



ILLINOIS  
ORCHID  
SOCIETY

# NEWSLETTER

**VOL. 53 No. 10, October 2005**

**Jerry Garner, Editor**

*ioseditor@comcast.net*

## 2005-2006 IOS Meeting and Show Dates

Meeting Dates	Location / Facilities
October 09	Renaissance Chicago North Shore Hotel, Glencoe
November 13	Renaissance Chicago North Shore Hotel, Glencoe
December 11	Hausermann's Holiday Party
<b>2006</b>	<b>No Spring Show</b>
July 06	Expected return to CBG
Fall 2006	Large Fall Show @ CBG

## 2005-2006 Orchid Events

10/21-10/23	Fall MAOC, Cincinnati, OH
10/22-10/23	Greater St. Louis Orchid Society Show
10/28-10/30	Blackhawk Orchid Society Fall Show
10/29-10/30	Michiana Orchid Society Fall Show
3/24-3/26/06	Spring MAOC, Omaha, NE



*Paph. Voodoo Magic*

## President's Message

**Wendy Wesley, IOS President**

I just want to say a quick thank you to all of the people who helped out with our Fall Show. I had a great time working the show with my fellow orchid growers and Society members. I am looking forward to seeing all of you at our next meeting, October 9<sup>th</sup>. Remember the location has been moved from the Garden to the Renaissance Chicago North Shore Hotel in Northbrook because of construction.

The Society is still in need of several volunteers for vacant positions. If you can spare just a few hours month, it would benefit the IOS greatly. This is a wonderful opportunity for new members to become involved & meet other members. Not-so-new members should consider volunteering too. Contact Wendy Wesley for more information.

## October Program Notes

**Barry Lubin, Program Chairman**

As you may recall, the Chicago Botanic Garden is undergoing a major remodeling and expansion that will be completed in June 2006. (Keep your fingers crossed.) Until then, we will be meeting outside of the Garden. Our next meeting is **Sunday, October 9, at the Renaissance Chicago North Shore Hotel, 933 Skokie Boulevard, Northbrook, IL.** Parking is free, and easily available. We will be meeting in the **Skokie Room**. The hotel is a mere 2 miles from the entrance to CBG, just off the Edens Expressway and south of Dundee Road, so please don't let the change in venue discourage your attendance. A map is included in the newsletter (page 4) for your convenience, or you can call the hotel at 847-498-6500 for directions. Have your plants in place for judging by 12:30 PM and bring lots of plants for the members' sale table. Also, please remember to bring something for the hospitality table to share with your fellow members. Please note: we are only permitted to bring home baked goods to the Renaissance Hotel – nothing in packages, e.g., no Entenmann's or Dunkin' Donuts. We still have some IOS bark mix and fertilizer (both the tap water and RO blends based on the Michigan State University formula) available. If you want some, please send me an e-mail before the meeting ([BRlubin@sbcglobal.net](mailto:BRlubin@sbcglobal.net)). I will only bring enough to fill pre-orders – the stuff gets rather heavy after lugging it back and forth 10 or 12 times. The Mentors (Newcomers) meeting will begin at 11:45 a.m. This is your chance to ask any

**2004-2005 IOS Officers – Terms of office are from July 1 until June 30**

President	Wendy Wesley	773-227-6064	( <a href="mailto:wswesley1@aol.com">wswesley1@aol.com</a> )
1 <sup>st</sup> VicePresident (Meetings/speakers)	Barry Lubin	847-432-5968	( <a href="mailto:brlubin@sbcglobal.net">brlubin@sbcglobal.net</a> )
2 <sup>nd</sup> Vice (Home Show Chair)	Lois Cinert	630-739-1068	( <a href="mailto:geolocin@earthlink.net">geolocin@earthlink.net</a> )
3 <sup>rd</sup> Vice President (Away show chair)	Sandy Fuller	847-991-5434	( <a href="mailto:sjfuller62@comcast.net">sjfuller62@comcast.net</a> )
Secretary (Recorder)	Sherry Maloney	847-498-0249	( <a href="mailto:smmaloney@earthlink.net">smmaloney@earthlink.net</a> )
Asst. Sec’y (Newsletter Editor)	Jerry Garner	847-864-8417	( <a href="mailto:ioseditor@comcast.net">ioseditor@comcast.net</a> )
Treasurer (Collects/disburses monies)	Jim Spatzek	847-498-4638	( <a href="mailto:jamcam21@sbcglobal.net">jamcam21@sbcglobal.net</a> )
Asst. Treas (Membership/ Dues)	Anne Kotowski	630-833-8042	( <a href="mailto:phrag207@aol.com">phrag207@aol.com</a> )
Immediate Past President	Joe Dixler	847-432-7708	( <a href="mailto:jmd@dixler.net">jmd@dixler.net</a> )

**Board Members – Terms of office expire June 30 of the year shown.**

Rich Unger	2006	773-685-2677	( <a href="mailto:aroma_imp@hotmail.com">aroma_imp@hotmail.com</a> )
Allison Tribble	2006	773-728-4874	( <a href="mailto:allisont@rcn.com">allisont@rcn.com</a> )
Sue Golan	2007	847-234-6311	( <a href="mailto:sgolan@aol.com">sgolan@aol.com</a> )
Allen Morr	2007	847-501-2532	( <a href="mailto:ozone03@ameritech.net">ozone03@ameritech.net</a> )
Toby Green	2008	847-845-6145	( <a href="mailto:toby.green@caremark.com">toby.green@caremark.com</a> )
Barbara Schmitz	2008	773-275-3061	( <a href="mailto:somalijane@aol.com">somalijane@aol.com</a> )
Leo Schordje	2009	847-746-9355	( <a href="mailto:lshordje@dataflo.net">lshordje@dataflo.net</a> )
Felicia Cochran	2009	630-889-0084	( <a href="mailto:fcochran@concentric.net">fcochran@concentric.net</a> )

questions you may have of our experienced growers. You can also bring in any plants giving you problems for expert examination and diagnosis, but please put them in a plastic bag to protect the innocent.

The workshop will begin at 12:30 PM. Our workshop host this month will be IOS member Tom Heller. Tom is returning with “New Stuff – Part 2”. About a year ago, Tom presented the first episode of “New Stuff”, with a discussion of many new products of interest to orchid growers. He has been actively collecting material for the next episode and is returning this month by popular demand.

Our featured speaker will be Fred Clarke of Sunset Valley Orchids (<http://www.sunsetvalleyorchids.com>) in Vista, California. His topic is **Cycnoches, Mormodes, and Catasetums: A Review of Some Trends**. If you receive any of the major orchid periodicals, you have certainly seen Fred’s recent success with catasetum hybrids, including his FCC award for the first truly black orchid, *Fredclarkeara* After Dark ‘SVO Black Pearl’ FCC/AOS (*Mormodia* Painted Desert x *Catasetum* Donna Wise). Fred is a certified American Orchid Society Judge. Fred will be bringing plants for sale, and you can pre-order on his website.

**Membership News**

**Anne Kotowski, Membership Chairman**

Everyone please welcome our new members. Make sure you introduce yourselves to these newcomers and make them feel welcome to the IOS. We hope to see all of them at the October meeting.

Two important reminders for everyone: the meeting is at the Radisson Chicago North Shore Hotel (see directions in the newsletter); and the Mentors’ (newcomers’) meeting begins at 11:30 a.m. This is a chance for you to ask questions of a few “experts” in the Society and get to know other new members. And don’t be shy with your



**Phal. Raspberry Cheesecake**

questions! We can all learn more about orchids by asking more questions.

**Welcome to New Members in September**

Mandy Swanson	Chicago
Jeanne Becker	Deerfield
Paula Pivar	Riverwoods
Alice Cha	

For up-to-date IOS news, meeting schedules and photos, go to the IOS website at [www.iosoc.com](http://www.iosoc.com).

## **Lycastes**

By Steve Gettel

Lycaste species and hybrids are becoming popular for their large numbers of long-lasting flowers that offer a wide range of colors. Few orchids rival a well-grown flowering Lycaste, e.g. *Lycaste skinneri*, in respect to flower size, shape and color. The myth that Lycastes are difficult to grow has been dispelled with the increased understanding of these plants' habitat and cultural requirements.

Most members of the genus share a common growth habit: large plicate leaves, clustered ovoid pseudobulbs, and multiple lateral inflorescences. Mature plants of the larger members of the genus require substantial space due to leaf width and span.

Lycastes are indigenous to the cloud forests of Central and South America. This genus of approximately three to four dozen species is distributed geographically from Mexico south to Brazil. Lycastes most common in cultivation belong to the Deciduosae and Macrophyllae groups and are predominantly epiphytes and lithophytes.

Members of the Deciduosae, which include *Lycaste aromatica*, are typically found at mid-elevations where the plants are exposed to a distinct wet/dry cycle. In winter and early spring these plants are deciduous and lose their leaves, exposing spines at the top of the pseudobulbs.

Flowers can completely encircle the growing portion of a plant.

The Macrophyllae, which includes *Lycaste skinneri*, are found at higher elevations, typically above 5,000 feet, in humid, breezy mountain forests. These plants experience a longer wet period and slightly cooler temperatures. *Lycaste skinneri* exhibits a wide variety of color types from true alba to semi-alba to pinks to darker lavenders. It is the foundation

for most Lycaste hybridization, although *Lycaste macrophylla* contributes red to hybrid flower color.

### **Lycaste Culture**

Culture differs somewhat between the Deciduosae and Macrophyllae groups, primarily in temperature and water requirements. Recognizing the proper culture, according to group, will make a substantial difference in a Lycaste's performance. The more closely these conditions can be duplicated in the home, the yard, or the greenhouse, the better these plants will grow and bloom.

**Temperature and Humidity** The deciduous yellow lycastes and *Lycaste macrophylla*, as well as their hybrids, are warmth tolerant and will perform with temperatures into the 90° F range provided there is sufficient air circulation. Extra shading will help reduce temperatures in warm areas. Many

of the deciduous species will tolerate cooler temperatures than the *Lyc. skinneri* types. *Lycastes skinneri* types perform best with temperatures between 60° and 80° F, although they will tolerate slightly higher or lower temperatures for short periods. Ideal humidity is between 50% and 70%, with as much ventilation or air circulation as possible. Growing plants on gravel trays will maintain humidity, as will grouping several plants together.

**Water and Fertilizer** Watering and fertilizing plants grown in sphagnum moss or a mixture of fir bark and perlite need to be kept evenly moist, not soggy to prevent root damage. If in doubt, err on the dry side and don't water. Mature plants should approach dryness particularly from blooming time until the new growth appears. Seedlings should be kept evenly moist. During the winter rest period, the deciduous group of Lycaste prefers to dry out more than the *Lyc. skinneri* types. Keep water off new growth to avoid damage.

As for most orchids, high water quality with low salt and mineral content is imperative. Feed with a balanced fertilizer at half strength every other watering.

**Light** Filtered, indirect light (approximately 1,500 foot-candles) is recommended. Direct sun will burn the leaves and too little light will result in few, if any, flowers. The leaves should be bright to yellowish green. Yellow leaves indicate too much light while dark-green leaves indicate too little.

**Pests and Diseases** Aphids and scale are encountered most often. Individual scale may be removed with a cotton swab saturated with rubbing alcohol. Infestations will usually require spraying both the topside and underside of leaves and new growths with an insecticide.

**Potting** Repotting is needed annually, after plants have finished blooming and when the plant's new growth is 3" to 6" tall. This is usually in the early spring to the early summer, but never during the hot summer months. Clean off the old potting mix from the roots and remove dead roots before repotting in new mix. If dividing plants, keep the divisions in clumps of three to five mature pseudobulbs. Always sterilize cutting tools to prevent the spread of viruses.

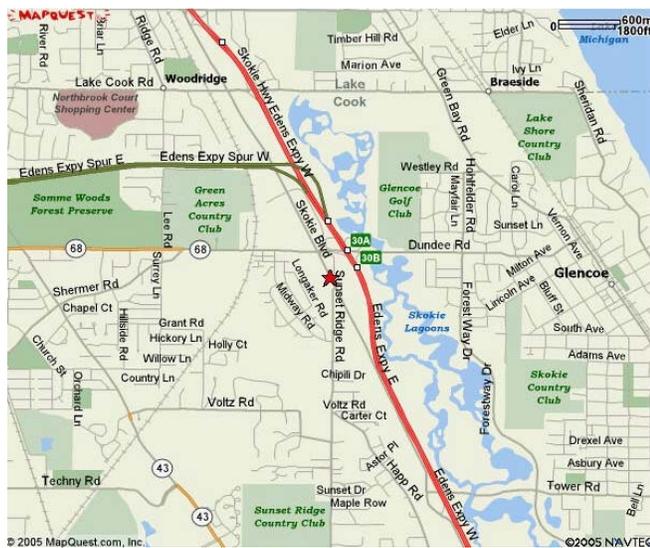
Plants grown in sphagnum moss should be potted in net pots or plastic containers that are well aerated and drained. Those in fine fir bark and perlite can be potted in plastic pots. Select pots that will just accommodate the roots; don't over pot.

Providing the correct cultural needs for *Lycastes* is certain to yield lovely flowering specimens that enhance the aesthetic value of any collection.

(Reprinted from the *AOS Bulletin*, February 1995. Edited for the *IOS Newsletter*.)

(Photo: *Lycaste* Elizabeth Powell 'Numero Duo' AM/AOS (*skinneri* x *Wyld Court*). Grown by Benjamin C. Berliner. Photo by Charles Marden Fitch.)

### Map to Renaissance Chicago North Shore Hotel



### Winterizing Your Windowsill Orchids

Jerry Garner, Newsletter Editor

The arrival of winter means a little extra care and attention are required for your orchids. Here are a few tips and reminders to consider when winterizing your orchids. There are a few essential items to remember, particularly temperature, watering, and light levels.

**Watering:** First and foremost, remember that short days and decreased sunlight will affect and slow the growth of your orchids. Cooler temperatures and longer nights mean your orchids will require less water than in the summer months. Plants will not dry out as quickly and there is less evaporation of water. Take time to assess how your orchids are tolerating the change of weather and growing conditions. Despite the variations, your plants will tolerate less water during the winter months. If you have recently moved your orchids from outdoors back into the house for the winter, you may need to water a bit more frequently for a while.

**Fertilizer:** It is important to keep in mind that less frequent watering and lower light levels during this period of slowed growth necessitate less fertilizer. Cut back on the fertilizing schedule. Using an occasional bloom

booster will help set the flower spikes especially on phalaenopsis.

**Light:** The sun is at lower levels during the winter, yet your orchids still require light. Move your plants around to give them as optimal light as possible. Even though your orchids like a brief rest period during the winter, they still need adequate light. Give your plants as much light as possible while the days are short. This will help to warm your orchids naturally with the sunlight. Note how the sunlight falls on your orchids, the shadows and the length of time your plants get sunlight. Position your plants accordingly and be prepared to move them around as the winter months progress. Cattleyas, vandas and other sun loving orchids should be placed where they will receive maximum light throughout the day. Orchids are less apt to get sunburned during the winter. Take care to notice the sun angles and light intensity as mid-March and April arrive. Sunburn becomes a real risk during these months as the sun's brightness intensifies. You may need to shield or move your orchids to compensate for the sun as spring approaches.

**Temperatures:** Orchids are sensitive to extremes in temperatures and severe cold can injure them. However, cool growing orchids should be quite happy with the arrival of cool temperatures! Take care to move plants away from windows and avoid having the leaves touch windows. The cold glass will damage the leaves. Individuals still growing orchids outdoors now must be cautious of freezing temperatures. Orchids will suffer damage if temperatures stay in ranges between 30° - 40° F. Vandaceous orchids are extremely susceptible to cold spells. Develop a plan on what to do as temperatures become more unpredictable. This might be quite a feat if you have a lot of orchids outdoors now. It is not always possible to move all your orchids indoors at one time when the temperatures reach critical marks on the thermometer. Watch the temperatures!

If you have already brought your plants indoors, be certain to provide adequate humidity. The heating systems used in homes are generally a drier heat and may cause the plant to shrivel. Position the orchids so they are not directly in front of heating vents. This can cause dehydration. Check your plants regularly. Another helpful tip is to place your plants in trays filled with rocks and water to keep the humidity higher around your plants.

**Staking:** Winter months affect various orchids differently. The cool growing orchids such as *Masd.* and *Pleuro.* will definitely get a jump start if

your indoor conditions are cool. But temperatures comfortable for us and home heating systems can cause problems for these species. Warmth loving orchids such as phalaenopsis and paphiopediliums will begin producing flower spikes vigorously. Stake the spikes to allow for the best orientation of the flowers. Don't turn the plants while spikes are maturing. Doing so can cause the spikes to grow at unnatural angles. Check your plants often and help the spikes grow upward.

Cymbidiums should be staked completely upright and straight to enhance the presentation of the flowers. Cattleyas need high light and may develop weaker spikes during winter months when the light is at a lower intensity. Stake the new growths and spikes to provide support. Take time to stake all flower spikes properly to prevent them from breaking and to ensure flowers are displayed appropriately.

**Insects:** Continually check your orchids for any signs of insect infestation. Mealy bugs, scale, spider mites and aphids love the warm dry conditions in most homes in winter. Emerging spikes and bracts are particularly inviting to these pests. Insects are often found in the folds and undersides of the leaves. Be diligent about inspecting your orchids so that any infestation can be dealt with quickly. The winter months can stress your plants and stressed plants are more susceptible to attack by insects and disease organisms. Providing the best cultural conditions possible is important to ensure your orchids remain healthy and vigorous through the winter.

Remember to always clean tools and keep the growing areas free of dead leaves, flowers and other debris. Winter is usually a time when plants rest and gardening comes to a standstill. However, orchids still require a bit of maintenance and care to keep them healthy and to prevent loss of plants due to less than optimum winter conditions. Light, water and temperature are important elements during the winter months. Have a plan on how you will care for your orchids and what steps you will take to keep them alive and healthy. A little effort now to safeguard your orchids will ensure healthy plants year round.

#### **Fact or Myth**

***Nothing in science can account for the way people feel about orchids. Those who love them love them madly. Orchids arouse passion more than romance. They are the sexiest flowers on earth. Once-normal people become orchid-addicts, driven to smuggle, poach and steal them.***

**The next IOS Board meeting will be held November 1<sup>st</sup> at 7:30 p.m. at the home of Board member Allen Morr, 253 Summerfield Road, Northbrook. All IOS members can attend Board meetings. Please notify Allen if you are planning to attend.**

## **Fall Show 2005 – Just a Quick Taste**



**Photo courtesy of Al Opitz. Display courtesy of Joe and Rosalie Dixler. More photos on IOS website & in November newsletter.**

## **The Evolution of the Orchid Hobbyist Through the Centuries**

**By Jerry Garner, Newsletter Editor (Based on an article by Norito Hasegawa)**

Undoubtedly orchids have been admired for centuries. It is inconceivable that native people of many countries have not admired orchids as they grew and flowered in their native habitats. However, whether they were collected and successfully grown as hobby plants over the millennia has not necessarily been recorded. The first accounts of orchids being truly collected and cultivated *ex situ* can be traced to the Chinese who called them *lan*. However, it is possible the term *lan* could have initially included many different flowers, perhaps lilies and chrysanthemums, as well as orchids. Chinese artists in the time of Confucius included cymbidiums in drawings on pottery and in their paintings and poetry. This admiration for orchids was exported to Japan through Korea and the Japanese samurai admired and collected orchids for their sweet fragrance, plant growth habit, and leaf variations. Besides cymbidiums, neofinetias were collected, nurtured and revered.

Since the beginning of the art of collecting and cultivating orchids in the East nearly two thousand years ago, the Western world has caught up, quickly spreading the gospel of orchids. Commercial ventures, especially in 19<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> century England, grew wealthy around the importations and new discoveries of orchids as British Imperialism spread its colonial base into Asia, Africa, and the Americas. The expense of collecting and importing and subsequently huge plant and financial losses made it prohibitive for the ordinary hobbyist to purchase orchids in great quantities, if at all. Mostly the affluent became avid collectors and their activities undoubtedly

included things such as one-upmanship, status and prestige seeking, snobbery and pride of possession in a one-of-a-kind orchid plant or hybrid. The number of orchids collected, identified and cataloged grew exponentially as a ravenous upper class demanded more and more of these exotic oddities.

By the 20<sup>th</sup> century many books had been written touting different formulas for growing orchids, including greenhouse culture and outdoor culture, thus spreading the word on how “easy” it was to grow many orchids. The growth of many orchid societies undoubtedly influenced the popularization of the hobby as these societies continue to do so today. Nowadays orchids are so readily available in grocery stores, general gardening stores, “big box” stores and through the Internet, that the hobby of orchid collecting runs the gamut from the serious orchid breeders and collectors, to artists, to orchid scientists, to multiple and monogeneric collectors, and of course to those simply wanting to have pots full of beautiful, inexpensive, unlabeled orchids.

Getting to this last phase of the hobby, of course, has taken centuries to accomplish, time which has included the more recent improvements in seed germination, the improvements of growing media, the concept of meristeming, and the use of computerization in growing, marketing, and distributing orchids. No doubt the 21<sup>st</sup> century will continue to see increased interest in orchid growing and collecting as our understanding of orchid cultivation and the number of affordable improved hybrids increases. The evolution of the orchid hobbyist marches onward.



## How Are Orchids Judged & What Are Those Letters After Their Names?

By Jerry Garner, Newsletter Editor

The American Orchid Society (and other national and international orchid groups) has established a series of criteria of excellence by which orchid plants are evaluated. Individual orchid plants (cultivars or clones) may receive flower quality awards such as the First Class Certificate (FCC/AOS, 90+ points), Award of Merit (AM/AOS, 80 - 89 points), or Highly Commended

Certificate (HCC/AOS, 75 - 79 points). Other awards may be given for achievement in culture, Certificate of Cultural Merit (CCM/AOS), or for botanical novelty, the Certificate of Botanical Recognition (CBR/AOS) and the Certificate of Horticultural Merit (CHM/AOS). While there are other flower awards that may be encountered, these will be the most commonly seen. Such awards are the purchaser’s assurance of a high level of flower quality, whether in the plant itself or its parents. Plants are judged at monthly judgments held at Centers around the country, including our own here in Chicago at the Chicago Botanic Garden or at AOS-sanctioned orchid shows, of which there are over 250 annually around the world, including our most recent Fall Show.



**Eplc. CharlieBrown 'First Choice'**  
(*Lc. Rojo x Encycl. cordigera*)  
HCC/AOS (77 points)  
Courtesy of Sunset Valley website

Anyone interested in studying to be an accredited AOS judge should contact Jim Spatzek, IOS Treasurer and liaison to the Chicago Judging Center or any of the many accredited judges who are members of our Society. Becoming a judge requires a tremendous commitment of time and resources and many years of study, but the knowledge and pleasure you get in return are well worth the effort.

2.

## From the Editor

Jerry Garner, Newsletter Editor

Last month I reported the two names suggested for the Newsletter, *Orchid Opus* from Carole Thompson, and *IOSynopsis* from Allen Morr. Recently I received the anonymous suggestion: *Orchis*, the first name assigned to an orchid plant

in 3<sup>rd</sup> century Greece by the taxonomist and “Father of Horticulture”, Theophrastus; and the subsequent root for the name of the entire Orchidaceae family. That puts off my coin toss another month, just in case you want to express an opinion about a newsletter name.

You may notice that some of the usual columns are not in this month’s newsletter. Because the Fall Show was just last weekend and the September newsletter went out later than normal to coincide with the show, the “usual suspects” i.e. contributors, really haven’t had time or energy to come up with much. Don’t fret – they’ll be back next month. In the interim, consider contributing something to the newsletter yourself. All of us have a favorite orchid in their past or present. We all have had some success and failure pursuing this addiction we could share with other members. I’m certain each of us has an opinion or suggestion for improving our Society or a topic for the workshops or a speaker we’d love to have at our monthly meeting. The point I’m trying to make is the same that Lois Cinert expressed in last month’s newsletter. The IOS and the IOS newsletter are only as strong and as helpful and informative for you as you, the members, make an effort to make it. Talk to Wendy about filling one of those vacancies. Talk to Sandy about helping with the away shows (at least give her a plant or two to take), say yes when Barry asks you to do a workshop, suggest a topic or speaker. In fact, don’t wait to be asked. Bring in one homemade treat for the refreshment table; recruit a new member. There is so much all of us can do with so little effort – but we have to step up and do it. The IOS has a lot to offer you, but it will only be as good and strong an organization as the individuals who make up our diverse membership. Share your talents. Share your knowledge. Show your support at the shows and if you can do only one thing, come to the meetings. You won’t be disappointed and the IOS will be a better organization with you active in it. Now, enough said, no more preaching, no more begging. I know it won’t be necessary.

## **October Checklist**

**Adapted from the AOS website and material written by Ned Nash and James Rose**

**Paphiopedilum:** Standard, green-leaved paphiopedilums begin to show bloom sheaths this month. Late-season heat waves can blast these early sheaths, so be observant about proper cooling and air circulation. As with the rest of your plants that may have been summered outdoors, it is time to prepare for their move inside. Clean each plant and implement pest-control practices. Repotting, if necessary, is appropriate.

**Phalaenopsis:** The bulk of this season’s growth is being ripened this month, with growers in cooler climates seeing the first emerging inflorescences. Some night heating may be necessary in the cooler areas. Begin to watch

watering more carefully, and reduce feeding proportionately with reduced watering needs. An extra dose of phosphorus and potassium, such as a bloom-booster or high-acid-type fertilizer, is beneficial.

**Cymbidium:** Through diligent modern breeding programs, the cymbidium season gets stretched longer and longer. Now we can expect to have flowers open as early as September and October. Stake inflorescences and move the plants to a shadier location to help the flowers develop successfully. Because the plants will have warmth tolerance “built in” genetically, keeping the plants as cool as possible will help prevent bud curl. For the midseason varieties, inflorescences should be initiated by now. Fertilize plants on a regular schedule with a balanced fertilizer (20-20-20) and shade the plants lightly.

**Dendrobium:** This is a good season for hybrids of the *Dendrobium phalaenopsis* and *Dendrobium canaliculatum* types. Both are capable of putting on tremendous shows of long lasting flowers. Fertilize with a low nitrogen formula to promote the best flowers. *Dendrobium phalaenopsis* can get tall and top heavy, suggesting an attractive and heavy container would be appropriate for this type.

**Cattleya:** Despite the shortening days and lowering angle of the sun, October can have unseasonably warm days. Water and fertilizer need to be in balance with heat and light. Alert growers will notice, however, that plants are beginning to slow down. Growth is maturing, and the sheaths are giving the promise of the next six months’ bloom.

Check plants for potting needs for the last time this season. Any in dire need should be potted, even some that may be on the cusp, as there is just enough of the growing season left to allow the plants to establish before the days start to get really short and cold. This is the month for purples derived from *Cattleya labiata* breeding to flower. If you are short on flowers now, look into this group. Nothing quite matches this type for beauty and fragrance. Plus they are easy to grow.

Any plants summered outdoors should be prepared to be brought back into the winter growing area. Clean the plants up and be on the lookout for any pests they may have picked up during the summer. Treat as necessary.

---

**Learn about the myth of Orchis and Bacchus in next month’s newsletter. You might be shocked!**



Nero Wolfe admiring one of his many orchids.  
A *Miltonia*, perhaps?

---

### Aztec Orchid Reputed Love Potion!

Anonymous

When Hernando Cortez and his soldiers marched into Tenochtitlan, they were greeted by the last Emperor of the Aztecs, Montezuma II. The Aztecs had had ten years of portents and omens of the fall of their empire. To appease the Spanish and as a gesture of good will, Montezuma sent gold and slaves to Cortez. Perhaps, as an unforeseen final gesture of friendship the Aztecs offered their Spanish 'guests' a drink made of chocolate, red peppers, honey, and **tlilxochitl** (*Vanilla planifolia*).

Montezuma II was stoned to death by his own people and Cortez seized Mexico for Spain. After several failures to cultivate vanilla in Europe, the Spanish realized vanilla pods could only be produced in Mexico. Because Spain controlled Mexico, it controlled the entire vanilla trade in Europe.

Legend has it vanilla came into being when the daughter of the Aztec fertility goddess could not marry the mortal youth she loved, she changed herself into the vanilla orchid so she could forever belong to her mortal lover and his people. However, the legend is not verifiable as native to Mesoamerica.

The legend was adopted as fact in Europe. Vanilla got the reputation for being a potent aphrodisiac (no pun intended.) Vanilla beans (seed pods) were used both as a flavoring and a perfume. Ground-up pods were added to desserts to settle a "fiery" stomach and to calm "hysterical" wives and mistresses.

Vanilla pods were placed in linen closets for the vanilla-scented pillowcases that reputedly kept headaches away. Vanilla perfume was used behind the ears to entice lovers. Elixirs of vanilla were said to cure the impotent, and the proof offered - Montezuma had over 300 wives! And chocolate remains the food of love, if it is laced with the forbidden fruit of the vanilla orchid, that is.



**18th Century French  
Print of Vanilla Pods**  
[Corbis Collection](#)

---

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED



**The October membership meeting will be held at the Renaissance Chicago North Shore Hotel in Northbrook on Oct. 9<sup>th</sup>. See inside for details and directions.**