



Central Illinois Orchid Society Newsletter

May 2014

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and Webpage content

President's message:

Spring has arrived, and our orchids must be very happy! I know mine are - there is much blooming and rejoicing going on amongst them, and this is occurring despite my many absences since our first grandchild was born. I've traveled to New York several times to help with his care, which is why I've been absent from every CIOS meeting so far this year. You all probably think your current president is a phantom!

Thus my topic: orchid care during vacations and other reasons that take us away from our collections. As summer and vacation season approach, it's time to consider ways to keep our orchids healthy when we're not there to lavish care on them (because we ARE lavishing, right?).

The first consideration is to ensure they get enough water during your absence. Orchids are resilient: they can go 10-14 days without being watered, assuming they're watered thoroughly before you leave. The size of the pot and the growing medium, however, do affect how long the plant can go without water. Smaller plants need more frequent watering, and orchids growing in very coarse bark mix will dry out sooner. The key point is being able to provide that thorough watering just before you leave, without drenching an already-soaked plant at the last minute (leading to root rot). Watering lightly for a few weeks before departure, or waiting a bit longer than usual to water so it can be done shortly before you leave, would be a good plan.

As you probably know, humidity trays with pebbles under your plants also help, not only keeping the humidity level higher, but also preventing the medium from drying out as quickly. Lowering the light level also keeps the orchids from drying out as much as they might otherwise, since the photosynthesis process causes the plants to consume more water. Not that your plants should stay in the dark while you're gone, of course!

If someone can look after your orchids while you're gone, all the better, but if not, some simple steps will help them survive until you return. I will see you at Monday's CIOS meeting.

Linda Bial, CIOS President

Next meeting:

- The May meeting is on **Monday, May 12** at 6:30 pm at the Champaign Public Library. Program will be on repotting, and several members will demonstrate how to repot and possibly divide orchids. The demo will focus on Phalaenopsis, Cattleya, Oncidium, Paphiopedilum, and others as time permits. While this is not a do-it-yourself session, members are welcome to bring a plant as a repotting candidate. Blooming plants are also welcome for show and tell. A beautiful spotted pink Phalaenopsis will be raffled off to members in attendance.
- The June meeting will be a field trip to the home of Tim Fairchild, a Champaign resident who has been growing hardy orchids for many years. Some of you may remember his talk at one of our meetings, but now we will have the opportunity to actually see his successful hardy orchid collection. We will meet at 6:30 pm at the Champaign Public Library Parking lot, and share rides or caravan to his house in west Champaign.

Events in the area:

- May 11, 2014. Eastern Iowa Orchid Exhibit and Sale. Iowa City, IA. www.orchidmall.com/eios/spike.pdf.
- Friday May 16th, 7:00 PM Prairie State Orchid Society meeting. Rochester Public Library, #1 Community Drive, Rochester, IL. This meeting will be a sale by the members. Orchid divisions, seedlings, pots, books, etc. will be for sale. Also a brief demonstration of repotting and discussion of potting medium will be presented.

Orchid of the month 1: hardy orchids

Obsessed with hardies? Perhaps, but it is possible to grow them in your garden, if you can provide the right kind of ground for them to grow in. The fact that they grow outside and only require some leafy mulch during winter makes them somewhat easier than the tropical orchids we struggle with throughout the year.



Illinois was once home to several species of wild orchids many years ago, but farming and urbanization have destroyed most of the habitat, leaving only a few patches of land where they still grow, and in some cases, thrive. Growing hardy orchids in your garden will help bring back into our lives what is already or almost lost native orchids and enrich our environment.

Large yellow ladyslippers (*Cypripedium pubescens*) on the previous page left, for example, are colonized on a hillside near Danville, owned and protected by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. http://www.illinoiswildflowers.info/woodland/plants/yl_ladyslipper.htm. Several specialty labs and nurseries make this and other ladyslipper orchids available for purchase. The only drawback for novice growers may be its cost (\$35+ each).

Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchid (*Platanthera leucophaea*), shown at right on the previous page, grows in moist to dry open prairie and is considered endangered in the Midwest. They are still found in several Illinois Counties including Champaign. <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/endangered/plants/epfo.html> and http://www.illinoiswildflowers.info/prairie/plantx/nodding_orchidx.htm.

Purple twayblade (*Liparis lillifolia*) shown below left is another species that are found throughout Illinois, including Champaign Country. This diminutive orchid can grow in many well-drained soil conditions from loamy to sandy, but the plant and its seeds require the presence of a particular strain of a fungus called *Rhizoctonia/Tulasnella*, so it may be difficult to get them established initially.

While not native to North America, Chinese ground orchid (*Bletilla striata*) shown below right and related species are gaining popularity as they are rather easy to grow in home gardens, and are fairly easily obtainable from nurseries. The image below right is of a seedling obtained for the May sale (which was cancelled). There are several more left of this plant for anyone interested in purchasing. The price is \$7. Only one is in bloom. This orchid can be planted in your garden with any garden soil, provided that it drains well and is mixed with organic matter (compost).



Orchid of the month 2: fragrant orchids

The book reviewed in this issue lists many fragrant orchids which are readily obtainable through nurseries. Here is a cursory list of some of them that are easy to grow in your home. The type of fragrance, blooming season, and the time of day when fragrance is most detectable is shown after the name of the plant.

Brassavola nodosa (Lily of the Valley; variable, often summer; evening)

Encyclia fragrans and *Ency. radiata* (gardenia/honey; variable, mostly spring; day)

Rhyncholaelia digbyana and its hybrid *Brassolaeliocattleya* Ports of Paradise (lemon and Lily of the Valley; spring to summer; evening)

Cattleya Chocolate Drop 'Kodama' (citrus, rose, lily; fall/winter; day)

Cattleya Marjorie Housermann 'York' (sweet, rose; summer/fall; day)

Dendrobium kingianum (hyacinth, lilac; winter-spring; day)

Neofinetia falcata (jasmine, vanilla; summer to fall; day)

Phalaenopsis Mini Mark 'Maria Teresa' (sweet floral; variable, often spring; day). Some Mini Mark varieties have no scent.

Phalaenopsis schilleriana (rose; winter to spring; day)

Rhynchostylis gigantea (citrus; fall to winter; day)



Phalaenopsis schilleriana



Brassavola nodosa



Dendrobium kingianum



Phalaenopsis Mini Mark



Cat. Marjorie Housermann 'York'



Lc. Bryan Wheeler 'Grandson'



Neofinetia falcata Cattleya



Brassolaeliocattleya Ports of Paradise



Cattleya Chocolate Drop 'Kodama'



Rhynchostylis gigantea (spotted form).



Encyclia fragrance (above) and Encyclia radiata (right)



Notes and tips:

- Phalaenopsis flower stem:

After months of blooming, most Phalaenopsis will eventually finish blooming. There are at least three types of opinions/practices regarding what to do. One is to cut the stem back to 1/2 inch above the bottom node (a little bump on the stem). Another is to cut at the middle of the stem, leaving several nodes below the cut, and the last practice is to leave the stem untouched, but only cut off where it turns brown.

Cutting just above the bottom node will ensure a completely new flower spike in the fall, and the node may develop into a second spike.

Cutting at the middle may prompt the nodes to become flower spikes during the summer, giving the plant a branched effect.

Leaving it may allow the tip of the stem to produce additional flowers throughout the summer, but it will never consist of multiple flowers as they first appeared in the winter.

Practices differ from grower to grower, but the most common may be the first option, i.e., cutting above the bottom node. As flowering takes enormous amount of energy, this provides the plant some time to rest, and regain vigor to bloom again in the fall. Also, without the flower spike, the plant is more easily repotted and managed.

- Summering outside

The night temperatures are reaching near 60°F, so many of the orchids can be brought outside. The plants can be covered if the temperatures dip below 50°F. Be careful not to set them out in light---they should be acclimatized to the outside environment gradually. Vanda leaves, though they can tolerate a hot afternoon sun during summer, can still get sun burnt if it is suddenly exposed to the outside light.

Book review:

Fragrant orchids, by Steven A. Frowine. Portland, OR: Timber Press, 2005.

At every orchid show, visitors try to detect some fragrance from the orchids on display. Most of them expect sweet or enchanting fragrance from the flowers so beautiful, but find that many of the plants lack in such quality. This is partly because some of the mass produced orchids have no fragrance to begin with, or the hobbyists who grew the plants usually acquire plants based on their flower appearances. On the other hand, even at our shows, we have seen one or two orchids fill the show room with perfume all day long, receiving a smile and a satisfying nod from everyone. But the acquisition of fragrant orchids does not have to be accidental. Though nearly 10 years old and some of the hybrid plants may not be easily found on the market, here is a book for those who seek a plant specifically for this added quality.

The book is about 200-pages long, and begins with three chapters devoted to the basic concept of fragrance and buying and growing orchids. Then five chapters follow, focusing on various major groups of orchids, such as *Cattleya*, *Dendrobium*, *Oncidium*, etc. Most valuable here is that each species mentioned in a group has detailed description, care requirements, intensity and kinds of fragrance (such as spicy, rose, etc.) and the time of day when most fragrant. All the plant images are in color. The author also includes "stinkers" in the "Other" group of plants to help unsuspecting buyers avoid them.

The last 60 pages are for seven appendices which list orchids by ease of care, light and temperature preferences, intensity of fragrances, when most fragrant, and blooming season. For example, most orchids are in the easy to intermediate culture group. The last appendix is a list of nurseries but any supplier can possibly carry fragrant orchid, so the reader should not be limited to the listing. Also, while it is possible that many suppliers would have species orchid listed in this book, some of the hybrids may no longer be available on regular market.

The author is a 'consultant to the green industry and an active garden writer and speaker'. His orchid connection is through the National Tropical Botanical Garden in Hawaii and at Missouri Botanical Garden. He also grows orchids at his home.

A copy of this book is available for loan from Eastern Illinois University Library, and from Mitzi Williams' personal library.