

# Central Illinois Orchid Society Newsletter

February 2014

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## Contact Us

[www.ciorchidsociety.org](http://www.ciorchidsociety.org)

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Central Illinois Orchid Society Newsletter is published irregularly. Subscription is through membership in the Society.

Membership is \$15/person and \$25/couple. Please visit our home page for Membership form and mailing address.

## CIOS Officers for 2014

Linda Bial, President  
Ray Urban, Vice Pres.  
Nancy Urban, Treasurer  
Bettina Francis, Secretary

Mitzi Williams, Newsletter and Webpage content

## President's message:

As is the norm here in east central Illinois in February, the weather is cold, the trees are bare, and the landscape looks quite barren, with not a green leaf to be seen. We all know that most of the trees here are deciduous, meaning they lose their leaves every fall and grow new ones in the spring. But did you know that some types of orchids do the same thing?

There are several varieties of deciduous orchids, including *Catasetum*, *Coelogyne*, *Cycnoche*, *Lycaste*, *Habenaria*, *Pleiones*, and some *Dendrobiums*. During winter months, deciduous orchids go into a state of hibernation, during which they gradually lose their leaves and seem to look dead, but actually are very much alive. You could also call this a period of dormancy. It can be quite disconcerting if you're not aware that your plant is a deciduous type. I once had a *Lycaste* that I thought had died when all its leaves fell off, but fortunately I just tucked it away somewhere instead of throwing it out. Imagine my surprise when my "dead" orchid sprouted new growth in the spring!

The care of deciduous orchids requires us to do something that seems all wrong: stop watering them. Generally speaking, withhold water from late autumn until new growth begins in the spring. These orchids tend to require shaded conditions during their growing phase in the summer. Then there orchids such as *Dendrobium pierardii*, which is not exactly deciduous, in that it doesn't drop all its leaves, but in order to flower it needs to have the same sort of care mentioned above. Without the winter dry period, it won't flower in the spring, but instead will produce keikis on the old canes.

February is the month of our annual spring orchid show, which is sure to bring beauty and color to this cold, barren time of year. I hope to see you all there!

Linda Bial, CIOS President

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P.S. Sandy Mason will be interviewing Linda about orchids for the WCIA Morning Show. Sandy's segment is called "In the Garden". It will air on Feb. 11 and 13. Sandy is Champaign County Extension Horticulture Educator. The show is brief but a lot can be said about orchids, our show, and sale .

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## Next meeting:

- We have no meeting on February 10 because of the **Annual Show on Saturday, February 15**, Room C., Champaign Public Library. We **need as many volunteers as possible** to staff the membership table and to answer questions
  - Orchid event and sale at the UI Plant Biology Conservatory and Greenhouses will be held on Sat.-Sun., March 15 - 16. Our participation is only on Saturday, but as usual, we will be providing assistance with the sale, repotting, and a lecture on orchid pests.
  - The year's activity can be seen on our Society website. The information will be updated as soon as we know. Please contact Linda about any topics or activities you would be interested in for our meeting.
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## Events in the area:

- Feb. 8- 9, 2014. Prairie State Orchid Society Show and Sale, Washington Park Botanical Garden Conservatory, Springfield, IL. Hours: Saturday Noon - 4pm; Sunday Noon - 3pm. If you wish to get a ride on Saturday, contact Bettina.
  - Feb. 1 - March 23, 2014, Missouri Botanical Garden Orchid Show. daily 9:00 am - 5:00 pm Missouri Botanical Garden. Admissions \$8 adults (ages 13 & over) but there may be additional fees for the Orchid Show. For details, see the events calendar at [www.mobot.org/](http://www.mobot.org/). \$5 adults (ages 13 & over), in addition to Garden admission.
  - Feb 15 - March 16, 2014. Chicago Botanic Garden Orchid Show. Open daily 10 am - 4pm. Glencoe, IL. There are many special events at this show. For example, the Lenhardt Library presents a special exhibition, *Exotic Orchids: Orchestrated in Print*, from Friday, February 14, to Sunday, May 11. In addition, weekend family classes will explore the vanilla orchid seed and vanilla ice cream, learn how to create a tropical terrarium, and visit the exhibition. Admission charge. <https://www.chicagobotanic.org/orchid>.
  - Feb. 15 - 16, 2014. Chicago Suburban Orchid Show (Batavia Orchid Society show). Du Page County Fairground, Wheaton, IL 60187. Saturday 10 am-5pm; Sunday 10am - 4pm. Nine (9) vendors will be present. [www.bataviaorchidsociety.org/2012\\_ORCHID\\_SHOW.htm](http://www.bataviaorchidsociety.org/2012_ORCHID_SHOW.htm) (please note 2012 is not a typo. It is indeed the page name.)
  - Feb. 28 - March 2, and March 7 - 9, 2014, 9:00 am - 5:30 pm. Orchids by Hausermann. Villa Park, IL. Open House Show and Sale. Many orchids are sold at a discount. For more information, visit: [www.orchidsbyhausermann.com/events.html](http://www.orchidsbyhausermann.com/events.html)
  - March 8-9, 2014. Illinois orchid society Spring show. Chicago botanic Garden.
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## Member raffle:

The Society has some donated plants which, for one reason or another, are not suitable for public sale even though they are healthy plants. These plants will be raffled off to members at our regular meetings as long as the supplies last. At the January meeting, Cindy won a large Phalaenopsis with two spikes. There are more plants, so be sure to attend the meetings.

## Notes and tips:

- **What are those brown flat things? Should I cut them?**



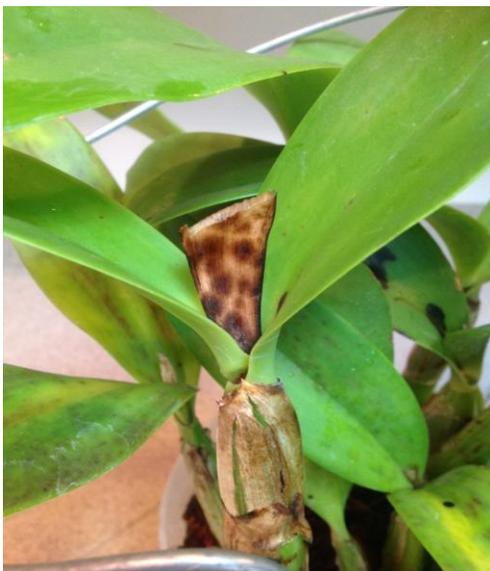
The brown part of the plant at left is a sheath which protects flowers deep inside it. It happens often with a young Cattleya-type plant, but even older, previously bloomed plant can have its sheath turn brown. This is usually due to the lack of humidity in the air (not the moisture in the pot). A sheath which grew during summer can dry out in the fall and turns brown due to lack of humidity.

At the base of the sheath, you may feel a slight bulge which indicates that the flowers are there to develop. Flower mass can also be seen by holding the sheath against light, but not being able to feel or see does not always mean the sheath is empty.

The above plant is 3 years old from the time it was purchased, so all together it is about 5-6 years old. It developed several sheaths in the past, but never bloomed. This sheath shows no sign of flower mass. It may be a blank as before, but patience is key here because it is mature enough to bloom.

It is possible that the flower mass has rotted inside the sheath so they will never bloom. More likely, however, the flower mass is still alive, but unable to emerge due to the dryness of the sheath. The plant shown below left has a fleshier sheath but no bulging at the base or no dark shadows when held against light. When it was cut well above the base, there was green flower mass still deep inside the sheath. Warmer temperatures and brighter light will help the flower buds of this plant to get going.

Once you confirm that the flower mass is inside but the sheath is totally dry, you can help the flowers by opening the sheath a little at the top as shown below right. Don't remove the sheath or open all the way because the buds inside still need protection from moisture or dryness. Once you open or cut the sheaths, be careful with watering. If you get the emerging buds wet, they may rot, especially during cold months.



- **Controlling blooming time:**

If you have flowers that have been in bloom for some time and wonder if they will last till the show time, lowering the temperature will prolong the blooms a little. If you cannot control the temperature in the room, place the pot near a cooler window. Hold back water if the temperature of the area is 60°F or below.

In the opposite, if your bud is bulging but not quite open, raising the temperatures and increasing light will help. Misting the bark surface and any exposed roots may be necessary.

- **Get ready for a season change: bugs and repotting**

Spring seems far away when we are still in deep freeze, but now is the time to check your supplies for insects and repotting. As the weather warms up and air gets dryer, spider mites can suddenly overtake your plants. Spider mites seem to prefer plants with somewhat thin, hard surface leaves such as Cymbidiums and Oncidiums. The affected leaf looks dryer and brownish. Running your fingers on the underside of the leaf may collect squished spider mites which color your fingers brownish. There are some biological and chemical products to control them, but washing the leaves thoroughly under running water (sprayer works best) works well, too. For controlling spider mites, see [www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/insect/05507.html](http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/insect/05507.html).

The ever-present mealy bugs don't seem to pick seasons. Their colony resembles a mass of white powder. You may also see an adult by itself. You can squish them with your fingers, or remove them with a tooth pick or cotton swabs, but it will be hard to totally get rid of them. The insecticide for indoor plants (such as Safer brand) needs to be used to kill the eggs and those hidden deep inside the leaf folds. Use of the chemicals for at least 5 weeks, with weekly spraying, is necessary. Mealy bugs attack many different kinds of orchids with soft leaf folds such as Phalaenopsis, Paphiopedilums, but less on those with stiffer leaves such as Cattleyas and Vandas. Mealy bugs also live at the base of the plants and in the potting mix, so if the infestation is too heavy, repotting may become necessary.

Winter is also a good time to check your supplies. New labels, permanent markers, and disposable plastic gloves are useful. Do you have enough pots and repotting materials? Our Society has various sizes of pots and two kinds of bark mix: medium coarse and small. They will be sold at the March sale, but if you want to get some beforehand, contact Mitzi.

## Orchid of the month: Vanda

Vanda is a very hardy orchids, and the mass of flowers are impressive. Growing them at home, however, is a challenge because some Vandas become HUGE! At one of the orchid nurseries in Florida, the Vandas were hung from a rod near the top of the plastic canopy and their roots, well over 5 feet long, hang straight down. At another nursery, a Vanda was tied to a tree on the south side where it was exposed to the hot Florida sun throughout the year while the mess of roots clung to the tree trunk.

Vandas can be grown easily in Illinois. Hang it outside where it receives good morning to mid-day sun but shelter from scorching, direct afternoon sun. Many hobbyists grow them in wooden baskets with very little amount of bark or moss. Some growers set the plant on top of an upside-down clay pot, which is placed inside a larger pot so the roots can grow down. A strawberry pot which provides water and air to the roots through its openings can be used successfully also. If grown in a basket, dunking the plant in a bucket of fertilizer-boosted water makes care easy.

Good news for home growers now is that Vandas are becoming smaller through hybridization without compromising the flower color or size. Hybrid such as Vandofinetia is a compact plant due to the small size of Neofinetia. The image below shows a Vanda grown in a glass cylinder. Nancy Urban found them at the Meijer store in Danville, but the two stores in C-U did not carry them (as of last week). The store clerk told Nancy that she takes out the plant, water, and puts it back into the cylinder. An easier way may be to fill the container up to the roots, let it soak for 15 minutes or so, and dump out the water. It will also avoid damaging the roots.



Vandas originate in south-east Asia, from India to New Guinea and from the Philippines to China. The group is made up of 35-50 species but there are many other species that belong to the Vanda tribe.

The inflorescence appears at the base of a leaf (little round protrusion in the image at left) in early spring and summer. Give bright light and plenty of moisture to the roots for good flower production.

Above left shows Vandas sold in glass cylinders. Above right shows a large Vanda set inside a strawberry pot. Below left shows a use of a wooden basket with some Spanish moss and coconut fiber. Below right shows two clever home-made hanging structures using wood and PVC pipes. The grower takes the structure with plants on it into a shower for watering.

