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THE KEIKI EXPRESS

Newsletter of the Virginia Orchid Society
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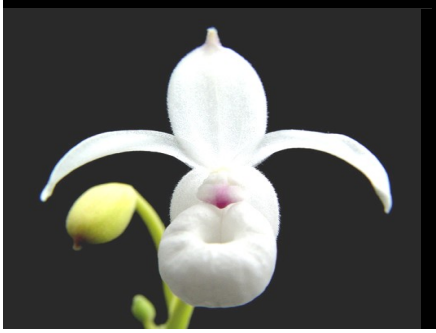
American Orchid Society
Education. Conservation. Research.
Affiliated Society



Mexipedium xerophyticum

Paphiopedilum godefroyae

Phragmipedium Hanne Popow

A look at Slippers

(Mexipedium, Paphiopedilum & Phragmipedium)

An in-person and zoom Presentation by Kim Feddersen

Sunday, September 21 from 1 pm to 5 pm: Presentation at 2 pm
In Classroom 1 at Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden

From his Fair Orchids website: My father operated a retail orchid nursery (Orkidé Kultur) in Denmark; in my teens and early twenties I worked for him after school and weekends, which ignited my passion for plants, in particular orchids. Back in 1994 I gave Carolyn two orchids for Valentine's Day, which led me to build a significant orchid collection as a hobby grower.

After 30+ years in corporate America (international trade, sales/engineering positions), I have gone back to my passion with Fair Orchids (https://fairorchids.us). I have participated in orchid shows in NJ and Northeastern US since 2014, and travel throughout the US speaking to orchid societies. I have done some limited breeding of orchids, and due to disappearance of a key Chinese producer of Clivia miniata, I have recently started to breed this plant as well.

Carolyn, my long suffering bride has largely given up on restricting my botanical activities. We downsized in 2022, but our now smaller house has a larger property. As the previous owners did no gardening to speak of, I finally have a blank canvas to paint with all sorts of interesting plants.

I will bring an assortment of plants to sell, and I can make the following offer for pre-orders from my website (fairorchids.us): Orders based on the website price lists, placed no later than Sept. 18th, and paid cash at the meeting, will be less 10%.

Kim Feddersen needs a place to stay Saturday September 20

If you are able to host Mr. Feddersen, please contact Robert Nordin for details: rn5pc@virginia.edu

Virginia Orchid Society 2025-2026 Officers:

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VOS Email Address:
virginiaorchidsociety@gmail.com

Refer to your membership directory for the email addresses for the above members

President's Message

Greetings,

I look forward to seeing you at the September 21st meeting as we start off the new year. I want to welcome those new members and returning members. We look forward to getting to know you and share our common interests of orchids. We have a great speaker lined up, Kim Fedderson. He will be bringing plants and you can preorder them for a discount.

We are working on making our website more secure. We will remove the membership list. You will receive a membership list email twice a year in October and March. Plan on paying your dues by the September deadline so you can be on the membership list. For individual inquiries in between those months, you can ask virginiaorchidsociety@gmail.com. We will have a strong password sent to those paid members.

The past newsletters will be taken off of the website and the current ones, with no officers' email addresses, will be used. We are in a transition from one webmaster to another. So be patient.

The board voted on having a public Facebook page which Helen Hull-Sanders is the administrator. This is to reach new members that might not be aware of our organization. We are aware of some members not wanting to be posted on Facebook. We will screen those pictures and focus on the orchids themselves. If you are one of those people that does not want to be on Facebook, be sure to get to know Helen or myself.

I will have a signup sheet for those coming to our greenhouse tour October 25, 2025 from 10-3 at my house from 10-12 (2114 W. Poythress St., Hopewell, VA 23860) and Karen and Ned Collier's house from 12-3 (12299 Griffin Rd. Petersburg, VA 23805). I have a freestanding greenhouse and Karen has a Florida room. We look forward to having you. We will have light refreshments and encourage everyone to bring a packed lunch to eat at 1:00 at Karen's. Drinks will be provided.

I am looking for ideas for a spring road trip. We need to start planning soon.

We are starting to plan for next year's show. We can use everyone's help. See Irina, who is the well-organized show chair, to find out how you are needed. The tentative dates are February 25- March 1, 2026. It is a great time to find out what the society is all about.

We wish Helen and her crew a safe trip and successful NCOS orchid show as they represent the VOS. Thank you to those that have loaned us your plants.

Best wishes,
Robin

Our Meeting Location:
Classroom 1 in the
Kelly Education Center
Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden
1800 Lakeside Ave., Henrico, VA 23228

The Power of Paphs

Slipper Orchids Cast a Spell Over Those Seeking the Unusual

By Ken Slump (first appeared in Orchids, June 2005
Reprinted with permission from the American Orchid Society, www.AOS.org)

It seems that species and hybrids from the genus Paphiopedilum, which are popularly called paphs, are orchids that many growers either adore or loath. Indeed, some do not regard them as real orchids at all. Despite a lack of little middle ground in their popularity, it is not uncommon for their detractors to become converts as their experience with orchids evolves.

This Asian genus forms the largest part of the orchid group commonly known as "slipper orchids," so named after the shape of their modified lip, which resembles the rounded toe of a shoe. The alliance also includes the genus Cypripedium, comprising hardy species found in the northern hemisphere, as well as the species in the genera Phragmipedium, Mexipedium, and Selenipedium, which are natives of the tropical Americas.

There has been taxonomic controversy within the genus since the discovery and description of the first plants by European botanists in the middle years of the 19th century. This is due in part to the tendency toward uniformity among locally inbred plant populations, which may or may not deserve to be recognized as a separate species from rather similar plants found elsewhere. Natural hybrids occur within the genus as well, which confuses matters further.

Most experts put the number of Paphiopedilum species somewhere between 60 and 80, yet the debate regarding classification within the genus continues to the present day. New Paphiopedilum species continue to be identified and named as various parts of Asia are more thoroughly explored.

Rather broad diversity among Paphiopedilum species has led most taxonomists to divide the genus into subgenera that are further divided into sections to include closely related species. It is not this author's intention to describe each of the sections, but a few merit mention.

Section Barbata includes the species that were combined to produce the primary hybrid Paphiopedilum Maudiae (callosum x lawrenceanum), a major contributor to complex hybrids and also the progenitor of those hybrids popularly known as "Maudiae types." Maudiae Paphiopedilums usually have striped dorsal sepals and warted petals. They are known for their ease of culture and include a range of floral variations from the albinistic green and white forms to those popular burgundy blossoms known as vinicolors.

The influential primary hybrid Paphiopedilum Leeanum (insigne x spicerianum) has its roots in Section Paphiopedilum. Paphiopedilum Leeanum is at the base of virtually all of the complex hybrids. Other popular and unique species from this section include Paphiopedilum charlesworthii, Paphiopedilum fairrieanum, and Paphiopedilum villosum.

Paph. Maudiae - Coloratum

Paph. Maudiae 'Magnificum' - Alba

Paph. Maudiae 'Maroon Star'
- Vinicolor type

Arguably the kings of the genus are the multifloral species that hail from Section Coryopedilum. These include such species as Paphiopedilum rothschildianum, Paphiopedilum stonei, and Paphiopedilum sanderianum. Well-grown species and their hybrids always command attention and continue to win top awards as orchid shows and AOS judgings. However, the plants of the species in this section tend to be large and are reputedly more difficult to cultivate and successfully flower than are those of some of their slipper orchid cousins.

Paphiopedilum Leeanum

Paphiopedilum stonei

Finally the author never misses an opportunity to promote the somewhat florally diminutive species of Section Cochlopetalum. What these sequential-blooming plants lack in flower size is nicely compensated for by their longevity of bloom. They produce their interesting flowers, one after another, on the same stalk for months. The section is closely allied and differences between species are subtle. Look for Paphiopedilum glaucophyllum or Paphiopedilum victoria-regina and you will have an orchid-flower-producing machine that is hard to beat. These are of easy culture, too.

Paphiopedilum rothschildianum

The exciting world of Paphiopedilum hybrids commenced with the flowering of Paphiopedilum Harrisianum (villosum x barbatum) at the Veitch nursery of England in 1869. This triggered a wave of hybridization that has flourished for decades. Recrossing and inbreeding multiple species eventually produced the complex hybrids popularly known as "bulldogs," which seemed to reach their zenith during the last half of the 20th century.

Paphiopedilum Harrisianum

Paphiopedilum glaucophyllum

While a number of variations and breeding milestones were reached over the years, most complex hybrid types fell within a rather tidy range of reddish bronze and/or green and/or white flowers, with or without stripes and/or spots. Perhaps that oversimplifies the accomplishments of the dedicated breeders who produced these remarkable flowers, many of which are still coveted and grown in contemporary collections. Indeed, these hybrids were so round and waxy that it seemed little more could be accomplished with most of the popular breeding lines. Even so, there is a sense of a resurgence of interest in complex hybrid Paphiopedilums these days.

Towards the end of the 20th century, with seemingly little left to achieve in complex hybrid breeding, attention turned to crossing the complex hybrids back to traditionally popular Paphiopedilum species, as well as some of the newer species that had recently come onto the scene. Such breeding resulted in a wave of novelty hybrids in which the progeny not only bear a strong resemblance to their species parent, but also share the positive attributes of their hybrid parent too. This type of breeding continues to dominate paph hybrids today.

Paphiopedilum Les Landes 'Red Galaxy' - Bulldog type

Paphiopedilum villosum

Horticulturists tend to think of Paphiopedilums as terrestrial orchids – ones that grow in the earth. In fact, many Paphiopedilums are lithophytes, which cling to rocks and traces of thin soil or organic matter that may accompany them. A few species are epiphytes. It is difficult to make generalizations regarding the culture of such a large and varied genus, but here are some.

Since they do not have pseudobulbs, most require a rather moisture-retentive potting mix, yet it must have good drainage. A favorite mix consists of six parts medium-sized coconut husk chips blended with two parts coarse perlite and one part horticultural charcoal. I formerly used bark chips instead of coconut husk chips but find that the coconut chips are more durable and moisture retentive.

It is often said that rapidly growing young plants benefit from frequent repotting. This can be particularly important if you use a growing medium that breaks down quickly, since the root system can quickly rot if it is consistently wet. Older plants with multiple growths may be separated into several plants, but keeping them together as long as possible will produce a beautiful specimen with multiple inflorescences.

As with most other orchids, Paphiopedilums generally grow best in a pot rather small for the size of the plant. Many are quite tolerant of lower light levels and make good subjects for indoor culture. Household temperatures suit them too. Most are excellent subjects to grow under artificial lights.

Paphiopedilums are subject to most typical orchid pests and diseases. Paphiopedilum growth habit may make detection somewhat difficult, so take care to look inside and underneath the fans of foliage regularly for signs of trouble. Watch for fungal or bacterial diseases on the foliage and in the crown of the plant, either of which may quickly kill it if left untreated. Such problems can often be prevented if spacing between plants is adequate and attention is paid to good air movement and avoiding low temperatures.

Paphiopedilums respond well to fertilization but are not greedy. Some growers have come to favor the use of time-released fertilizers in their pots, especially during periods of active growth.

Slipper orchids seem to arouse passions among their enthusiasts in excess of those for any other type of orchid. Maybe the intrigue for the genus is that it includes some of the easiest-to-grow orchids, yet there is plenty of challenge for the more experienced grower too. Perhaps one orchid judge put it best when she remarked, “Paphs are easy to grow, but difficult to grow well.”