



# Vero Beach Orchid Society



July 2017

## July Speaker

### Thanh Nguyen, Springwater Orchids

Thanh is an owner-operator of Springwater Orchids (Melbourne, FL). He is an engineer by trade, but also has been collecting and growing orchids for over 30 years. His orchid business began in 2001, mainly selling on the internet but gradually moved to orchid shows in recent years.

Thanh loves orchid species. And although he grows and sells all orchids genera, his forte has always been the genus of Paphiopedilum. He collects fine plants; grows, sells, breeds, and enjoys sharing his experiences with his customers and colleagues. His passion in paphs resulted in numerous award winning plants and an on-going paphs breeding program using local lab work, and local growing environment. His goals are to bring the excellence of a paphs breeding program back to America, and augment the enthusiasm of paphs growing by way of sharing his growing experience and educational programs via shows and society speeches. You will see these goals reflected in his breeding program with well thought process to target various audiences; from easy growing/flowering plants to state of the art breeding catered to most difficult collectors' interest, in parallel with conservation of breeding species, improving overall plants and flowers quality, broadening their growing conditions to make growing paph a joy, not aggravation!

Give it a try, and buy a paph seedling!

This month, Thanh will review the **basic culture of orchids**, along with specific culture of various genus via Q&A, that suitable to our climate. He will also bring broad orchid genera to sell at the meeting. If you have any questions you'd like to have answered, Thanh will be happy to do that for you. So bring those questions with you.



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## VERO BEACH ORCHID SOCIETY BOARD MEETING MINUTE

June 5, 2017

Minutes from board meetings will not appear in the newsletter until September since there will not be a board meeting until that time. The June minutes will appear at that time, after they have been approved for accuracy by the board.

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### **July in Your Orchid Collection**



***Vanda Mary's Dimity 'Mary's Dimity' HCC/AOS***

#### **July Climate Data**

Average high: 90.9    Average low: 76.5    Average mean: 83.7    Average rainfall: 5.79"

Although it mostly passes unnoticed to millions locked in their air-conditioned bubbles, July in South Florida is quite different from June. While the pattern of afternoon showers built from the moisture of the morning's sea breeze persists in July, the thunder-storms are sharper and shorter. The clouds linger less and the foliage dries more quickly. Less quantity of rain falls in July than in June and periods of several days typically pass without a drop. This is good news for orchid growers. July (and August) allows orchidists to focus on the first essential of orchid growing, drying the plant out.

Frequently, neophyte growers ask "What if I go away for several weeks in the summer and there is no one to water the plants?" The response is "That's wonderful". Experienced growers use the break in the

rainfall during July and August to dry their plants "hard". Depriving orchids of water for several days until they and the media or baskets they grow in are bone dry is essential to good orchid culture. By drying the plants hard, one deals a severe blow to orchid's natural enemy, fungus. Orchids have evolved to withstand drought because fungus cannot. During severe drought fungus' only defense is to cease all growth and retreat into a spore stage. Hopefully (and with good cultural management) these pathogens will not be aroused from this slumber until the first drizzle of September sets in, allowing our plants two months to mature and harden their growth making them less vulnerable to the September conditions which give some advantage again to the fungi.

Careful watering and judicious drying will do more than any other practice to ensure healthy plants. Drought is the orchid plants armor against disease. Be sure that your plants dry as completely as the weather of July permits. Nonetheless, as our plants are in full growth they need adequate water in July therefore after a hard drying, orchid plants need a thorough rehydration. If the next rain fall is insufficient to saturate pot, roots and media, the grower should add to the natural moisture until he is sure both roots and media are saturated, using two or three applications of water spaced a few minutes apart. When the plants stop dripping is the time to apply the next dose of water. Don't stop watering until the "heft" of the pot tells you that it is holding as much water as it can.

More typically in July, orchidists should use these opportunities when more moisture is required to substitute fertilizer for water and saturate the roots and the media in the same thorough manner. In July typically think of fertilizing rather than watering. Weekly application of a commonly available balanced fertilizer (20-20-20 or 18-18-18) at two teaspoons per gallon will supply the nutrients that our plants require in this period of lush growth. This balanced formula should be alternated every other week with potassium nitrate and Epsom salts (one tablespoon each) to supply the extra magnesium and potassium we now know are plants need on a regular basis. Even better (although not so readily available) lower phosphorus fertilizers containing extra magnesium and calcium with a formula like Peter's Excel (15-5-15) have been shown to be the precise fertilizer our plants need. This formula is recommended year round. Hopefully such orchid specific fertilizers will become more widely available.

Lowering the phosphorus intake of our plants is particularly important in South Florida because of our alkaline water. Always apply fertilizer in the same way as water, in two to three doses spaced a few minutes apart. Apply the fertilizer to the point of "run off", i.e., when the solution starts to fall off the plants; stop and move on to the next plant. Repeat the application a few minutes later when the plants stop dripping. In July more than ever, never, never follow the frequently heard and disastrously bad advice of watering before fertilizing. Always substitute fertilizer for water: now and at every season. Roots saturated with water cannot absorb fertilizer but the prolonged wetness can rot your plants. Don't give fungus the upper hand by wetting the plant's foliage and roots more often or longer than necessary. Careful watering is especially important throughout the rainy season.

The wise orchidist will have long since finished all of his potting of sympodials and the top working of his vandas but for the rest of us this is the eleventh hour. Autumn is closer than we think and vandas will need at least three months to settle in to their new baskets or pots before the first chill of October tickles their root tips. Unless you can protect them thoroughly from cold, Vanda top cuttings and keikis should not be made after the end of July. If you do take cuttings remember the "3 root rule". Count down from the crown and make the cutting beneath the third or fourth root. Keep as many leaves as possible on the stump and you will be rewarded with a greater abundance of offshoots. Always slip the sterile knife or shears down between the stem and the leaves and then cut transversely to save as many leaves as possible. Be sure to anchor the cutting firmly in its new lodging. Tie them up and tie them down! There is no time for mistakes in July.

Thrips are much less of a problem in July as the rain tends to wash them away and doubtless there is an abundance of other lush fodder for them elsewhere in our yards. They can reappear in a prolonged patch of dryness, so if you need to think of watering in July it may be dry enough to worry about thrips. A prophylactic spraying for thrips in July will also put a damper on scale crawlers. If a second spraying with soap follows the first by seven to 10 days, the population of mites will be scotched as well.

### **Tasks for July**

- Dry plants hard once or twice
  - Apply liquid fertilizer instead of water during dry patches.
  - Watch for thrips when rain has been sparse for several days.
  - Finish top cutting and planting of vandaceous genera.
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### **Editors Notes:**

A big thanks to Jim Andre for his presentation in the June meeting. It was the most interesting chemistry class I've attended! But, it was most informative as well. Thanks Jim.

This month's speaker will be entertaining as well as instructional, Thanh is an excellent speaker and one of our best local growers. He welcomes all of us to come to his greenhouse, but you'll need to make arrangements in advance since Thanh does have a day job that keeps him busy most weekdays.

Since there wasn't a board meeting in July and I was not in attendance in June, I don't have much extra to add this month. I can tell you all that we have a chairperson for the show for next year already, and that we have an operating budget approved by the board.

The only other item, and it's a big one, is for you all to be sure to purchase your raffle ticket for the Symposium, if you're interested in attending and haven't gotten your ticket yet. We will be selling them in this meeting and also will be making the drawing at the end of this monthly meeting!

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## **VERO BEACH ORCHID SOCIETY OFFICERS**

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DUES FOR 2017: SINGLE MEMBER DUES \$15.00

FAMILY DUES: \$20.00

**OUR NEXT REGULAR MEETING WILL BE JULY 20TH, AT 7:00 PM AT THE GARDEN CLUB OF INDIAN RIVER COUNTY, 2526 17TH AVENUE VERO BEACH, FLORIDA 32960. THE MEETING WILL START AT 7:00 PM**