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THE ORCHID KEIKI

Newsletter of the Virginia Orchid Society

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HUNTING ORCHIDS IN SICHUAN PROVINCE, CHINA

China is a vast (some would say mysterious) country. Extremely mountainous terrain makes travel outside major cities and towns very difficult, perhaps even dangerous. There are more than 1400 species of orchids known to occur naturally in China (compare that to approximately 250 in all of North America) and it is thought that many more are waiting to be discovered. Approximately one-third of China's native orchids are endemic.

Sichuan Province in central China where mist shrouded peaks reach 14,000', the roads are narrow, the valleys are deep, the rivers were raging and dense forests cover rocky slopes up to the tree line. The Tibetan village was a most extraordinary, if not unsettling, finale. But, it provided the only opportunity to see a much sought after Lady's-slipper, *Cypripedium guttatum*. Join Bob and Amy for a recounting of their orchid hunting travels in China.



Bob Sprague will NOT bring plants for sale. Members can bring items.

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Next meeting date:
March 17, 2019
Bob Sprague, Speaker
2:00 pm Stranges Garden Center Short Pump

Upcoming meetings:
April 14, 2019
Martin Motes, Speaker
2:00 pm Stranges Garden Center Short Pump

Additional Events:
NCOS Plant Auction
March 30, 2019

VOS Field Trip to Orchid Lakes - information TBA



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Reed Ginn

Happy March to all!

We are in a transitional month where we welcome Daylight Savings Time and the arrival of spring. Now is the time to think about two items: who should serve on the VOS Board and what would you like to do over the summer. You can pass your ideas to any current board member or myself.

The VOS Orchid Show was a success! Thank you for all your support, participation, and orchids for the VOS display. It was a great time of fellowship, getting the VOS display up and running, as well as all of the set up for the show. I encourage each member to begin thinking about next year's theme and how you would like to participate. Want to know how much fun it can be to participate, just ask anybody who participated in this year's show. The dividend comes when visitors are awe struck with the orchids, ask questions, and want to know about our meetings. Let's thank Strange's for all their support by patronizing their store ourselves and encouraging our friend's to do the same.

Remember to bring your item for the hospitality table and let Bernie know what you will be bringing at b.b1951@hotmail.com so she can plan accordingly. To make for a more complete meeting, come early to help setup and stay a little later to help put items away. I am looking forward to seeing you at the March meeting for a good time of fellowship, learning about orchids, and refreshment.

Reed

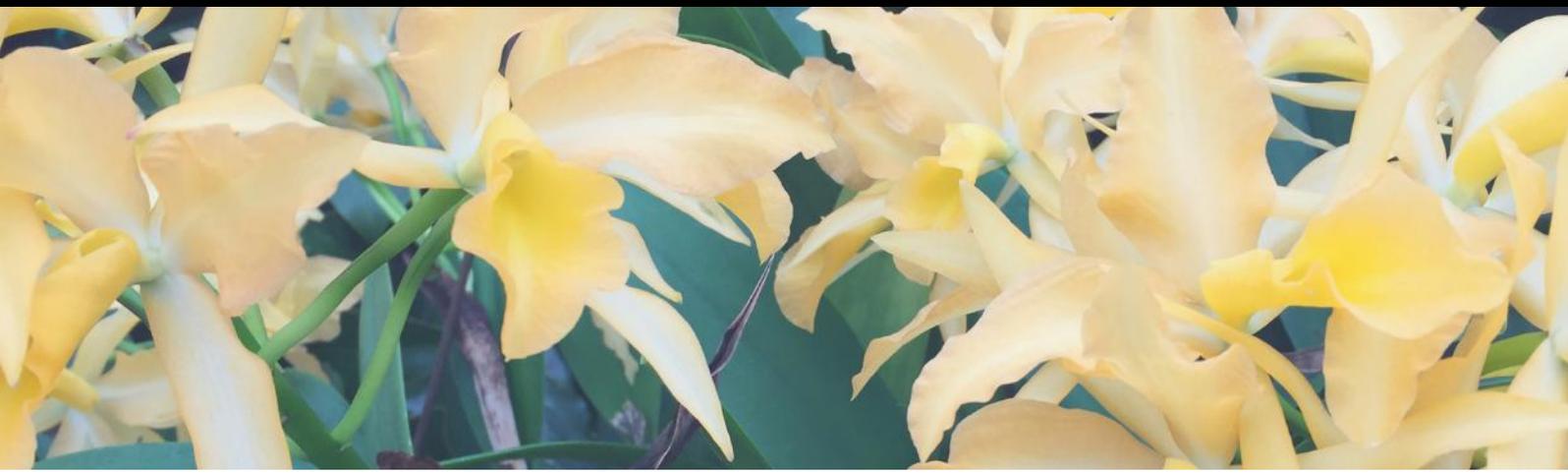


WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS



ORCHIDS FROM THE VOS SHOW





PHOTOS: VOS SHOW 2019



VOS Display



Chadwick & Son Display



Working the VOS Show



Charlottesville Orchid Society Display



Robert Thiessen, Library Chair
whitecloud20XX@gmail.com



VOS Members Sales Table



Floradise Orchids Display

VOS Board

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CULTURAL Originally published in ORCHIDS Magazine March 2013.

Give Me Some Air: Combining Humidity with Air that Feels Light and Is Constantly Moving Benefits Plants

During the 19th-century Orchidmania craze that swept Europe, thousands of orchids would die in dry, heated “stoves,” as the orchid greenhouses were called. It is surprising that any survived and it was only the sheer numbers being ripped from the jungles at that time that allowed a hobby to be born. These early orchid hobbyists had little first-hand knowledge of where or how orchids grew and the plants often arrived in Europe unaccompanied by the person who collected them. The notion was that epiphytic orchids grew in dank and steamy tropical jungles. There certainly are orchids that come from sea level forests close to the equator, but even in those places there is open air movement, the subject we will cover here.

Humidity and air movement are qualities of the air that surround your orchids, and you. Although there are genera-specific requirements for more or less humidity, most tropical epiphytic orchids require 50–70 percent humidity. Less than 40 percent humidity can cause plants to grow poorly or at best, less than optimum. Plants transpire moisture through stomata, tiny pores on the leaves. If the humidity of the growing environment is too low, orchid plants will transpire water faster than they can take it up through the roots and become desiccated. Roots and potting media will also dry out quicker when a plant is kept in a dehydrated state. Watering more frequently is not a solution for dehydration and leads to root problems because of rapid decay of the medium.

If you grow orchids in a greenhouse it is most likely properly equipped to provide an acceptable range of humidity. Evaporative coolers are an excellent means of adding humidity and keeping temperatures cooler in summer. If you grow orchids in the home, you have more of a challenge to maintain proper humidity. Winter heating and summer air conditioning both dry the air significantly. For just a few plants there is a classic solution that may be somewhat limited in its effectiveness, but is easy and provides some humidity. Fill a shallow tray (such as an aluminum oven liner) with pebbles, and then add water to just below the tops of the pebbles. Set your orchid pots on the pebbles. Refill the tray every few days as needed (if algae builds up, empty the pebbles into a colander in the sink and rinse with diluted bleach, then plenty of clean water and then return to the tray). This works well if you are growing just a few orchids on a windowsill. Misting can also help, but the water evaporates so quickly that the benefits do not last long. If you have a larger collection that you perhaps grow on a plant stand or cart, an inexpensive humidifier can be bought for slightly more than the cost of a couple of



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plants. Look for one with a large reservoir that does not need frequent refilling. Specific orchid-growing setups such as orchidariums, terrariums, Wardian cases and many under-lights setups in basements all will provide ample humidity.

If you were to visit the habitat of an epiphytic orchid such as *Cattleya mossiae*, you would discover a setting totally contrary to the Victorian perception mentioned in the first paragraph. You would be in the Venezuelan mountains at an elevation of about 3,000–4,500 feet (915–1,370 m) and the cattleyas would be growing in the canopy of the trees above you. Air constantly flows up the mountains and the tops of the trees sway in the breeze. Many of our favorite orchids come from this kind of airy environment.

Optimum conditions for cultivating orchids are often described with the words “buoyant atmosphere.” What that describes is air that feels light and is constantly moving. Primarily, a buoyant atmosphere provides a constantly fresh supply of carbon dioxide to the trees and the orchids in them. Green plants convert carbon dioxide and water into food compounds (such as glucose) and oxygen through the process called photosynthesis. Air that is constantly moving provides other benefits, such as eliminating pockets of extreme temperatures and moderating the temperature of both air and leaves. An adequately ventilated orchid growing space discourages fungal infections by hastening the evaporation of standing water. The surest way to discourage the flower-damaging fungus *Botrytis cinerea* is to increase air movement.

Providing orchids with air movement is one of the easiest things to achieve. If you are growing a few orchids on a windowsill, merely open the window a few inches any time the outside temperature is above 50 F (10 C). If you have a grow cart of orchids, one or two 6- or 8- inch (15- or 20-cm) muffin fans will do the trick. Turn them on low and aim them above or to the side of the orchids to draw air over the plants. Ceiling fans provide excellent air circulation for patios and sunrooms, while most commercial greenhouses offer fan options. If yours does not, buy one or two 24-inch (60 cm) box fans, depending on the size of your structure. If you're comfortable, they are too.

