



The Arizona Orchidist

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NEXT OSA MEETING

The next regular society meeting will be

Monday, May 7th at 7:00 P.M.

Meetings are held at the

Training Center

at the

Arizona State Veteran Home

4141 N. S. Herrera Way, Phoenix.

OSA meetings are open to all
plant enthusiasts

Refreshments will be provided

Beverage by

Megan Stuff

Snacks by

Bob MacLeod & Susan Nahmias

Refreshment Coordinators:

Barbara Parnell (480) 948-0714

Lou Ann Remeikis (602) 803-6889

Jo Anne Waddoups

480-654-9883

Board Meeting

**May 27 at 1 PM at the home of
Julie Rathbun**

Grower on Call

Barbara Parnell

birdie552002@yahoo.com

MAY PROGRAM

Repotting seedlings from a Community Pot

Community pots, commonly referred to as compots, each contain 5 or 6 orchid seedlings which are large enough to survive in individual pots after they are removed from a compot. Flasks contain more seedlings, but they are much smaller plants. Seedlings from a flask are usually removed from the flask and placed into compots until they grow large enough to be removed from compots.

For growers, the advantage of purchasing a compot is that each seedling is cheaper than one mature plant would be. The trade-off is that it takes longer for a seedling to mature to blooming size than if a near blooming size plant is purchased.

For this program, everything will be provided, free of charge, for members to pot a seedling into an individual pot. At the end of our meeting, you will be able to take your newly repotted seedling home and take care of it. It will be interesting to see the first blooms that appear on your seedling.

Several donated compots of different hybrids will be available at our meeting. To help you choose which seedling you want to re-pot, photos of the hybrids in bloom will be available.

W. Stimmell

2012 OSA MEMBERSHIP ROSTER

The 2012 roster is available electronically. If you indicated an e-mail address on your membership renewal form, you may request a roster. To request a roster, send an e-mail to: wilellas@att.net

Note: Due to the number of complaints received regarding invasion of privacy by solicitations to functions other than OSA functions, the electronic version of our roster includes only names and phone numbers – NO mailing addresses or e-mail addresses.

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Julie Rathbun

During our April 2nd meeting, we started the process of liquidating OSA's library. Lou Ann Remeikis brought the books which have been stored in her garage; Wilella served as the auctioneer; and Susan Nahmias kept track of which members bought books and their winning bids. Thank you, ladies! Lou Ann laid the books on the front table so that members could preview the books for sale. Since many of our members are new to orchids, quite a few members were not familiar with either the books or their authors. With a warped sense of humor, Willie noted which authors are deceased (their books often sell for higher prices than they sold for while they were alive), which books were "coffee table" books, but not particularly helpful regarding orchid culture, and which books contained useful information. Those who bought books were surely pleased at their bargain purchases. And by the end of the auction, only a few scientific books remained unsold. It was a fun evening, and a good time was had by all. We might donate unsold books to the Yuma Orchid Society, but that will have to be a decision made by our board members. During our August meeting, we plan to liquidate another portion of our library.

Also during the April meeting, I reminded members that there will be **no July and no September meetings** due to holiday interference. Our **June/July and our August/September newsletters will be combined issues.**

Our colorful display table at our April meeting featured assorted genera of both species and hybrids. One of the primary hybrid plants was probably the tallest plant anyone ever brought to one of our meetings!

One of the numerous donated plants (many in bloom!) on our raffle table was interesting because it was a companion plant, not an orchid. It was a *Dischidia pectinoides* – commonly called the ant plant or clamshell plant. According to the donor: "The little [red] buds are actually the flowers. They never open up; they just grow into a long skinny seed pod that will burst open with seeds attached to a white fuzzy thing [that looks] like a dandelion."

Recently, member Seelye Smith was seriously ill and was hospitalized. We were sorry to hear about her health, but were pleased to learn that she's home and slowly recovering. Please join me in thinking positive thoughts for Seelye's complete recovery. There's nothing as important to us as the health and welfare of our members.

Carpool Note: Many of our members have day jobs which make it impossible to carpool to our meetings. But a few of our members have been sharing rides to our meetings even before the steep rise in gas prices. If at all possible, I encourage members to consider carpooling to our meetings. A driver might not accept partial reimbursement for gas, but it would be considerate of a passenger to at least offer to help pay for gas.

If you are interested in sharing a ride and would like to know who lives near you, contact any board member. We don't know everything, but we're handy with Phoenix Metro maps!

See you on May 7th!

Julie

April Raffle Donors

Connie Skinner Cromwell, Bob MacLeod,
Barbara Parnell, Wilella Stimmell,
and non-members Michael Hilner, Mike Sielaff,
and the family of August Lorenzini

Thank You !

Book Review

The Orchid Whisperer

Expert Secrets for Growing Beautiful Orchids.

By Bruce Rogers. Chronicle Books. \$19.95.

Forget horses and dogs, which aren't all that tough to figure out, especially if you have a carrot or a bit of ground beef in your hands.

But orchids? Now, there are mysterious creatures. We need all the whisperers we can get to figure out these fussy and expensive darlings of the floral world.

Rogers has been cultivating orchids for 30 years and is a member of the advisory council of the San Francisco Conservatory of Flowers.

His book is a sturdy, soft cover guide printed on thick, glossy stock, with many full-page images of orchids. The soft cover helps to keep the cost of the book down because, as Rogers observes in his introduction, "I liked the idea of creating an orchid book that is around the same retail price as a regular orchid."

His sense of humor and practical approach carries throughout the book, which is divided into chapters on what to look for when buying orchids, growing and maintenance tips and decorating with orchids. Part III focuses on 12 of the easiest-to-grow orchids, including phalaenopsis, lady's slipper and vanilla orchid, with detailed entries for each on the plant's history, preferred growing conditions and troubleshooting.

Milwaukee Wisconsin Journal Sentinel

April 13, 2012

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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 Arizona Federation of Garden Clubs, Inc. , and The Nature Conservancy.

THE THUNDER DRAGON ORCHID CONSERVATION PROJECT

(A personal report of some of the 2011 activities by Stig Dalström)

The 10th of September, 2011, trip to Bhutan could not have gotten a slower start. The batteries for the starting engine of the Ukrainian Aerosvit airplane were dead. Since there were no other Aerosvit staff present in Sweden, except a slightly harried stewardess, no new batteries seemed likely to appear for a while. To jumpstart the machine was out of the question, naturally.

The flight was originally scheduled to depart in the morning but the battery failure caused a several hours delay. Finally, a motley mixture of Ukrainians and Swedish low-budget travelers were anxiously seated in a bus ready to be transported across the tarmac to the distantly parked plane, and the departure from Arlanda airport north of Stockholm, Sweden. The reason why the airplane was parked far away from the terminal was because the air company did not pay the fees that allowed access to the terminal. This alone should have set off some red flags, of course, but a low budget traveler has limited options and when a better priced ticket is presented, he normally selects it. On this particular day, however, nothing worked the way it was supposed to, and eventually all passengers had to return to the terminal once again, muttering Cyrillic as well as Scandinavian curses. Our schedule was tight, to say the least. The flight was supposed to take my travel companion, Thomas Höjjer and myself to Kiev, and then to Bangkok where we had a three hour stop-over the following morning before departing with Druk Air towards Paro in Bhutan. We were already more than three hours delayed and we had not even left Stockholm. Eventually, the Ukrainian authorities grudgingly authorized a change of flight and we could embark a Turkish Air flight to Istanbul instead, and later continue to Bangkok. This turned out to be a good choice since the Turkish Air is one of Europe's voted best companies and the service was excellent!

Needless to say, we missed our Paro flight and had to overnight in Bangkok. This would normally not have been a big problem, except that this year the lavish monsoon rains were lingering unusually long and turning half of Thailand into a lake, including some of the areas surrounding the Bangkok international airport. We sloshed through the inundated streets in a crummy taxi cab and made it to a nearby hotel, and back to the airport the following morning (3.30 am). Once there we were able to get some last business class seats in the otherwise crowded Druk Air flight. A little more expensive than we had planned but we were still on the + side after our Turkish Air experience. As it turned out, the staff at the National Biodiversity Centre (NBC) in Thimphu had already made new reservations for us in the economy class, which the check-in clerk missed somehow. We made it safely to Paro in any case, which coincidentally has the world's most difficult and dangerously placed airfield (considered by many air professionals), where we were met by our friends from the NBC.

The following week was spent catching up on what had happened during the passed 18 months since the last trip. We met some new staff and re-connected with the old. The first priority, however, was to inspect the new roof and the condition of the Orchidarium. Both Thomas and I were in for a pleasant surprise. The staff had been busy and taken all our earlier teachings way beyond our expectations. The roof was also not too bad, despite being made of corrugated metal sheets with some transparent dittos here and there. The light conditions are sufficient for some plants but insufficient for others, so more windows will have to be cut and installed eventually. The condition of the orchids and other plants were surprisingly good though and some I had never seen before were in full bloom. Among others, a beautiful *Dendrobium hookerianum* and some plants of the similar and equally attractive *Dendrobium chrysanthum*. The latter was one of the first orchids ever to bloom in my primitive cultivation back in the mid-seventies, in a dark place called Borlänge, Sweden.

According to the preliminary itinerary, we were scheduled to leave Thimphu again on September 17, for a 10 day full scale expedition into the extreme western parts of Bhutan. Since no roads exist in that area, we were going to use porters and horses for the transportation of the enormous amounts of rice and chili peppers the Bhutanese need to function well. Thomas and I had prepared ourselves with luxury goods from Sweden, such as crisp bread, soups, instant coffee, chocolate and many other little treats. We never cease to confuse the Bhutanese with how little food we actually need to keep going. And without eating any rice at all, other than on very rare occasions.

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Anyway, two days before the departure, I woke up very early and decided to be industrious by writing some emails. Thomas was still asleep (we always share room for financial reasons). I carefully leaned over the little bedside table, grabbed my laptop, turned sideways, and yelped with pain. It felt like somebody had stabbed a knife into my spine and I could barely move. Somehow, I managed to get back to my bed and extremely slowly sank down onto it, suffering the most excruciating pain I have ever experienced. Thomas woke up and found me nose down in an angle diagonally across the bed with my head in the corner, barely able to breath and lying very still. I simply could not move. It did not take long before the entire NBC staff knew about my problem, and to get seriously worried. Some massage therapists eventually arrived and gave me a good work-over, while various friends and allies arrived to look in on the virtually immobilized Swede.

Very slowly, during the remains of the day, I managed to relax my back muscles and very, very slowly gain my mobility back just enough to be transported to the hospital, where a concerned "bone doctor" examined and diagnosed my back. To everybody's great relief, he found that no serious damage was done, but I needed to relax for at least a week (his recommendation) and he prescribed a strong liniment ointment that the programs director of the NBC promptly purchased for me. Since all health care is free in Bhutan, even for strangers, this little detour did not cost anything, and I eventually made it back to my bed at the Yeedin Guesthouse where I remained for the duration of a day and a half. At one point late the second day I was able to slowly raise my legs and pull my knees towards the chest. All of a sudden there was an audible "pop" in my lower back and the pain was gone instantly. To everybody's great surprise I was on my feet shortly thereafter and eager to get going.

The expedition departed two days later than scheduled, which allowed a private dinner party hosted by Dasho Ugyen Tshewang, who (together with Preston Scott) instigated the entire Bhutan project, gave an introductory lecture at Selby Gardens in June of 2007, and now works for the Prime Minister of Bhutan. The dinner party was small and intimate with delicious Bhutanese dishes specially prepared by Ugyen's long time friend, the Royal Court chef Kezang. Being honored by this treatment, Thomas and I also felt obligated to join Ugyen in a generous testing of his collection of good wines and tasty *ara* (somewhat resembling home-made vodka and deceptively strong). Ugyen himself drove us back to the guesthouse later that night (chuckling all the way) where we almost did not make it up to the room due to our seriously intoxicated conditions. The *ara* seemed to loosen up my back muscles though, together with an array of other bodily functions.

The proud expedition was scheduled to take off very early in the morning of September 19. For some reason there was no electricity available in the city of Ha where we had spent the night (Thomas and I in the Royal Guesthouse thanks to a phone call from Dasho Ugyen, and the others in the office of the local Forest Department). Unfortunately, the diesel pumps in Ha all operated by electricity, so we were delayed once more. Eventually, we found a person who had a key to a fuel storage and we purchased some gallons for the thirsty vehicles. Several hours delayed we managed to drive across a high mountain ridge and reach the end of a very muddy and slippery "road-track" construction. We would not have made it without four-wheel drive vehicles and very good drivers.

We had it from apparently misinformed sources that the monsoon season would be over by then and therefore no leeches. Unfortunately, the monsoon did not acknowledge this and merrily continued to drench the mountain sides with floods of cold rain while millions of blood sucking leeches were singing hallelujah in chorus. It was a morose group of 11 participants together with 6 horses that began the sharp decent into the valley before us. The trip had been described as "quite a climb", and the icy rain turned the trails to streams of muddy water and treacherous muck holes. Within the hour we were all soaked by rain and sweat, and some of us were muddy up to the division of the body. Slipping, sliding and cursing away we continued our struggle to get a foothold on the very steep trail, hour after hour, while frenetically swatting away hordes of slimy little suckers that attacked from all sides.

Eight hours later the group was spread out into distant sub-groups of very tired hikers. For some reason my leg muscles began giving in to repeated attacks of painful cramps, and simply collapse every ten to fifteen yards. I have never been so exhausted in my life, and Thomas was in no better condition even though he was ahead of me somewhere. Slowly, the dreary and drizzling day turned into evening and we could finally see some lights glowing faintly in the darkness, across a deep abyss and on the other side of the valley. By then I seriously questioned whether I would be able to make it or not. To stumble five steps, wait and rest a minute or two, and then stumble another five steps is not very road-winning. It was dark, and still raining. There were three of us in the last group, totally exhausted, and out of water and food except some dried fruit. All the others were ahead of us somewhere along the mucky trail and lost in the darkness. What could possibly make the situation worse?

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A 6.9 earthquake did the trick! All of a sudden the entire area began trembling and shaking violently. I had to lower myself to the ground not to fall, and the three of us (Ngawang, Wangmo and I) stared dumbfounded at each other.

-“Earthquake! Quick! We need to get up on higher ground!”

We had almost made it down to the river where we were to cross on an old and rickety suspension bridge when the ground began shaking. But in the darkness we had no idea how far down the very steep slope we actually were, and hearing rather than seeing giant trees breaking and squeaking noisily around and above us, we realized that we had to get out from under them as fast as we could. The devastating tremble lasted for perhaps ten seconds, then deadly silence for a brief moment before some other thunderous tumbling alerted us.

-“Landslides! Where? We have to get back up, now!!!”

The roaring sound of large boulders coming down fast somewhere near us did wonders to our tired legs and we scurried uphill again desperate to reach a safer ground with no trees above us. We actually saw a huge tree tumbling over, barely visible against the nearly black sky. Then other landslides began, here and there, but completely invisible in the darkness. We finally managed to get up to an open area we had passed “days” ago and sank down to the ground, totally finished. Suddenly the thoughts came crashing in. Where were the others? The six horses and the porters had passed us only moments before the earthquake began and logically would be in the midst of where we thought the rock- and landslides had occurred. And all our friends? Anxiously, we climbed a small rock to stare across the valley to see if we could spot some lights. We signaled repeatedly with our flashlights and eventually got some responses. Some moments later I heard a very faint but unmistakably Swedish-English accented inquiry how we were doing. I thanked whatever local Deity that had protected Thomas and yelled back that we were ok. He also recognized my voice, he later told me, and it seemed that all the others also were safe over on the other side, even the horses. What a relief!

But what about the bridge? Ngawang, Wangmo and I did not dare to go any further in the pitch blackness and drizzling rain, and realized that unless a miracle happened, we were facing a very miserable night right there, next to the rock we were standing on. We were cold, wet, thirsty, weary and very, very tired, and for a while we just held hands while Ngawang and Wangmo were praying in Bhutanese (my head was simply empty), thanking the local Deities for their protection. We had actually visited a local monastery before leaving Ha in order to do some offerings and pray for a safe trip. I will never make fun of religious convictions again!

Eventually, my former military survival training kicked in and I asked my friends to do an inventory of their backpacks. With what we had, we managed to construct a primitive “tent” against the rock with the help of a plastic tarp and some saplings, spread some branches on the ground and to place Ngawang’s sleeping pad on it. We tied our umbrellas on the sides to protect from wind and rain, and finally were able to gather snugly underneath. Well away from the wet we were then ready to wrap Ngawang’s sleeping bag around us and prepare for the long night. Because of the steep terrain, the horses had limited porter capacities and Ngawang had been forced to carry his own backpack. He therefore had some useful equipment stowed away inside. Dark thoughts were nevertheless crossing our minds but we could have been in a much worse situation. At least nobody was hurt and we “just” had to wait out the next morning, which seemed like an eternity away.

What must have been about one hour later, however, lights suddenly flicked far below us along the trail. It did not take long for the lights to turn into our two brave Forest rangers, Bhakta and Goman, coming to rescue us. With them were also Drupchu from the NBC, carrying a thermos with hot tea. I could hardly believe my eyes! They told us later that as soon as they realized we were unharmed and safely above the landslide area, they worked out a plan to help us. They set off into the darkness, managed to avoid some deep holes in the treacherous trail, crossed the undamaged bridge and found a way through and over the rocks, mud and debris, to find us huddling together under the plastic tarp. They offered to carry me across but that would simply have been too much of an insult and we took off downwards in a hurry, me limping behind as best as I could, moaning and grinding my teeth as the cramps began to hurt again. But we all made it down to and across the bridge safely, and up the equally steep and slippery slope on the other side. Here and there the trail was gone and we could stare down into an unknown abyss of darkness. When I finally reached the small village of Shebji, and the house we were supposed to stay in, I crawled up the ladder to the living quarters, with friends pulling and supporting from all sides, tearing my cold and soaked clothes off my trembling body, and wrapping me in a blanket. Before I knew anything else I had a cup of steaming tea in my hand.

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The relief would be short-lived however. Our host had been in communication with some authorities in Ha and Thimphu through their cell phones (believe it or not!), and they were warning for a serious after-shock. For that reason we had to get out of the two story mud brick house and scamper up to a neighbor's bamboo hut, which was considered safer (not so much weight crushing down on you if the worst thing would happen). Unfortunately, when the first earthquake happened, the porters immediately released the horses from their burdens in order to save the animals, and all our luggage was still down by the river, several hundred meters below us, including dry clothes. I was fortunate to borrow a thin but dry sleeveless shirt from Ngawang and wore my cold rain jacket over it for the duration of the night. Others were not so lucky and we all tried to make it as comfortable as we could, tightly cramped on the floor, together with two local households of equally concerned people. There was little, shivering sleep that night, interrupted now and then by smaller tremors and distant landslides, which at first triggered everybody to rush outside, but after a while were fatalistically ignored due to sheer exhaustion. A night to remember.






Anyway, the luggage was brought up the next morning and we could all change into dry and clean clothes. During the following days we had some great opportunities to collect orchids and explore the nearby mountainsides, but we also learned that it was pointless to continue further west due to the damage the earthquake had caused to the trail and the scattered villages. We were reminded how lucky we had been when news reached us that some 5000 people had died in the earthquake, which had its epicenter in nearby Sikkim, India. There were fortunately only few casualties in Bhutan. Many houses were crumbled and damaged but the Bhutanese protective Deities had been busy that night. Due to the damages lower down in the valley, and the continuing rain, we cut our visit short by a few days and prepared for the return up the murderous trail with dreary feelings. It turned into a day to remember, and has to have been experienced to be believed!

Once safely back to Ha, we spent a few days orchid exploring in the higher and alpine areas under an impossibly blue sky and a smiling sun. Across the mountains in the southwest, however, thick ominous clouds told us that the leeches were still having a great time.



Dendrobium densiflorum Photo by Stig Dalstrom

OSA May 2012 Calendar

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1  <i>Karolyn Hall Fred Stimmell</i>	2	3	4	5
6	7 OSA Meeting 7:00 PM	8  <i>Barbara Parnell</i>	9	10	11	12
13	14	15  <i>Tony Duran</i>	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26  <i>Cece Blue</i>
27	28  Memorial Day	29	30	31		



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