



Central Illinois Orchid Society Newsletter

October 2008

Volume 2, Number 7

In This Issue

- Orchid basics
- Next meeting
- Orchid of the month 1
- Events in the area
- Orchid of the month 2
- Notes and tips

Contact Us

http://ci_orchid_society.tripod.com

Central Illinois Orchid Society Newsletter is published irregularly. Subscription is through membership in the Society.

Membership is \$10/person with \$5 for each additional family member. Checks payable to CIOS should be sent to Jerry Steerman, 507 N. Coler, Urbana, IL 61801.

CIOS Officers for 2008

Mitzi Williams, President & News Letter Editor

Jerry Steerman, Treasurer

Nancy Steerman, Secretary

Tim Bowers, AOS rep.

Orchid basics:

Almost everyone I know has lost some orchids, and if not lost totally, some plants just sulk for many years. The most common cause of losing an orchid may be that it is the wrong type of orchid for your growing environment. The next reason may be over watering (or under watering if grown on a cork bark). The most common reason for no bloom for an otherwise healthy orchid is lack of light. Below are some tips in matching the plants to your environment.

1. Cattleya type orchids need a lot of bright light to bloom. If your Cattleya types have dark green leaves but have not flowered, give them more light, especially during spring and summer.
2. Phalaenopsis orchids can be successfully grown with light from eastern windows, or by southern windows if the light is diffused somewhat.
3. Slipper orchids, especially the Asian variety with mottled leaves will burn if given too much light. They grow best behind other light-loving plants such as Cattleyas or in partial or filtered eastern exposure.
4. If the light is blocked or the window is too small to get a full day of light, consider using artificial lights. It is best to use cool bulbs so as not to burn the plants.
5. Water in the morning and hold back watering on cloudy days. Accumulated water in the center of leaf axis, especially for Phalaenopsis, may lead to crown rot, and the plant will not grow (i.e., no flower).
6. Fertilizer should be kept at a minimum during winter or not given at all.
7. Some orchids have definite blooming cycles (winter, spring, etc.) while others continue to grow several new growths a year, thus giving an appearance to be in constant bloom.
8. Don't put them aside after blooming. New growths need to be encouraged by providing the same TLC as before.

Mitzi Williams

Next meeting:

- The next CIOS meeting is on Tuesday, Oct. 21 at 6:30 p.m. The program is a field visit to Jerry and Nancy Steerman's, 507 N. Colar, U. **WE WILL NOT BE AT THE URBANA FREE LIBRARY!** Show and tell of your blooming plants are welcome. Refreshments will be provided.
- Our annual auction has been postponed to Nov. 4 at 6:30 p.m. in Rm 1125 Plant Science Lab, 1201 S. Dorner Drive, Urbana. The doors will be locked after 6:30 p.m. so please be on time. We will join the Illini Orchid Club (UI students' group). Please consider donating your extra plants or growing supplies. This event is the only fund raising opportunity for CIOS.
- We will have a regular meeting on Tuesday, November 18 at 6:30 p.m. at the Urbana Free Library. We will be electing new officers and do some planning of next year's activities, but there will be plenty of time for a show and tell.

Orchid of the month 1:



This is Vanda Sansai Blue '3n'(Crimson Glory x Coerulea) is in Jerry Steerman's collection.

Jerry bought this amazingly blue/purple mericlone vanda in bud 4 years ago from Hausermann's. It has bloomed every year in late summer or early fall.

Jerry grows his vandas in wooden baskets, and hangs them on a tree branch during summer. The vandas enjoy natural moisture of Illinois' high humidity. Jerry fertilizes them occasionally. When the outside temperatures become near freezing, he brings them into the greenhouse for the winter, and soaks the root ball and extraneous hanging roots in water every week or two.

Events in the area

- Oct. 24-26, 2008 Blackhawk Orchid Society Show, Klehm Arboretum, 2715 South Main St., Rockford, IL. Contact: Brian Lang, 3509 S. Baileyville Rd., Freeport, IL 61032; (815) 297-4723.
- Nov. 8-9 - Michiana Orchid Society Show, Holy Cross College, 4515 State Road 933 North, Notre Dame, IN. Contact: Sandy Ohlund, 3888 East 600 North, Rolling Prairie, IN 46371; (219) 778-4457; sohlund@csinet.net.

Orchid of the month 2:



Phragmipediums are a type of slipper orchids originally found in Mexico, Central and northern part of South America. Shown at left are both hybrids of *Phrag. besseae*: *Phrag. Jason Fisher x Phrag. besseae* (top) and *Phrag. Don Wimber* (bottom). Other species such as *Phrag. caudatum* or its hybrids develop long petals, and can grow quite tall. One such plant was featured as Orchid of the Month in the Nov. 2007 issue of this newsletter.

Phrag. besseae was first discovered in 1981 in the “wet montane forests on the eastern slope of the Andes Mountains in Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru. ... The unusual vivid red color of the flower attracted orchid collectors and hybridizers, and a huge commercial demand for the species developed. Over-collection coupled with habitat destruction soon drove many populations of *Phragmipedium besseae* to the brink of extinction. In an effort to protect remaining populations, *Phragmipedium* species are listed on Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), which bans trade in wild-collected plants. “ (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phragmipedium> 10/13/08)

Because their native habitat is a wet slope where water runs over their roots constantly, experts suggest growing them in bark, with a water-filled saucer under it. So these **plants cannot possibly be overwatered.** ☺

The plant requires medium light and medium to cool temperature. A support stick is needed once the flower stem grows above the leaves. They can be summered outside in a shaded area and brought in the fall before the night temperature falls below 50°F.

Notes and tips:

• Bloom boosters

Most orchids will bloom fine with “weakly weekly” regimen of balanced orchid fertilizer or those with high nitrogen content (i.e., Peters 30-10-10), but switching to bloom boosting fertilizer (Jack’s classic 10-30-20; Schultz 19-31-17; etc.) in the fall may enhance flowering of winter blooming orchids. A 1-lb. bag of Orchid Bloom Booster (11-35-15) by Better-Gro is sold at Lowe’s in Champaign for about \$4.00. Too much fertilizer can kill an orchid, so the strength indicated on the label should be observed, or cut down to be on the safe side.

● Phalaenopsis Care:

Check your Phals carefully. You may see the signs for another flowery display anytime between now and late November. Once the flower stem begins growing, it is best not to change the direction of the plant so that the flowers will all face one side and not get turned upside down. Stakes may be applied as the inflorescence grows taller.



A new flowering stem (inflorescence) appearing here.

This is a new healthy root. Because of its green tip, it resembles an inflorescence at first, but soon it will grow straight out or downward, and eventually show the white velamen which absorbs humidity and stores moisture and nutrients.



Sometimes the flower stem produces a plantlet or keiki (pronounced kâke, means child or baby in Hawaiian) after flowering, or instead of flowers. Slice off the keiki after it grows 3 or more roots of 1 inch long or more, and plant it in bark. The keiki can be planted in bark still attached, and cut off from the main stem after the roots take hold. It will take several years for the new plant to bloom.

For additional information on Phalaenopsis care, click on Orchid Information at the American Orchid Society's website, www.orchidweb.org/ and then Culture Sheets. This site provides a wealth of information about acquiring and growing orchids. Beginners will find Orchid Basics a must to read, and as he/she continues to care for the orchid, Monthly Checklists will provide timely orchid care information for that plant.

Many CIOS members can share their experiences with growing orchids. Monthly meetings are often the best place to ask questions. If the plant is not doing well, it is best to bring it to the meeting for problem diagnosis and suggestions for solutions.

● Prairie Orchid Protection and Restoration

In the article entitled “Citizen Scientists: an Orchid Recovery Project”, first published in the Native Orchid Conference Journal, April-June 2008, Cathy Bloome describes her 15 years experience as a volunteer in restoration efforts of Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchid (*Platanthera leucophaea*), also called Prairie White Fringed Orchid.¹ According to Bloome, prairie restoration efforts began in Cook County in the mid-1970’s. *P. leucophaea* was discovered in the 1980’s, and, pollination and seed collection were started in earnest with the help of volunteers like Bloom. A similar account of *P. leucophaea* restoration effort in Lake County Illinois was featured in the Audubon magazine.² The prairie fringed orchid was first mentioned by the Lewis and Clark Expedition, and was then called *Habenaria leucophaea*.³ *P. leucophaea* appears in the east of the Mississippi while its western cousin, *P. praeclara* (Western prairie fringed orchid) appears in the west of the Mississippi. They were considered as a single species until 1986.

Both orchid species are on the federally threatened plant list, but keeping them from extinction on private land is difficult to do unless the land owner is willing to protect them. Habitat destruction due to accidents or misunderstanding can permanently eliminate these native plants.⁴

Flowering occurs in late June and early July with each stalk covered with anywhere between 5 to 40 white flowers. The most prominent feature of the flower is the 3 fringed lower petals. Jasmine-like fragrance is emitted at night to attract its only pollinator, the hawkmoth, which has the proboscis long enough to reach the nectary of *P. leucophaea*.

Bloom says that the volunteers, now called Citizen Scientists, used toothpicks and a Styrofoam cup to collect pollinia from one orchid and pollinated another orchid. Bloom took on two sites to monitor the habitat, and to sow seeds, and saw one blooming orchid 7 years after she broke the prairie soil and dispersed the seeds. Sadly, she has not seen that plant again, but found new blooming plant in the area she had not sown seeds.

A list of various orchid species endangered in Illinois is compiled by the Illinois Endangered Species Protection Board.⁵ The Illinois Rare Plant Task Force poster (#1) shows seven species of native orchids that are being threatened including *P. leucophaea*. This colorful poster (about 24” x 35”) is available free from Mitzi Williams.

References:

1. Bloom, Cathy. Citizen Scientists: An orchid recovery Project. www.orchidconservationcoalition.org/articles.html. (10/15/08)
2. Audubon, May – June 2007. <http://audubonmagazine.org/features0705/habitat.html> (10/15/08)
3. Article adopted from Sather N., 1991. “Western prairie fringed orchid: a threatened Midwestern prairie plant.” Minnesota Dept. of Natural Resources, St. Paul. 14 P. http://files.dnr.state.mn.us/natural_resources/ets/fringed_orchid.pdf. (10/15/08)
4. Protected prairie orchids sprayed with herbicide. The Bismark Tribune. Sept. 9, 2008 <http://www.bismarktribune.com/articles/2008/09/09/news/state/164132.txt> (10/15/08)
5. <http://dnr.state.il.us/espb/datelist.htm>.