



Vero Beach Orchid Society



December 2015

December Meeting

With this being December, there will not be a speaker for our group since it's Christmas Party time at Marsh Landing. As you've read previously, the party will be on the 19th of December and the cut-off for signing up is December 12th. Lots of friend sharing a good meal and a gift at the end. What a great finale to another good year but a wonderful get together.

Tamiami Bus Trip

Arrangements for the bus trip are underway. If you're interested in joining us, please send your \$20 deposit (hopefully in a check or money order) for your seat to the post office box between now and the next regular meeting. We will fill the bus on a first come first served basis, so the sooner you submit your deposit, the more likely there will still be a seat available. The post office address is on the last page of the newsletter. If the bus fills before the next meeting, I'll send out a notification to all on our email list.

We will be leaving the parking lot across the street from the India River Garden Club building at 8:00am on January 23rd. If we have Ft Pierce members joining us, we'll make a short stop to pick them up. Then we'll be on our way. The arrival time should be about 10:30, which will give us all plenty of time to see everything there is and make any selections you can't live without.

We're still trying to work out a discounted entry fee for our busload, so it might cost less or nothing to get into the building. But don't hold us to that. It all depends on the facility and the organizers.

There is a small snack bar in the fair grounds building where the show is held, but feel free to bring eats with you on the bus, We only ask that if you eat on the bus, please be neat and clean up after yourself. They do have tables and chairs set up in the building for "dining". A lot of people use them for just resting too.

Our plan is to leave the show at about 3:00 pm, unless everybody is finished earlier. On the departure time, we will play it by ear. On our way home we'll stop for a meal, and hopefully arrive home (back to the parking lot) before 7:00 pm.

This is your opportunity to get plants from different vendors that you won't find at any of our local shows. It is an international show, so there will be vendors from Thailand, Jamaica, Malaysia, Peru, and Hawaii to name a few of the international vendors, as well as growers from the Miami, Homestead South and Central Florida areas. And growers from other areas of the United States will also be represented. It's really a great show so we hope you all can join us.

December in Your Orchid Collection



V. Arjuna 'Illumined' AM/AOS

December Climate Data

Average high: 77.5

Average low: 62.2

Average mean: 69.9

Average rainfall: 2.18"

December marks the beginning of the serious dry season in South Florida. While this additional dryness provides relief from the autumnal rains that can bring so many fungal problems, December is also the month of shortest day lengths. This contracted period of light, on the contrary, reduces severely the drying potential for our plants. Nature thus both gives and takes away from us in December. We must make sure, therefore, that we do not aid the dark side of the force by improper watering. In December, above all, one must stick strictly to the two cardinal principles of orchid watering: water early in the day so your plants have as many hours as possible to dry, and water heavily when you water, allowing longer intervals between watering to dry plants thoroughly. This practice maximizes the benefit of the drier air of December and minimizes the adverse effect of the shorter day lengths.

When nature has delivered a light overnight or early morning rain as she so often does in December at the leading edge of a cold front, add to her efforts by watering thoroughly that same morning and skip out watering for an extra several days afterward. With this

method you can use the general dryness of December to give yourself much of the advantage of a greenhouse in terms of controlling watering. As in all aspects of orchid culture, keen observation is the key to success. In cooler weather your plants need much less water. Moreover cool air even at the same relative humidity strips less water from your plants because cool air has less water holding capability. Always be sure that your plants really need water before you roll out the hose in December. Remember to use at least one of the standard tests for dryness: the finger dug slightly into the media test or the newly sharpened pencil coming dry like a knife from a well cooked custard, or test by hefting a pot that you know the weight of, both wet and dry and be sure that it has attained sufficient lightness. When you are sure they are dry, water them until you are sure they are very wet, then let the drying air of December do its magic to ward off leaf spotting diseases,

Himalayan dendrobiums of the nobile and Callista (*D. aggregatum*, *chrysotoxum*, etc.) Sections require no additional water (beyond rain) in December. Remember, those of you who water (or, even worse, fertilize) these dendrobiums in December, will be punished by having your flowers taken away in the spring. Some growers, who have the space, isolate these dendrobiums along with other types that want hard drying such as *Catasetum*, *Cycnoches*, *Mormodes*, and *Calanthe*. Another strategy is to hang these plants high or at the edges of the collection reminding oneself to neglect them and also to avoid watering them by mistake. Some growers achieve the same result effect by turning the pots of these genera on their side in November or December, to avoid catching water from whatever source. Plants of some of these genera that have finished flowering can even be removed from their pots and stripped to bare roots in anticipation of re-potting them in new media when they break growth in the spring.

sympodial orchids are resting in December and require less fertilizer. Biweekly or even monthly applications of a balanced fertilizer or 15-5-15 are still desirable. Nitrate nitrogen is the most readily absorbed in cooler weather; therefore at least one more application of the potassium nitrate/magnesium sulfate (at 1 tbs. each per gal.) recommended in November is still a good idea. It's good stuff! Vandas, *Phalaenopsis* and other monopodial orchids should be fertilized right through the winter although both the amount of fertilizer and the frequency of application can be reduced. Remember reddening of the foliage is not natural, nor is it a response to the cold per se but rather a symptom of nutritional deficiency. The plants are asking for more potassium and magnesium. Give them the groceries.

December can be cold. Frost has occurred in the first week of the month and unforgettably, the coldest temperatures ever recorded in South Florida were registered on December 25, 1989. If you haven't taken some of the precautions outlined in the November Newsletter, get busy! Keep a close eye on the forecasts during this volatile month.

Remember that hard cane dendrobiums of the sections *Spathulata* and *Phalaenanthe* are the most sensitive of commonly cultivated orchids. They resent temperature much below 60 degrees F. *Phalaenopsis* are next most sensitive, then vandas. Protect all these genera more carefully.

If you are getting a jump on Spring potting chores by repotting sympodial orchids that have finished blooming, it is particularly important that you take extra care in securing them in their containers. These plants may not be sending out new roots for several

months, enough time for them to be shaken loose from insufficient staking. Passing cold fronts can bring brisk winds in December. When new roots start to form on insufficiently secured plants, wind moves the plant and chafes the new root tips off. Improperly secured plants are never able to root properly and slowly pine away. If you love them you must tie them up, tie them down. This is also especially true of mass produced orchids sold in Home Depot, K Mart etc. The soft, peat based media used to grow these commercially produced plants in the controlled environment of a greenhouse often does not provide sufficient purchase to secure the plants in the rough and tumble of a South Florida orchid collection buffeted by harsh winter winds. You probably should have already re-potted these into more durable medium but until you do, tie 'em up!

Keep those vandas, phalaenopsis and hard cane dendrobiums as warm as you can. Merry Christmas, Hanukkah, and Kwanza!

Tasks for December

- Water judiciously and well
- Protect cold sensitive genera
- Provide extra potassium and magnesium
- Repot flowered out plants- be sure they are secure
- Buy holiday presents for all your orchid friends- suggestions: *Fla. Orchid Growing Month by Month* (The acclaimed Florida specific guide to great growing) \$22.50 post paid and signed or *Orchid Territory* (The hilarious best-selling novel on the Florida orchid scene) \$17.50 post paid and signed. Or December special both for \$30.00! Checks or money orders to Redland Press 25000 Farmlife Rd., Redland, Florida 33031. Phone 305 247-4398 or vandas@mindspring.com.

VERO BEACH ORCHID SOCIETY BOARD MEETING MINUTES NOVEMBER 2, 2015

President Jim Andre called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. at the Garden Club. Other Board members present were: Vice-President Bob Greene, Treasurer Addison Marvin, Secretary Marilyn Row, News Letter Editor Carolyn Greene, and Show Chairman Doug Mew.

The minutes of the October 5, 2015 Board meeting were read. Carolyn Greene made a motion to accept the minutes as corrected, seconded by Bob Greene. The motion passed.

Treasure's Report: Addison Marvin presented the Treasurer's Report for the month of October, 2015. Carolyn Greene made a motion, seconded by Marilyn Row to accept the report as corrected. The Motion passed.

Old Business:

Orchid Show: Doug Mew reported that we now have 10 orchid vendors for a total of 17 vendors for our April 2016 show. Busy Bee will be one of those new vendors.

Christmas Party: Members will be charged \$20 each and non-members charged \$25. A map with

instructions on how to get to the party at **Marsh Landing** will be available.

New Business

Bus Trip: Bob Greene advised that it would cost \$1,200 on the Magic Carpet Bus for the trip to the Tamiami Trail Orchid Show on January 23, 2016. Our Society members would be required to pay \$20 each but it might be refunded once they are on the bus. We would need 45 members. After that, we could invite other societies to travel with us. Non-members would be charged \$20 each with no refund. There may be a fee to get into the show but a special deal is being requested from the venue. The bus will depart at 8:00 in the morning and return around 7:00 p.m.

Doug Mew made a motion, seconded by Carolyn Greene, to adjourn the meeting. It passed at 7:55 p.m.

Submitted by
Marilyn E. Row, Secretary

EDITOR'S NOTE

First, the Christmas party should be very nice and I know the food's good there. We eat there quite frequently. Hope to see you all there.

Second, Tamiami is an awesome show to attend. One of the real benefits over Redlands is that it is in an air conditioned building so you'll stay cool and dry! So let's fill up that bus.

Third, we aren't yet sure who our speaker for January will be, though we have an idea. Our February speaker will be our own Sherry Cauley. More on her topic in the January and February newsletter.

Hope you all have a very safe, blessed and Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

VERO BEACH ORCHID SOCIETY OFFICERS

President – Jim Andre
Vice President – Bob Greene
Secretary – Marilyn Row
Treasurer – Addison Marvin

Board of Directors
Louise Martin
Ronnie Meeks
Doug Mew

Committees
Membership –
Hospitality – Louise & Marty Martin
Sunshine – Marilyn Row
Show Chairman – Doug Mew
Newsletter Editor – Carolyn Greene

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Society Email: vbos@bellsouth.net

DUES FOR 2014: SINGLE MEMBER DUES \$15.00

FAMILY DUES: \$20.00

THIS MONTH WE WILL NOT HAVE A REGULAR THURSDAY MEETING BECAUSE OF THE CHRISTMAS PARTY.

**OUR NEXT REGULAR MEETING WILL BE JANUARY 21TH, 2016, AT
GARDEN CLUB OF INDIAN RIVER COUNTY, 2526 17TH AVENUE VERO BEACH, FLORIDA 32960
THE MEETING WILL START AT 7:00 PM**