



The Arizona Orchidist

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Clarence S. Lindsten

1966

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February 2019

NEXT OSA MEETING

The next regular society meeting
will be

Monday, February 4th

Training Center

at the

Arizona State Veteran Home

4141 S. Herrera Way, Phoenix.

(Formerly North 3rd Street)

OSA meetings are open to all
plant enthusiasts

Refreshments

Snacks

Carol Erwin
and Sue Kennon

Beverage

We need a volunteer!

Refreshment Coordinators:

Lou Ann Remeikis (602) 803-6889

Barbara Parnell 602) 451-5952

Board Meeting

February 17 at 1 PM
at the home
of Julie Rathbun

Grower on Call

Dean Toms
602-588-4028
datoms@msn.com

February 2019

Do you have orchids that are no longer in bloom and need a little rejuvenation?

Sometimes we find ourselves putting off the repotting ritual. Neglecting your orchids prevents them from thriving. If this is you, and even if it isn't, come to the February meeting. You can come to watch or participate in an evening of repotting an orchid in need.

Members can bring one plant and receive instructions or guidance in transplanting it. Every now and then each orchid needs fresh new medium around its roots. New medium improves the air circulation, helping to reduce or eliminate mold or mildew that accumulates with old decaying bark.

If you bring a plant, do not forget to bring a new pot to put your plant in. OSA will have some presoaked fir bark on hand. However, if you want to transplant your orchid into an alternate medium (sphagnum moss, etc.) , bring it with you and we'll help.

The holidays are now over and everyone's schedules are getting back to normal.

I hope to see as many of our members as possible at February's meeting.

Happy Growing

Lou Ann

Raffle Donors

Carol Erwin, Dolly Floyd, Bob MacLeod,

Julie Rathbun, Wilella Stimmell

Thank You for Your Support

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From the President's Desk

Julie Rathbun

At our January 7th meeting, only one member brought a large, newly acquired plant with deformed flowers that was a first bloom plant for him. Several of our members had theories to explain the deformed blooms, but since we had nothing to compare the abnormality to, we were really just guessing.

All other members in attendance apparently had no problems or questions about their newly acquired plants. Also, we had a silent auction of plants.

We had hoped to see Sarah Heberling, Lou Ann's mother, at the meeting, but she couldn't attend because Lou Ann's dad had been released from a local hospital the previous day. We missed you Sarah!

On January 12, we presented two hands-on repotting programs: one in the morning at the Chandler Downtown Library (a magnificent structure much like the Burton Barr Library in downtown Phoenix); and the other in the afternoon at the Southeast Regional Library in Gilbert.

Karrie Wicks, Librarian at the Chandler Library sent us a message after our program and told us that the program was an "amazing success" and that the participants gave her very positive feedback. She would like to schedule another program for this year, but we have a policy of not returning to the same library in the same year.

It was a long day for our program team, but well worth our time.

We have two community service programs scheduled for February, but not on the same day. The first one is on February 6th at 11AM at the Anthem Library, and the 2nd is at the Fairway Library in Sun City on the 14th at 10 AM.

We don't yet know the firm dates for the Home and Garden Show at the State Farm Arena, but it has always been scheduled for the first weekend in March. We will need members to volunteer to work this 3 day event.

See you on February 4!

Julie



Photo of Randy's misformed Paph bloom from the January meeting.
Photo credit to Dolly Floyd

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL Final Reminder

Attached to this issue is a membership renewal form. OSA's calendar year ends on December 31st.

At your earliest convenience, please complete all areas of the form and return it with your 2019 membership dues to the Treasurer's address that is listed on the form, or bring your completed form with cash or check to our January meeting. **Please do not pay your dues without completing your renewal form or at the very least: write your name, date, and "same info" (if applicable).**

If you didn't receive a renewal form, contact our newsletter Editor, Keith Mead, at orchidsinabq@gmail.com

Alternatively, we always have application/renewal forms at our meetings. (You can also download our application form from our website.)

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www.orchidsocietyaz.org

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.

The Other Orchid Thief: Virus Ravages the Popular Flower

Once the province of high society, orchids have found their way into households worldwide, but so has a plant-killing batch of viruses plaguing nurseries

- By Daniel Grushkin

For hobbyists like Colette Theriault, a photographer who lives in Ontario, orchids are an addiction. Theriault bought her first *Phalaenopsis* in 1999 and nurtured it for three years before it bloomed its first pink flowers. The success led to more, until she had 25 orchids crowding her windowsills. In March she discovered yellow spots on the leaves of her collection—a telltale sign of a virus, like those plaguing the orchid industry.

Theriault is now fighting a losing battle to save the first orchid she ever bought. "It's psychological for me," she says. "I was mad at myself for buying more plants."

Not long ago, only a rarified elite kept orchids in their homes. Collected from the tropics, orchids transported to other climates lacked the conditions needed to flourish and were nearly impossible to breed. But in recent decades growers have learned how to clone thousands of identical plants, and an industry has grown around the flowers. As growers have bred increasingly baroque varieties, sales have exploded, making orchids the second most sold houseplant in the U.S. (after poinsettia). Go to any Home Depot and brazen sprays of purple orchids are on display along with aisles of drywall and doorknobs. Even corner bodegas in big cities tend to carry a droopy *Phalaenopsis* or two for sale as house gifts.

The popularity of orchids culminates in spring displays that pull in huge crowds. Last month, their strange and colorful petals drew 117,000 gawkers to the Bronx for a radiant exhibition at The New York Botanical Garden. Another legion of aficionados will descend on Oklahoma City for the American Orchid Society meeting this month.

As the orchid business has leapt from \$47 million in 1996 to \$123 million a year, a batch of viruses has bedeviled orchid greenhouses. "It's ruining the business," says Joseph Silva, co-owner of Silva Orchids in Neptune, N.J.

There are 30 known orchid viruses, but when growers say a plant has "a virus" they usually mean one of the two most prevalent: *Cymbidium mosaic virus* (CMV) or *Odontoglossum ringspot virus* (ORSV). Neither causes any obvious signs, but once orchids contract them, the plants begin to limp along—with fewer, shorter-lasting flowers. Then brown spots begin to appear on the leaves, the petals mottle and wilt, and the plant ultimately succumbs.

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Tellingly, viruses do not naturally spread among wild orchids, which multiply by producing hundreds of thousands of feather-light seeds, none of which can carry viruses. So the only vector for spreading CMV and ORSV are the growers themselves. In some cases, careless producers have cloned infected plants and inadvertently sold armies of orchids bearing viruses. More commonly, workers spread the virus with their clippers. Unless heated or bleached between each trimming, the blades play the part of a dirty syringe.

"Orchid growers divided plants indiscriminately, gave them to friends, sold them. It didn't take long for one infected plant to infect thousands—never through the air, never through insects, but simply by human propagation," says Bill Zettler, a plant pathologist at University of Florida.

There are no current statistics on the prevalence of viruses. But studies during the last 20 years show a startling rate of both CMV and ORSV. Viruses infected 50 percent of the orchids tested in Singapore's botanical gardens in a 1994 study, 25 percent of those grown in Hawaii in 1993, and 65 percent of the cut orchids from Thailand, the world's largest exporter, in 2005.

Currently, at least two groups of orchid scientists, one in Hawaii and another in Singapore, have begun trying to solve the problem by genetically engineering breeds that resist CMV and ORSV. Sek Man Wong, a plant pathologist at the National University of Singapore, is using RNA interference to splice virus RNA into the plant's genetic blueprint. Theoretically the virus signatures should allow the plant to recognize and eliminate a potential infection. He hopes to have the genetically modified orchid ready for the market by 2015.

In the meantime, the percentage of infection among growers worldwide has likely dropped in the years since industry groups such as the American Orchid Society turned a spotlight on the issue. Ron McHatton, chief operating officer of the American Orchid Society, has been trying to quell a rash of gossip about viruses because, over the last few years, growers fingered Taiwan for continuing to spread the contagion. As the largest potted-orchid exporter, Taiwan delivers \$21 million in *Phalaenopsis* orchids each year. "People are saying the industry is riddled with virus. It's just not true," McHatton says.

Chin-An Chang, the former head of the plant pathology at the Taiwan Agricultural Research Institute, thinks it's unreasonable to ask for virus-free orchids because market prices are now so low. "A serious hobbyist who's concerned about viruses can go directly to the nursery for high quality. For the consumers buying it from the supermarket, some percentage of virus should be acceptable." That is hardly comfort for fans, who primp and beautify their orchids and end up infecting their entire collections.

OSA February 2019 Calendar

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

| | | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--|---|---|----|----|
| | | | | | 1 | 2 |
| 3 | 4 OSA Meeting 7 PM | 5 | 6  Carol Erwin | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 10  Gary Cauble | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14  | 15 | 16 |
| 17 | 18 | 19  Jim Johnson | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 |
| 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | | |



Orchid Society of Arizona

c/o Keith Mead
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February 2019 Newsletter