



The Orchid Collection

Genesee Region Orchid Society
Volume 28, Number 1
September, 2005

www.geneseearchid.org

Beginners Meeting 6:15 p.m. * Social "Hour" 7:00 - 7:15 p.m. * Meeting begins at 7:15 p.m.
Senior Adult Lounge at the Jewish Community Center, 1200 Edgewood Avenue, Rochester, NY

NEXT MEETING: SEPT. 12, 2005



Angraecum didieri, miniature species
Photo illustration ©Phil Matt

The long, hot summer seems like a strangely distant blur as August draws to a close. Mountains of tomatoes, forests of basil and a vague feeling that I should investigate the possibilities of wildcatting for oil in the backyard are all that remain.

Our speaker for September will be Lucinda Winn, one of the three owners of J&L Orchids in Easton, CT. Lucinda has taught orchid growing courses at the New York Botanical Garden for many years, and has lectured all over the U.S., as well as in many other countries. She will present a program on "Miniature Orchids - Good Things Come In Small Packages."

J&L Orchids was among the the first orchid nurseries to specialize in growing miniature orchids. Miniatures have enjoyed a surge in popu-

larity in the last few years as people are realizing how many of these charming plants can be grown in the same space as a few standard size plants. The miniature displays of J&L have won Best Display in Show for the last two years at the Greater New York Orchid Society Show, proving that bigger is not necessarily better!

J&L is offering a discount of 15% for preorders to be delivered at the meeting - and no charges for shipping! You can call in your order at 203- 261-3772, or email it to them at jlorchid@snet.net. The entire catalog is up on their website, www.jlorchids.com

We will be taking Lucinda out to dinner at a local restaurant at 5 p.m. on September 12th. Anyone interested in attending please contact Diane Bernard at (315)597-6778. The Show Table will be back, so please remember to bring in your flowering plants. We'll see you there!

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Try Rubber Mulch for Potting Orchids!

I have been keeping my eyes open for a long time for an ideal orchid potting medium. This media would not be too heavy, would not rot, be inexpensive, and would allow good air movement. I think I found it. My wife and I stopped at Harris Garden Center on Route 250 in Webster for some other items and I spotted a display featuring a new type made of recycled rubber. It was shredded to the same size as medium orchid bark. It was lightweight and guaranteed to last as garden mulch for up to 10 years (won't rot.) I remember an AOS *Bulletin* article where an author described successfully using cut up rubber retreads as a medium for growing orchids.

This rubber comes in chunks or shredded, black or brown. I bought 2 bags of the shredded type for \$15.98 each. You get 1.6 cu. ft. per bag. It is labeled "GroundScape". The manufacturer has a web site, www.groundscape.com. Check it out.

I am going to use this when I repot any of my *Cattleya* alliance orchids as a first trial. Rubber is not porous and will not hold much water compared to bark, thus it will need more frequent watering. As it ages I expect its surface to wet better. Of course you can always add perlite, if you want more water retention. The rubber won't hold salts and will not be susceptible to snow mold. Snow mold has been a problem for me with bark. I bought the shredded type of rubber mulch, as it will hold more water than the chunky type. It should be perfect for potting orchids that do not want to be disturbed often. Because the rubber won't rot, over watering will be less of a problem than with bark.

Weight and water retention are important orchid media features. I weighed 6-inch plastic pots filled with bark, rubber mulch, coconut husk, PrimeAgra ceramic media, and brick chips. I liked the idea of inert brick chips at one time, but discovered it was much too heavy. The rubber is only 75% heavier than bark, whereas the brick is more than 4 times heavier. Below are some weights of different media, both dry and wet. I worry about the coconut husk, because it holds so much water. When that water dries, there will be a large concentration factor for any salts in the water.

The weight of an empty 6" plastic pot is about 2 ozs.

Table I: Weight in ozs. of media in 6" pot less weight of plastic pot.

Media	Dry Wt.	Wet Wt.	Water Retention
Pine bark †	10	12	2
Rubber mulch*	18	20	2
Coconut husk	4	15	12
PrimeAgra@‡	18	21	3
Brick chips	47	53	6

(† fresh, & fresh soaked)
 (* water repellent when fresh)
 (‡ ceramic)

- R. Wyman

Beginners Meeting to Focus on Cattleyas

This year the Beginners Meeting will focus on a different orchid group each month. This month we will be discussing *Cattleya* and allied orchids. The discussion will include a repotting demonstration, tips to get them to rebloom, and nomenclature for intergeneric hybrids. If you have *Cattleya* type orchids feel free to bring them along for inclusion in the discussion.

The meeting starts at 6:15 PM and ends just before 7:00 PM so that members may attend the regular meeting. We will meet in the class room on the North side of the West Lobby entrance near the computer lab. Since we have a limited time slot try to be there on time.

- Jim Marlow



**DON'T LET YOUR
MEMBERSHIP EXPIRE!
DUES ARE DUE NOW!**

You can pay at the Sept. meeting, or use the form on the opposite page & mail it in! We will drop unpaid members from our mailing list for the next newsletter, so take a moment to pay your dues!

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GROS 2005-2006 Membership Renewal Form

If your mailing label on this newsletter says "Dues 2005-2006" to the right of your name, it means that you've forgotten to renew your GROS membership! To avoid being dropped from our mailing list, please pay your dues now. Only paid-up members will receive the October newsletter with the membership roster!

Check your mailing label on the other side of this form, make any necessary changes, and enclose this form, along with your check made out to the Genesee Region Orchid Society.

Mail to: GROS, P.O. Box 20606, Rochester, NY14602

\$20 single membership or \$25 family membership



Please check boxes below that apply:

- It's OK to publish my name and address in the roster
- It's OK to publish my phone number in the roster

How Do You Grow? Let Us Know!

Bob Wyman's article on growing orchids in rubber chunks (opposite page) got me thinking about how many different ways there must be to grow orchids successfully. It seems like finding the "magic" mixture of stuff for good orchid growing is almost a separate obsession - as if the orchids alone weren't enough! How exciting it is to plunk down some of your lovely orchids into a pot of "new" media, only to find out several months down the road that it would have been kinder just to leave them out on the back step and wait for December to arrive!

Personally, over the years I've tried just about everything that's "come along" in the way of growing media: bark-based mixes with a zillion different recipes of esoteric ingredient ratios, Pro-Mix ("mud"), coconut husk chip mixes, and now, semi-hydroponic growing with

LECA (lightweight expanded clay aggregate.) I grow under lights in my basement, so I guess that limits my choices for growing medium, although I'll readily admit that I'm not quite sure why that's so. I long ago gave up trying to figure out how to emulate the plants' "natural" habitat, as (1) I can't turn my basement into a jungle, rainforest, tropical paradise, etc., and (2) orchids don't really grow in any kind of potting media in the wild, as far as I can tell. They don't typically grow in pots, either!

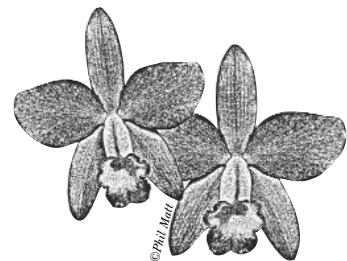
How do you grow *your* orchids? In a greenhouse? In your windowsills? Under lights?

What do *you* use for growing medium? Bark mixes? Coco chips? Pro-Mix? New Zealand sphagnum moss? Wine corks? Rubber chunks? Beer bottle caps? Something else? What do you like or dislike about your choice of media? Send me a few words about the kinds of orchids you grow, where you grow them and what you use for growing media. I'll put the

comments together and run them in a future column. I think it could be an interesting exploration for both experienced and novice orchid growers. After all, one of the greatest resources for learning how to grow better orchids is the collective wisdom of our wonderful group of GROS members.

Send your comments to me by email at newsletter@philmatt.com or give me a call at 288-7025.

- Phil Matt
Newsletter Editor



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The Genesee Region Orchid Society (GROS) meets every month from September through May at the Jewish Community Center, 1200 Edgewood Avenue, Rochester, NY, on the first Monday following the first Sunday of each month. (Dates sometimes vary due to holidays, etc.) The GROS is an Affiliate of The American Orchid Society and of The Orchid

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