



Central Illinois Orchid Society Newsletter

April 2015

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

CIOS Officers for 2015

Joanne Miller, President

Bettina Francis, Vice Pres. /Secretary

Mark Williams, Treasurer

Mitzi Williams, Editor, Newsletter & Webpage content.

From the President:

NATIVE ORCHIDS IN VIEW THIS MONTH!

Since spring is finally here, I know many of us will be out enjoying trails and wildlife parks in Illinois. Did you know that Illinois has native orchids growing in natural settings in our woodlands and conservation areas relatively close by? You may find them in damp woods, slopes of wooded bluffs, sandy woodlands and savannas, along rivers and forested bogs and near fallen trees from windstorms. One of the largest and most attractive orchids in Illinois is the *Cypripedium pubescens*, Yellow Lady Slippers. The flowers are showy and large and have dark maroon sepals and petals that are twisted. The pouch like lip is yellow with red spots on the inside with incurved pouch margins. The leaves resemble Solomon's seal which you may be familiar with. They will be blooming in April and May. Vermilion County has many State Parks in which to look. Kickapoo State Park & Kennekuk Cove County Park has many trails to explore, as well as Homer Lake Forest Preserve, Busey Woods in Urbana and Meadowbrook Park in Urbana.

There is also the *Aplectrum hyemale*, Putty Root Orchid which has been found in Fox Ridge State Park in Charleston and Lake Shelbyville, blooming in May. *Galearis spectabilis*, the Showy Orchid, has been found in Macon County's Conservation District in Decatur. So enjoy our spring days and see if you can find any orchids along pathways to inspiration, which will please any nature lover. Remember to take pictures along the way!

Welcome to our new members. We are so glad to have you! Dee Brunkow, Ana Clark, Meridee Dornhoff, Laura Jamison, Deepa Madhubalan, Sara Taber, Heidi Von Gunden.

Please join us at our next meeting, Monday, April 13 to hear from Jennifer Nelson, Ph.D., University of Illinois Extension Office, who will speak on fertilizers in general and for orchids. See you then!

Joanne Miller
CIOS President

Next meeting:

- The April meeting will be on Monday, April 13 at 6:30 p.m. at the Hessel Park Church. Dr. Jennifer Nelson, Horticultural Educator of the Univ. of Illinois Extension for DeWitt/Macon/Piatt counties, will be the featured speaker. If you have blooming orchids, please bring them for show and tell.
- Our regular May meeting will be replaced by two special events: a sale on Saturday, May 9 from 8am - 1 p.m., in conjunction with the Native Plant Sale at Lincoln Square Mall. This sale is hosted by the Grand Prairie Friends and there will be many other vendors selling bedding plants, herbs, native plants, etc. We will have both tropical and hardy orchids, i.e., two blooming size and two juvenile *Cypripedium pubescense* (yellow lady slipper). We will need some volunteers for this sale beginning 7:30 A.M. for set up.

Another event in May is a trip to Hill Top Orchid Nursery in Indiana on Saturday, May 23. We will be car pooling to this nursery. Details will be sent in May.

Glass flower collection at Harvard:



If you will be near Boston, MA in one of your travels, be sure to check out the Glass Flower Collection at the Harvard University Museum of Natural History in Cambridge, MA. There, life-size flower specimens, made entirely of glass with some wire reinforcements inside, are on display.

About 3,000, representing 847 plant species, are exhibited, and surprisingly include a good number of tropical and hardy orchids.

The models were made by a father and son team of glass artisans, Leopold and Rudolf Blaschka over five decades starting in 1886. The accuracy and the details of the plants, especially various parts of the flower, both life-size and enlarged, will blow your away!



Above: models of *Cypripedium* species.
Above left: general overview of the collection

You can get a glimpse of the collection at the museum website, hmn.harvard.edu/glass-flowers. If you are interested in a book that describes the collection with images, the following book is available from Amazon.com: *The Glass Flowers at Harvard*, by Schultes, Richard E, William A. Davis and Hillel Burger. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 2003. (There are many editions and e-versions available).

Events in the area:

- April 11 (Sat.): 9-4 and April 12 (Sun.): 10-2. U. of I. Mom's Day weekend plant sale. Plant Science Lab, 1201 S. Dorner Dr., Urbana. Sale plants include: herbs, cacti and succulents, orchids, annuals and perennials, fairy/terrarium plants and various tropical plants. The Conservatory and Plant Collections are in danger of reduction. Show your appreciation of the Conservatory and the specimen rooms by taking a part in this sale!
- Apr 18 – 19, 2015, 10 am - 5 pm. Central Indiana Orchid Society Spring Show. Garfield Park Conservatory, 2505 Conservatory Drive, Indianapolis, IN. Vendors will also be available with orchids for sale. **NO REGISTRATION REQUIRED.** Fee: \$3 per person, \$8 per family. Contact: Michael Hinshaw 765-318-5968 mehinshaw@hotmail.com

Notes and tips:

- Potting materials: There are many varieties of potting materials that are in use among orchid growers and nurseries. Basically, for epiphytes, anything porous to hold down the roots snugly in the pot and allows air and water to pass through seem to be appropriate. Potting materials seem to be dictated by familiarity, personal preference, growing environment, and plant type.

◇ Bark mix -- this is the material most commonly available to growers in our area, and mainly made up of fir tree bark chips. Some mixes also contain perlite, charcoal, and sometimes sphagnum moss. In the past, some tree fern fiber pieces were also found in some mixtures, but it is rather rare now.

Our Society keeps a stock of bark mix which contains some perlite and charcoal. The bark mix comes in two sizes, small and medium. Small mix is suitable for orchids with thin roots such as *Oncidiums* and their hybrids, or the plants which like to stay moist such as *Paphiopedilums*. This type of mix is also suitable for orchid seedlings. Medium bark mix is best for most other plants such as *Phalaenopsis*, *Dendrobium*, *Cattleya*, *Encyclia*, etc.

◇ Clay pellets -- This potting material is used in conjunction with a special plastic pot with a few small holes at about 1" from the bottom, so the water never drains out completely. The roots can get moisture through moist pellets but also receive plenty of air because the round pellets never decompose. Bettina uses these.

◇ Orchinata -- this is a new medium made of Monterey pine (*Pinus radiata*) which is widely cultivated in New Zealand and is rapidly gaining popularity as orchid planting medium. It looks much like the bark chips without any additives. Mitzi uses these.

◇ Other potting materials may have more economic emphasis. For example, small lava rocks are often found in use for orchids grown in Hawaii because of their abundance and resistance to high humidity. Mass market orchids (usually *Phalaenopsis*) are planted in moss for ease of shipment and long moisture retention.

Orchid of the month 1:

By Cindy Westfall

Trichopilia (trick-o-PIL-ee-ah) is a genus in the Oncidium alliance, and their care is similar. I only have one Trichopilia in my collection: Trpla. Charles, which is a primary hybrid between Trpla. suavis and Trpla. maginata. It has fragrant blooms in winter and early spring.



I grow this plant under medium-low light and with intermediate temperatures. I have read that some of the species prefer cooler temps, so research before you buy. I water the plant once every 5-7 days, as the medium starts to dry, but I don't let it dry out all the way. I have read that Trichopilia can be very susceptible to crown rot, especially as seedling, so buying a mature plant is advised. I have not had this problem with mine, however.

I have mine planted in medium grade Orchidata bark. While the plant does not want to dry out, you need good drainage. The roots are quite fine and too saturated of a medium will rot them. When in doubt, grow a Trichopilia similar to an Oncidium Intergeneric, maybe erring on the side of cooler temperatures. At least, that's what worked for me!

One thing I like about Trichopilia is how showy the flowers are. There is something about an orchid with really showy flowers that makes me think 'oh, I could never grow that, it's so exotic!' but this one for me has been relatively easy. Another great thing about it is how quickly the flower spikes emerge. I have watered my plant and noticed nothing. A week later, there are buds nearly developed! It's a nice change for someone like me who is used to Paphs, which take months to flower. If you'd like to try a Trichopilia, some on-line nurseries that carry them include Santa Barbara Orchid Estate and Orchids Limited.

Editor's note: The genus Trichopilia consists of about 30 species which grow as epiphytes or terrestrials in wet forests of Mexico, Bolivia, and Brazil.

Orchid of the month 2:

- Phragmipediums--the "OTHER" slipper orchids.

Many people are familiar with Paphiopedilum, the slipper orchids from India, China, New Guinea, and other semi tropical parts of South East Asia. The most distinct flower characteristic of both types of orchids is the bottom petal, which is fused to form a slipper-shaped pouch to attract and trap a pollinator. About 65 species of Paphiopedilums have been recorded thus far. With a few exceptions, their height averages between 6 to 12 inches. Another type of pouched orchid called Phragmipedium comes from the higher elevation of South America, especially Peru, Bolivia, Columbia, Ecuador, and Brazil.

Below are images of Phragmipediums, the other slipper orchid. At left is Phragmipedium. JF-MDC.'RF'. 4N X besseae Chii and at right, Phrag. Eric Young x Phrag. ficherii.



They typically grow on moist cliff edges, often hidden from the view below. Some of them grow on lime-based rocks, which makes them "lithophytic" orchids. There are about 20 known species of this orchid. The average height of Phragmipediums is 12-24 inches. The leaves are long and strappy. They typically like bright light, cooler temperatures than Paphs., and constantly wet feet. To provide such condition, some growers place them in saucers filled with fresh water after watering every week.

The most sensationalized Phragmipedium is Phrag. kovachii shown below, a new species discovered in 2003 with magenta flowers ranging 6 - 9 inches across!

The first U.S. nursery which acquired the seedlings of Phrag. kovachii is Orchids Limited of Plymouth, MN. They figured out how best to grow this amazing species. Check out their video at:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aP7mPM69UxQ>.

It is interesting to know that, despite the similarities of appearance, the two genera (Paphs and Phrags) do not cross pollinate.

