

# news

## Volume 15.5 - November 2003

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- The Notice Board      Hooray! We are incorporated!
- Preparing to Show Orchids      As of July 31st, 2003, the Canadian Orchid Congress is a registered non-profit organization. Again, I thank all of you who have assisted in achieving this.
- Growing Orchids Under Lights      Yesterday I came home from attending the Calgary Orchid Show. I feel that this was the best show the Foothills OS has ever had! Of course, the orchids, the displays and the sales area were as good as each year. This time, they also had absolutely splendid Indian Summer with clear blue skies and golden poplars everywhere, temperatures in the high twenties and, thanks to a great publicity campaign, hundreds of visitors through the gates. Yes – yes, I love the prairies. But I think that if any of you had come to this show, you, too, would have been overwhelmed with all this blue and gold, wide open spaces outdoors and tons of orchids indoors. What could be better?
- Coming Events      Then I came home and it looks as if our coastal hot, dry summer is over. It is pouring rain and the trees, shrubs and lawns are reviving. Now it is time to turn on the heat and the lights in the greenhouse and take off the shading. Never underestimate the benefits of additional light over your orchids. If you want to have flowers, they need light, lots of it.

If you had taken your orchids outside during the summer and have brought them back in the house, make sure that you are not bringing along any unwanted guests. It is not going to hurt most plants if you dump out the pot to check that no slug or bug is sitting between the roots. It also won't hurt them if you wash all the leaves and stems with warm soapy water. And once the plants are indoors, slow down on the water and fertilizer – shorter days mean less growing time.

At this time, I will already remind you that the next COC meeting will be during the 2004 Vancouver show, on May 3-4-5. Try to keep these dates open so you can come all the way out to the Pacific side of our country and perhaps pick up some of our famous Pacific Paralysis.

Keep having fun with your orchids!

*Ingrid Schmidt-Ostrander*

# The Notice Board

## Hardy Orchids and how to grow them in your Garden

Originally these slides were put together for interested Orchid growers who wanted to expand their hobby into their gardens, mainly in southwestern BC.

More than half of the slides are of North American wild Orchids, where the slipper Orchids make up most of the slides. Some slides were taken in natural situations, others are from our garden, where I try to demonstrate where and how to cultivate these different genera and species. The later half of the slides are of Orchids from around the northern Hemisphere. In fact some of the plants shown came from Formosa, Tibet, China and Siberia. These pictures are mostly from our garden. So are the pictures of the European Dactylorhizas.

With few exceptions most of these plants can be grown in all provinces of Canada. Others, while hardy, still need some protection in Winter. To be able to grow these orchids closely together I have chosen pot culture. This allows me to consider the individual soil requirements. Especially the pH needed in soils and fertilizers.

For anyone interested in growing Orchids in their gardens, I gladly will correspond with them via E:mail at [wbischoff@telus.net](mailto:wbischoff@telus.net)  
*- slide program compiled by Bill Bischoff, Vancouver and Fraser Valley O.S.*

## Note From the Treasurer: COC Dues for 2004

Just as a reminder to everyone, the time of year for COC membership renewals is fast approaching. The membership fee is \$1.00 for each member of your society. The COC membership year is January 1 to December 31 - the same as a calendar year. Your COC dues are due by January 31, 2004. A letter will be mailed out in November to the societies regarding the above.

Cheques are made payable to: Canadian Orchid Congress and mailed to:  
Janette Richardson  
38 Straub Crescent  
Regina, Saskatchewan  
S4T 6S6

## Canadian Culture Sheets

The COC, in the person of Ross Otto, has produced a set of twelve orchid culture sheets. The sheets are available on the COC website as html files for viewing and PDF files for printing.

## Slide Programs

**Cattleyas** - by Ken Girard. This is an excellent program.

**Oncidiums** - by Gordon Heaps.

**Fragrant Orchids** by Marilyn Light.

**Hardy Orchids and Their Culture** by Bill Bischoff

**Phragmipediums**

More information on the programs is available on the COC website.

**Note:** When reserving a program, please include **two** (2) cheques, one cheque for \$10.00 to cover the cost of shipping and insurance, and another cheque for \$25.00. The cheque for \$25.00 will be required as a deposit and will be returned as soon as the program is returned. Please include in your request the date of the meeting for which you want the slide program. Cheques are to be made payable to "The Canadian Orchid Congress".

The slide programs may be ordered from:

Janette Richardson  
38 Straub Crescent,  
Regina, Sask., S4T 6S6

Phone: 306-543-0560

Email: [dale.richardson@sk.sympatico.ca](mailto:dale.richardson@sk.sympatico.ca)

## New publication

Orchid Conservation. Natural History Publications (Borneo) 2003. (Eds Kingsley Dixon, Shelagh Kell, Russell Barrett & Phillip Cribb) 417 pp.

Watch <http://www.nhpborneo.com> for details.

# Preparing to Show Orchids

We all likely remember when we first saw orchids in a handsome display at a show. This could have been the first time we saw corsage orchids (Cattleyas) presented as part of a living plant! It was possibly at a show that we became inspired to become orchid growers and to someday proudly show what we had bloomed. We may not have realized it then, but a lot of preparation goes into showing orchids. In order to achieve the very best, an exhibitor must choose healthy stock, grow it well, care for the developing flowers and transport all safely to the show. Lets get prepared to do as good a job!

Exhibitors have a variety of goals in mind when they show an orchid. Some wish to proudly show their very first orchid whose blooming event thankfully coincided with the local show date. Maybe they will win a ribbon and maybe not but they will have succeeded in blooming what they once only dreamed of. Rosettes, ribbons, trophies and maybe an award or two are a definite lure for some exhibitors while others simply wish to assist their club by supplying additional plants for a larger exhibit.

In larger displays, flaws are likely not seen by the casual observer but in smaller exhibits or when a plant is on the judging table, flaws are much more apparent. Despite the pretty flowers, yellowed or spotted leaves stand out in stark contrast which can be a turn off to the viewer. It is therefore in the best interest of the exhibitor to groom plants before the show. Not only will plants be at their best but a ribbon or two may be more likely forthcoming. Furthermore, their fine plants will help set goals for all those future exhibitors.

## Preparing the plant

The process of showing orchids begins long before the show date. Protect potential show plants from conditions that damage foliage and new growths. Most orchids keep their leaves for several years or even longer. A spot of drought or too little shade can produce effects such as accordion-pleated foliage in *Miltonia* or an unsightly brown papery patch on a *Cattleya* leaf.

Divide and repot orchids in their season but well before a show so that they will be secure in their containers. While it is normal for some orchids to develop aerial roots outside of their containers, this can present a problem when transporting and staging exhibits. Exposed roots will likely become damaged during transport. An orchid will likely recover from superficial damage such as broken leaf tips and sunburn but the telltale signs will persist and could

render the plant unsuitable for display where the foliage will be easily seen. Catasetum foliage may be deciduous but marks of an early thrips and aphid attack will mar the leaves for an entire season.

Control pests, water and fertilize with care, avoid spraying with hard water or products that leave an unsightly residue. Crown rot not only puts a plant at risk and damages its appearance but it also reduces the flowering capacity for a minimum of one season. A variety of fungi can mar foliage. Plants grown too hot or too cold, too wet or under too humid conditions and without adequate ventilation can develop unsightly foliage. Questionable specimens should either be tested or isolated from the collection. Remove virused plants from the collection and do not take them to a show. Not only are they a menace to healthy plants but they often present unsightly foliage. Grow plants as well as possible for maximum bloom quality and production.

A few days before show time, select plants at their blooming prime. While grooming should be a year round task, it is worthwhile checking that all debris including dead foliage, dried backbulbs, and recently fallen blooms have been removed. Tweezers are useful tools when grooming tiny specimens. Examine the foliage, especially the undersurface, for signs of scale and other pests. Gently wipe the upper surface of each leaf with a clean damp paper towel. Change towels between plants. Repeat if necessary at the show to remove travel dust. Do your fellow exhibitors a favor by leaving infested plants at home. Hosing off aphids as a quick fix inevitably leaves a few hitchhikers that will spread to other plants at a show.

When foliage is unsightly because of simple physical damage, we can still make good use of the blooms. Blooms can be entered in a cut flower or decorative class. In a large display, minor problems may disappear amongst the mass of blooms. An alternative is to remove the damaged portions from an otherwise large healthy specimen but this should be done only as a last resort.

## Training the inflorescence

Inflorescences are soft when immature but as they elongate, can become brittle and inflexible. As tiny flower buds develop, they will adjust their position according to the direction of light and the plant habit. Resupination (lip becoming lowermost) happens a few days before the flower opens. The best time to stake an inflorescence is when it is young. This way, flower buds and flowers will be

carried to best advantage. Use a long enough stake to support what is expected to develop.

Inflorescences can be staked to be upright or arching. Phalaenopsis and Odontoglossum are staked vertical over their entire length or partway which permits the flower-bearing part to drape gracefully in a cascade of wonderful blooms. Use only new bamboo or sterilized metal or plastic stakes. Be certain that a stake will not wobble during transport. Gently train a developing inflorescence by securing it along its length as it elongates using twists of waxed florist tape. Never attach the tie so tightly that the stalk becomes deformed. During the entire training process until flowering, keep the plant in the same position relative to the direction of light. A mark on the pot can help with realignment if the container has to be moved. Stakes are sometimes removed for display purposes but if this is not the intention, choose a stake style to complement rather than detract from the flowers.

### Care of the flowers

Developing flower buds are very susceptible to physical damage such as bruising, sun or frost burn, and insect predation and this can happen weeks before the show. A tiny scar on an equally tiny bud may not be noticeable but the damaged part can become an unsightly blemish when the bud expands to open.

Protect developing buds from damage by paying close attention to culture. Control insect pests especially thrips and aphids preferably before the buds form. Thrips nymphs will feed just under the petal edges of an opening bud leaving silvery scars to mar an otherwise beautiful flower. Botrytis fungus is a problem when nights are cool, humidity is high and there is poor air circulation. Affected buds and flowers will develop unsightly speckles. Pay special attention to ventilation in the weeks leading up to a show, especially if it is during a change of season.

Bud drop is a maddening habit of some Dendrobium and Phalaenopsis plants. A sharp change in temperature and humidity is suggested as the cause but you may not be able to stop bud drop from happening. If you have plants that are particularly susceptible to bud drop, bear this in mind before choosing them for the center of a display. Chances are that the changes experienced on the way to the show or at the show will cause buds to change colour and drop.

Dislodged pollen can cause flowers to collapse or to change color. Male flowers of *Catasetum* are notorious for launching pollinia at the slightest touch to one of the two trigger appendages that protrude from the column. Be

absolutely certain that *Catasetum* spikes do not touch anything while in transit. I attach cords to either side of the stake and use these to keep the flowers away from the sides of the container. Thankfully, flower collapse happens about a day after the pollen is lost so ribbon judging may not be affected if the worst happens. Cymbidiums are also susceptible. A dislodged anther cap can be sufficient to tarnish an otherwise pristine bloom. Pure color Cymbidiums that lack the ability to express red pigment are seemingly immune to the problem.

### Pests and Diseases

Pests and diseases have no business at a show but that does not mean that they will not be present. We all have a duty to ensure that our plants are not a source of problems for other exhibitors.

Greenhouse growers are encouraged to check especially yellow flowers and new succulent growths for aphids before bringing the plants to the show. While a blast of water or even soapy water will remove most, some nymphs may linger. Flower thrips, and a nasty hermaphroditic thrips that affects *Paphs* and other orchids, *Heliethrips haemorrhoidalis*, can spread to other plants at a show. Since the latter are hermaphrodites, only one is needed to start a destructive infestation that is challenging to eliminate. Adult thrips will hide in potting media while juveniles will feed in groups on the leaves and inflorescence bracts of *Paphiopedilum*, *Phragmipedium*, and *Disa*. They seem to prefer feeding on the flowers of the *Cattleya* alliance. Control pests well before the show otherwise leave the monsters at home.

### Transport

Planning is critical to success. Suitable boxes, packing, helping hands and a vehicle are all part of successful transport. When selecting plants which might be in flower at show time, consider how they can be packed and how those containers can fit in your vehicle. It is not unknown for someone to rent a van to transport an especially large or tall specimen.

Consider the effect of too much heat from the sun or car heater, the chance of sunburn, freezing because of proximity to an uninsulated wall or chill because of the air conditioning. If renting a vehicle, check for the location of heating/air conditioning vents. Use such areas for storing luggage, props and such non-plant items.

If you plan to stop along the way for a meal, consider what will happen to the plants left in the car over midday. Heat from the sun will quickly damage flowers and even kill plants.

Take no chances with a precious cargo that you have worked hard to acquire. Park in the shade. Cover plants in boxes with a lightweight cloth to mask the sun's rays. I use a picnic cooler to transport tiny pleurothallids in cool, humid comfort. We cannot always have the ideal weather for transporting orchids to a show but cool cloudy weather is probably safest.

### **At the show**

Have on hand: show schedule, paper towels, spray bottle and water, tweezers, scissors, razorblades and alcohol, waxed florist tape

Locate your assigned exhibit area then get assistance to transport the plants and containers to that area. Move

carefully and deliberately especially with tall or ungainly specimens. Sudden and expressive hand movements have been known to knock off a flower or two! Unpack carefully, check that any stakes are still secure. Groom again if needed, remove any travelling supports and table your blooming beauties. Ensure that the entries are registered and labelled then sit back and enjoy the show and the culmination of months of preparation. Perhaps this time it will be you that receives ribbons.

Good luck! - Marilyn H. S. Light

*Adapted from an article first published at [www.orchidsafari.com](http://www.orchidsafari.com) on October 8, 2003. The transcript of the complete on-line discussion will appear at <http://www.geocities.com/brassia.geo/OSTA.html>*

## Some Notes on Growing Orchids Under Lights

As we are getting deeper into fall, with its shortened days and less sunlight, some of us would consider hibernating. But no – we turn on all sorts of lights and pretend that real winter does not happen.

Most of our orchids originate in the tropics – what exactly are these 'Tropics'? Where are these places with sun shining vertically on the earth? Yes, they are close to the equator. To be a little more precise, 'The Tropics' is the area between the 23<sup>rd</sup> degree of latitude North to the 23<sup>rd</sup> degree of latitude South. Or in more concrete terms: the Northern circle goes around the globe (roughly) from Cabo St. Lucas and Mazatlan (Mexico) through Morocco – Wadi Halfa (Africa) and Muscat (Arabic Peninsula) through Calcutta (India) and Iwo Jima (Japan). The Southern circle would begin in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) and continue through the Kalahari Desert and Botswana (Africa), through Alice Springs – Rockhampton (Australia). Between these two circles, the sun will be exactly overhead during part of every year. These are the places where many of our tropical orchids lived, before we tried to grow them here, where even the summer sun is at a low angle, still lower in spring and fall and even lower in the winter. Under these low light conditions, the orchids may be forgiven if they, too, want to go into hibernation. But no – we turn on the lights and hope that the orchids won't notice that outdoors, there are no tropics here; it is Northern winter. ("...c'est hiver")

What kinds of lights should we put over our orchids? There are so many different kinds of lights now, it is a science to know it all. You can go to some hydroponics shop and they will show you their stock. If you are lucky,

they will explain a little what each light will do. There are fluorescent and incandescent lights, high-pressure mercury and high-pressure sodium, there are blended lights, quartz-iodine and metal halide lamps; they come in brightness from 25 to 1,000 watts. All of them, singly or better in combination, can be used to give our plants more light in which to grow and flourish. They have different wavelengths from (350) cool blues to (650) warm reds. Some parts of the light spectrum are not used by plants. These can be screened out with PAR (photosynthetic active radiation) filters. If you really need to "push" your plants, have the lights on 16 hours and then keep the plants in total darkness 8 hours. Of course, the photo-sensitive types may not like this regime. Please, keep in mind that the ballasts of all the really big lamps put out a lot of heat.

There are 'mobile' lamps that travel on tracks all around the greenhouses. All lights can be hung up on chains so that they may be raised or lowered, according to need. The big metal halide bulbs should be about 2 meters above the bench to afford even distribution of the light.

We used to have judging classes for "plants grown under lights", knowing that these would be smallish plants from under fluorescent tubes. With one or more 1,000-watt metal halide lamps in your growing area, you will bloom even the big Vandas and their relatives. Of course, we are not thinking of the bill for electricity – right? We just want to have flowers on our tropical treasures. Therefore I suggest that you don't just let your orchids bloom - give them extra light and MAKE them bloom!  
- I. Schmidt-Ostrander

# COMING EVENTS

2003

**Nov 1-2:** The Orchid Society of Nova Scotia at the Nova Scotia Museum of Science, Halifax. Contact: Jean Ikeson 866-798-0514 toll free; email: greenhouses@win.eastlink.ca

<http://www.chebucto.ns.ca/Recreation/OrchidSNS/>

**Nov 8-9:** Niagara Region OS at Queen Elizabeth Centre, Facer St. (QEW and Niagara St), St Catherines

**Nov 15-16:** Les Orchidophiles de Quebec Orchid show, Pavillon Environtron, Laval University, Quebec, QC  
info: orchidophilesquebec@hotmail.com

"<http://cf.geocities.com/orchidophilesqc/orchidof.html>"

2004

**Feb 20-22:** Orchid Society of Alberta in the Grant MacEwan College, Millwoods Campus, 7319 - 29 Ave. Edmonton, Alberta.

This is an OAS judged show. Show chair: Terry Letendre, email: tletendre@shaw.ca

<http://www.telusplanet.net/public/macklam/pages/aborchsoc.html>

**March 6-7:** Victoria Orchid Society Spring Orchid Show. It will be in the Students' Union Building, University of Victoria, Finnerty Road. Contact: "Ingrid Ostrander" email: ifl@telus.net 250-652-6133  
"<http://victoriaorchidsociety.ca/>"

**March 13-14:** London Orchid Society Orchid Show, Wonderland Gardens, 284 Wonderland Road South, London, ON  
For show information: "<http://los.lon.imag.net/losshows.htm>"

**March 20-21:** Orchid Society of the Royal Botanical Gardens 680 Plains Rd., Burlington "<http://www.osrbg.ca/>"  
Show chair is Ben Boers, email bboers@cogeco.ca

**April 2-4:** The Manitoba Orchid Society For more information, please email: president@manitobaorchidsociety.ca  
"<http://www.manitobaorchidsociety.ca/default.htm>"

**April 3-4:** The Regina Orchid Society annual show and sale at the Core Ritchie Community Centre, 445 14th Avenue, Regina. Contact Charles Eisbrenner, email: c.eisbrenner@ca.ibm.com, phone: (306)545-2185

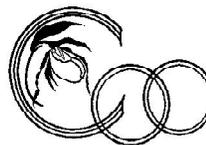
**April 3-4:** The Orchid Society of Nova Scotia at the Nova Scotia Museum of Science, Halifax. Contact: Jean Ikeson 866-798-0514 toll free; email: greenhouses@win.eastlink.ca  
<http://www.chebucto.ns.ca/Recreation/OrchidSNS/>

**April 16-18:** Central Vancouver Island Orchid Society  
Location: Country Club Center, Nanaimo, BC. Contact: Sue Christison, email: CVIOS@shaw.ca  
"<http://members.shaw.ca/CVIOS/CVIOS/>"

**COC Web Site - <http://www.CanadianOrchidCongress.ca/>**

**This newsletter may be found there.**

**Please send in your show information - date, location, contact, etc.**



news

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Editor: Jerry Bolce

The purpose of COC news is to inform members of the meetings, policies of the COC, to profile members, and to provide technical information regarding happenings, trends and techniques in orchid cultivation across the country and around the world.

We welcome your suggestions and contributions. Deadline for each issue is one month before the issue dates previously announced.

Recipients of this newsletter are strongly urged to pass a copy on to other members of their society

## Officers of the Canadian Orchid Congress

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