



The Arizona Orchidist

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NEXT OSA MEETING

Meetings are held at the
Encanto Park Clubhouse
2605 N. 15th Ave., Phoenix, Arizona
North of Encanto Blvd. on 15th Ave.
Phone (602) 261-8993

The next regular society meeting will
be Monday, February 6, 2006 at
7:00 p.m.

OSA meetings are open to all
plant enthusiasts

Refreshments will be provided.

This month beverages
will be provided by:

Barbara Parnell
snacks by

Lou Ann Remeikis and
Sarah Heberling

Refreshment Coordinators:

Barbara Parnell (480) 948-0714
Mary Gannon (623) 878-4173

OSABOARD MEETING

The next OSA board meeting
will be held at 1 PM
Sunday, February 26, 2006
at the home of Jim Lauck

Board meetings are open to all OSA
members

Please call Jim for directions
(623) 742-6574

Grower on Call

Keith Mead kjkm@comcast.net

February Program

TERRESTRIAL ORCHIDS OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Dr. John Alcock, Regents' Professor of Biology at Arizona State University will present a PowerPoint program on the biology and conservation of the terrestrial orchids of Western Australia.

Although John's research deals primarily with the evolution of diversity in how male insects find and acquire mates, he has an intense interest in plant natural history, particularly with respect to orchids. John has traveled extensively within Western Australia, and since 1985, he has made eight trips to this orchid-rich corner of the world.

Among other textbooks which John has authored, in November, 2005, **AN ENTHUSIASM FOR ORCHIDS** was published. Copies of the book will be available for sale during the meeting, and John will autograph them.

This will be John's second presentation for OSA. He last spoke to us in May, 2002. Welcome back, John!

W. Stimmell

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From the President's Desk

Julie Rathbun

I hope that everyone had a happy, safe New Year!

Our January 2 meeting at the Arizona State Veteran Home was a pleasant experience for me. Thanks to our members and guests who made me feel comfortable while I was conducting my first meeting as your new President!

We were happy to welcome back **Sarah and Madeleine Heberling!** For those of you who don't know, Sarah is Madeleine's grandmother and mother of Lou Ann Remeikis. Lou Ann is Madeleine's Aunt. Sarah usually lives part of each year in Illinois and part of each year in Arizona. Last year we were sad when Madeleine and her parents moved from Mesa, AZ to Illinois. Madeleine spent part of her Christmas vacation in Arizona. At our January meeting, she won quite a few plants from the raffle table. She told us that she would return this summer for another visit. We're looking forward to her next visit!

Special thanks to **Aaron Hicks** for his repotting program. For those members who didn't bring plants to repot, I'm sure they learned a lot by watching Aaron's techniques. While he's repotting, Aaron's frequent, humorous comments always add a fun note to an otherwise non-humorous program. The program would have lasted much longer if Aaron would have had to divide Jim Lauck's HUMONGOUS epidendrum. A veteran member convinced Jim that his epidendrum species (purchased at our Dec., 2004 auction) was a specimen plant that had been thriving for at least 20 years and that if he had room in his greenhouse for the extremely large plant, he might want to reconsider dividing the plant. The decision was made to remove some of the outermost growths and give them to members who wanted a division of the plant. I hope that everyone who received a division of Jim's plant thanked him!

A cattleya owned by Teddy Cohen was also not repotted. The roots of her plant were growing over the edge of the pot, but there was a seed pod on the plant. Aaron groomed the plant and advised Teddy to repot it at a later date.

A few words of caution regarding potting mix suitable for the low desert: each person's growing environment is different than another grower's environment. The potting medium that works for plants grown in **my** greenhouse might not be suitable for growers whose plants are grown on their windowsills. Ask yourself a few simple questions before you decide to switch from fir bark to a different potting medium: How often do I want to repot my plants? If my plants are growing well in plastic or clay pots, and I water once a week, will a different potting mix than the one that I've been using, produce better results? And if you **do** decide to experiment with a different potting mix, select **no more than one or two plants** that you wouldn't mind losing. **DO NOT** repot all of your plants into a different potting medium. It's better to lose one or two plants and learn an inexpensive lesson than it is to lose ALL of your plants.

Speaking of potting mix: **Jim Lauck** repackaged a few of OSA's bulk containers of both medium and fine, high quality fir bark into 2.5 gallon plastic bags. (This size bag is larger than a hobby bag but smaller than a bulk container.) The bark is mixed with perlite. If you are interested in purchasing one or more of the 2.5 gallon bags, contact Jim **BEFORE** a meeting so that he can bring the bark to a monthly meeting. Jim provided the bags and performed the repackaging. Thanks Jim!

The Refreshments Sign-up Sheet for our monthly meetings was passed around at our January meeting. I will also circulate the sheet at our February 6 meeting. I hope that all members take their turn providing beverages or snacks. This year we're going to try a **different approach for Refreshments Co-chairs**. Rather than place the burden for all meetings on just two members, we're going to experiment by having two members serve for two months at a time. For our **February and March** meetings, **Barbara Parnell and Mary Gannon** will serve as **Refreshments Co-Chairs**. When you sign up to bring the beverage or snack for a meeting, be sure to check page 1 of our newsletter and see which two members are in charge of coordinating refreshments for an upcoming meeting. If you sign up to bring refreshments for a meeting, and then find that you will be unable to fulfill your obligation for that meeting, **please** notify one or both of the refreshment coordinators **AT LEAST 24 hours** before our meeting. If simple courtesy is not extended to the coordinators, then it's entirely possible that there will be no beverage or snacks available at a meeting.

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It has come to my attention that a few members who receive their newsletters via e-mail, did not receive their **membership renewal forms** with the December or January newsletters. If YOU are one who did NOT receive a membership renewal form, you can download the form from our website. The link to the renewal form is located at the bottom of our Mission page.

<http://www.jimni.0catch.com/osa2.htm>

Two other options for obtaining an OSA renewal form: 1) Send an e-mail to our Treasurer, Wilella Stimmell, and she will send you the form as an attachment. 2) At each monthly meeting, renewal forms are available on our raffle ticket sales table.

Thanks for your patience and support! See you at our usual meeting place, Encanto Park Clubhouse, on Feb. 6!

Julie

Member News

WELCOME NEW MEMBER

MARIA BAISIER

ON THE MEND

Fred Rathbun
Tommy Anderson

January Raffle Table Donors

OSA members -August Lorenzini, Bob MacLeod, Cynthia Schnitzer, Connie Skinner, and Wilella Stimmell; non-OSA members - Oak Hill Gardens and Santa Barbara Orchid Show Committee.

Special Thanks to all for supporting this important way of fundraising.

Arizona State Veteran Home Wish List: soda pop (both diet and regular Coke, Pepsi, and Sprite), flavored water, sugar free chocolate bars, and 36-count boxes of microwavable popcorn (butter flavor only) Please don't forget the ASVH when you do your shopping.

The *Arizona Orchidist* is published monthly by the Orchid Society of Arizona, Inc.
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<http://welcome.to/orchidsocietyaz>
Or to any of the Board Officers or Trustees:

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The Orchid Society of Arizona, Inc. is a non-profit 501 (C) (3) organization dedicated to community service and the study of orchids. It is affiliated with the American Orchid Society, The Orchid Digest Corporation, the Arizona Federation of Garden Clubs, Inc. The Nature Conservancy.

2006 COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAM SCHEDULE

By Wilella Stimmell, CSP Coordinator

OSA's first community service program in the new year was presented on **January 12** for members of **Weeders Garden Club** in Sun Lakes. (Weeders is an affiliated group of the Arizona Federation of Garden Clubs.) A few of the members had tried to grow orchids but reported failures. Most of the members who had gathered in a private home for their monthly meeting took notes during the program, asked many questions, and were pleased to learn some tips about caring for orchids. They also admired our blooming display plants, and several members were positively riveted by our photo of a 1st grade student's blooming phalaenopsis.

The member who won the phalaenopsis plant that we donated for a drawing, was **ecstatic** that she had another chance to try to grow an orchid! After the program, she said that during the summer months, she moved to Arizona from California and brought 10 orchids with her. She didn't know how to care for them in this climate, and ALL of them went to "orchid heaven".

The garden club graciously donated funds for our school programs.

Did you know ?

Vanilla is being grown on the Big Island of Hawaii? The Hawaiian Vanilla Company is owned by Jim and Tracy Reddekopp. If your travel plans include a trip to the Big Island, you might want to participate in a Hawaiian Vanilla Company seminar and learn about the history of the company and the high quality of Hawaiian vanilla beans. The e-mail address for the company is: CustRelations@hawaiianvanilla.com and the phone number is (808) 776-1771. If you don't plan to visit Hawaii, you might want to check out the company's website at <http://www.hawaiianvanilla.com/>

SURF'S UP

Do you ever discover a website while "surfing the net" that contains information that might be of interest to your orchid buddies? Well, when you "happen" upon such a site and would like to share please send your editor an email (kjkm@comcast.net) with the address and a brief description of what can be found there.

Wilella found this one to share: <http://www.rainforestportal.org/>

The Rainforest Portal was launched on January 2, 2006 and includes happenings that are updated daily. The searchable site contains News, Issues, and Alerts. As of January 10, current issues included: Panama's plan to construct a power line through the Darien Gap rainforest and Madagascar's progress on its plan to triple its nature reserves by the end of 2008. Conservation-minded orchid growers will surely want to bookmark this site and visit it frequently to keep abreast of what's happening in rainforests throughout the world.

OSA 2006 Membership Dues

If you have not yet paid your 2006 membership dues, a renewal form is available to download from our website. PLEASE DO NOT PAY YOUR MEMBERSHIP DUES WITHOUT FILLING OUT A RENEWAL FORM TO ACCOMPANY YOUR CHECK. Any changes in your snail mail address, e-mail address, phone number, or growing environments, etc. should be indicated on your renewal form. Suggestions for speakers are passed along to our Program Chair, and suggestions for in-house programs are passed along to our 1st VP. Also, if you would like to receive your newsletter via e-mail, please indicate your desire on your renewal form or contact our Editor, Keith Mead, at kjkm@comcast.net

Choosing Potting Media

"What's the best potting medium for my orchid?"

Continued from our January Issue

OK, now that we have the background behind us, it's time to look at the various **media ingredients** that are commonly available, and their specific properties.

One of the more common media ingredients - used alone or in blends - is **fir bark**. Good quality bark is getting harder and harder to find, but the stuff that is available is typically steamed to extract the resins that could be toxic to your plants. The removal of that resin increases the water-holding capacity of the bark, but also shortens the life of it. The irregular shape of the pieces of bark can lead to excess packing, which may reduce the airflow to the root system. Fine grade is often used for small seedlings, and the coarser grades for large plants. Before using bark, water it with boiling water to facilitate wetting, then let it cool.

Coconut husk chips (CHC), made from the pithy covering outside of the spherical, hard coconut shell, is gaining popularity as a replacement for fir bark. It is readily available, relatively cheap, and wets and rewets better than bark. It also tends to be more regular in shape - chunks or cubes as opposed to coarse flakes - so facilitates better air flow throughout the root mass. CHC holds a lot more water than bark, so keep that in mind when using it. It lasts considerably longer than bark as well, often going three years before decomposition becomes an issue, as opposed to a year for bark. A word of warning: despite claims otherwise, most CHC has a fairly high salt content when you get it, so it pays to soak and rinse it several times prior to use.

Coconut husk fiber is the wiry result of stripping and shredding the interior of the coconut husk, rather than chipping it. It is springy and flexible, and is often matted to form liners to hanging baskets, but it can also be used straight as a medium for plants that really like to dry out fast. If fairly tightly compressed, water will stay in pockets in the mass for a longer time period.

Coir, sometimes called "**Coco-Peat**," is the result of grinding the husk into coarse powder. It is often used as a substitute for peat moss in blends, but can be used alone for seedlings that like to stay damp.

Peat moss and its commercially available blends, such as **ProMix HP**, are sometimes used in the so-called "mud mixes," which hold water really well. Like coir, it can be blended with other ingredients to produce a good medium for terrestrial and semi-terrestrial species.

Osmunda fiber, the roots of a number of ferns from the genus *Osmunda*, used to be a staple in the orchid-growing community, but it is now difficult to find a high quality fiber.. It is tough and springy, and requires vertical alignment in the pot to ensure proper drainage. In almost totally ensures that the plants' roots get all of the air they need, and as it decomposes, is an excellent source of nutrients, requiring little or no supplementation via fertilizers.

Tree fern fiber - the "trunks" of tropical tree ferns - has replaced most osmunda in orchid culture. It is very stiff and airy, and can be obtained as shredded fibers, chunks or slabs. It has little moisture holding capacity, so aerates media blends very well. The slabs are often used for mounting plants directly.

Continued from page 5

Redwood fiber, or "**Palco Wool**" as it is sometimes known, is a light, fluffy wood fiber that does not decompose, and is added as a moisture-retention aid and as a means of increasing the acidity of media blends.

Sphagnum moss is pretty much a standard in the orchid growing community, whether by itself or as a blend additive. Available in a wide range of quality - from the expensive New Zealand "Primo" and its close-but-less-expensive counterparts from Chile, to some really lousy stuff (short strands, no "fluff"), - the good stuff is a great medium for plants that love constant moisture. Learning how to attain the proper packing density is a challenge, as it holds so much water that it can become sopping pretty easily. Generally, sphagnum becomes sour and in need of replacement in the 6- to 9-month range, although that can be extended by blending it with charcoal.

Hardwood charcoal is a very long-lasting medium ingredient having a moderate-to-low moisture holding capacity. Many growers of vandaceous plants use the coarse grade as the sole medium. Some claim that the charcoal "sweetens" the medium by absorbing some of the foul chemicals produced in the decomposition of other media components, or excess salts from fertilizers.

Perlite, often referred to as "**sponge rock**" for the coarser grades, is expanded volcanic glass, and is a great aerator of blends, but still holds enough moisture to be a fairly good substrate for Semi-Hydroponic culture.

Pumice is similar in nature to perlite, but with a higher density and lower moisture-holding capacity.

LECA, standing for "Lightweight Expanded Clay Aggregate," is a general term for any number of more-or-less spherical terra cotta pellets that were originally designed to be the aggregate in lightweight concrete formulations, but later diverted to horticultural use. There are many brands available, including Aliflor, Hydroton, PrimeAgra and others, and they vary greatly in their properties and applicability to orchid culture.

Diatomite is calcined diatomaceous earth muds. It is highly porous, and holds a tremendous amount of water. While it seems to be just too wet for Semi-Hydroponic culture, it has seen good application by itself for pot culture for plants that appreciate a damp root environment.

Thanks to Ray Barkalow of First Rays Orchids for his permission to reprint the above article. Visit his website at www.firstrays.com/ for a wealth of orchid information.

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Orchids in February

It's just a tiny month,
It hasn't many days.
And they are short; the nights are cold,
And proper caution pays.
So run the fans and move the air,
Especially at night.
This helps to keep the fungus down,
And stops botrytis blight.

It is a very special month,
With sentiments divine.
For it's the time to send your love,
An orchid valentine.
So fix the nicest one you have,
With ribbon and with lace,
Then give it to your sweetheart, with
Your tenderest embrace.

*Clarence S. Lindsten
Orchids in My Greenhouse
Crabgrass in My Lawn
(1973)*

THIS SPACE IS RESERVED

Yes, this space is reserved for YOUR contribution to the newsletter. Read any good orchid books lately? Had success blooming that prize that would NEVER bloom? Discover success with a new potting media? Find that wonderful website with ALL the answers? We would love for you to share this information with your orchid buddies.

Newsletter submission deadline is the 10th of the month preceding the issue. Just email the editor at kjkm@comcast.net.....I'll be waiting !

OSA February 2006 Calendar

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5	6 OSA MEETING 7:00 PM	7	8	9	10	11
12	13  Wayne Baker	14  Bob Gordon	15	16	17	18
19  Jim Johnson Jim Lauck	20	21	22	23	24	15
26	27  Teddy Cohen	28	(29)  Del Pace			



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