

# THE HOUSTON HAPPENINGS

The Monthly Newsletter of the Houston Orchid Society, Houston, Texas

## Speaker:

By John Stubbings, First Vice-President



Our speaker for May is Greg Allikas. Greg will talk about orchid photography. Greg's vocation is photography, his avocation is orchid photography. He has been taking beautiful photos of orchids for a long time supporting the AOS. I'm sure you've all seen fine examples of his work in *Orchids* magazine, indeed I counted eight of Greg's photos in the current issue. He resides in Florida and is the resident AOS photographer for the West Palm Beach judging center. He was with us at our AOS show and I'm sure you saw him busily recording the event for later publication in *Orchids*. He is currently chair of the AOS Publications Committee. We look forward to learning how to do a better job of taking orchid photographs.

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The Houston Orchid Society was established in 1945 and is a recipient of the AOS Distinguished Affiliated Societies Service Award.



## 19th WOC Book is In!

The Proceedings of the 19th World Orchid Conference is a 508-page, full-color record of the show and conference held in Miami in January of 2008. Every trophy-winning orchid, and all exhibits, are presented in full-page, full color photographs, and the volume also includes full coverage of all the Conference events (opening and closing ceremonies, the Tropical Night Gala and more).

Every scientific paper and poster presented during the Conference is also published. The purchase price is \$135.00, postpaid anywhere in the U.S.

The book may be ordered from the Conference website ([www.19woc.com](http://www.19woc.com)), or by calling 305-245-4570 (9am - 5pm, US Eastern Time, Tuesday-Sunday).

## President's Post

By Holly Miller, President

As I write this, we are a week and a half away from our show and when you read it, the show will be over. What can I say? I hope you all enjoyed the show as much as I think I will. Most of all, I hope you made new friends, learned a lot and enjoyed being involved in whatever way you were. Most of the members of our society are very willing to pitch in and work together and that's what makes our meetings and events so much fun. We do have a great orchid society! I want to thank each of you for your contribution in making this such a great show. All of us owe a HUGE thank you to Melba and Jim Butler, who have worked on this tirelessly for two years and have made it one of our best shows ever - please tell them yourselves when you get a chance.

We may have more visitors and new members at the May meeting - people who have become interested when attending the show. Please keep this in mind and help Allan Davies and Katherine Brown welcome them and get them oriented at the meeting.

Next year's show is already looming. We are working on a location and it should be announced soon. You may be pleasantly surprised.

This is a great month for orchid growing - get out there and clean up your growing area after the winter. Look at all your plants and see what they need during this growing season. Do some re-potting, look for pests and problems - enjoy your orchids.

## Houston Judging Center

By Margaret Putman

**HJC Results - April 18, 2009-**

There were 11 plants entered with three awards:

1. Tolumnia Little Bird Reef 'Sunbird' (Melody x Robsan) AM 80 points, owned by Don Ghiz, Houston, TX (920094611)
2. Epidendrum mutelianum 'Vera Cruz' (species) CHM 82 points, owned by David Hunt, Houston, (20094612)
3. Vascostylis Pine Rivers 'Fuchsia Delight' (Ascda. Peggy Foo x Rhy coelestis), HCC 79 points, owned by Greg Scott, Conroe, TX (20094613)

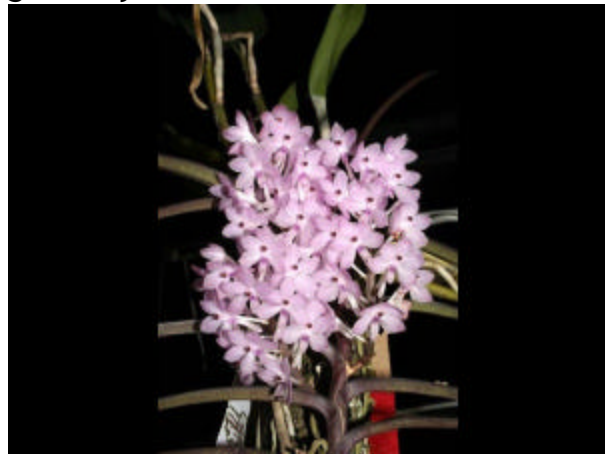
There were 10 Accredited Judges, 3 Probationary Judges, and 2 Student Judges present with a total of 20 persons attending. The next regular judging will be held at the Houston Garden Center, May 16, 2009. Please note the change in location. Lunch is your own responsibility. It is requested that all plants be entered before 11:30 A. M. so that they may be properly researched prior to judging.

## Winners' Tips

We didn't have a photographer this month at the meeting, so don't have a picture of the Paph winner and the photo of the species winner is from OrchidWiz. Neither winner responded about how they grew the plants so the species information is from Charles Baker's pages as presented in OrchidWiz.

**Hybrid Winner: Paph. In Charm Greenery grown by Doug George**

**Species Winner: Ascocentrum christensonianum grown by Tan Tran**



*Photograph courtesy of Lourens Grobler in OrchidWiz*

“ORIGIN/HABITAT: Vietnam. This recently discovered orchid was found in Southern Vietnam about 12 miles northwest of Phan Rang. Plants were growing in a fairly narrow valley along the Song Cai River between two nearby mountain ridges. This region which is only 350-500 feet (100-150 m) above sea level, is dry, dusty, and overgrown with thin, bushy, semi-deciduous, monsoon forest. - Charles Baker”

## Texas Gulf Coast Fern Society

Meets the Third Sunday of each month at the Houston Garden Center at 2:00 PM. Come join us and learn more about growing ferns in the Houston environment. Visit the website at <http://www.tgcfersoc.org/> for more information.

## Wild Orchid Field Trips

By: Donna and Johnny Williams

These outings are always a lot of fun. We start early to have time to reach the destinations which Joe and Doug have planned. They know where to find the plants we want to check on. They tell us at what stage we should find the plants - just leafing out, in bud, in flower, etc. This last trip we were looking for *Cypripedium kentuckiense*. The hope was to find them in full bloom and to hand pollinate them.

Our first destination was a place we had been last year. Searching for the orchids was quite a challenge because some of the markers had been lost or covered by vegetation. We all clambered around the forest floor searching for anything remembered from the last trip. Finally they were spotted - a healthy-looking patch of plants with three buds but none of the buds were open yet. Doug and Joe thought they might open up within the next week or two.

After leaving this location we drove down the road a short distance to a location Joe knew about. It was so beautiful and peaceful there. This bucolic setting was flat, in the open, with small ponds surrounded by blooming swamp lilies and other blooming wildflowers. The sun was shining and cattle were grazing - one of them a mother nursing an all white baby calf. It was one of those places you want to preserve so that you can walk into the "picture" again whenever you need a dose of nature and her peace and beauty.

We then drove to a little spot beside an old country cemetery to eat lunch, visit with each other, and enjoy the quiet scenery. Of course, we had to walk around to see what "treasures" we could spot and there were some - an old black hickory tree with its flowery leaf capsules, some trilliums, etc.

The second location for the Cyp search required a bit of a drive and a longer walk into the forest. We were looking for the creek bed where a patch of Cyps has been growing for more than 20 years. Joe had taken a photograph of them in bloom for one of his publications back in the late 1990's. These, too, proved to be quite elusive and our trek was on slopes covered with inches of leaf litter. We found many "treasures" here too that included different kinds of ferns and mosses. This was a great adventure and we were just about to give up the search when Joe found the clump. It proved to be well worth the hike as there were 13 plants and two fully open blooms. They were incredible to see in their native habitat - like a little spot of sunshine in the forest. These are

*Continued on Page 6*

## AOS Corner

By Carol Holdren, AOS Trustee

Check out the AOS.ORG website. If you haven't been there lately you'll find lots of new stuff. There is a great new forum where you can ask orchid questions, show photos of your blooming beauties, read other orchid society newsletters or just chat about orchids. There is a blog for orchid societies as well as one for judges - anyone can participate, you do not have to be an AOS member to be on the forum. You only have to register which makes it a little more civil than some web forums.

Greg Allikas is working on the web site and he keeps it full of exciting orchid information as well as beautiful photos. If you don't see the link to the forum on the home page then go to the "Orchid Information" link and you'll see it. The web site still has the latest information on orchid shows as well as AOS Member's Meetings. There are new "How-To" videos showing everything from how to pot a keki to what a virused plant looks like. You can also purchase AOS books at the site and pay for your AOS awards. At the bottom of the Home Page is a link to the Affiliated Societies Page where you can find out all there is to know about AOS Affiliated Orchid Societies such as what the benefits are and how to use them.

So if you haven't been to the AOS web site at [www.aos.org](http://www.aos.org), give it a look; I think you may be pleasantly surprised. And if you want to join AOS, for those who are not members, you can do that too. If you join for 2 years, the best deal, you get a special bonus. So check it out!





## Culture Q&A

*HOS Culture Q&A Panel: Ted Baenziger, Jay Balchan, Dolores Fields, Joe Fields, Marvin Gerber, Renee Gerber, Doug Harris, Rick Hepler, Julius Klehm, Nina Rach, and Greg Scott.*

**Q:** With our show and exhibits recently behind us, I was hoping our panel could give us some tips for the next time on how to get our plants to (a) spike when we want them to rather when they want to, (b) to get the spike to grow faster, (c) to get the buds to open faster, and (d) to make the flowers stay fresh longer. So many people told me that the timing of the blooms was just not right for the show, so what tricks can we use to control this?

**A:** These are tough questions, and there might not be good answers. The easiest plants to control are phalaenopsis, which are triggered to bloom by cool nighttime temperatures. By keeping night temperatures above 65 phals will not spike. Then, allow the minimum to fall to 55 or so, the plants will initiate bloom spikes to flower in about 150 days. Other orchids can be controlled to a lesser extent by reducing or increasing the amount of light the plants are exposed to as buds develop. By manipulating the buds in this manner, you run the risk of a sub-par flowering. There is no doubt that there is a certain amount of luck involved in having plants bloom well at show time. -- Marvin

**A:** This is a question that requires many different answers and cannot be answered here in a short time.

### Increase in Darkness

Some of our orchids flower in the fall. They are long night sensitive. As we go into the fall, the days become increasingly shorter and the nights increasingly longer. The day that the magic length of night is reached, like a light switch on the wall, the plant changes from a growing mode to a flowering mode. Then it follows its genetic instructions and flowers at the predetermined time. Our phals are an example. The lengthening night aided by falling night temperatures of 50 degrees causes the phal plant to start the flowering phase. Some hybrid phals have instructions from more than one species in the background. Others are triggered by a dry period and length of darkness. One ancestor wants to flower in February and another might want May. The environment with the genes will determine the result. Pick plants that fit your needs.

### Decrease in Darkness

Other plants monitor the decrease in darkness during the spring. We are aware that as we go into the spring, the days are getting longer and the nights shorter. Again, when the decrease in darkness reaches the thresh hold

the switch is thrown and the flowering phase begins.

The only way to change the flowering of decreasing and increasing darkness plants is to put up black acetate plastic or cloth and vary the length of night over many days and nights. Temperature may need to be controlled. Supplemental lighting will be required in some instances. A complex timer with automatic motors to open and close the acetate, varying the length of darkness is expensive and not very practical. Extra heaters or coolers are needed in other situations. Some commercials use this technique to flower phals year around.

Be conscious that outdoor night lights may be bright enough to interfere with some of your plants flowering at the correct time. Also, remember that going into the greenhouse or a grow room and turning on the lights can trigger the wrong time for flowering. Some refuse to put lights in a greenhouse to prevent this problem. A room in your house used as a grow room may need the lights controlled. A cheap timer can be used to start the day by turning on the lights and stop the day by turning off the lights. Good luck stopping the children from running in and turning on the lights. Some have complained that a neighbors outdoor night light keeps some of their plants from flowering. Please do not go and buy a BB gun.

The best solution is to obtain plants that flower at certain times of the year. Three white cattleyas, with red lips, one flowering in late February, another in March and a third in

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## Bromeliad Society/Houston Inc.

Regular meeting third Tuesday of each month at 7:30 PM  
Houston Garden Center  
[www.bromeliadsocietyhouston.org](http://www.bromeliadsocietyhouston.org)

Annual Show and Sale  
May 15, 16 & 17  
Mercer Arboretum

*Q&A (Continued)*

May are a possible choice. One, with luck, should be in good condition to enter the spring show in either, February, March or April. Several for the fall shows will cover the fall show period. I have a favorite Cattleya species that flowers at Christmas time. This one is never in a show and never available for an orchid society meeting. I enjoy it most years and never get to show it. It is still my favorite Cattleya.

Another problem here in Houston is that from March to November we receive too much light for our orchids with as much as 500 Langleys (a Langley is an amount of light) whereas, during the winter months of December, January and February the light may drop to a low of 198. We get too much light from March to November and not enough from December through February. Some winters we get extra light and other winters very poor light. Plants slow their growth during all winters and many do not flower well or do not flower period. Supplemental light in a greenhouse during these low light months will help our Dendrobiums, some Vandas and some Cattleyas flower much better.

**Indeterminate flowering**

Some plants flower when they have stored lots of food energy and are mature. Excellent culture helps these to flower more often. I have a term for this type of culture---forced culture. The maximum amount of water, fertilizer, light etc is applied so that the plant is super happy and will grow and flower to its maximum. Of course, there is the danger of burning with too much light, rooting roots with too much water, etc.

**Forced Culture**

Once in my greenhouse I had a Vanda with an ancestor that flowered in the fall, one ancestor that flowered in the spring and another that flowered indeterminately. It reached maturity and flowered in the fall each year. I added more light and watered more frequently with 1/2 tsp fertilizer with open roots in a wooden basket. It flowered in the fall and the spring. I hung it higher in the greenhouse for more light, watered almost every day with the same amount of fertilizer as before. It started to flower about every 75 days---continuous. I would cut off the old inflorescence and count down the leaves from top to the fourth one and there were two new buds starting to grow--one on each side. As long as I continued the forced culture it flowered continuously. However, when I got lazy and busy and decreased the frequency of watering it began to flower less often and finally flowered only each fall. The best growers use some form of forced culture for more flowers in many orchids. I will not recommend because you will kill more. But, this is the way to get more flowers.

Choose your plants carefully and practice perfect culture for the best results---build a bigger greenhouse and buy more plants.

## Rare Orchid Spotted in Fakahatchee Strand

By Chris Little

On Saturday March 14, 2009 I was hiking with Keith Bradley and Russ Clussman as part of the annual central slough survey in Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park to search for rare flora.



*Photograph by Chris Little*

After several hours of slogging through the swamp we came upon a particularly nice slough. We decided to split up to cover the slough better.

After only a minute I found an orchid which I had never seen before. I called Keith over and Russ soon followed. We all discussed the orchid and Russ exclaimed that he believed it was *Cyclopogon elatus*, a

very rare orchid, which has not been seen in Florida since 1962. We all celebrated our find and spend the next few hours searching the area where almost a hundred of the plants were found.



*Photograph by Chris Little*

Mike Owen, the park biologist, soon arrived on the scene where he celebrated the find with us. The orchid has never been observed in the Fakahatchee and was last seen in Miami-Dade County in 1962. Keith and I later found a few more plants about a mile away from the original location later in the day. What an amazing feeling to discover such a rare plant.

*Note from editor: According to the Naples news, this orchid has not been seen since 1980 and this discovery showed a nice grouping of approximately 90 plants.*

*Wild Orchid Hunt (Continued)*

large plants. The flower is quite big and bright yellow with green/maroon striping in the dorsal sepal. Our colleagues took careful measurements and a lot of photographs and Doug hand pollinated the blooms.

These hunts are a great treat for us for several reasons:

- Travel with very knowledgeable orchid growers who are happy to share information and answer questions.
- The opportunity to “discover” a now rare orchid in its natural setting.
- Being able to ask, “what is this” (wildflower, tree, fern, moss, etc.) and have an expert identify it for you.
- Learning about the Texas landscapes, their history and development through millennia.
- Seeing other plants, butterflies, birds, and animals in their natural settings with no traffic noise, crowds of people, etc.
- Getting to do all this with a great group of people who also value the beauty and “intelligence” of nature in this lovely part of Texas.
- It can all be done in one day (and there were no mosquitoes this trip)!



## Welcome New Members

Sayeda Hanson

## Welcome Guests

Karel Cromie

C.J. Maciejesk

Regina Maciejesk

## Thanks for Refreshments

Kenneth Gardner

Sandra Higham

Lakshmi Narayana

Vernon Prytz

Beverly & Calvin Starr

Sandy & John Stubbings

Diane Taylor

## Honor your Mother or Wife this Mother's Day: Name an Orchid and Support the National Parkinson Foundation

This Mother's Day, give your mother and/or wife a unique gift—name a new hybrid orchid after her! The National Parkinson Foundation is partnering with Soroa Orchids, one of the premier orchid growers in the world, to auction off the naming rights of a new hybrid orchid. While you honor your mother and/or wife with this gift, you also honor the lives of people living with Parkinson's disease. Place your bid online at [www.parkinson.org](http://www.parkinson.org) during the month of April—Parkinson's Awareness Month. The online auction closes on May 9, 2009. For more information, call 1-800-327-4545.



## Committee Bulletins

### **Newcomers Group**

Chair: Jean Schwenke, [schwenke@atlascsusa.com](mailto:schwenke@atlascsusa.com) 832-746-1003

The Newcomers would like to thank Loren and Judith Neufeld for hosting our April meeting and for allowing us to practice our exhibit set up. Of course we wished we could linger all day amongst their beautiful orchids, but we had work to do, and I hope everyone who attended the show was very pleased with the results. I want to personally give a big thank you to all those who helped make our Newcomers' display a work of art and a labor of love.

Our next meeting will be May 17th at 2:00 PM at the home of Jim and Melba Butler. In orchid terms, you could honestly call the Butlers a real "power couple." They've been a long-standing cornerstone in our HOS/AOS home, and we couldn't ask for a better way to spend a spring afternoon than with these dynamic devotees.

### **Intermediate Group**

Chair: Debbie Peterson, [dpeterson@avalonadvisors.com](mailto:dpeterson@avalonadvisors.com) 281-890-0811

Co-chair: Calvin Starr, [calvin@kr5e.com](mailto:calvin@kr5e.com) 281-482-5589

The HOS Intermediate Group will be meeting on the 4th Sunday of each month at 2PM. The meeting in May will be on the 24th and held at Clown Alley Orchids 3119 Lily Street in Pasadena [www.clownalleyorchids.com](http://www.clownalleyorchids.com) 281-991-6841. Our group will now start focusing on studying more intensely on orchid growing issues in our meetings going forward.

Our April meeting, party and AOS show was a lot of fun for those who participated. At this point in time that I'm submitting this article to the newsletter, I'm unable to tell how well our displays did at the show for me to brag about it or not. I sure hope we won something! If anything, we had lots of fun putting them together, helping out at the show and getting to know our fellow orchid growers better. A big thank you to Allan & Bente Davies for the BBQ they hosted the group on Saturday April 18th. We all had a fabulous time!

If anyone wants to join our group please email us or see Debbie or Calvin at the next HOS meeting. If anyone would like to have our meetings at your greenhouse, please let us know. I have June and July currently open and we're looking for a place to go.

### **Raffle Table**

Chair: Mary Gunn, Sylvia Dekmezian, Amy Colville

Raffle table plants for our April meeting will be from multiple vendors at our April Show. We hope to have a good variety. Be sure to stop by to get your free ticket for the door prize - two tickets if you are wearing your name tag! Tickets for the raffle are priced at 5 tickets for \$1 and 30 tickets for \$5.

## Houston Orchid Society 2009 Officers and Committee Chairs

### **Officers**

<i>President</i>	Holly Miller
<i>1st Vice President</i>	John Stubbings
<i>2nd Vice President</i>	John Jamerlan
<i>Membership</i>	Katherine Brown
<i>Recording Sec.</i>	Claudia Hanson
<i>Treasurer</i>	Jill Smith

### **Chairs**

<i>Guest Hospitality</i>	Allan Davies
<i>Happenings Editor</i>	Susan Taylor
<i>Librarian</i>	Sarah Bentley
<i>Newcomers Group</i>	Jean Schwenke, Judith & Loren Neufeld
<i>Intermediate Group</i>	Debbie Peterson, Calvin Starr
<i>Parliamentarian</i>	Marvin Gerber
<i>Photography</i>	Malcolm McCorquodale III
<i>Plant Raffle</i>	Mary Gunn, Sylvia Dekmezian, Amy Colville
<i>Refreshments</i>	Noreen Tolman, Ken Gardner, Eddie Mitchell, Will Litchfield
<i>Silent Auction</i>	Lee and Gordon Rowell
<i>2009 Spring Show</i>	Melba and Jim Butler
<i>HOS Web</i>	Calvin Starr
<i>2009 Workshop Chair</i>	Ted Baenziger and John Stubbings

### **Directors**

<i>Two-Year Term</i>	<i>One-Year Term</i>
Donna Williams	Jeff Bradley
Joe Fields	Greg Scott
Ted Baenziger	Dave Hunt
Don Ghiz	Johnny Williams
Calvin Starr	Sandra Higham
Doug Harris	Dolores Fields
Loren Neufeld	Marvin Gerber

### **Representatives**

AOS Representative	Jim Butler
IPA Representative	John Stubbings
ODC Representative	Joe Fields
SWROGA Representative	Julius Klehm and Marilyn Holloway

**Houston Orchid Society**  
May 2009 Meeting

**Program:** Greg Alikas  
How to Photograph Orchids

**Date:** May 7, 2009  
**Time:** 7:30 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.

**Place:** Houston Garden Center

**2009 Speakers**

May - Greg Alikas, How to Photograph Orchids  
June - Eric Michels, Weird Orchids  
July - TBA  
August - Peter Tobias, Orchid Conservation  
September - Bob Fuchs, Vandas  
October - Julius Klehm, Live AOS Judging  
November - Fred Clarke, Mini and Midi Cattleyas  
December - Christmas Party and HJC Auction

**HOS Website**

[www.houstonorchidsociety.org](http://www.houstonorchidsociety.org)

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**Houston Orchid Society**  
*The Houston Happenings*  
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