Neenah show in late February of this year. It was not in bloom but I recognized the upward-growing roots. The largest pseudobulb was 8" and the longest leaf 25" so it was a big plant.

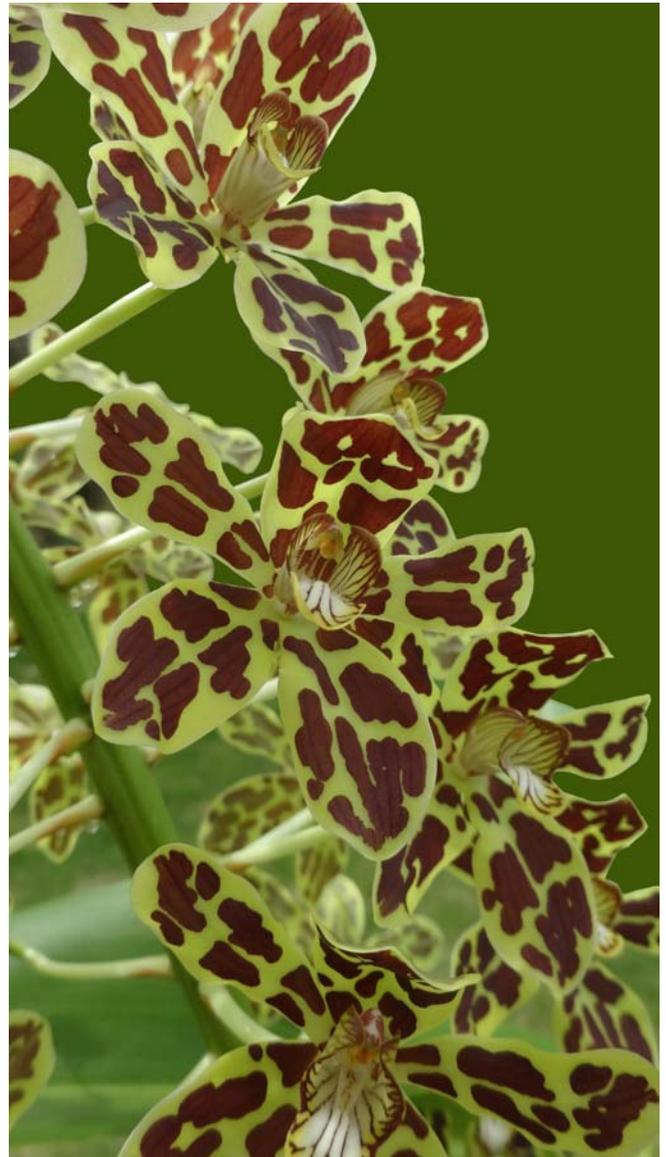
When I got it home I tried to repot it but couldn't get it out of the pot it was so pot-bound. As I was pounding on the pot, I finally noticed a small growth at the base of the leaves about one inch in length. I realized it was the start of a flower spike. So I quit pounding on it and just put the plant, without repotting, into a clay pot for stability because it was very top-heavy.

The flower spike grew and then it sprouted a second one!

I brought this plant to the April OGG meeting



Terri at Paradigm in April



How the flowers look when they are fully open.

at Paradigm where members might have seen it. At the time it had half of one flower spike open with flowers and the other stem with tight buds. It is now has both spikes fully open and hasn't lost any flowers yet! It has 68 individual flowers on the first spike [which I now have learned is called a raceme*] and 60 on the second. It is quite the showy plant!

I learned it is comes from South East Asia,

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New Guinea and some islands of the Pacific Ocean and the genera includes some of the world's largest orchid plants. In their natural habitat, they often grow to several meters in diameter, and can have hundreds if not thousands of flower racemes. A plant of *Grammatophyllum speciosum* reportedly weighing two tons was one of the highlights in the 1851 exhibition at the Crystal Palace in London. Another unusual characteristic of this plant are their pseudobulbs. This orchid discards its center bulbs by rapidly rotting and eventually turning into a dry shell.

From www.OrchidsAmore.com:

These are easy to grow if given enough water and fertilizer. They increase in size rapidly if re-potted into larger containers. Be aware, that like all orchids they only have so much strength per year for growing and flowers.

Re-potting rapidly will make larger plants faster but possibly will cause the plant to skip flowering for a year. They have a tendency to drop leaves if grown too cool over the winter, but recover rapidly when growing season starts. They like high sunlight to set flowers. Flower inflorescences will normally have 80-100 flowers from 3-4 inches each.

One AOS awarded plant had 32 inflorescences and 3670 flowers.

They are unique in that they have two distinct types of roots for different purposes.

The thick normal roots grow down into the medium and function like any other orchids' roots. The thinner hairy roots that grow up should never be forced into the medium. In the wild their purpose is to catch debris such as leaves and as the debris decomposes it feeds the plant.

From www.aos.org:

According to AOS, this orchid likes warm temperatures and bright light. I have observed *Gram. speciosum*, and *Gram. scriptum* growing in full sun. All species come



What it looked like at the end of May

from distinct wet/dry habitats, thus they require plenty of water and high humidity during the growing season, but less water is required during the cooler months. Fertilize with half-strength balanced fertilizer weekly during the growing season and twice a week during the cooler months. Pot in medium grade bark in terracotta or plastic pots. The mix should retain moisture.

* ra•ceme *noun* BOTANY

A flower cluster with the separate flowers attached by short equal stalks at equal distances along a central stem. The flowers at the base of the central stem develop first.

MAY 2017 OGG RIBBON JUDGING

First Place

Sue Reed	<i>Phragmipedium dominianum</i> Nitidissimum Grande
Sue Reed	<i>Phragmipedium caudatum</i>
Keith Nelson	<i>Epidendrum radicans</i>
Keith Nelson	<i>Dendrobium senile</i>
Keith Nelson	<i>Cattleya luteola</i>
Keith Nelson	<i>Catyclia</i> Middleburg x <i>Encyclia bractescens</i>
Keith Nelson	<i>Bulbophyllum macranthum</i>

Third Place

Keith Nelson	<i>Bulbophyllum</i> unknown hybrid
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Phragmipedium caudatum



Bulbophyllum macranthum



Cattleya luteola

THE RAREST PLANT IN BRITAIN MAKES A GHOSTLY APPEARANCE

By Robert Krulwich

It comes. It goes. It's been declared dead. And yet, like any good ghost, it keeps coming back.

You look. It's there. Then it's not. Decades go by, and people are prowling the woods, eyes down, hunting for it—crawling, searching, losing hope, and then, all of a sudden, there it is again! In a totally unexpected spot, far from the last sighting, hiding in the dark, barely as tall as your thumb, leafless, probably the rarest plant in Great Britain. It's known as the ghost orchid, and when it shows up, people go nuts.

I'm talking about plant people.

Let the twenty-somethings hunt for Pokemon characters on their smartphones. This is an older game of hide-and-seek—just as obsessive and every bit as crazy.

HOW IT ALL BEGAN

It starts back in 1855, when a Mrs. Anderson Smith (I see her in a full skirt, edging her way down a steep dirt trail to a silvery brook in Herefordshire, England) catches sight of a teeny blossom. It's barely visible, shaded, hemmed in by ferns and nettles. She leans over, plucks it, doesn't know what it is, and takes it to a local plant lover, who tells her it's *Epipogium aphyllum*, a leafless orchid (different, it should be noted, than the *Polyrrhiza Lindenii* featured in *The Orchid Thief*). Something new in England, it's placed on exhibit—and then, just as suddenly, disappears. "Rumour says it was accidentally destroyed when the room in which it was exhibited was cleared," the local paper reports.

The orchid stays missing. Twenty years pass. There's a second sighting in a different plot of woods miles from the first, then another 20-year pause, then another sighting, and by the time World War I ends, the plant has

a reputation for once-in-a-generation appearances, sometimes in Scotland, then in England, then in Wales. Plant lovers wonder where it will turn up next and who's carrying its seeds. Flies? Bees? Birds? Nobody knows. (The seeds are very, very small. They wouldn't be bird food.)

A LITTLE GIRL GETS LUCKY

By 1926, so many people know about the ghost orchid, you can feel the hunt getting shrill. The Cardiff National Museum in Wales has a diary written by avid plant hunter Eleanor Vachell, who breathlessly describes a May morning when an official at the British Museum in London calls a friend of hers, Mr. Francis Druce. The official wants to know if anyone's gotten wind of a new find—the first in years.

Druce, a local plant hunter, tells the museum that, yes, at this very moment, he's got a fresh-from-the-forest ghost orchid stem in his house—in a vase. He'd gotten it from a little girl who'd found it on her own. The

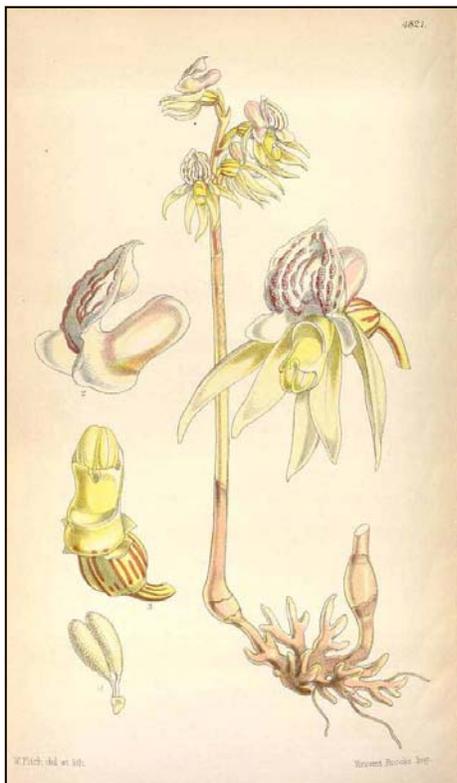
British Museum says, "Can we have a sample?" and quickly recruits Druce to conduct a search. Druce calls our diarist, Vachell.

GAME ON!

"Excitement knew no bounds," Vachell wrote. "[A] taxi was hurriedly summoned," and the team walked into the woods to see if they could find another blossom, but wherever they looked—"though they spread out widely in both directions"—they found nothing.

They needed the girl.

Asking around they found a "Mrs. I," who answered her door to say that, yes, she knew about the orchid (in fact, she'd made a sketch of the plant, which she was very happy to share with the museum), and



Epipogium aphyllum, Curtis's *Botanical Magazine*, t. 4758-4824, vol. 80 [ser. 3, vol. 10]: t. 4821 (1854) [W.H. Fitch]

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she knew the girl. She gave them her address.

The girl was in. What's more, she had a second stem. It was in plain view, sitting in a vase. Druce asked if she wanted to contribute her find to science. I'm guessing he told her about how exciting it would be to share her find with the British nation, but the girl—never named in the diary—said no. And kept saying no.

"In vain did Mr. Druce plead with her to part with it but she was adamant!" The stem was hers. She had no intention of sharing it. (Apparently, even in 1926, a determined little girl could hold her own against equally determined adults. No parents are ever mentioned.)

The girl was, however, willing to take the adults back to the woods to lead them to the very place where she'd made her discovery.

So back they went, Druce, Vachell, and the discoverer. Though they got down on their knees at the very spot where the blossoms had appeared, though they rummaged and searched, and though a few days later Vachell went back and dug down to the rootlets to see if any buds were coming up—the plant was done. There would be no more flowers. Game over. Chapter closed.

SO THERE YOU ARE!

There have been several chapters since. The orchid reappeared (in a different locale) in the 1950s, then again in the '80s, and most recently—after a 23-year pause—in 2009. A plant hunter and motorbike company owner named Mark Jannink tracked down a single specimen with just one small white flower on top. It was only about six inches tall. "The plant was so unobtrusive," said London's Independent, "that it was invisible from a few yards away. On spotting it, Jannink exclaimed: 'Hello you—so there you are!'"

Jannink had been hunting for months, trying to narrow his search to a few likely spots, according to a museum account:

He researched all previous Ghost Orchid discoveries—their preferred habitat, time of flowering and weather patterns—then staked out ten possible sites in the West Midlands, visiting them every two weeks throughout the summer of 2009, following the first cold winter for many years. Finally in September, he discovered one small specimen—causing great excitement amongst botanists, as the Ghost Orchid had been declared officially extinct in 2005!

Yup, it had been declared dead. But no more. The great science writer Richard Fortey wrote recently that it's just extremely elusive, maybe *the most elusive* plant in Britain. "Since the flowers blend almost perfectly with beech leaves as a backdrop," he says, it's a double-ghost, nearly transparent, and camouflaged to boot, with a mysterious ability to leap great distances. "Nothing I have read explains how a plant with such minute seeds can apparently jump so dramatically from place to place. There is something almost spooky about it," Fortey writes.

And talk about spooky: It has no chlorophyll. Almost every plant in the forest has green cells that photosynthesize and turn sunshine and air into proteins and sugars. Not this little guy. It clearly doesn't need light; it grows in deep shade where no other plants can grow. How it lives was a mystery (turns out, it's a parasite; it's stealing energy from a fungus below) but the best thing about it---is that it persists.

For the last 150 years, it has taunted, flirted, hidden, played dead. Mostly, it's missing, and yet we're getting used to the idea that even when it gone, it's always there. Or is about to be.

And in a shrinking world, that's nice to know.

<http://news.nationalgeographic.com>

UP-COMING EVENTS

- **September 16-17** - Wisconsin Orchid Society's Fall Show, Mitchell Park Domes, Milwaukee
- **October 21-23** - Fall MAOC, Cincinnati, OH
- **November 8-12, 2017** -- 22nd World Orchid Conference, Guayaquil, Ecuador

ADDENDUM TO JUNE 2017 NEWSLETTER

The 2017 annual OGG picnic will be held at noon on **Saturday June 17**, hosted by Liz Wood. Bring plants for ribbon judging. Our Plant Doctor Keith Nelson will be there at the re-potting table with some Orchids so bring those plants that need re-potting along with a new pot.

Please bring a dish to pass, and your beverage of choice. There will be a few chairs and tables, but bring a chair if you have one. We could use an extra cooler and a few more tables. Feel free to invite family.

There's plenty of parking across the street from the house, and on Upland, the cross street nearby, but there's no parking on my side of the street.

Hope to see you there!
Liz Wood
233 S Owen Dr.
Madison WI 53705

