February Program: Brandon Tam, Huntington Botanical Gardens
By Nina Rach

Our February speaker will be Brandon Tam, who will tell us about orchid projects and activities at The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens in San Marino, California.

Brandon Tam is the Orchid Collection Specialist and Orchid Show Director at The Huntington, which is the former estate of Henry and Arabella Huntington. Arabella established an orchid collection before she died in 1924, and Henry left his estate in 1927 to establish the museum.

Tam started volunteering at the Huntington in 2007, during high school, and became a full-time employee when he graduated two years later. He went on to earn a B.S. in Plant Science at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona in 2015.

In 2010, a collection of 6,000 paphiopedilums from Robert Weltz of Montecito, California, were donated to the Huntington by Weltz’s daughters. The Huntington’s orchid collection now includes more than 14,000 plants, one of the largest collections in the United States. The plants are housed in 26,000+ sq ft of growing area, which includes the Rose Hills Foundation Conservatory and three collection greenhouses dedicated to tropical plants. He also oversees the Huntington’s 50 Amorphophallus titanum plants (better known as the “corpse flower”), and successfully bloomed one in 2014.

Tam’s responsibilities include the conservation, management and husbandry of the orchids at The Huntington, and since 2014,

Continued on page 4

Please Welcome New Member
Matthew Polmanter

Inside This Issue:

Presidents Post 1
Plant Table 2
HOS Annual Show 2
Stay-At-Home Orchids 3
Houston Judging Center 4
February Tips 5
AOS Webinars 6
Upcoming Events 7
Newcomer’s Group 8
January Meeting Photos 9

The Houston Happenings

Volume 49, Issue 2  February 2019

Presidents Post
By Rick Hepler

As I write this note to you all, the temperature is dropping to the coolest point this winter season. Although a necessary event in an orchid’s life, the mid-30’s is probably a temperature you want to avoid. Especially if your plants go through a shock event such as this - mid-70’s one day, then mid-30’s a day later.

These drastic changes in temperatures remind me of the time when I first started growing. I, like many starting out, had no stable growing space for a sizable collection. Plastic wrapped around the support poles of a back porch and a small electric heater in the middle was the best I could do, barely keeping 5-8 degrees above the outside temps. Well, it turned out to be good enough in the winter of ’89. The power company at the time, HL&P (Reliant), wasn’t big enough to keep up with the growing demand of Houston. They announced there would be “brown outs” and to be prepared. I’m not sure folks knew what that meant - I know I didn’t. Basically HL&P turned off a large section of Houston for several hours at a time, then moved onto a different section and repeated the process to keep up with the power needs.

Fortunately, my plants weren’t affected by the brown outs, but some HOS members at the time were not as lucky. Some of our members lost everything in their greenhouses.

The lesson to take away is this. If your plants are allowed to acclimate to cooler and cooler temperatures, they will fare far better than plants that are kept at a cozy 60-65 degrees, then suddenly dumped into the 30’s. I’ve actually had plants grow and bloom better with cooler winter temps versus spending the money to keep them warmer.

Good luck and happy growing.
January Plant Table
By Sarah Bentley

Wow! What a difference a holiday makes! At the November 2018 meeting, there were very few plants on exhibit at our "show and tell" section. So, I prepared for a minimal number of plants at the first meeting of the new year. Was I ever WRONG! Thankfully, there were dozens of plants on show in January 2019.

Perhaps, the report and awards presented at the December program were an inspiration to the growers who brought plants in January. There were a total of 37 hybrid plants brought by 15 members. 14 species plants were presented by 9 members.

Don Ghiz is the owner of the popular vote winner for a hybrid, Blc (Rlc) George Herbert Walker Bush 'Waldor' AM/AOS. The parents of this gorgeous specimen are Blc (Rlc) Orglade's Full House x Blc (Rlc) Pamela Hetherington. It was not an especially large plant, but there were four evenly-spaced, huge flowers presented basically in a full circle. The perfectly shaped blooms had classic cattleya coloring of purple and yellow. An enticing scent was evident as well.

Another cattleya was the popular vote winner for the species table. Sandra Higham's orchid, Cattleya (Sophrinitis) cernua, produced numerous lovely red blooms on a miniature, mounted plant.

A particular thank you goes to the expert members who described the exhibited orchids to the members in attendance. Jay Balchan gave insight to the culture and descriptions of the hybrid plants.

In addition to presenting a very interesting program, Linda Fries graciously agreed to describe the plants on the species table. Her knowledge and interest led to more understanding of the plants our members presented, including a few representatives of her topic of the evening. Thank you, Linda.

It's that time of year.... SHOW TIME! We will be back in Memorial City Mall in the same location as last year, the Dillards courtyard, where we had a fantastic show! You will notice that the show date is a little earlier than in past years. We are doing this so that we can use our regular April meeting date as a show setup evening! The main item that the mall asked us to correct for this show was to complete all the large setup activities before the mall opens in the morning (10am) on Friday. After the mall opens, we can still do small items like arranging plants in the displays, putting cloth around the pots and registering plant for ribbon judging, but all large activities that involve ladders, boxes, chairs, moving plants and props into the mall, etc, must be done by Friday 10am!

To help meet this deadline, we are going to try something a little different. We are going to use our regular April 4th HOS meeting as a show setup party! So meet at the mall that evening, any time after 6pm, instead of the First Christian Church. We will be providing pizzas and other snacks. Everyone is invited to participate, even if you don’t have a display, since the vendors will need help as well.

If you are interested in doing your own exhibit, contact Holly Miller 281-597-8792 hollymil29@gmail.com.

We also have a few volunteer areas where we could use your assistance. We need your help!! All of these jobs are EASY, but they need you!! Please let either Holly or myself know if you are willing to help with one of the tasks below!!

Clerking: On Friday evening, we have ribbon judging for all the plants entered from the exhibits. Clerks help the judges spot the plants and put ribbons on the winners. They also may be asked to help with the decisions. This is a fun way to learn about the flowers and why some merit ribbons and others don’t. Jay will coordinate the clerks, but we need you to volunteer to be a clerk! We usually start a bit after 6:30, lasting for a couple of hours.

Houston Orchid Society Exhibit:
Loren Neufeld is once again arranging the HOS exhibit and will be there Thursday evening and Friday morning. Members of the society can bring their plants to be entered in our host society exhibit anytime during setup. Loren can certainly use help Thursday evening, Friday morning and then again Sunday late afternoon for exhibit tear down.

Children’s Table: This is an exhibit and learning area and is the first thing visitors see at the entrance to the Show. Volunteers are needed for an hour or so at a time to assist children with some special games and activities. Nearly everyone who helped last year enjoyed the interaction with the kids and parents.

AOS Table: HOS, AOS and Orchid Digest information will be at this table. Volunteers are needed to chat with people about orchids and the various organizations and to hand out information. This table is side by side with the children’s table, which allows for people to mix and mingle with both. Again, we need some help here, also.

Thank you all for your support! I look forward to your help and to a fantastic show!
Stay-At-Home Orchids from Derek Lowenstein

- Rhyncattleanthe Free Spirit  
  “Miami Sun”
- Rhyncattleanthe Brassy Gold
- Cattleya General Patton  
  ‘Maryland’

Stay-At-Home Orchids from Stephen Fox

- Beallara Marfitch  
  ‘Select’
- Dendrobium Spring Bird  
  ‘Kurashiki’
- Dendrobium spectabile
- Dendrobium Hawaii Spectacular
- Bulbophyllum lobbii  
  “Kathy’s Gold”

Stay-At-Home Orchids from Judith & Loren Neufeld

- Neostylis Lou Sneary
- Phalaenopsis Sogo Yukidian
- Vanda Pachara Delight  
  ‘Sakate’
- Brassavola Little Stars
- Vandachostylis Sasicha
- Ascocenda (Vanda)  
  Princess Mikasa
Tam has exhibited Huntington plants which have garnered five First Class Certificates (FCCs), three Certificates of Cultural Excellence (CCEs), and more than 100 other American Orchid Society awards.

He belongs to several orchid societies in southern California and has actively supported the AOS by helping to organize and host the 2016 Fall Members Meeting, serving as a member on the AOS Conservation Committee, and participating in the Pacific South Judging Region, which has four judging centers, including one in San Marino. In March 2018, at age 25, Tam also began a three-year term as an AOS Trustee, the youngest in AOS history.

He spends his free time growing his orchids, traveling the world, and most importantly, eating!

The monthly meeting of the Houston Judging Center was held at the First Christian Church on January 19th with 23 people in attendance. After our biannual business meeting, 19 plants were entered and five awards were given.

The first award went to Bill Caldwell for his Rth Marie Caldwell ‘Ellie Hemphill’ which scored an AM 81 points. He also received an HCC of 76 points for his Dendrobium Swiss Mountain Palace ‘Mountain Majesty’.

Stephen Moffitt walked away with three awards. Stephen’s Fdk. (Fredclarkeara) Desert Tenor ‘HJC’ scored an HCC of 76 points. Stephen’s Fdk. Doubtless ‘Pink Fairy’ received an HCC of 79 points and his Fdk. Kelly Longley ‘Renee Gerber’ was presented with an HCC of 79 points.

Each month, the Houston Judging Center holds its monthly meeting on the third Saturday at the First Christian Church. The cutoff time for receiving plants is 11:30 a.m.

Please come see us February 16th. Your plants may like to give you a Valentine award!
Dear readers:

This month let’s talk about air. Of course, you all know that Valentine’s day is coming, and flowers are a favorite gift at that time (red Phalaenopsis anyone?), but did you also know that traditionally, in our region, February 14 is the pruning day for roses because it is the last day for hard freezes? That’s because our Gulf of Mexico is warming up and provides for a cushion of warm air, up through the Woodlands and beyond. It’s time to think about air circulation in your growing areas. The new spurt of Spring growth is about to begin, if it hasn’t already started for deciduous Dendrobium and Catasetum. Both of mine are showing new life, especially Dendrobium anosmum (below), which is in full bud. This is because of the longer days and higher temperatures.

So, what is good air? 80% nitrogen, 17% oxygen, plus 1% or more of carbon dioxide (and other stuff, like argon), without pollutants. The nitrogen is pretty well useless to orchids, since they cannot fix it (that is, capture it in an useful form). As a result, we have to give some available (non-urea) nitrogen to our plants. The oxygen is poisonous to all green plants as it puts a stop to photosynthesis and is expelled by the plants as “waste”, thus allowing us to live and breathe!

The carbon dioxide, known as a “greenhouse” gas, is really important to orchids, because it is the source for sugar and starch for the orchid (the chlorophyll cycle depends on it absolutely). Orchids, like many other plants, have small mouths on the underside of their leaves called stomata, that suck up the CO2 and use it; some do this only in the evenings, when the temperature drops and humidity is on the rise. These are called CAM3 plants, and they need to photosynthesize at night. This CAM3 applies to most of our thick-leaved plants, like Cattleya and most Phalaenopsis, but the thin-leaved specimens like Zygos and Catasetum do their work during the day. Whatever the orchid, it needs air moving over the stomata to take CO2 in and expel O2.

Think of the environment of the orchids themselves. Most of ours are epiphytic, which means growing on other plants, in most cases the branches. The air circulation is excellent up there, what we would call breezy, and, for the higher altitudes, rather brisk as well, falling into the 50’s. These higher elevation plants have to contend with cooler conditions than we can give them usually, and so we need a good flow of air that is constantly cooling them and drying out the roots and crowns. Some examples: Cattleya (C.) bowringiana, C. aurea, C. maxima; Psychopsis papilio; Dendrobium of the Latouria clan, Restrepia brachypus and its relatives.

Others of lower elevations include most Encyclias, Stanhopeas, plus Dendrobium of the rocks, like D. bigibbum and its relatives. They can take our heat, but not our dead (unmoving) summer air.

If the air does not move, the stomata start gasping, and they cannot pull air in since they have no lungs or muscles. If the air does not flow, the plants suffer and often start to fail, inviting fungal and bacterial growth on the leaf. Of course, too much light and heat are also damaging. The more light there is, the more we need to aerate.

Stale, unmoving air also invites erwina rot and botrytis or black spotting on blooms. Mealy bugs and scale also like it still, so they can suck in peace. Avoid them with good air movement. (One exception is the ghost orchid, Dendrophy- lax lindenii, which grows close to the ground, on tree trunks, in swampy conditions in Florida and Cuba, and likes it “steamy with good light”, since it has no leaves and must depend on its roots for photosynthesis. This one should be tucked in a corner and watered regularly.

Another that doesn’t mind stale or stagnant air is Ludisia bicolor, a jewel orchid that grows terrestrial in the shade of trees. They do best under the bench.)

So, what to do about all the others? Fans. Not the clapping, hooting kind. Electric blade-twirlers. Box fans or round ones should be placed in tandem, that is, so the breeze from one gets picked up by the other. In a greenhouse that is wide enough, the air flow should be circular, down one side, up the other. You also need an exhaust fan to let the hottest air escape. If a balcony, besides the ceiling fan, a box fan can really help expel dead air from the collection. For inside growing, ceiling fans, plus quiet round or box-type fans, should have the air moving 24/7.

Two special cases. 1) a Wardian case uses small computer fans that take very low voltage and are quiet; one of them has to act as a means of exhaust. And 2) misting fans. Useful on a balcony or in a greenhouse, they can help reduce temperature. At least that’s what they are used for on patios and outdoor bars. They do present a problem if the mist goes directly on plants: calcium carbonate build-up. Because tap water in Houston has so much of this ‘lime’, not only can the leaves become quite white, but the nozzles themselves become clogged. White vinegar is very useful to gently clean away the white and, as a soaker, to unclog the misters, and in normal (2%) dose, will not harm anything.

One further practical precaution. If you use any gas appliances (like a grill or a propane heater), anywhere near plants, especially orchids, the carbon monoxide can do serious damage! And not to alarm you, but it can also kill pets and humans. Aeration is good for them as well as for the ‘chids.

Have fun, dear members, and enjoy the cool nights while they last.
AOS WEBINARS

Wednesday, February 13, 2019
7:30 PM - 8:30 PM CST
Growing Cymbidiums
George Hatfield
For members only

Register

Tuesday, February 26, 2019
7:30 PM - 8:30 PM CST
Greenhouse Chat
Ron McHatton

Register
### HOS Officers and Committee Chairs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Officers</th>
<th>Committee Chairs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td>Conservation Nina Rach</td>
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<tr>
<td>VP - Speakers</td>
<td>Display Table Sarah Bentley</td>
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<tr>
<td>VP - Shows</td>
<td>Exhibits Loren Neufeld</td>
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<td>VP - Membership</td>
<td>Guest Hospitality Marianne Canevaro</td>
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<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>Happenings Editor Jay Balchan</td>
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<td>Intermediate Group Jay Balchan</td>
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<td>Newcomers Group Stephen and Tim Gallagher</td>
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<td>Parliamentarian Don Ghiz</td>
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<td>Photography Malcolm McCorquodale</td>
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<td>Plant Raffle Brad Miller</td>
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<td>Refreshments Lily Chang</td>
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<td>Summer Workshop Derek Lowenstein</td>
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### Directors - One Year Term

- Holly Miller
- Calvin Starr
- Susan Dally
- Ft. Ted Baenziger

### Directors - Two Year Term

- Steve Fox
- Marianne Canevaro
- Stephen Moffitt
- Jay Balchan

### Representatives

- AOS Representative Jay Balchan
- IPA Representative Father Ted Baenziger
- ODC Representative Father Ted Baenziger
- SWROGA Directors Laurie Skov Don Maples

### Upcoming Events

**February 23-24, 2019**
**Heart of Texas Orchid Society Show**
Zilker Botanical Garden Center
2220 Barton Springs Rd
Austin, TX 78746

**March 8-9, 2019**
**Greater North Texas Orchid Society Show**
Richardson Civic Center
411 W. Arapaho Rd.
Richardson, TX

**March 22-24, 2019**
**Alama Orchid Society Show**
San Antonio Garden Center
3310 North New Braunfels Ave
San Antonio, TX

**April 6-7, 2019**
**Houston Orchid Society Show**
Memorial City Mall, Dillard's Court
Houston, TX

**April 12-14, 2019**
**Acadian Orchid Society Show**
Ira Nelson Horticultural Center
2206 Johnston Street
Lafayette, LA 70503

**April 12-13, 2019**
**Central Louisiana Orchid Society Show**
Kees Park Community Center
Pineville, LA
The Newcomer’s Group got the year off to a great start on January 20th at the home of Jay Balchan. Jay is always a great host and the opportunity to spend time in his greenhouse was a real treat for all involved. The focus of the meeting was on Cattleyas and their culture and we had a very active and rewarding question and answer session following the presentation. Special thanks go out to Scott and Freda Goedde for bringing some very nice blooming plants to show off. It is always nice to be able to share our successes as well as our failures. We hope this trend continues throughout the year!

Stephen and I are trying to obtain current contact information for all eligible newcomers, so please hunt us down at the monthly meetings or contact us directly if you want to join in the fun. We always like to see new faces in the group. The email contact for the group is hosnewcomers@gmail.com. As always, HOS members are encouraged to bring any plant donations to the monthly meetings, so that we can get the newcomers off to a good start.


We can never have enough refreshments, so please consider bringing something to the next meeting. Show off that delicious dish or dessert you’re famous for!

Thank you to everyone who purchased raffle tickets last month.

We had some very nice phals from Orchid Life Nursery and this month, we will have selections from Carmela’s. Spend a little or spend a bit more. The more tickets, the better the chance of winning. It all goes toward a great cause - right back to the society we all love!

Be sure to wear your name badge to get your two free tickets and, if you meet someone attending their first meeting, make sure you send them to the raffle table, where they will get two free tickets.

I remember winning a plant at my first meeting with a free ticket - it was awesome!
January Meeting Photos