

Central Vancouver Island Orchid Society Newsletter
January 2011



President: Bryan Emery 250-294-6478
Secretary: Laurie Forbes 250- 722-3836
Membership: Bev Morrison 250-758-5361
Treasurer: Shelley Rattink 250-245-1370
Editor: Mike Miller 250-248-3478
Mailing address: P.O. Box 1061,
Nanaimo, B.C.
V9R 5Z2
email: stelmike@telus.net
web site: www.cvios.com

**Sarcophilus Duno Nickys Twin (Nicky x Fitzhart),
Photo: Brian Gerhard**

Meetings are held September through June on the Saturday before the 4th Wednesday of each month at the Harewood Activity Centre, 195

Fourth Street, Nanaimo, in the hall on the second floor, doors open at 11:30, with the business meeting starting at 12:00 noon.

Coming Meeting Dates:

2011

Jan 22, Feb 19, March 19, April 23, May 21, June 11, Sept 24, Oct 22, Nov 19, Dec 17

Program for January 22nd

**The Art of Packing Plants for Transport
& Things we all need made of wire**

By Mike Miller

Coming Events:

Vancouver Orchid Society, Floral Hall, VanDusen Gardens, February 11 – 13th 2011

Victoria Orchid Society, March 6-7th 2010, student Union Building U of Vic.

CVIOS 50/50 Auction March 20, 2010

Editorial:

I hope you all had a good holiday season and are ready for 2011 with everything that it could bring into our lives.

The Orchid World lost a great lady by the name of Lynne Cassidy who lived in Surrey and was a long, long time force in the Fraser Valley Orchid Society. Lynne a very old friend of mine passed away after a long battle with cancer. She will be missed but fondly remembered for the dynamo that she was. Those who had the good fortune to travel with her to various parts of the Orchid world will have some very special memories. She was a force on the WOC committee for Vancouver and still worked on the legacy fund investing in orchid research. The COC will also miss her and her willingness to work endlessly for what ever needed doing. She has left a void, but the collection of torches she held will be picked up by those she befriended over the years in all of her multifaceted endeavours.

Celebration of Lynne's life will be held at First United Church, 15385 Semiahmoo

Ave., White Rock, BC V4B1T6 at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, January 29, 2011 with a reception to follow. In lieu of flowers, Lynne has requested donations to the BC or Canadian Cancer Society or for orchid conservation through land acquisition in

Ecuador to: FUNDACION PARA LA INVESTIGATION, CONVERCACION DE LA BIODIVERS, (Account #3436743704), GUALACEO-AZUAY-E, GUALACEO, ECUADOR. If wiring funds (\$US) send to: BANCO DEL PINHINCHA C.A,3 DE NOVIEMBRE , 4-14Y COLON, Ecuador (Swift code PICHECEQ)

Anyone wishing to have remembrances read at the service should email Merv Lutes at: lutesara@yahoo.ca

Cheers Mike

People who agreed to bring goodies to the January meeting:

**Dora Glover, Sue Christison, Bob Campbell,
Angie Beltane, Elizabeth Clark**

Common Problems Encountered Growing Cattleyas in the Home

By Ned Mattinen

Yellowing of Foliage

Causes:

- Extreme Sunlight
- Overwatering
- Sour Potting Material
- Poor Drainage

Note: Under home culture, Cattleya foliage from spring to fall should range in shades from medium to light green. From late fall to winter (in the north) it will be a slightly deeper green. (Deep green foliage all year indicates lack of sunlight.)

It is natural for most Cattleya plants to shed anywhere from 1 to 4 leaves each year. . . the leaf turning yellow and then brown before dropping off the plant. (It is not natural for a large number of leaves to turn yellow at one time and drop off.) Some Cattleyas may drop a leaf or two more than others.

Shriveling of Leaves and Pseudobulbs

Causes:

- Underwatering - roots usually healthy
- Overwatering (if foliage is yellow) roots usually rotted
- Orchid Scale Damage (*Diaspis boisduvalli*)
- Too hot a room with too low humidity

Note: If scale is observed on a plant (fluffy, white cottony patches), remove sheathing around pseudobulbs carefully and burn sheathing along with scale pried off the plant. Then isolate the plant. Spray with Malathion. (Spraying may have to be repeated a couple times.)

Source of Scale: It is very important to find the source where your Orchid plants have contacted the scale from to eliminate the recurrence. Perhaps plants such as African Violets, Poinsettia, etc., could have been the source for the outbreak. If so, treat, them also.

Bud Blast (Buds Turning Soft, Watery and Shriveling Before Maturing)

Causes:

- Overwatering
- Poor Ventilation
- Lack of Humidity
- Artificial City Gas used for cooking purposes, etc., in home. (Skelgas, bottled and natural city gas are much less harmful.)

If your home is piped with *artificial* city gas which is used for cooking purposes. . . do not grow your Orchids in the kitchen! If you are not sure what type the gas' is (if city gas) - call your Water & Gas Co. for information (artificial or natural) - An electric stove for cooking purposes might ease your mind.

Failure of Plant to Root Properly

Causes:

Overwatering

Stagnant potting media

Rhizome set too deep in media.

Too hot a room with too low humidity - Pseudo bulbs dehydrate through leaves and grow too weak to root.

“Pulverized” Redwood Bark Coming From Bottom of Pot Hole

Cause:

Millipedes

Any time pulverized redwood bark seeps from under the flower pot it is time to look for Millipedes! This small caterpillar-like insect of hard exterior, measuring about half inch in length has a nasty habit of turning redwood bark into powder. If you find one Millipede you are bound to find another or more. Although this pest does not kill the Orchid plant directly (it doesn't feed on plant), it can cause the redwood bark to "waterlog" and interfere with drainage. (It is difficult to kill this pest and I have found the one and best way to dispose of it is to throwaway the affected bark and wash the roots entirely clean of all bark and repot the plant.)

(Millipedes do not relish sphagnum moss as much as redwood bark.)

(The horrid odor of Malathion seems not in the least to affect the Millipedes!)

Thrips

Cause:

Though this tiny, hard to see fast-moving silvery-grey insect is considered such a great threat to so many indoor and outdoor plants, I find that they are not quite so rough on Cattleya Orchids as with other plants. A weekly spraying with a good African Violet spray or Acme indoor plant spray seems to hold this pest in its place. (I do not spray the plants when buds are exposed out of the sheath or in flower but wait until the blooms have withered or been removed before spraying.)

Spotted Blooms

Cause:

When watering your plants in the morning be most careful not to let droplets of water splash on open blooms as when the sun's rays are cast on the blooms small burn marks will be the results when the water dries or evaporates on blooms.

Very Slow Unfolding Foliage

Causes:

Lack of Sunlight and Ventilation Loss of Roots

Weak Neck on

Causes:

Overwatering

Inheritance

Blooms Failure to Form Sheaths or Buds

Causes:

Lack of Sunlight
High Night Temperature - should be below 70° F.
Root shock from repotting or dividing sensitive varieties
Cool Temperature Orchid (high altitude species)
Orchid requiring high light intensity (*Brassavola* and hybrids)
Too much light (day and night)
Over Fertilizing - Nitrogen "poisoning" forces too many weak new growths
Sour. Potting Material

Rot

Causes:

Watering late in day
Poor Drainage
Overwatering
Pot setting in water continually

Short Lived Blooms

Causes:

Poor Ventilation
Excess Tobacco smoke in room**
Low Humidity (fall-winter)
High Night Temperature
Artificial City Gas in home

Poor Flower Production of Recently Purchased, "Plant In Bud," by mail

Causes:

Never expect recently ordered *Plants In Bud* to perform "perfectly" shortly after arrival of plants. Many of these plants have traveled roughly in the mail receiving slight to major injury which can cause some imperfection on opening of the blooms. Some blooms can be slightly or heavily crippled, remain half open or buds shriveling entirely. Some may open without any damaged appearance whatsoever but the flowers may not last long. One must also count for the fact that this plant has just arrived from a greenhouse nursery where it has received the best of care and may not take to our "home living room window" with just a grain of salt! Do not be too harsh on judgment of first time to bloom plants from nurseries ordered in bud. . . or even on any first time to bloom plants. Give them at least a year to show what they can really do! Some will surely amaze you!

**Tobacco smoke listed separately from "ventilation," as I firmly believe tobacco smoke "damaging" to Orchid sepals even with the aid of good ventilation.

Orchid Digest, April 1969

Phalaenopsis as Houseplants

Bill & Linda Mitchell

With rising utility costs, smaller urban spaces and wider popularity, orchids are becoming a most desirable group of houseplants. The space, initial investment, time and costs involved in maintaining a greenhouse are factors prompting the move into the home. And there are people who can actually resist the thought of two hundred (or more) orchids! Some people want a blooming plant as an accent piece in their decor, much the same as they would choose a piece of art.

There are some orchids, which should not be attempted by the beginning grower since their natural conditions are too difficult to maintain in the home. These include the cool-growing types (who wants their home to get down to forty degrees on a regular basis?) such as masdevallias and Colombian miltonias. Also difficult in the home are plants that require very high humidity; draculas and many non-horticultural species (commonly referred to as "botanicals") are included here. Basically, the best plants to try are those which require the temperatures, humidity and light conditions found in your home - such as phalaenopsis and the warm-growing paphiopedilums. Cattleyas, cymbidiums (in temperate climates), as well as some oncidiums, dendrobiums and odontoglossums can be grown successfully in the home, but generally these need experience and modification to home conditions. With this in mind, let's look at what it takes to maintain *Phalaenopsis*, some of the most desirable of the "houseplant" orchids because of their ease of culture, attractive foliage, and long-lasting bloom.

Phalaenopsis, also called the Moth Orchid, come mainly from southeast Asia, but they range from Taiwan to the northern tip of Australia according to Herman Sweet in his book, *The Genus Phalaenopsis*. They enjoy moderate temperatures, bright-moderate light and moderate to high humidity. These three factors can vary but it must be remembered that there is an ideal balance between the three; if one factor changes, then adjustment needs to be made in the others. Higher temperatures will call for more humidity. Less light will call for less water in the root zone. Higher humidity will require more air circulation, etc. Almost no home has the climate of a south sea island!

Any place in the home can be used to grow and display *Phalaenopsis* as long as it meets the needs of the plant. This could be a coffee table with other plants, a window shelf in the bathroom or the kitchen, a sun room or atrium, any place that can maintain the light, temperature and humidity requirements of the plants.

The temperature should remain above 60° F. at night. *Phalaenopsis* will tolerate lower temperatures, but below 60° F. the plants stop growing. They can tolerate daytime temperatures as high as 85° F. to 90° F. given sufficient humidity, though 70° to 80° F. is ideal. A south window with a sheer curtain or an east or west window should give enough light for strong growth and bloom. The humidity should be sixty to seventy-five percent.

Temperature is an easy factor to control; if your home heating system lets your chosen spot stay too cool, a small space heater can be used in that area. Just remember that there should be about a fifteen degree differential between day and night temperature in the fall to induce bloom spikes. The heater should not blow directly on the plants as that can cause the humidity to drop and the plants will dry out too quickly. If your space is warm, shade (that sheer curtain) is called for, moving the plants back from the window will help, as will increasing the air circulation.

Light is probably the most important factor, but it too can be controlled fairly easily. Bright-diffuse or shaded sunlight, about 1,000 foot-candles, will be adequate for your plants. The actual foot-candles of light can be measured with the light meter on your camera. However, before running to the camera store to spend money on a light meter, hold your hand between the plants and the source of light



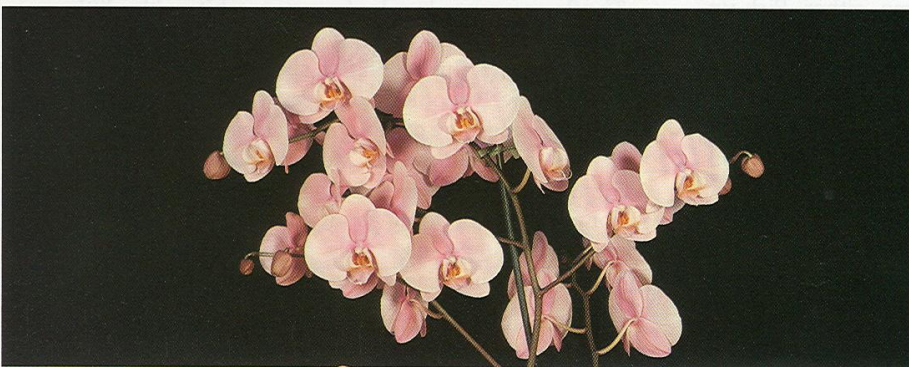
Phal. Giant Frost



100 Southern Cross



Phal. Lavender Lady 'A&R' AM/AOS



Phal. Misty Delight 'Heathers Mist'



Phal. leucorrhoda

Orch. Dig., July-Aug.-Sept., 1993

about one foot above the leaves. A "soft" shadow, meaning the edges of the shadow are slightly blurred, is about the right amount of light. The leaves should be a rich, dark green. If the leaves have turned a very yellow green or have a red edge, this is too much light. Too little light is more likely to be the case than too much. This can be remedied by the use of fluorescent fixtures above the plants. There are any number of different ways to do this, the fixtures can be hung from the ceiling or mounted on stands depending on how big the fixtures are and how many plants are involved. They can supplement natural daylight or can virtually replace it altogether. There are more than a few basement "greenhouses" producing award winning blooms! The tubes to go in the fixtures are the next consideration: most of the major manufacturers have developed a tube to duplicate natural daylight. The most commonly available and economical to use is the "wide spectrum." Since the tubes should be changed every twelve to eighteen months to maintain the full spectrum of which they are capable, cost can become a factor.

Humidity is probably the easiest factor to control. For a few plants, a humidity tray should be adequate. This can be a baking pan with pebbles, a plastic tray with marbles, or a plastic tray with a plastic grid manufactured just for this purpose. The point is to keep water in the bottom of the tray and set the pot on top of the pebbles but not in the water. The water must never be able to soak into the pot and keep the roots too wet. Since humid air rises, the leaves will be surrounded with higher humidity provided the tray is wide enough. For a more extensive collection, a humidifier, which produces vapor, not steam, will help.

Air circulation has been mentioned and should be considered. There should be enough air circulation to keep the flowers moving very gently; remember, south sea island breezes! Good air circulation in humid conditions is essential for the health of the plants. It will dry the crown of the plant after it is watered and will help eliminate fungal and bacterial infections. Watering and fertilizing go together. Use a houseplant fertilizer, 30-10-10 fertilizer at half the strength recommended on the package every time you water during the growing season. In the fall change to 15-30-15 at half strength. Water only when necessary, not when "it's time!" This is very important! The amount of water the plant uses will vary with the temperature, light, humidity, the potting medium and the seasons. More light and higher temperatures result in growth. When the plant is actively producing roots and leaves it will use more water and consequently more fertilizer. Remember when you were a growing teen-ager? When the days get shorter and the temperature falls (in the fall!) this demand will lessen. It is a good idea to flush the pot every fourth or fifth watering by letting plain water run through it for several minutes. This helps to remove undissolved salts left in the medium from the fertilizer. Follow this with fertilized water, particularly when the plant is growing in the summer. *Phalaenopsis* are epiphytes. That means they "grow upon" tree branches, or other supports, with their roots exposed to the air. They get rained on, fogged on and then DRY OUT! They don't dry to the point that the leaves wilt, but they don't stay wet all the time, either. Pick up the pot, heft it right after it's been watered. Heavy, right? Wait a week to ten days and heft the pot. Not so heavy, right? Wait a few more days and heft it again. By now it should be ready to water. If in doubt wait a day or longer. Yes, they are rain forest plants and this forest is wet - part of the time, but remember those roots out in the breeze? If you keep them stuffed in that pot and wet and stagnant, where there is little air circulation, they will rot if they are too wet. No roots, no plant, no flowers! Very simple! There are some things to be said about which *Phalaenopsis* to acquire. This will depend on your taste and space. There are some phals - *Phalaenopsis gigantea* in particular, which can grow to huge sizes. This plant lives up to its name with leaves three (or more) feet long and one and a half feet wide! *Phalaenopsis violacea*, too, can be pretty good size although not as large as *P. gigantea*. The saving grace is that both of these species can be a bit slower growing than most phals. There are, however, some smaller growing species: *P. equestris*, *P.*

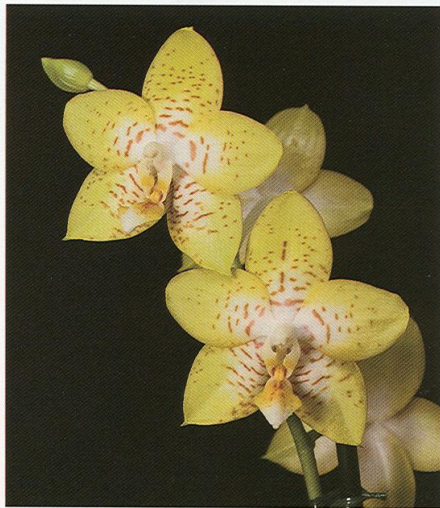
parishii (a finicky grower, however), *P. lindenii* and *P. celebensis*, all of which are suitable for small spaces.



Phal. Escalation



Phal. Giant Frost 'Torrent'



Phal. Susianna Wijanto 'Sunshine' AM/AOS



Phal. Del Dios 'Gift'



Phal. Elegant Embroidery 'Glory Be'

Phalaenopsis stuartiana and *P. schilleriana* are also of reasonable size. And what's more, it seems that these smaller-growing plants have interesting foliage - a real plus when you live with your plants. The markings on the leaves range from a silver-green to chocolate blotching. Called marmorations, the markings make the plants very attractive even when not in bloom.

Assuming that space is limited and that the grower is interested in hybrids, as well as species, there are a number of small-growing phals that are very desirable. Herb Hager has been breeding a line of multi-floral miniatures for some years and has developed some wonderful things, most of which have *Phalaenopsis equestris* in the background. This parent has light to dark pink flowers, some with a white edge on the sepals and petals, and multi-branched, many-flowered spikes. It gives its offspring the same qualities. The cross with *P. stuartiana* yields *P. Cassandra*, one of the first of this type hybrid. *Cassandra* crossed with *P. Swiss Miss* gives *P. Be Glad*, which is the basis of much of this line of breeding. Most of this type is in the pink range, some with stripes and some with red lips. These flowers are about two inches across and a well-grown mature plant can have thirty to fifty flowers which will last six to eight weeks on the plant. *Phalaenopsis Cassandra* crossed with *P. stuartiana* (a backcross to one of its parents) gives *P. Petite Snow*, a real charmer with flowers about one and three-quarters of an inch across and with a multi-branching spike habit for a very nice display of flowers. The flowers range in color from pure white with a little yellow in the throat and white with fine mahogany spots to a pink flush with fine spotting. These crosses have the lovely mottled silver leaves of the *P. stuartiana* parent. Some more of this type of cross are *Small Wish*, *Berries 'N' Cream*, *Glad Melinda*, *Little Pink Doris*, *Small Wonder*, *Little Kris* and *Carmela's Pixie*. Ask your supplier not only about growing conditions but about parentage, especially if you are looking for smaller-growing plants. The vendor should be able to give you some idea of what to expect from the cross and to help you learn to successfully grow and bloom the plants you are buying.

The future is looking very good for this line of breeding. Not only is there the *P. Be Glad* type of small, pink or white or striped selection, but breeders are working on white with red lips, yellows, art shades, really good pinks and greens to name a few directions in this "mini-flora" line of breeding. Sooner or later, the spotting from *P. stuartiana* will be manifesting itself. We could have flowers with spots on white or colored backgrounds like their standard size cousins. Also in the works at several growers are yellows, rounded fuller pinks, neon candy stripes like the striped standard size phals. There are breeders working with *P. parishii* var. *lobbii*. While the species is difficult to grow, the offspring seem not to be so finicky. These are smaller, about one and one-fourth inches and often have strong flame-orange colors in the lip. Also being used more is *P. lindenii*. It produces one and one-half to two inch flowers, some with stripes and some with reddish lavender lips. And then there are the micro-miniatures. These are based on these small species bred to even smaller things. *Kingidium deliciosum* has been used on a limited basis and is being explored further. These flowers are tiny - about one-half to three-quarters of an inch. The lip of this species is a pinkish lavender and it has cream-white petals and sepals. Its offspring tend to resemble it strongly.

Some of these are not yet available on a widespread basis, but keep asking growers if you are particularly interested. And read the advertisements in this and other orchid and houseplant publications for plants, supplies, equipment and information. Most growers believe that a major part of their business is information and education and are happy to answer your thoughtful questions. There are a number of books available to the beginner which are very helpful: *Culture of the Phalaenopsis Orchid* by Bob Gordon, *Orchids You Can Grow* by Harry Britton Logan, *Home Orchid Growing* by Rebecca Tyson Northern, *Your First Orchids and How to Grow Them* from the Oregon Orchid Society, and *The Handbook on Orchid Culture* from the AOS.

Orchid Digest, July-Aug.-Sept., 1993
