



August 2009 Newsletter

Affiliations American Orchid Society The Orchid Digest	Proud Supporter of Alzheimer's Association of the Central Coast
President: Danny Stocks	Vice President: Eric Holenda
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Our Next Meeting (by Eric Holenda)

Our August meeting will be "WHAT'S WRONG WITH MY PLANT?" Periodically we like to give the membership the opportunity to get any help they may need to successfully grow and bloom their orchids. Often just one simple change in culture can make the difference between frustration and elation. Bring in plants that you are puzzled about or are sickly and our panel of medics will diagnose them. Often repotting will be the recommended treatment. We'll bring some repotting supplies to rejuvenate as many of these patients as time will allow. We also welcome any questions about general orchid culture. The person that brings in the WORST LOOKING SICK PLANT will receive ten free raffle tickets for the opportunity table. The opportunity table will be provided by SLO Gardens.

Our treat fairies for August are Delene Keck, Bonnie Werring and Jean McIlvanie.

FOR SALE: 1 gallon capacity humidifier -- \$5. new. Call Eric 929-5749

President's Message (Danny Stocks)

I was fortunate to attend a lecture by Lou Menezes last month during the International Orchid Fair in Santa Barbara. Lou spoke about conserving the habitats of *Cattleya nobilior* and *Cattleya walkeriana* in her home country of Brazil. It opened my eyes on a problem in the orchid world, the disappearance of orchids in the wild. She was speaking specifically about the disappearance of *C. nobilior* and *C. walkeriana* in her area of Brazil. But it is not just a local problem in Brazil; it is a global problem for almost all orchid species worldwide.

Since that lecture I have been doing some reading on the subject and would like to pass on the information I have gathered to the members of our club. There are some simple things we as orchid consumers can do to help.

In 1994 it was estimated that smuggling orchids was a 5 billion dollar business. Where are these orchids going? Not to Trader Joes. They are going to people in orchid societies like you and I. We the consumers of exotic, unusual, and rare orchids are part of the problem. Do we know or care where the orchids we are buying are coming from? Do we ask? Who would the smugglers sell to if we, the orchid consumer, made a conscious effort to ask and not buy orchids that may have

been collected in the wild? No one. There would not be a market for wild orchids. Smuggling would not be profitable and would diminish if there were not a market to sell their orchids. Orchid smuggling is going to occur as long as we tolerate it.

The government saw the extinction of not only orchids but of many different species of plants and animals as a problem. Subsequently, the United States and 120 other countries came together in 1973 and created the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES). I had heard of CITES before but really did not know what it was about. All I really knew was if you wanted to ship or receive orchids from some states to another you needed these papers called CITES papers. The papers were hard to get and expensive. I actually thought that CITES just was about the distribution of orchids and was designed to stop the spread of viruses and diseases that occur in orchids. Kind of like that agricultural inspection stations you go through as you enter the state. I was wrong. CITES is a worldwide document that stipulates that any species of plant or animal that is endangered cannot be traded commercially.

Like most other documents of this nature, it is easy to draft up but hard to enforce. Enforcement comes from two areas. First CITES highly regulates the gathering of orchids from the wild. It is up to each individual country to fund the staffing for this protection. Needless to say many of the countries where orchids grow the governments have a hard enough time feeding the people let alone funding orchid protection. On the down side of this protection, if an area is to be cleared for farms or houses, it is still illegal or extremely difficult to remove endangered or rare orchid species from areas that are going to be destroyed.

The second area of enforcement for CITES is customs. The customs agents have a hard enough time trying to stop illegal drugs from entering the country to really devote time and resources into the illegal orchid trade. And let's be honest, can you really tell what species an orchid is when it is not in bloom? Besides, by the time the orchids are passing borders, they have already been removed from their natural habitat.

A bigger problem for orchids than smuggling is human pressure on orchid habitats. Habitat loss is huge problem that we probably have all heard about. Cut and burn agriculture in

third world countries changes large tracts of land destroying all the native plants and animals including orchids. Can you really blame the farmers doing this; they are just trying to feed their families. It is the same thing our forefathers did in this country. But it is not just the third world countries where this is occurring. It may not be slash and burn agriculture but even in this country sensitive orchid habitat is being lost every day. So what can we do about habitat loss? None of us can afford to go out and buy large tracts of land to preserve orchids. Fortunately, there are organizations out there that do just that. They collect money from organizations and people like us and buy land. One of the larger better known international organizations is the Orchid Conservation Alliance. They buy and manage tracts of land all over the world that contain orchids. I encourage everyone to go to their web site, www.orchidconservationalliance.org, and check out the areas they are targeting for preserves. I am proud that our club is a member of this alliance helping in this effort.

Besides habitat loss, habitat destruction is also helping the loss orchids in the wild. There are large areas of preserves trying to maintain orchid populations in their natural state. In Brazil alone there are over 13,381,000 acres in preserves. Just because there is a preserve, what stops people from entering and taking orchids? A line on a map is hardly a boundary that will stop people from entering. Not only the illegal gathering of orchids but the people that come into an area to just look at wild orchids can have a devastating effect on many habitats. It is just like our national parks. I have heard the saying: "Americans are loving their national parks to death." The same thing is happening in other countries where wild orchids grow. Many orchids grow in very specialized habitats that can take very little interference from humans before they are permanently damaged.

So what can we do as orchid hobbyists to preserve orchids in their natural habitat? Ask if the orchid you are buying was raised at a nursery or gathered from the wild. Do not buy or own orchids that were gathered in the wild. Campaign for orchid preservation in this country or any other that you are

affiliated with. Support organizations such as the Orchid Conservation Alliance. Do not gather wild orchids yourself. When going on vacations to see orchids in their natural environments, only deal with companies that promote orchid conservation and employ reputable guides. There is a saying when backpacking: "leave only foot prints." I would propose, when looking at orchids in the wild, walk softly and try not to even leave footprints.

July Meeting Summary

Our annual BBQ potluck and silent auction was a big success. Everyone enjoyed the food. Thanks to everyone who brought plants and who bought plants, we made \$670 on the silent auction. The theme for next year's show will be announced at the August meeting.

THERE IS A CHANGE IN CALENDAR FOR COLLECTING MEMBERSHIP DUES FROM JULY TO JANUARY. DUES FOR THE REMAIN 2009 YEAR IS \$10 AND JANUARY THROUGH DECEMBER 2010 IS \$20.

MEMBERS WHO ARE UNABLE TO ATTEND THE MEETING MAY MAIL YOUR DUE TO PEGGY BOZEM AT 111 KAREN WAY, PISMO BEACH, CA 93449.

Orchid Calendar

Dates	Event	Location	Comments
August 8	Cabrillo Orchid Soc annual BBQ & silent auction	Fishman Ranch Cayucos	1-4 pm Call Susan at 995-0006 for directions
August 13	FCOS Monthly Meeting	AG Women's Club, Arroyo Grande	7:30 pm
Sept 12-13	San Francisco Orchid Society Orchids in the Park	Hall of Flowers County Fair Bldg Golden Gate Park	
November 28-29	Santa Barbara Orchid Society Fall Show and Sale	Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History	