



Houston Happenings

The Houston Orchid Society's Monthly Newsletter

AUGUST 7, 2003 MEETING

Meeting Time: 7:30 P.M.

Plant Table: Setup 7:00 P.M.

Place: Hermann Garden Center

Speakers: Andy Easton

Topic: Oldies but Goodies (no, not Jerry Stephens)

Plant Sale: Setup at 7:00 P.M.

Although Andy Easton is a native New Zealander, he graduated from Colorado State University in 1972 and remained in the United States until 1984. It was happenstance that at the precocious age of 10 Andy won a few horse wagers in his native New Zealand, enabling him to buy his first orchids and make them his life's work. His orchid career blossomed in 1984 with founding the Geyslerland Orchid Nursery in New Zealand, a nursery responsible for most of the new cybidiums introduced in the next 20 or so years. After that, Andy returned to the United States and became Director of Education and Orchid Operations for the AOS headquarters in Florida.



Andy is currently Vice President of Life Sciences for K B Orchids, Homestead, FL and is world renowned for his hybridization of odontoglossums. He is here in Houston as part of the Summer Workshop on August 8th and 9th. He is no stranger to orchids and vice versa. If you were to enter his name into an Internet search engine, you would find many 'hits'. He is also a frequent contributor to 'Orchids' magazine. Those interested in more information should pursue these sources.

Andy Easton, fmr. Director of Education and Orchid Operations for AOS, will speak at the August meeting. His long time association with orchids and the orchid community make him an interesting and informative speaker.

In response to a request for comments on his planned speech, Andy writes, "As the title of my weekend talk will be on new advances in the orchid world, maybe on Thursday night I could talk on 'The Old Days,' when Jerry Stephens was in early middle age and orchid growing was a very sedate and formal hobby restricted by cost and the availability of plants to the wealthy and a few established orchid nurseries basically dominated the North American orchid scene. I will show black and white slides and highlight the sometimes contradictory nature of orchid knowledge in those times." I don't know what he means by 'Jerry's early middle age', but my guess is that it's sometime after the Ice Age.

I know everyone will enjoy Andy's speech and learn a lot, so please come welcome him this August 7th.

Greg Scott



Above left: Lee and Gordon Rowell at the Newcomers' Meeting hosted by Laurie and Sheila Skov. Right: Sheila and Arthur Skov with 6' tall Vanda papilionanthe. (See related article on pg.2.)

FROM THE PRESIDENT

First item this month is that I hope to see you all at the HOS Workshop this coming weekend. Jerry has arranged an all-star line-up of speakers. These are folks you hear about and read about every month in *Orchids* magazine and this is your chance to meet them, get autographs if you'd like, hear them speak on their area of expertise, and to buy the select plants they are bringing. The Workshop is a very inexpensive way to learn a great deal and have a very enjoyable day surrounded by orchids and friends.

The other item I wanted to share with you this month involves a little game suggested to me by our speaker last month, Bill Thoms. First you need to find a friend also in the orchid hobby. That shouldn't be hard. Second, you need to place a little (preferably friendly) wager on the outcome of this game.... example "loser buys lunch". The game is to take 10 pennies and hide them in the growing area of the other person. Then each person tries to find the pennies that the other person has hidden. You'll probably need to mark the pennies in some way so that your "friend" just doesn't dig 10 pennies out of his/her pocket and say, "I found 'em all!" Obviously, the winner is the one who finds the most pennies after some period of time. The purpose of the game is several-fold. First, it forces you to clean up!! If you've got a stack of old pots in the greenhouse, a good hiding place for a penny would be at the bottom of the stack and you'd never find it. But more importantly, it forces you to look at all your plants! A penny could be hidden in the pot (top of the pot, not buried in the media!) of the last plant on your top bench which you never look at and when you find the penny, you also find some scale (admit it, we all have some). You could even do this game a couple of times a year as an incentive to keep things looking good and to make sure you look at that last plant at least twice a year!

One quick hint on putting the odds in your favor is to make sure the friend you pick has a greenhouse at least 10 times the size of yours. OK....I pick Greg!!

Jay Balchan

NO AUGUST NEWCOMERS MEETING

The Newcomers came out in a force of 51 people to meet on July 20th in the backyard jungle paradise of Sheila and Laurie Skov's. The Skov's operate *Orchids and Tropicals* in Clearlake and grow all their orchids outside without the confines of formal glass walls. Shade cloth in the summer and added plastic covers in the winter have turned this space into a unique growing area. In addition to growing over 4,000 plants Laurie designs and builds - or can help you design and build - shade houses and greenhouses from inexpensive PVC pipe. He and Sheila talked about their experiences and gave the Newcomers pointers on growing outside. Their son Arthur loves to repot plants and, per Dad, thinks nothing of potting 100 plants on a good day. A good time was had by all. HOS thanks the Skov's for their generous gift of time and plants.

The Newcomers will not have a meeting in August. Their assignment is to attend the August workshop. I hope to see EVERYONE there.

Theresa M. Riggs

JULY PLANT TABLE

Great selection of orchids on the plant table - thanks to all that brought these beautiful plants! We had a total of 26 hybrids and 32 species on the plant table this month. The Hybrid winner for this month was Vanda Polly Parplay, owned by Denny & Renee Haase. The Species winner was *Dendrochilum filiforme*, owned by Laurie & Russell Skov. Congratulations - great plants! Don't forget to fill out an entry form for each plant you bring for the "Plant Table" and put your name on the back of the form. The HOS members have brought more than 465 plants to share on the plant table so far this year. THANKS to all of you! Also, vote for your favorite hybrid and species on the plant table each month!

Pam Vinson

HOUSTON JUDGING CENTER

Web site: <http://hjc.houstonorchidsociety.org>

July 19, 2003

There were 21 plants entered for judging with 6 awards:

1. *Laeliocattleya Orlades* 'Louise' (C. Chocolate Drop x Lc. Wine Festival) HCC 77 points, owned by Denny & Renee Haas, Spring, TX
2. *Brassolaeliocattleya Rustic Spots* 'Remar III' (Bl. Richard Mueller x C. Landate) HCC 76 points, owned by Renee & Marvin Gerber, Houston, TX
3. *Cattleya Silver Flute* 'Hope Ranch' (Rivermont Imperial x *loddigesii*) HCC 76 points, owned by Denny & Renee Haas, Spring, TX
4. *Encyclia pyriformis* 'Vera Cruz' (species) provisional CHM 80 points, owned by David Hunt, Houston, TX
5. *Octomeria scirpoidea* 'Vera Cruz' (species) CBR, owned by David Hunt, Houston, TX
6. *Bulbophyllum annandalei aurea* 'Vera Cruz' (species) provisional CBR, owned by David Hunt, Houston, TX

There were 11 Accredited Judges, 3 Probationary Judges and 2 Student Judges present with a total of 27 people attending.

The next regular judging will be held on August 16, 2003 at the B. J. & Margaret Bradshaw Wellness Center, 7731 Southwest Freeway (Highway 59 South). It is requested that all plants be entered prior to 11:30 A. M. so that they may be properly researched for judging.

Marg Putman

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

August 8, 9. HOS 24th Annual Workshop. Greenway Holiday Inn Select. A must for all orchid growers and lovers.

Oct. 3-5. Central Louisiana OS Hosting SWROGA. Best Western Inn, Conference Center. Alexandria, LA. Contact Byron McGraw (318) 640-4732, email bydor@aol.com.

Mavis Klehm

GROWING TIP

Thanks to Jerry Stephens, who offers this tip.

When repotting up plants that need extra water, such as Phals, Jerry places a 1 or 2 oz plastic portion cup in the bottom of the pot. This collects and holds water for the plant's needs during the non-watering period. Portion cups may be purchased at Ace Restaurant Supply or many other food/restaurant supply outlets in Houston.

Editor

CLASSIFIED

I WILL BE SELLING MY COLLECTION, EXCEPT FOR MY CATASE-TUMS. EVERYTHING ELSE MUST GO. THEY WILL BE SOLD IN THREE GROUPS. 1. MINATURE CYMBIDIUMS, HYBRIDS AND SPECIES (60 BS. PLANTS) 2. PHRAGS AND PAPHS MOSTLY BLOOMING SIZE (SEVERAL HUNDRED). 3. CATTLEYA HYBRIDS, SPECIES, AND OTHER SPECIES.

IF INTERESTED, MAKE AN APPOINTMENT TO VIEW THE COLLECTION AND MAKE ME AN OFFER. YOU MUST TAKE ALL PLANTS IN ONE OF THE THREE CATEGORIES. AFTER A REASONABLE TIME I WILL CONTACT THE PERSON WHO SUCCESSFULLY MAKES THE HIGHEST BID IN EACH CATEGORY. I WILL POSITIVELY NOT BE SELLING INDIVIDUAL PLANTS TO ANY ONE. I WILL NOT BE KEEPING ANY OF THE PLANTS IN THESE THREE CATEGORIES. YOU WILL BE ASSURED OF MOSTLY VERY GOOD PLANTS. CONTACT ME AT 713-453-3317 EVENINGS - STEPHEN MOFFITT

VANDA CULTURE

On the north end of our plant tables at each society meeting we always see several Vandas. This article will deal with the culture of commonly grown Vandas and Vanda alliance orchids often observed in the Houston area. Species of Vanda, Ascocentrum, Aerides, Renanthera, Arachnis, to mention a few, and their hybrids are in this group.

Water and Fertilizer

Most growers in the Houston area underwater their Vandas. They are difficult to over-water. Most or all need to be grown in open baskets or on plaques. These plants need daily water for ten to fifteen minutes minimum or several waterings during each day. Two successful growers immediately pop into mind. One rings a greenhouse alarm to clear the growing area of people. The water sprinklers come on and water for ten to fifteen minutes with large volumes of water. The roots will turn a solid, dark green indicating that they have absorbed their limit of water. The baskets hang seven foot in the air and the roots of all the plants almost touch the rock-covered ground. The plants are very healthy and well grown.

Most growers cannot afford to run large volumes of water over plants for ten to fifteen minutes for several reasons. Our yards would flood and water would run into the street. A second reason is the cost of water. Even though we have very low water prices in the Houston area with no limits on use, the cost would be noticed on the water bill.

The second grower uses a more practical method. He has a timer that opens and sprays his orchids two to three minutes three times daily.

So, why do Vandas require so much water, where as other orchids can be very healthy with much less. Vandas have roots that take in water and fertilizer at a very slow rate. Also the roots are large and present less surface area. Third, many of the roots are hanging in empty air and not attached to media. Maximum absorption occurs where the root contacts and adheres to media of some type. So provide twice as much fertilizer and extra water.

Potting

Do not pot Vandas. The roots are limited, large, stiff and will break and tear when you remove the plant during repotting. Vandas tend to stop growing and flowering when their roots are repotted or disturbed. If damaged, roots will take many months or years to resume healthy, productive growth. All orchid roots absorb the maximum amount of water and nutrients where the roots attach to media. Time is necessary for the roots to grow again and attach. The best solution is to remove all rotten or loose basket wood and set the plant and remaining basket into a larger wooden basket. Incidentally, there are new black, plastic baskets marketed as Vanda baskets. We will have to grow orchids in a few to determine how well they grow Vandas.

Light

Most Vandas, except Vanda coerulea, grow in hot, bright tropical climates. Provide more light than Cattleyas but do not give excessive amounts. Vanda sanderiana, an ancestor in most of our Vandas, is from the island of Mindanao in the Philippines 5 degrees above the equator. They grow in the tops of hardwood trees. The sun shines during the morning with a rain in the afternoon and occasional cloud cover. About sixty to seventy percent of the time there is cloud cover. Direct light lasts for short periods of time. The humidity averages eighty to eighty one percent. Thailand, Florida and parts of Hawaii grow the best Vandas because of constant, year round temperature and light. Thailand

growers use slat houses with one inch slats and one inch spaces to block out half of the light. Hawaiian and Florida growers use shade cloth to accomplish the same growing conditions.

Houston has the same light conditions except during the months of December, January and February. These months can be the most troubling. We need to remove shade cloth and provide as much light as possible during the many cloudy, overcast days. However, occasional cold fronts blow through clearing out the sky providing very bright direct sunlight. Burning often occurs on these bright, cold days, because our greenhouses are closed and air movement is below normal.

Terete leafed types will do well in direct sunlight, but the Rhynchostylis, Vandopsis and Neofinetia species and some hybrids need lower Cattleya light.

Buying Plants

Vandas will take four to eight years to mature and produce large flowers. If you do not wish to wait this long, buy ascocendas, which are hybrids between Vandas and ascocentrums. Ascocentrums flower early, around three years, with many small flowers on small, charming plants. The hybrids are a compromise with fewer, larger, earlier flowers.

Flowering

With good culture, most flower twice each year. A few flower when growths are mature and healthy. Others will flower continuously if excellent culture is observed. The flower inflorescences will emerge between the fourth and fifth leaf from the top. Vanda coerulea hybrids display flowers well above the foliage, tend to have blue, tessellated flowers and grow less tropical. Many inflorescences need support and grooming, as they are quite heavy.

If you like to water and fertilize orchids, perhaps Vandas are for you.

Joe Fields

AUGUST WORKSHOP

THERE'S STILL TIME AND LIMITED SPACE AVAILABLE TO REGISTER FOR THE AUGUST 8th AND 9th HOS WORKSHOP. HOWEVER, THE COUNT HAS TO GO INTO THE HOTEL FOR ACCOMODATIONS BY AUGUST 4TH, SO PLEASE DON'T WAIT TO REGISTER. CALL BILL BARTLETT OR JERRY STEPHENS TO CONFIRM YOUR ATTENDANCE NOW. THEIR NUMBERS ARE LISTED IN THE OFFICERS' DIRECTORY ON PG. 5.

FOR THOSE WHO HAVE NOT ATTENDED IN THE PAST, YOU'LL WANT TO ATTEND THIS YEAR'S WORKSHOP. IT'S AN EVENING AND A SATURDAY THAT WILL SHARPEN YOUR GROWING SKILLS AND ELEVATE YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE ORCHID GENERA - NOT TO MENTION THE SALES TABLES AND GREAT LINEUP OF VENDORS AND SPEAKERS.

Jerry Stephens

VANDA COERULEA. Important Characteristics.

It is difficult to discuss *Vanda coerulea* without discussing *Euanthe sandieriana*. H. G. Reichenbach first described *Euanthe sandieriana* in 1882 and it was assigned to the genus *Vanda*. In 1914 Rudolph Schlechter assigned *sandieriana* to genus *Euanthe*. Philip Cribb of the Royal Botanic Gardens agrees with Schlechter, however, Eric Christenson is in agreement with Reichenbach's first decision. This argument is in part about the structure of the lip. *Vandas* that are not disputed have a three-lobed lip with a definite spur, whereas *Euanthe sandieriana* has a two-lobed lip and lacks a spur. There are also other horticultural differences. For this article I will refer to *Euanthe sandieriana* as *Vanda sandieriana*.

Vanda coerulea is found throughout the Himalayas, India, Nepal, Burma, Northern Thailand and Southern China. They grow in elevations from 2,500 to 4,000 feet. In some areas it is not uncommon for frost to occur at times during the winter months.

A very good modern *Vanda coerulea* is a wonderful sight to behold. *Vanda coerulea* flowers are vibrant, sharply defined with royal purple tessellations (checkered or mosaic) usually on a white or pale blue background. Blossoms are numerous, large and well arranged. *Vanda coerulea* is not found too often in orchid collections in the U.S., especially in warm climates as in Houston. There has been much great improvement in *Vanda coerulea* in recent years through selective breeding. Most commercial growers today grow from seed, as *Vanda coerulea* is almost extinct because of forest destruction.

The earlier jungle collected *Vanda coerulea* used as stud plants had many serious problems, such as faint tessellations and severe twisting of the petals. Other problems were severe spacing between petals and sepals, centrally, and "floppy" flowers.

As a parent, *Vanda coerulea* has contributed as many positive features to *Vandas* as has *Vanda sandieriana*. (Years 1981 through 1994, *Vanda coerulea* was used as a parent 49 times compared to 23 times for *Vanda sandieriana*. Prior to these years, *Vanda sandieriana* was used more as a parent.)

As a parent, *Vanda coerulea* has contributed size, floriferousness, vigor, cold tolerance, color pattern and length of inflorescence. The open shape between petals and sepals has been somewhat overcome in third and fourth generations.

The most important feature of *Vanda coerulea* is its range of colors from blues, intense lavenders, purples, pinks and some whites. The progeny of *Vanda coerulea* inherit one of its most important features, the tessellated patterns.

In jungle collected plants, tessellations appear as faint patterns. *Vanda coerulea* is considered one of the most free-flowering *Vanda* species. Well-known author and *Vanda*-grower Mr. David Grove claims that *Vanda coerulea* can bloom three, four and sometimes five times per year. This blooming quality is also transmitted to its progeny. Primary hybrids are often as free flowering as *Vanda coerulea*.

If there were ever two species made for each other (a hybridizer's dream come true), they are *Vanda coerulea* and *Vanda sandieriana*, which resulted in *Vanda Rothschildiana*. It was first registered in 1931. The cross was made by M. Chassaing, the chief gardener of the Rothschild's. According to renowned *Vanda* hybridizer Martin Motes, this cross has never been superseded.



Plate 1. *Vanda coerulea* 'Oschilgrove Lou', AMFACS.

David Grove states that *Vanda coerulea* may produce large, vividly colored and tessellated flowers in one set of circumstances (environment and growing conditions contribute to outcome) while in another may produce "bleached-out", small and poorly shaped flowers, especially if the plant is not in good health. He recommends not discarding any *Vanda coerulea* until it has bloomed several times, as you may be discarding an awardable plant.

The AOS Judging Handbook gives a separate scale for scoring *Vanda*. In an ideal situation, judges take the ancestral background of a plant into consideration. As outlined in the handbook, the general form of a *Vanda* is toward roundness, fullness and flatness. The sepals should be broad and rounded and should be arranged in a near equilateral triangle. The dorsal sepal should be as nearly equal to the lateral sepals as possible. The petals should be broad and rounded, as nearly equal to the dorsal sepal as possible and should fill

the gap between the sepals. The lip should be harmonious with the rest of the flower in size and shape, in accordance with ancestral species. Color definition should be clear, not muddy. Colored venations, if present, should be distinctive. As to size, the flower should be equal to or greater than the geometric mean of the size of the parents. Substance should be better than the average of the parents. Inflorescences should be erect or gracefully arched according to parental background. Spray-type *Vandas* should have fifty percent of the flowers open to show the full potential of the flower.

As judges, we are always looking for improvement over what has been achieved previously. A plant that was highly rated ten years earlier might now be of average quality (sometimes referred to as a "pot plant"). The *Vanda coerulea* that we see today is far removed from the jungle species collected generations ago.

Jim Butler

AOS CORNER

Have we got a deal for you! If you're not currently an AOS member, or even if you are.

Folks who sign up for two years AOS membership or who renew their membership for two years, receive a coupon entitling them to \$30.00 off on a retail plant/supply purchase of \$100.00 or more from one of a dozen outstanding participating growers (see advertisement on pg 625 of the August issue of Orchids). This is an outstanding deal!

Why join the AOS or stay with the AOS? Of course, the peerless monthly, collectable 80-page Orchids magazine tops the list. Don't you just love the new format and style? How about the informative essays and professional photography? Or the growing tips and information about products? And the ads. Better than ever and all in glorious color! And remember - The award-winning *Orchids* magazine can't be bought on the newsstand or anywhere else. It's only available through an AOS membership!

••Access to all Members-Only areas of the AOS's immensely popular Web site (www.orchidweb.org). Members-Only areas will debut in Fall 2003.

••Contact with the AOS's experienced and knowledgeable staff for advice with your orchids.

••Members-Only discounts on purchases from the Orchid Emporium giftshop, catalog and on-line shopping, including tantalizing merchandise and the widest selection of orchid books in the world. •

••Discounted admission to select botanical gardens and arboreta across the USA.

••Reduced subscription rates for the Awards Quarterly.

••Reduced processing fees for AOS-judged plant and flower awards.

••Free admission to the AOS Visitors Center and Botanical Garden, the Society's gorgeous headquarters campus in Delray Beach, Florida.

I could go on and on and on about membership benefits - a free *Your First Orchid* handbook, a free copy of the AOS *Orchid Source Directory*, free gift/book catalogs, etc. Plus, through our dues we aid so many other important areas that the Society supports year round - orchid research, conservation, education, Affiliated Societies, and the like. Please get on board and stay on board!

Donna Craig for Karin Luhnau

Got any GUIGNARDIA?

Bill Thoms, last month's speaker, pointed out to Jay and I a problem fungus that grows on vandaceous orchids (and many other plants). Since this month's articles feature vandaceous, I thought a picture of the problem would be appropriate. Bill suggests removing any



leaves showing signs of the fungus rather than treating with fungicide. He claims fungicides are not very effective.

Editor

DON'T FORGET: Plant Raffle Tickets for Boxtops
www.boxtopsforeducation.com

Reminder: Thank the Following for the August Refreshments Table

Coordinator: John Van Domelen
Punch/Drinks: Sarah Bentley
Sheet Cake: Sarah Bentley
Cookies: Sarah Bentley
Snacks: Sarah Bentley
Snacks: Sarah Bentley

Please volunteer for coming months.

Houston Orchid Society 2003 Officers and Committee Chairs

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HOUSTON HAPPENINGS
Houston Orchid Society
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FIRST CLASS MAIL

AUGUST 2003 ISSUE



ABOVE : (left) Hybrid Winner, V. Polly Tarpley owned by Denny and Renee Haas. (right) Species Winner, *Dendrochilum filiforme* owned by the Laurie and Sheila Skov. (center) Kelly Moseley poses with gifts for the arrival of her 'newcomer'

BELOW: HOUSTON JUDGING CENTER'S JULY AWARDS (See Pg. 2 for full descriptions).

