



The Orchid Collection

Vol. 32, No. 1 - September, 2010

Genesee Region Orchid Society, Inc.
<http://www.geneseeorchid.org>

NEXT MEETING: **TUESDAY**, SEPT. 7, 2010

“Orchids 101” 6:00 p.m. ❁ Social “Hour” 7:00 - 7:15 p.m. ❁ Meeting begins at 7:15 p.m.
Senior Lounge, Jewish Community Center, 1200 Edgewood Ave., Rochester, NY



Cattleya Garrett Collins (C. Little Dipper × C. Mini Purple)
3rd. Place Ribbon, GROS Spring Show, 2010. Grower: Alan Sowinski.

Summer continues on into September with lots of heat; despite the fact that the children are heading back to school and the stores are already hawking Halloween ware, the only really reliable measure of the season, really, is that the GROS is back in town.

We kick off our orchid season with a visit from Alan Koch, who'll be trekking in from Gold Country Orchids in Lincoln, California to present, “Mini Catts.” This group of orchids is bred specifically to maintain a very compact plant size with relatively large flowers. Many minicatts blooming several times per year when grown under

optimal conditions. As a recognized expert on Brazilian *Cattleyas* - source of many of the species used in minicatt hybridizing - Alan has been at the forefront of minicatt breeding for many years.

Alan has published in *The Orchid Digest*, the *American Orchid Society* magazines, and in *Proceedings of the World Orchid Conference*. He is an accredited AOS judge. He will be bringing plants to sell at the meeting, so be sure to arrive early for best selection. We will be taking Alan to dinner prior to the meeting - please see the website for late-breaking details.

Don't forget - the meeting is on **TUESDAY** night! The Show Table will be back, so please bring your flowering plants. We'll see you there!

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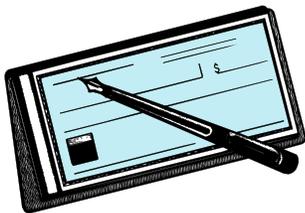
- Dues Reminder ♡2
- Fragrant Orchids ♡2

Membership Dues: The Time is Now!

If you've spent the summer out in the middle of Lake Ontario, or maybe on some other planet, you have a good excuse for not having paid your membership dues yet. Otherwise, there are no good excuses!

Our Treasurer even sent you a membership expiration notice via regular old "snail mail" sometime this summer. The truth is, the club's ability to continue to present outstanding speakers from around the country, to maintain our Library and website - all depends (among other things) upon timely receipt of your dues.

Planning to come hear Alan Koch speak in September? Please don't forget your checkbook and see Ron Uhlig, our Treasurer, at the meeting. It only takes a minute to take care of your membership dues, and by paying at the meeting, you'll be sure to stay on our mail/email lists. Only paid-up members will receive the printed GROS membership directory in October.



The Sweet Smell of Success

To orchids in the wild, success is being able to propagate themselves. Since orchid pollen is stuck together in pollinia, orchids can't be wind-pollinated like many plants. They must attract pollinators, but how? They are often widely scattered in inconspicuous locations up in the trees. To solve this dilemma, many orchid species have evolved incredible fragrances. The fact that we also enjoy them is because, fortunately, we happen to like the same sweet scents that attract bees and moths by suggesting the presence of sugary nectar. There are a few orchids, such as certain *Bulbophyllums*, that stink! These are pollinated by flies,

and smell like rotting meat. Most attractive to the flies, but not recommended to growers except fanatical collectors.

There is a fascinating connection between flower color and fragrance in orchid species. White or green flowers are often fragrant at night. Examples include the *brassavolas* and *angraecums*. These flowers are pollinated by moths, whose feathery antennae are extremely sensitive to odors. Bright colors are of no use at night, but white or light green flowers are more visible, and the fragrance lets the moths home in even in the dark.

Red flowers are seldom fragrant (the rose is an exception). It turns out that bees can't see red (it looks black to them), although their vision extends into the ultraviolet. Many red and yellow flowers are pollinated instead by hummingbirds, which are strongly attracted to these colors, but have virtually no sense of smell.

Other flowers with colors like pink, purple and yellow may or may not be fragrant. If they are, it's during the daytime, since the colors are designed to attract bees or butterflies. Examples include the lavender *cattleya* species, and the yellow *lycastes*.

Some orchids, such as the exotically fragrant *stanhopeas*, emit odors so specific as to attract on and only one species of bee. Some of these fragrances are heady and perfume-like; others smell like Lysol® or Vicks® VapoRub®.

Hybrids are a different story. Hybridizers have concentrated on flower size, shape, and color - not fragrance. This is not unrelated to the fact that fragrance doesn't count in awards judging. Many lavender, white, and green *cattleya* hybrids are fragrant, since most of the parent *cattleya* species are fragrant, as is *Rhyncholaelia* (formerly *Brassavola*) *digbyana*, ancestor of almost all "Brassos". However, red *cattleya* hybrids, as well as some of the yellows,

have non-fragrant red species in their background, and the fragrance is usually lost in the process. Perhaps someday someone will breed for both fragrance and color.

To get orchids in your collection, which are guaranteed to be fragrant, you'll find yourself going back to the species. My all-time favorite for fragrance is *Brassavola nodosa*, the "lady of the night" orchid. It's green and white and, sure enough, is fragrant at night, especially just after dusk. So fragrant that one small plant with a few flowers open in one corner of my living room can be smelled 35 feet away. Although the scent carries far, it doesn't overwhelm.

**“There are a few
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as certain
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that stink!”**

Interestingly, when I moved the plant under a lamp one night, the fragrance soon stopped. It only smells when it's in the dark. The plant is small and a good one for beginners to grow. It likes a lot of sun. Mine blooms yearly for five weeks in November-December.

An even more powerful scent belongs to *Cycnoches chlorichilon*,

the "swan orchid." This one is colored chartreuse and is fragrant in the daytime. I found its heavy, sweet scent rather overpowering. It's also a fairly big plant and a bit tricky to overwinter (mine died.)

However, I can recommend *Lycaste aromatica*. It loses its foot-tall leaves in the winter; then the leafless pseudobulb produces up to twelve yellow and orange flowers in the spring, each on a separate spike, which lasts two weeks and smell "more like cinnamon than cinnamon does," as a friend of mine put it. I grow mine cool and bright in the winter and more shaded in the summer.

There are dozens of other fragrant species available from dealers and catalogs. If you don't have any fragrant orchids, try one and treat yourself to the "sweet smell of success."

Judging Centers Thank GROS

We've received the following correspondence from AOS Judging Centers. For new members or those unaware of our club's activities in supporting the American Orchid Society's judging system, the GROS makes annual donations to these centers to help defray the cost of AOS judging at our Spring shows.

June 3, 2010

Dear GROS Members,

On behalf of the Toronto Judging Centre judges, I would like to thank you for the generous donation. This money will help to acquire new material for the judges' use.

Thanks again.

Sincerely,
Mario Ferussi, Treasurer

(Addressed to Ron Uhlig, GROS
Treasurer:)

June 6, 2010

Dear Ron,
On behalf of the National Capital Judging Center, I would like to thank the Genesee Region Orchid Society for its very generous contribution of \$125.00 to our Judging Center. We are delighted to be able to support your society's show and we appreciate it when societies are willing to reciprocate by supporting the Judging Center. Please pass on our thanks to your membership at the earliest opportunity.

Again, thank you very much!

Sincerely,
Robert J. Griesbach
Chair, National Capital Judging Center



Minicatts: A Brief Background

Miniature *Cattleyas*, or "Minicatts" as they are affectionately known, arose from the desire to achieve large, showy flowers typical of the *Cattleya* species, with a smaller plant size that might be more manageable and attractive to orchidists. Frank Fordyce, one of the key figures in early minicatt breeding, described minicatts as being at most 8 inches tall, and typically flowering for the first time in a 3-inch pot.

Breeder Ernest Hetherington created one of the first minicatts in 1975, Sc. Rose Pixie. This was a cross between C. Bob Betts (a standard size hybrid *Cattleya*) and *Sophranitis coccinea*, a very small, intensely colored red species from Brazil. The resultant plant only reached about 7 inches in height when mature, but often bloomed several times per year, with fragrant, long-lasting flowers. Many other hybrids followed, using species such as *L. sincoriana*, *L. pumila*, *C. walkeriana*, *C. guttata* and *C. aclandiae*, among others. Selected and polyploid plants of *S. coccinea* remain in the picture for contemporary minicatt breeding.

Various breeding goals have included adding warmth tolerance, improving substance, bettering the lip shape, increasing the number and frequency of flowerings, and adding to the range of available colors. To this end, additional species such as *Rhynchoaelia*, *Broughtonia* and *Brassavola* have also been introduced into breeding programs.

Our speaker this month, Alan Koch, has been breeding minicatts for many years. He suggests that it is critical to allow the plants to dry out thoroughly between waterings - even if mounted. The typical minicatt has thick leaves and fat pseudobulbs, which is also a kind of "clue" to alert growers to avoid keeping them too wet. The pseudobulbs act as water storage "containers," which is also a "clue" as to why one should not overpot the plants - this could surround their roots with too much moisture and prevent adequate drying.

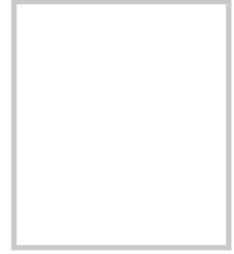
- Phil Matt

The Sept. Meeting is on TUESDAY night, Sept. 7th !!

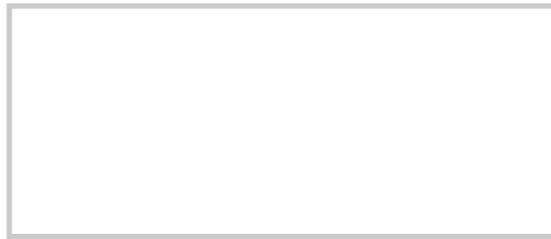
The Orchid Collection is a publication of the Genesee Region Orchid Society. It is published ten times per year for our members. Single membership is \$20.00, family membership is \$25.00 annually. Dues should be sent to the GROS at P.O. Box 20606, Rochester, N.Y. 14602

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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 Digest Corporation. Material in our newsletter, The Orchid Collection, may be freely reprinted in other orchid society publications with proper attribution. Copyrighted illustrations, photographs or articles may not be reprinted without the express written permission of the artist or author.



DON'T FORGET!

SEPT. MEETING IS ON TUESDAY NIGHT, SEPT. 7 at the JCC SENIOR LOUNGE