



SPIKE

Newsletter of the Ottawa Orchid Society

May 2022

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4 ODG meeting	5 Photo submission	6	7
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Dendrobium bullenium
Photo by: Sabina Gupta

ODG: Orchids Discussion Group
OOS: Ottawa Orchid Society

Welcome! Upcoming Activities at a Glance!

May 15, 2022 at 1:30 p.m.: In May, Glen Decker, formerly the owner of Piping Rock Orchids, will speak on 'My life with the Slippers'.

June 18, 2022 at 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.: Orchid Sales Event at RA Centre in Clark Hall. It is an all Canadian Vendors Event with a Members' Sales Table. Set up will be from 8:00 a.m. - 10:00 p.m. and pack up at 4:00 - 6:00 p.m. Volunteers are needed. Please contact janet.johns@sympatico.ca. Stay tuned for more from membership@ottawaorchidsociety.com.

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President's Message



I hope you enjoyed Sandra Tillisch Svoboda's presentation on *Masdevallias*. The *Masdevallia* flowers are so beautiful and colorful. I strongly suggest that if you missed the talk, you should ask for the PDF presentation, which she so kindly has agreed to share.

We are very proud to be represented at the American Orchid Society (AOS) by two award winners. Jean Hollebhone has worked tirelessly over many years as a Vice President and Chair of several committees. Recently at the Annual General Meeting in Florida, she received President's Award for her many contributions. In addition, Joyce Medcalf will receive a plaque in recognition of her service as an AOS trustee for the last three years. She has also worked on the Nominating and Development Committee. Both Jean and Joyce serve in many capacities in our Society as well. Congratulations to both of them!

It is a very exciting time for all of us as venues are opening to in-person events. We do recognize, however, that some of our members are in a high-risk category and may not be able to attend in person. For this reason, our meeting on May 15, 2022 will be both online and in person, to accommodate all our members. For those attending in person, please adhere to the COVID-19 protocols. We intend to continue hybrid meetings throughout next season.

In May, we will meet at the Ron Kolbus Lakeside Centre, which is a very large and beautiful venue. However, we will be looking for a less expensive and somewhat smaller venue over the summer for next season's meetings. Stay tuned for that information.

There will be an Orchid Sales Event on Saturday, June 18 at the RA Centre in Clark Hall. Plans are under way and we have 7 vendors committed. As there is enough interest, there will be Members' Sales Table. Some vendors such as Roehampton Orchids are unable to attend the event and are offering pre-sale order possibilities. Roehampton Orchids has also offered a discount of 15% and will ensure delivery of plants to the event by Plantrunz.

This will be a safe event where masks are required. We do need volunteers to make this event successful. If you can help at either of these events (May 15 meeting or June 18 sale), please contact me janet.johns@sympatico.ca. Let us finish the 2021-22 season with a great celebration!

I look forward to seeing you all at the May 15 meeting, online or in person 😊.

Jan Johns

Program Updates 2022 (all talks will be held at 1:30 p.m.)

May Meeting

In May, we are holding our first face-to-face meeting since 2020, at the Ron Kolbus Lakeside Centre. We are welcoming Glen Decker, formerly the owner of Piping Rock Orchids, who will speak to us on 'My life with the Slippers'. Knowing Glen, this will be a very interesting and enjoyable talk. The presentation will include his journey to see slipper orchids around the world, including Peru, Ecuador, and through Europe, and the things that he has learned about growing them in the process. The lecture will include some history, travel, culture and stories about people within our obsession. Do join us for what will be a personable and fun talk about one of our favourite orchid alliances, and we will learn some new growing tips too!

Glen has been growing orchids for over 40 years and holds the degree of Associate in Applied Science in Ornamental Horticulture. He was the previous Chair of the American Orchid Society's Publications Committee and is a past Director of the Orchid Digest Corporation. Glen is a superb grower and has won numerous AOS awards, including the Butterworth Prize, Nax Trophy, WW Wilson Award and the Carlyle A. Luer Award. He has appeared in Martha Stewart's Better Living Magazine and on a PBS TV special, 'Orchid Delirium'. He rewrote the Slipper section of the Brooklyn Botanic Garden's 'The Best Orchids for Indoors', and is presently the Technical Editor for the 2nd edition of the book 'Orchids for Dummies'. He has also written many articles on *Paphiopedilums* and *Phragmipediums*, which have been published worldwide.

Jean Hollebome (Program Chair)

May 2022 In-Person Meeting Details

Join us on Sunday, May 15 at 1:30 p.m. either online via Zoom or in person at the Ron Kolbus Lakeside Centre, 102 Greenview Avenue, Ottawa (at Britannia Beach).

If you intend to join us in person, please note the following:

1. Masks must be worn over the mouth and nose at all times inside the building.
2. Sadly there will be no snacks/coffee provided.
3. Contact information (name and phone number) of all attendees will be recorded.
4. Please reduce risk to yourself and others by ensuring you have been vaccinated with boosters.

5. Please do NOT attend if
 - a. You have been in contact with a COVID-positive person within the last 10 days.
 - b. Have travelled outside of Canada within the last 10 days.
 - c. Are feeling unwell in any way.
6. Make sure to register for the online meeting even if you intend to join us in person just in case one of the above situations occur. Don't miss our last meeting of 2021-22.

Our speaker, Glen Decker, will join us via Zoom, which will be shown at the in person meeting and online. (yes, we've rehearsed!). We will hold two separate Show Tables – one virtual and one in person. If you are bringing orchids to the in person meeting, please make sure they arrive by 1:00 p.m.

We will have information about the Orchid Society at the meeting and invite the public and/or past members to attend with the stated restrictions.

Driving Directions:

- If coming in from the West on the 417, take Pinecrest exit North. Pinecrest turns into Greenview Avenue at Carling Avenue, so stay on the road until you can't go any further.
- If coming in from the East, the Pinecrest exit is closed and under construction. Take the Woodroffe exit North. Turn left (West) onto Carling Avenue. Turn right (North) onto Greenview at Pinecrest.
- **Note:** Once on Greenview, keep on the road and go past the Ron Kolbus Lakeside Centre sign and parking lot on the right until you finally reach the building. Parking is on the left in front of the Centre at 102 Greenview.

We look forward to seeing you in person or online for our last meeting of the 2021-22 season.

(Jan Johns)

Orchids Discussion Group Update

The ODG meeting was a great success this season and will take a break for the summer. Details of the next ODG when we resume for the next season will be announced in the September Spike.

Pat Boisvert

Montréal Judging Centre Updates

The Montréal Judging Centre extends an open invitation to the members of the OOS to attend its judging sessions. The Centre meets every month on the third Saturday (except in December when the meeting is held on the second Saturday). The meeting is held at the *Jardin botanique de Montréal* (JBM, Montréal Botanical Garden) in the main building. In May 2022, the Centre will attend the Québec City Orchid Show and therefore will not meet in Montréal.

In the current COVID context, the following restrictions will apply in order to attend judging (until further instructions are received from the Québec Government):

1. Only members who wish to have their plants judged will be allowed to attend
2. All participants must wear a mask while inside the JBM
3. All participants must provide proof of double vaccination against COVID (no personal data is captured) before entering the judging room

Judging meetings

- The meetings start around 9:30 a.m. but the training session (open to participants) starts around 10:00 a.m.
- Plant registration is upon arrival or after 11:00 a.m. (but before 12:30 p.m.)
- Participants must bring their lunch as there is no restaurant on the premises
- Upon entrance at the main building, participants must sign in on the sheet for the “Centre de judgment” at the security desk
- The security personnel will indicate the room number where judging takes place (usually on the second floor) – take the elevator on the right, past the double doors

Judging

- Participants will sign in
- Plants are then registered; the Registrar will provide the necessary help
- Participants must have the full name of the plants (plants with no name will not be judged)
- Participants must bring a clone name to assign to the awarded plants (the clone name is anything the owner chooses; the clone name must be provided at the judging session)
- **NOTE:** Plants must be clean and without pests, inflorescences may be staked; **while plants are being judged, participants are not allowed to make comments or to intervene**, and if there are any questions, these will be answered after judging

André Couture

Awarded Plants – April 2022

Gongora claviodora
'Jardin botanique de Montréal'
HCC/AOS 75 pts



Owner: Jardin botanique de Montréal
Photography: Thang Dam

Phalaenopsis Mituo King 'Isabelle'
AM/AOS 80 pts



Owner: André Couture
Photography: André Couture

April 2022 Zoom OOS Meeting Recap

Easter Sunday April 17, 2022 OOS Meeting Notes

1. **Introduction:** Jan Johns opened the meeting (meeting protocols and agenda) with thanks to those who were attending for choosing to share their Easter Sunday with the Ottawa Orchid Society. Thanks to Jennie McCloskey for hosting the meeting.
2. **AOS Awards:** Thanks to Annette Seling for pointing out that Jean Hollebhone, our Program Chair, had just been awarded a President's Award for her outstanding contribution to the American Orchid Society. Joyce Medcalf was awarded the Volunteer Service Award as well. Look for more about these in a future Spike.
3. **Speaker:** Jean Hollebhone warmly introduced our speaker, Sandra Tillisch Svoboda who joined us from Santa Barbara, California, to speak on *Those Amazing Masdevallias*. It was noted that Sandra is the editor of Orchid Digest to which we have a subscription. This is a very useful journal for orchid growers. You can borrow copies of the magazine from our library when we are back in person. Sandra has visited our Society before and assisted with our show.

Note: Sandra has kindly sent the slide show in pdf format. If you would like to receive a copy, please email me at janet.johns@sympatico.ca. The pictures are wonderful.

Speaker Notes

For the most part, *Masdevallias* are endemic in Central America extending to Southern Mexico, and as far down in South America as Paraguay. Most are endangered. Many are cool-growing at high elevations in cloud forests with high humidity, but there are several varieties that grow in lowlands at higher temperatures. They can be epiphytic, lithophytic or terrestrial.

General culture tips for all:

- Light should be filtered or diffused (800-1,500m foot-candles).
- Strong air movement at all times.
- Keep evenly moist with only slight drying time between waterings.
- Temperature requirements are dependent on species, but most prefer a 6-7°C difference between night and day temperatures.
- Some prefer to be a little drier in the fall/winter months – but never completely dry.
- Balanced fertilizer 1/4-1/2 strength if in bark every 1 to 2 weeks; every 3 to 4 weeks if in sphagnum moss. Reduce feeding when reducing watering in winter months.
- They can be mounted. Potting medium should be open, fast draining, but retain moisture.
- Repot in late winter early spring, or when not flowering.

Sandra reminded us that growing orchids should be fun, before going through the conditions for particular species: Cold-to-Cool growing, Cool-to-Intermediate growing and Warm-growing with some wonderful examples of their flowers – worth asking for the handout.

Cool-to-Cold Growing Species

Cold Night: 4-7°C (40-45°F), Day: 10-16°C (50-60°F)

Cool Night: 7-12°C (45-53°F), Day: 10-17°C (50-63°F)

Many will tolerate a short increase in daytime temperatures, but heat stress is a critical problem. Signs of heat stress are leaf drop and aborting of new growth and buds. During heat stress, keep the roots drier, but mist frequently and increase humidity. Increase air movement and reduce the light.

In warm dry areas, use evaporative coolers and/or misting equipment to keep the temperature and humidity levels appropriate.

Examples with varied flower colour, form and size include: *Masd. amabilis*, *hercules*, *ova-avis*, *notosibirica*, *pachyura*, *rubeola* (very rare in culture), *rosea*. For more details see the slide show. Many have won AOS awards and the pictures are stunning.

Cool-to-Intermediate Growing Species

Cool Night: 7-12°C (45-53°F), Day: 10-17°C (50-63°F)

Intermediate Night: 10-13°C (50-56°F), Day: 13-20°C (55-68°F)

These can tolerate higher day temperatures but do need the low night temperatures and will also suffer heat stress. A humid environment with good air flow is important.

Examples include: *Masd. angulata*, *datura*, *bicornis*, *abbreviata*, *melanoxantha*, *constricta*, *coriacea*, *prodigiosa*, *exquisita*, *deformis*, *norops*, *caudata*, *navicularis*, *glandulosa*, *iris*, *angulifera*, *strobilii*, *ampullacea*, *lintrricula*, *hirtzii*, *patula*. For more details see the slide show. Many have won AOS awards and the pictures are stunning.

Warm-Growing

Warm Night: 16-18°C (60-65°F), Day: 20-27°C (68-80°F)

These species are susceptible to fungal infections. Flowers are produced near the base. They should be removed when finished to prevent fungal infection. They require high humidity and in general, higher light conditions.

Examples: *Masd. crescenticola*, *vieirana*, *norae*, *livingstoneana*, *lata*, *sprucei*,

Hybrids

These plants are floriferous and colourful. Many hybrids have been produced...in brilliant colours and patterns. In the slide show, Sandra showed some F1 crosses and hybrid crosses, indicating the parents and progeny so you can see how the characteristics of the parents are revealed in the progeny – definitely worth seeing.

F1 hybrids shown:

Masd. Angel Frost, Ken Dole 'M & B' AM/AOS, Peach Fuzz 'Golden Giant' FCC/AOS, Angel Heart 'Grand Poobah' AM/AOS,

Species with Hybrids or Two Hybrids shown:

Masd. Monarch 'Cow Hollow' x *Masd. prodigiosa*, *Masd.* Walnut Valley Aquarius 'M & B' AM/AOS, *Masd.* Jaime Posada 'Patriarch' AM/AOS, *Masd.* Mandy 'Libardo' AM/AOS

The talk ended with several references that are useful if you are interested in growing these lovely orchids.

Pat Boisvert fielded questions:

- Crinkled leaves could be due to low humidity or lack of nutrients.
- Not blooming: The nighttime drop in temperature is important. Always try increasing light. Leaves should be a light green.
- Are conditions for *Dracula* similar? *Dracula* are more difficult to grow and need Wardian cases. *Masdevallias* are more forgiving.
- To see *Masdevallias* in the wild, go to Ecuador in the fall – November is the best time, but they have around 4,000 species, so any time is good. The people are very friendly and helpful.

- What is the best medium: Sandra uses sphagnum moss, but understands it can be difficult for beginners to water properly. It must be airy around the roots so she suggested both pots and bark are ok. Some can be mounted as long as the humidity is high. Joyce suggested using ½ sphagnum moss with ½ Styrofoam to keep the mix airy.
- When asked about the flower structures on some looking like carrion flowers and that some smelled badly (like *bulbophyllum*) Sandra indicated that more information about the pollinators was needed.

4. OOS Notices

There were three notices

- a. A request for people to share their orchids for the Québec Show May 6-8. Many thanks to Monique Savard, Hélène Mondou and Elvira Langa-Barona for agreeing to do this for us. It is very exciting to be back at a show – finally. We wish them well and thank those willing to send their flowers.
- b. In-person May meeting at Ron Kolbus Lakeside Centre (see information on page 4-5)
 - a. It will be a hybrid meeting – please be kind, there may be hiccups.
 - b. We will be collecting contact names and phone numbers at the meeting.
 - c. You must wear a mask covering your mouth and nose at all times inside the building. There will be no refreshments.
 - d. Reduce risk to yourself – get your booster shots, avoid high risk activities.
Reduce risk to others – if you are unwell, have been in contact with someone who is Covid positive, or just returned from travel, please do not join us and risk others at the event. Make sure you sign up for our Zoom virtual meeting.
- c. June Sale

At this time, we are planning to host a sale on Saturday, June 18 in Clarke Hall at the RA Centre. We are looking for volunteers both for the event and for the Sales Committee. In particular, we need a Publicity Chair (we have several volunteers for this – just need a Coordinator). If you can help out, please let Jan know at janet.johns@sympatico.ca

5. Virtual Show Table and Member's Choice

- a. We had 30 orchids from 14 of our members. Thanks to Joyce Medcalf, Jean Hollebhone, André Couture, Scott de Vito, Marie-Josée Bergeron and Pat Boisvert for judging these lovely orchids and photographs. Thank you to all those who contributed this month and congratulations to the ribbon winners. Many thanks to Jean Hollebhone for continuing to make sure that winners receive their ribbons by mail. See page 11-16 for the results.

6. **Happy Easter** – Jan wished everyone a Happy Easter with a picture of bunnies and eggs before closing the meeting.

APRIL 2022 VIRTUAL SHOW TABLE RIBBON WINNERS

ALLIANCE	MEMBER'S NAME	NAME OF ORCHID	RIBBON AWARD
Cattleya Alliance Judged by Joyce Medcalf	Ethan Ackermann	<i>Cattleya nobilior</i> f. <i>amaliae</i>	1 st
	Julia Parshina	<i>Epicattleya</i> NOID	2 nd
	Annette Seling	<i>Encyclia cochleata</i>	3 rd
Cypripedium Alliance Judged by Jean Hollebhone	Tommy Wingreen	<i>Paphiopedilum philippinense</i> (P. <i>philippinense</i> var. <i>alba</i> 'Sterling' x P. <i>philippinense</i> var. <i>alba</i> 'Heart Break')	1 st
	Robert St-Jean	<i>Paphiopedilum rothschildianum</i> x sib ('Black Beauty' x 'Giant Wings' GM/WOC)	2 ^{nd-1}
	Magdalena Gawronska	<i>Paphiopedilum</i> Deperle (<i>delenatii</i> fma. <i>vinicolor</i> 'Dark Glow' x <i>primulinum</i> v. <i>purpurescence</i> 'Tall 50')	2 ^{nd-2}
	Serge Croteau	<i>Paphiopedilum</i> Chiara (<i>Paphiopedilum sukhakulii</i> x <i>Paphiopedilum lawrenceanum</i>)	3 ^{rd-1}
	Magdalena Gawronska	<i>Paphiopedilum concolor</i>	3 ^{rd-2}
Dendrobium Alliance Judged by Joyce Medcalf	Magdalena Gawronska	<i>Dendrobium lindleyi</i>	1 st
	Jan Johns	<i>Dendrobium infundibulum</i>	2 nd
	Marie-Josée Bergeron	<i>Dendrobium spectabile</i>	3 ^{rd-1}
	Julia Parshina	<i>Dendrobium kingianum</i>	3 ^{rd-2}
Oncidium Alliance Judged by Marie-Josée Bergeron	Mélanie Picard	<i>Oncidium cheiroporum</i>	1 st
	Mélanie Picard	<i>Oncidium sotoanum</i>	2 nd
	Maria Martins	<i>Psychopsis papilio</i> 1	3 ^{rd-1}
	Julia Parshina	<i>Psychopsis papilio</i> 'Mendenhall' 2	3 ^{rd-2}
Phalaenopsis Alliance Judged by Scott de Vito	Annette Seling	<i>Phalaenopsis</i> Salu's Fragrancy (<i>Phalaenopsis</i> Hannover Passion x <i>Phalaenopsis</i> Golden Sun)	1 st
	Mélanie Picard	<i>Phalaenopsis japonica</i>	2 ^{nd-1}
	Hessalene Attong	<i>Phalaenopsis</i> Miro Sun 'Miro 1' (<i>Phalaenopsis</i> Mituo Sun x <i>Phalaenopsis</i> Miro Buddha)	2 ^{nd-2}
	Monique Savard	<i>Phalaenopsis</i> NOID1	3 ^{rd-1}
	Maria Martins	<i>Phalaenopsis</i> Silky Moon (<i>Phalaenopsis</i> Mituo Sun x <i>Phalaenopsis</i> Miro Buddha)	3 ^{rd-2}
Miscellaneous Judged by André Couture	Maria Martins	<i>Angulocaste</i> Olympus 'Sun Dawn' AM/AOS (<i>Angulocaste</i> Apollo x <i>Lycaste</i> Sunrise)	1 st
	Hessalene Attong	<i>Monnierara</i> Millennium Magic 'Witchcraft' AM/AOS (<i>Catanoches</i> Midnight Jem x <i>Mormodes sinuata</i>)	2 ^{nd-1}
	Maria Martins	<i>Maxillaria tenuifolia</i> 2	2 ^{nd-2}
	Mélanie Picard	<i>Gastrochilus retrocallus</i>	3 ^{rd-1}
	Annette Seling	<i>Lockhartia bennettii</i>	3 ^{rd-2}
Photography Judged by Pat Boisvert	Ethan Ackermann	<i>Cattleya nobilior</i> f. <i>amaliae</i>	1 st
	Julia Parshina	<i>Dendrobium kingianum</i>	2 ^{nd-1}
	Mélanie Picard	<i>Phalaenopsis japonica</i>	2 ^{nd-2}
	Annette Seling	<i>Encyclia cochleata</i>	2 ^{nd-3}
	Magdalena Gawronska	<i>Paphiopedilum</i> Deperle (<i>delenatii</i> fma. <i>vinicolor</i> 'Dark Glow' x <i>primulinum</i> v. <i>purpurescence</i> 'Tall 50')	3 ^{rd-1}
	Hessalene Attong	<i>Phalaenopsis</i> Miro Sun 'Miro 1' (<i>Phalaenopsis</i> Mituo Sun x <i>Phalaenopsis</i> Miro Buddha)	3 ^{rd-2}

APRIL 2022 VIRTUAL SHOW TABLE RIBBON WINNERS

ALLIANCE	MEMBER'S NAME	NAME OF ORCHID	RIBBON AWARD
Continued Photography Judged by Pat Boisvert	Annette Seling	<i>Phalaenopsis</i> Salu's Frangency (<i>Phalaenopsis</i> Hannover Passion x <i>Phalaenopsis</i> Golden Sun)	3 ^{rd-3}
Best of Show Table	Tommy Wingreen	<i>Paphiopedilum philippinense</i> (<i>P. philippinense</i> var. <i>alba</i> 'Sterling' x <i>P. philippinense</i> var. <i>alba</i> 'Heart Break')	
Member's Choice Poll Winner	Annette Seling	<i>Phalaenopsis</i> Salu's Frangency (<i>Phalaenopsis</i> Hannover Passion x <i>Phalaenopsis</i> Golden Sun)	

April Virtual Show Table Results

Best of Show Table

Paphiopedilum philippinense
(*P. philippinense* var. *alba* 'Sterling' x
P. philippinense var. *alba* 'Heart Break')

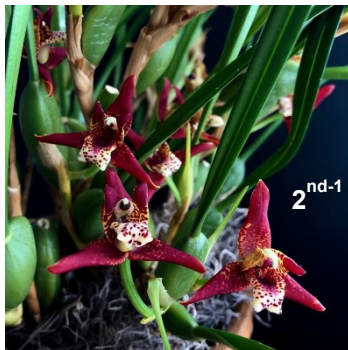
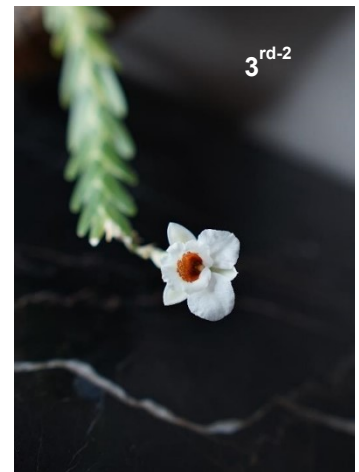
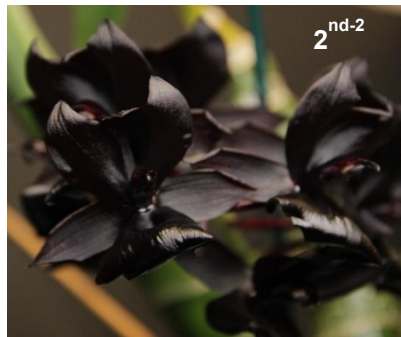


Member's Choice

Phalaenopsis Salu's Fragrancy
(*Phalaenopsis* Hannover Passion
x *Phalaenopsis* Golden Sun)



Miscellaneous



Dendrobium Alliance



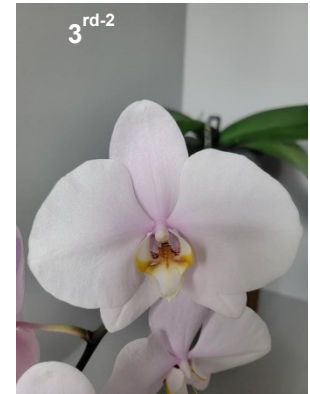
Cattleya Alliance



Oncidium Alliance



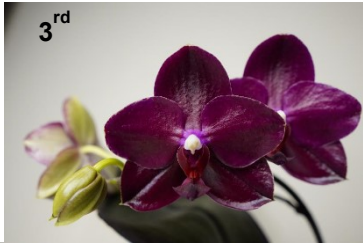
Phalaenopsis Alliance



Cypripedium Alliance



Photography Awards



Experiment and Conservation

This is a proposal to members of the Ottawa to participate in an experiment (or a challenge) and to help with a conservation project.

Background

A member of the Montréal Judging Centre provided flasks of two *Catasetums* that are in a precarious situation in South America: *Catasetum tabulare* and *Catasetum maculatum*.

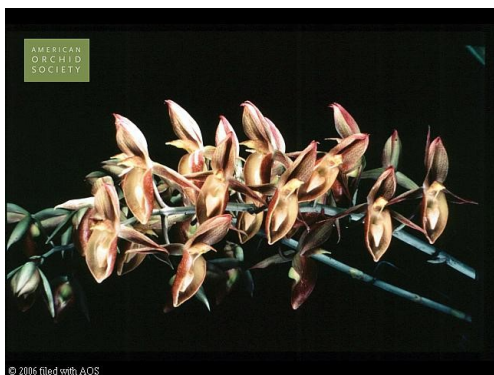
Catasetum tabulare grows in the humid forest on lower trunks of trees and palms in Colombia along the Rio Cauca with abundant rainfall. There is little variation in climatic conditions during the year. *Catasetum maculatum* can be found in Mexico in the states of Oaxaca, Guerrero and Michoacán. The climate is characterized by heavy rainfall from spring to autumn followed by a dry period.

A few years ago, Jean Hollebhone organized a *Dendrobium* challenge to members of our Society to bloom these. The current project follows the same path. Seedlings of each *Catasetum* will be available at the May meeting for purchase at \$10/piece. The challenge will be: ‘who will be the first member to bloom these?’. To help with this project, a short presentation will be made at the meeting with emphasis on culture. All seedlings are well established and growing strongly.

This project is part of a larger project which we hope will ensure the survival of these species either in private collection or in the wild. Funds collected from the sale of these *Catasetum* will be used to help establish (and re-establish) the species in a new reserve recently created in the Department of Antioquia (Colombia).

Join us at the May meeting to learn more about this project and more importantly about these two species rarely seen in cultivation.

Catasetum tabulare



Catasetum maculatum



Photos: American Orchid Society

Novice Editor's Corner

Watering Orchids (as discussed at the ODG)

My very first orchid, *Oncidium* Sharry Baby, which I had grown for several years to a specimen size, died because of overwatering! When we moved from our apartment to the new house, I thought I should give it a new home too. I decided to repot it in a larger self-watering pot. That year in the summer, I left the pot outside along with all the other house plants. I watered it as usual without realising it was also being watered by the rain. Since it was in a self-watering pot, the plant was flooded and within a couple of weeks, it started showing some signs of decline but I didn't understand why. By the time I realised what had happened, the rot had set in! Well, at that time I was still a novice.

As you all are aware, orchids are mostly epiphytes or lithophytes, growing on a substrate with their roots open to air (tree, rocks). Their roots have a coating called velamen and it is made to rapidly absorb moisture from their surroundings and also photosynthesise. If you squish the velamen of a dead root of an orchid, you will get a feeling of pressing Styrofoam or sponge. In the centre of the velamen is a thin thread-like structure, which is hard to break if it is dead. But if you press a healthy root of an orchid, the velamen feels firm and juicy. It is also extremely brittle. Healthy roots are a sign of a healthy plant. When you overwater an orchid, the velamen rots, becomes soft and turns brown, leaving only the thread inside. However, when you underwater an orchid, the velamen shrinks or flattens, looks white and feels like Styrofoam to touch.

So what are the best ways to water an orchid when growing in pots? Well, there is no simple answer to that. The watering regimen depends on the type of plant, the pot, the substrate and the environment it is growing in. An orchid growing in a glazed terracotta pot, will require a different watering schedule compared to the one growing in an unglazed terracotta pot. Unglazed pots will wick the water and exude water rapidly, and thus will require more frequent watering. Orchids growing in plastic pots that have holes all around will require more frequent watering compared to the ones grown in plastic pots with holes only in the bottom. Orchids growing in moss will require less watering compared to the ones growing in bark or stones. Plants growing in a greenhouse will need less watering and finally, some plants like to have their roots wet all the time compared to others. The other factors that influence the frequency of watering indoors are the temperature in the house and air circulation. If you have a fan blowing around your plants 24/7, more frequent watering will be needed regardless of what type of substrate or pot they are grown in.

How do you know when to water?

You know your plant needs water when:

- The pot feels light when you pick it up. Top-heavy plants easily topple down when the pot and the substrate are bone dry.

- The roots look white and have lost their green, luster and full texture.
- Leaves are yellowing.
- Pest issues surface suddenly (some bugs appear when the surrounding humidity drops significantly, e.g., during winter).

How to avoid over or underwatering?

- Know your plant. *Cattleyas* are usually grown in bark and do not like to be wet. *Oncidium*s can also be grown in bark but their roots like to be moist.
- Orchids with pseudobulbs tolerate drought well compared to others such as *Phalaenopsis* or *Cypripedium*s.
- Some plants are seasonal and go dormant during winter months. These should not be watered until they wake up from their dormancy, usually at the beginning of spring. *Catasetums* belong to this category.
- The best way to avoid over or underwatering is to establish a watering schedule – orchids love consistency. Most would love to be watered every week if growing in bark. Plants growing in tightly packed moss can go without watering for 2-3 weeks.

How to water?

- Use lukewarm water.
- The best method to water orchids is from underneath. They don't like collecting water between their leaves. The clogged water in leaves can start leaf rot and also invites other pests and diseases.
- You can place the plant in a saucer or a bowl and fill the saucer with water. Leave the pot to soak up the water for 5-10 minutes.
- Most growers water them in sinks and prefer gentle hosing. This works well as you can also wash the leaves and wash off any pests that may have invited themselves. However, care must be taken to drain all water from the pot and dry the leaves before the pot is placed back on the shelf.
- Regardless of how you water, water in the mornings so that plants have time to dry before night fall.

Which water to use?

- I use regular tap water for all my plants. However, I have heard that in certain areas, tap water may be hard and may contain a lot of dissolved solids. In such cases, tap water may not be the best for orchids.
- One can use rain water.
- RO/distilled water. Some species do not tolerate tap water.

- Some fertilizers can only be used with rain water. In this case, one can water orchids with regular tap water and use rain water only when fertilizing.

Conclusions:

The topic of watering orchids is larger than what I can cover here. However, regardless of the type of plant, substrate, pot and others factors, regular inspection of your plants for signs of decline and establishing a consistent watering schedule will override any of the issues mentioned above.



Magnolia
Photo by: Arlene Lang

Editor's Wrap



Welcome! We have almost successfully completed yet another season in spite of the ever-present Coronavirus. In the end, it seems like either it has become a part of our lives or we have become a part of its life! I do not know if it is the right thing to say, but it feels like we have learnt to co-exist and I hope we respect each other's space 😊!

The Board has organised an Orchid Sales event on Saturday June 18, 2022, which will be held at the RA Centre in Clark Hall from 10:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. While the Board has done all the heavy lifting by organising the event, for it to be successful, the organising team will need your help. Please volunteer where you can. Thanks to the organising team led by Jan Johns for their hard work and for this exciting opportunity for buying new orchids just before we officially hit the Summer Solstice.

I have not been around very much for the last couple of meetings because of conflicting priorities; however, it has been exciting to put together the Show Table results for Spike. Thank you to all members for sending your beautifully blooming plants throughout the season for the Show Table. Many thanks to our judges for their work every month, going through the submissions to select the best ones. After the meeting in May we will not have another Show Table until September. Make sure to take pictures of your summer blooming orchids for publication in the September Spike. Similarly, if you end up going on orchid excursions, take plenty of pictures and send them to me at sabs_ca@yahoo.com. I will make sure to showcase them in Spike next season.

Thanks to all members of the Board for their relentless efforts throughout the season for keeping it exciting. Thanks to Jean Hollebhone, André Couture, Marie-Josée Bergeron and Monique Savard for organising the orchid group orders. Thanks to all those who contributed to Spike. A special thanks to Arlene for proof reading Spike every month with her eagle eyes!

Wishing you all a wonderful summer! Enjoy the warmth while it lasts. Take care and keep safe. See you at the June Sales Event.

Ciao,

Sabina Gupta (Editor, Spike Newsletter)

