



Central Illinois Orchid Society Newsletter

March 2014

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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:

I don't know about you, but I keep thinking spring is right around the corner. And then it snows. A lot. So staying in the house and reading seems like a good idea these days. This month, my topic is books about orchids. Not how to raise them -- we probably all have a favorite or two in that genre -- but rather "about orchids" in that they feature orchids and the world of people who grow, show, sell, or steal them.

First is a book you may have heard of: *The Orchid Thief**, by Susan Orlean (1998). The author's research first resulted in an article in *The New Yorker*; then a much longer version appeared in book form. Later, it became the nucleus for the movie *Adaptation* (2002), about a scriptwriter's attempts to adapt *The Orchid Thief* for the screen. Orlean's suspenseful book is subtitled "A true story of beauty and obsession" and it concerns an eccentric man's attempts to clone the rare ghost orchid, *Polyrrhiza lindenii*, providing the reader with a glimpse of the subculture of orchid obsessives in Florida, and the ways in which many try to skirt the law to poach orchids and feed their obsession.

Next is *Orchid Fever*, by Eric Hansen (2002), subtitled "A horticultural tale of love, lust, and lunacy" (hmm; sensing a theme?). Whereas *The Orchid Thief* was set in the U.S., *Orchid Fever* is set in exotic locales such as Borneo, Turkey, Japan...and Kew Gardens. Hansen explores the larger international world of orchid culture and the billion-dollar orchid industry, examining why people will risk lives and liberty in pursuit of these beautiful plants.

Finally, there's *The Scent of Scandal*, by Craig Pittman (2012). Its subtitle is "Greed, betrayal, and the world's most beautiful orchid" (the orchid world sounds like a scary place!). Pittman's book, like Orlean's, is set in Florida. He examines the strange story of *Phragmipedium kovachii*, discovered in Peru in 2002, which quickly became the most sought-after orchid in the world and commanded a price of \$10,000 on the black market (there's an orchid black market?!).

Happy reading, and happy growing!

Linda Bial, CIOS President

* Our Society has a copy of this book for anyone to borrow. Contact Mitzi.

Next meeting:

- **Orchid event and sale** at the UI Plant Biology Conservatory and Greenhouses will be held on Sat.-Sun., March 15 - 16. **Our participation and sale is only on Saturday.** Bettina Francis will be giving a talk on orchid pests and diseases at 11 A.M. Repotting service will be provided for a fee. There is no regular meeting this month.

We need your help at this sale. If you can volunteer either morning or afternoon, please contact Linda (lindabial@gmail.com). If you can come but are unable to stay to work, that's O.K., too. We will have great, carefully selected plants and supplies for sale. The number of plants are limited so come early!

- April meeting will be on April 14 at the Champaign Public Library. Nancy Urban will be speaking on jewel orchids.

Events in the area:

- March 8-9, 2014. Illinois orchid society Spring show. Chicago botanic Garden.
 - Now - 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>.
 - Now- March 23, 2014, Missouri Botanical Garden Orchid Show. daily 9:00 am - 5:00 pm Missouri Botanical Garden. Admission to the garden is \$8 adults (ages 13 & over) and an additional \$5 for adults to the orchid show. For details, see the events calendar at www.mobot.org/.
 - March 29-30, 2014. Central Ohio Orchid Society Show and Sale. Franklin Park Conservatory, 1777East Broad St., Columbus, OH. www.coosinfo.info/
 - April 12-13, 2014. Central Indiana Orchid Society Show and Sale. Garfield Park Conservatory, 2505 Conservatory Drive, Indianapolis, IN. www.centralios.org.
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Cash for best essay:

The Mid-America Orchid Congress, a regional orchid society consortium, invites you to enter your essay on "My problem with orchids is..." (writer fills in the blank). The essay should be no more than 500 words in length and submitted no later than October 1st to Doris Asher (asherdoris@juno.com). The winners will be announced at the Congress' Fall Meeting in Columbus, OH, November 6-9, 2014. You do not need to be present to win. First prize wins \$100.00; second, \$50; third, \$25. All three prize-winning essays will appear in future issues of the Congress's newsletter, The Mid-American. The contest is open to everyone regardless of membership in Mid-America. For more information or if you have questions, contact Doris Asher via email or by phone (517-332-0004). The 2013 winning essays appear on p.6-7 of their newsletter, <http://midamericanorchids.org/MidAmerican/MAOC%20Mid-American%20Nov%202013.pdf>.

2014 Show :

The 2014 Show took place on Feb. 15 at the Champaign Public Library. The day was overcast with a threat of snow, but about 130 people braved the weather to get a glimpse of the tropics. The planning and the publicity process moved smoothly with Bettina Frances serving as Show Chair. Kudos to Paul Brady for creating yet another stunning poster, and to Sandy Mason featuring orchids in her "In the Garden" part of the WCIA Morning show which aired the Thursday before the show. Many thanks go to Fluerish, Prairie Gardens, and PrimoGro for providing impressive raffle items for the show.



The biggest applauds go to Linda Bial, Bettina and George Frances, Tammy Lambert, Don McClure, Joanne Miller, Ray Urban, Cindy Westfall, and Mark and Mitzi Williams for working at the show to make this year's event another great opportunity for sharing our passion for orchids with the community.

For more images of the show and the plants on display, please see our website, www.ciorchidsociety.org.

At left: Sandy Mason, UI Extention Horticulture Educator, interviewing President Linda Bial.

Notes and tips:

● Fertilizer:

With spring approaching (yes, it will be here soon!), your orchids are beginning to cast off their winter dormancy and are getting ready to grow again. Now is the time to brush up your fertilizer knowledge, but are you puzzled by all different types of fertilizers? If so, here are some pointers:

All fertilizers are made up of a combination of three (3) different components: nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium. These components are shown on the fertilizer label in a set of three (3) numbers. These numbers represent the amount of Nitrogen, Phosphorus, and Potassium regardless of the product, but the amount of each component varies from product to product, or for intended use. To put simply, nitrogen helps the green growth, such as the new leaf of a Phalaenopsis or a new growth of a Cattleya. Phosphorus helps root growth and plant maturity as well as flowering, while potassium also helps root development in different ways and help the plant endure stress.

In the image of fertilizers from Better-Gro shown below, the one on the left (Orchid Plus) contains 20% nitrogen (N), 14% phosphorus (P), and 13% potassium (K), while the one on the right (Orchid Bloom Booster), the numbers are 11% nitrogen, 35% phosphorus, and 15% potassium. The box by MiracleGro below, the NPK ratio is 30-10-10. MiracleGro now has a new product in a form of a mister (far right). Not much is known on the effectiveness of fertilizer mist, so the information provided here focuses on water-soluble products.

What makes these products unique for orchids is the additional elements included in them, i.e., many essential minerals such as iron, boron, copper, magnesium, etc. These additional nutrients give the extra kick to the overall performance of orchids.



● **When to use which one:**

In spring, after flowering, and when the orchid begin to grow new leaves or new shoots, it is best to use the fertilizer high in nitrogen, i.e., Better-Gro's Orchid Plus or MiracleGro's Orchid food. It is important to follow the instructions on the amount to use to prevent root burn. If you have not been fertilizing through fall and winter, it is important to begin fertilizing slowly, such as once every 3 weeks, and increasing it to every other week, then to every week. If you do fertilize every week, don't forget to it once a month and use plain water in order to flush out the accumulated salts.

The bloom booster, as indicated by the high phosphorus content of the Better-Gro product above, is to be used to enhance the budding. Cymbidiums respond very well to this fertilizer if it is used from late September until flower spikes appear in January-February. The effect of the bloom booster on other types of orchids may not be as visible as on Cymbidiums.

● **New products**

Two new products from MiracleGro (MG) shown below were spotted in a recent trip to a local store. Like the mist fertilizer, the spike may not be the most effective way to fertilize orchids planted in bark mix. The "Coarse Blend" mix has large chips of bark, while the regular Orchid Potting Mix by MG has too much peat moss.



Orchid of the month: Brassavola:

The most well-known Brassavola is *B. nodosa*, shown at right, and is the first orchid brought to Holland in 1698 (Wikipedia). Though only about 20 species, Brassavola, is often crossed with *Cattleya* (Bc.) and *Laelia* (Bl.) or sometimes both (Blc.) to create elegant shapes and colorful flowers. They can be planted in bark, but seem to like baskets better. In a basket, however, frequent watering is necessary because the roots are exposed.

Below left: Bc. Richard Mueller.

Below right: Bc. Maikai 'Mayumi' HCC/AOS. These flowers first opened mid-December 2013, and are still going though the color is getting lighter.



Both have *B. nodosa* in its parentage. The spots on the lip are often invisible on *B. nodosa* but always show up in its crosses. As long as the temperature stays above 68°F, Bc. Maikai produces new shoots and blooms throughout the year.

2014 membership:

If you have not renewed your membership for 2014, please do so as soon as possible. See the side bar on page 1 for the amount. Please send your check to Nancy Urban, 22 Dixie Acres Rd, Danville, IL 61832.