

The Orchid Enthusiast

The Newsletter for the Central New York Orchid Society

Volume 9: Issue 1 Jan. 2007 CNYOS is affiliated with the American Orchid Society and the Orchid Digest

Next Meeting Jan. 14th. - Note that our first meeting will be on the second-Sunday of January rather than the usual first-Sunday meeting time.

Our first meeting of the New Year will be a presentation by Kim Boronczyk about the many kinds of potting media that are available for the well-heeled orchid grower. She will be talking about the many good and bad points of many of the media that we use to grow our orchids in or on. If there is a certain type of media or other potting supplies that you would like to buy from Kim, let her know as soon as possible.

We will also have our Beginner's Meeting at 1:30p.m. before the Regular Meeting. Judi Witkin will be holding an open-topic question-and-answer session. Got a question about anything at all? Write it down and ask Judi!

2007 CNYOS dues are now due, and should be paid to our Treasurer Carol Haskell as soon as possible. We will also likely be updating our records of our Members, their addresses, phone numbers and email addresses at this meeting. If any of your contact info has changed, then please let Carol know asap.

Also another important note is that we will be having Officer Elections at this meeting. I have not received any nominations for new officers yet, and if there are no new volunteers then it is likely that the previous officers will be voted in for another term. There are committee positions that need filling. It isn't necessary for just one person to do a whole task, it is much easier if there are a few hands to different parts. Please volunteer!

Misc. business

Club Vice-President Kim Boronczyk has orchid supplies for sale. Please contact Kim at 315-455-7587 before regular meetings to discuss what she has available and can bring to the next meeting.

The club has an orchid book library. Please contact Judi or Tom to find out what is available and to sign out a book.

The Wolles are still collecting clothing, household items, baby supplies and other food and paper stores for the Living Hope Christian Center in Syracuse. Members can bring their donations to the meeting to give to the Wolles.

Onondaga Coach Bus tours has a bus going to New York City on the Saturday of the Greater New York Orchid Show. It's April 21, 2007, and \$49.00 for a one day trip. Their web site is <<http://www.onondagacoach.com>>

www.onondagacoach.com click on One Day Trips, or New York City. Call Donna for information 633-2437.

Anyone who has ideas for Beginner's Session topics please feel free to contact Tom D. by phone at 315-687-3449

In This Issue:

Meeting times:	pg. 1
CNYOS Calendar:	pg. 1
Previous minutes	pg. 2
Misc. notes:	pg. 1
Volunteer schedules:	pg. 2
Main article:	pg. 2-4
Orchid Speak:	pg. 5
Book review:	pg. 5
Show Table	pg. 6-7
Orchid Trading Post:	pg. 7

CNYOS Calendar

Jan. 14th Potting Media Extravaganza by Kim Boronczyk and Officer Elections

Feb. 4th tba

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Please remember to bring your flowering orchids to display on our Show Table!

Minutes – CNYOS Meeting December 3, 2006

Kim Boronczyk opened the business portion of the meeting for Judi, who was absent by reminding everyone that December is the month when club dues are due and Carol Haskell is willing and able to take your money, so your membership stays current:

1. We will elect new officers for 2007 at the January meeting. Kim asked that anyone interested in running for either the office of president or vice-president, contact Charles Ufford. If no one comes forward, both Judi and Kim are willing to serve a second term. We will vote on the 2007 slate of officers at the January meeting.
2. Carol Haskell presented the Treasurer's report and reported that the club account currently contains a total of \$2,930.13. The net result of the 2006 CNYOS Show was -\$1,601.46, which is an improvement over the results of the 2005 Show. The mini-auction held at the November meeting yielded \$429.57. All the show expense bills are in.
3. Charles is looking for articles for the newsletter. The articles do not have to be culture-related. Interested members could write about their personal experiences growing certain plants or trying new techniques.
4. We need a show chair for the 2007 CNYOS show next October. Please let Kim or Judi know if you are interested. Whoever does this will get lots of support from the club.
5. The newsletter's Trading post is available both in the newsletter and on our website. If you have plants or supplies to sell or are looking for a certain variety, etc., let Charles Ufford know and he will post it. Also, Mike Candella still has plants he would like to sell.
6. Kim passed out the new membership listing for 2006.

Volunteer Schedules - Refreshment List for Winter/Spring 2007

January 14th - Barbara Weller and Judi Witkin

February 4th - Diane Bordoni, Deb Coyle and Dolores Capella

March 4th - Maxine Weibel

Please remember to bring your flowering orchids to the meeting for our show table!

The Art of Mixed Media

More than one medium can be used to successfully grow any given plant. In the greenhouses at Morrisville State College, Phalaenopsis orchids are being successfully grown and bloomed in a soil-less 'Peat-lite' mix amended with perlite (sponge rock). Certainly a mix I would not think could be successful, nor would I recommend it for non-greenhouse applications. Yet, the atmosphere of the tropical house, the student's watering practices, and of course good oversight, blend for success. Of course this goes against the popular thinking that Phalaenopsis orchids being epiphytic, can't successfully be grown in a fine peat mix. We all presume it holds too much moisture and will stay wet for too long. Well, so much for those assumptions!

We can see by this example that it is the sometimes-overlooked 'other factors' that should strongly guide our choice of a specific growing medium. This goes beyond determining whether an orchid is epiphytic, lithophytic, or terrestrial by nature.

First let's remember what those 'other factors' are. Basically, they are your cultural conditions: the quality and amount of light you can provide, your temperature ranges, humidity and air movement in your growing space. Last but not least is the type of container you intend to use. Will it be clay, plastic, net or a wood slatted basket? Each has specific properties that will combine with the chosen medium to create a particular root zone environment.

By choice, most of the orchids we grow are epiphytic and therefore should be mounted. Why? They grow this way in nature, having evolved to take maximum advantage of their environment. Growing on trees fulfills all the criteria necessary for the perfect epiphytic medium: the roots are exposed to high humidity

yet the medium has just the right moisture retention, draining perfectly so that it never stays too wet for too long, and there is constant gentle air movement. Well, that's great if you live in the tropics or can provide most of the elements on a miniature scale. Short of that, accommodations must be made. You either decide how to provide those tropical conditions or choose a different medium to combine with your conditions for a good approximation of the ideal. A look at some of the most commonly used media will be useful.

Light Weight Expanded Clay Aggregate

Some are familiar with the Prime-Agra brand name. There are similar products that go by other names. According to Ray Barkalow of FirstRays.com, Prime Agra is the best for semi-hydroponic orchid culture. Expanded clay pellets have many positive properties. They are inert, have a neutral pH, are odorless, provide excellent capillary action, good air circulation around the roots, and can be re-used. Because of the water reservoir it may not need to be watered as often and you can easily determine, if you use translucent pots, when it needs to be watered. It is advertised as successfully growing a wide range of orchids. It can also be used to provide better drainage and more aeration at the bottom of a pot when using a different primary medium.

Bark

As a potting medium for orchids, fir bark is still the most widely used either by itself or in various combinations. This is in contrast to Pine bark used in landscaping. Pine bark should not be used, as the resins present are harmful to orchids. Initially, bark has a high surface tension and so takes more effort to moisten. Hot water can be used before the potting and does a good job for the initial soaking. There are surfactants, or soaps designed for horticultural use for assisting the wetting process. New bark tends to dry quickly but after some time begins to break down leading to a condition of staying wet too long. Micro-organisms that break down bark use nitrogen. A fertilizer with a sufficient amount of nitrogen must be used to provide for the needs of the plant. You can usually get a year or two of good root conditions and then it should be replaced. The pros and cons of bark can be debated but it comes down to the plant, your conditions, watering practices and personal preference.

Diatomite

Most commonly found under the trade name 'Aussie Gold', it is sold by a number of vendors in a variety of mixes that contain varying amounts of diatomite combined with coir fiber, charcoal and perlite. Diatomite is a mineral composed of almost 90% silicon dioxide with the balance being elemental minerals. More basically, it is the fossilized remains of unicellular fresh water diatoms. It is not the same as diatomaceous earth, which has a salt-water origin and thus is unsuitable for horticultural use. It is advertised as having many excellent properties: it absorbs up to 150% of its weight, capillary action allows water transport evenly throughout the medium, sterile, pH can be accurately adjusted, assists aeration and it doesn't break down. Mixes can be customized for different orchids or specific growing needs. The type of pot and the percent diatomite used can dramatically affect your success by changing the moisture retention properties. It is interesting to note that in a recent [Orchids](#) article (Sept. 2006) on experiments using diatomite mixes, Dr. Wang concludes "...diatomite absorbs and retains significant amounts of soluble salts following repeated fertilization over a long period of time. If diatomite is to be reused, several soaks in fresh water is recommended to remove salts."

Coconut Husk

This medium comes in different grades and can be used alone or as a substitute for bark in a mix. Coconut husk lasts longer than bark and holds considerably more moisture. Because of the spongy nature when saturated, caution must be used when using it alone. It compresses and can be packed too tightly around the roots. The moisture retention issue is the top concern when using this medium.

Coir or Coconut Fiber

This material is the fibers of the coconut husk. It is used in a similar manner to sphagnum moss. For orchids that need great drainage this can be used tucked gently around the roots of the plant. I have no experience with this medium except as an amendment in a bark mix or as liner material in wood slatted baskets. In the latter application it works well to keep bark etc. from falling or being washed out by watering. It can also be added to media as a ground component like peat moss.

Sphagnum Moss

New Zealand sphagnum is considered by most to be the 'gold standard' of the mosses. It holds many times its weight in water in small cells designed for that purpose. Many feel it takes some time to get the hang of using it without creating either too wet or too airy root conditions. Repotting with moist but not soggy moss is best achieved without adding so much water to the dry moss that you are tempted to squeeze it out. When you squeeze the moss out it actually damages the structure and can't hold as much water nor does it provide the optimum openness sphagnum is known for. It is the preferred medium for getting young plants or plants that have few roots, well established. However, not all orchids like the moss environment. With regular use of fertilizer, moss usually lasts 6 to 8 months in good condition.

Osmunda Fiber

Popular before the use of bark, osmunda is the root mass from a fern. It is quite moisture retentive.

Tree Fern

Like osmunda, tree fern is the dry root of the giant tree fern. It's used predominately as an amendment in a mixed media. The other way you will see used is in slab form for mounting orchids. It provides a long lasting, moisture retentive, well-aerated substrate.

Charcoal

Charcoal comes in various grades and is most often added to media for increasing drainage. It is reputed to have the ability to absorb toxins. It will last for years. Some orchids seem to do well in charcoal as the sole medium.

Perlite

Perlite is a naturally occurring siliceous rock that when exposed to high heat, expands. It is white to grey in color, lightweight, and can provide excellent porosity and texture to a media mix. It comes in three grades. The larger pea size lasts the longest. Care should be taken when working with perlite. The dust is an irritant to the lungs, so a dust mask would be wise if you're mixing a batch of media.

You can imagine some of the many combinations that can be created using the above media. It is likely that the new 'perfect orchid media' is right around the corner. But no matter how big the hype, you will still have to see if it works for you. Go slowly repotting into a medium new to you. Repot less than 10% of your orchids. In six months to a year of growing you will see clearly how well a new medium works.

There are a lot of very experienced growers in our club who have tried a lot of different media. Ask them for their advice. Then try a few plants. Observe the progress of the plant both above and below the surface as well as how the medium itself responds to your conditions. Check the roots periodically. Take some notes for future reference and so you can share your 'findings'.

Good growing,

Tom Daily

Orchid Speak

diatoms- microscopic unicellular plants found in marine and freshwater. “The richest sources of diatom fossils are deposits of their skeletons known as diatomite, or diatomaceous earth. This mineral was formed as ancient diatoms died and settled to the bottom of lakes or ocean

fir bark- any of the different grades of bark from any of the evergreen trees in the genus *Abies*.

pine bark- any of the different grades of bark from the evergreen trees in the genus *Pinus*.

Tom Daily

Expanding Horizons: Books of Interest

Orchid Hunting In The Lost World (And Elsewhere in Venezuela) G.C.K Dunsterville and E. Dunsterville. 1988 by American Orchid Society, Inc.

“Another dramatic expedition, full of mystery and the fancy of prehistoric monsters lurking about, was to Meseta de Sarisarinama, which was reported to have massive, unexplored holes in it. Try to imagine a flat expanse of rock, 200 square miles in size, broken into deep chasms up to 1000 feet deep and 1500 feet in diameter, filled with tall forest with the promise of many species new to science. Forty species of orchids, including two new ones, rewarded Stalky and Nora for their efforts.”

As an avid reader of books that take me into the unexplored and uncharted, I recommend this book for your library. It is a compellation of 64 articles written by G.C.K. ‘Stalky’ Dunsterville and his wife Nora about their orchid hunting in the vastly unexplored areas of Venezuela. These were written for the *American Orchid Society Bulletin* from 1959 to 1986. With a sense of humor and the courage of a nineteenth century orchid collectors this book is filled with the exploits of two fascinating people dealing with ‘hunger, thirst, snakebite, primitive transportation, cloud-bursts, floods, mud, biting insects, exposure and disease’ in the search of orchids known and unknown. There are wonderful photographs, color and black and white, as well as excellent illustrations. These drawings are remarkable simply by the fact that many were made in the field under the confinement of protective netting, a small oasis from the many hungry insects. Each article was written from the perspective of a dedicated orchidist with unbridled curiosity and highly trained powers of observation giving through information without the tedium of an academic work. His writing style puts the reader in the same room, in the overstuffed leather chair in front of the fire, as Stalky describes in detail, the geography, the orchids and their habitats, insects, and other creatures encountered. The articles as a whole build a picture of a very diverse ecosystem with a sense that new discoveries are around the next bend in the river. More than anything else, it’s an authoritative book on Venezuela’s orchids presented as a detailed story truly fit for a cold Winters’ night.

Tom Daily

DECEMBER SHOW TABLE

Please note especially all names and abbreviations in boldface, and correct or complete your records, including parentage and new registrations.

Cypripedium Alliance

*Paph. W ssner Vietnam Wings** (*moquetteanum* x *vietnamense*) Ditz
Phrag. Sedenii (longifolium x *schlimii*) Coyle

Cattleya Alliance

Slc. Exotic Mini Treat (Lc. Trick or Treat x *Slc. Seagulls Mini-Cat Heaven*) Lloyd
Blc. Burana Beauty x (*Blc. Destiny* x *Slc. Hazel Boyd*) Coyle
Sc. Crystelle Smith (Beaufort x *C. Ioddigesii*) Cotter
Pot. Heavenly Jewel (Slc. Tangerine Jewel x *Blc. Meditation*) Braue
Bnts. Donald Prince (S. brevipedunculata x *B. nodosa*) Kot
Prosthechea brassavolae Capella
Slc. Dream Catcher (Bright Angel x *Sc. Beaufort*) DeTore
Slc. Mahalo Jack (C. walkeriana x *Sl. Orpetii*) Coleman

Oncidium Alliance

Ntl. barkeri Coleman
Orpha. radicans “
Onc. Twinkle (cheirophorum x *ornithorhynchum*) “
Brsdm. Nittany Gold (Br. verrucosa x *Mex. ghiesbreghtiana*) “
Onc. Sweet Sugar (Aloha Iwanaga x *varicosum*) “
Burr. Living Fire (Vuyl. Edna x *Onc. maculatum*) Coyle

Pleurothallid Alliance

Masd. weberbaueri Cotter
Masd. impostor Coleman
Rstp. cuprea Daily
Rstp. brachypus (?) “
Rstp. sanguinea “
Masd. deformis Ditz
Masd. discoidea Capella
Masd. Angel Tang (veitchiana x *tonduzii*) Bordoni
Pths. unknown Weller

Dendrobium

Den. Super Ise (Super Star x *Ise*) Coleman
Den. lindleyi Kot
Den. nobile^o Galson

Miscellaneous

Gga. galeata

Unknown, 2 plants

Lip. condylobulbon

Ddc. glumaceum

Ddc. cootesii

Bulb. careyanum

Max. cucullata

Cotter

“

Coleman

“

Capella

Ditz

Weller

*This slip apparently was lost a few months ago and just turned up. We apologize for the oversight.
°“*cooksonianum*” is a variety of *Dendrobium nobile*. What you have is a sibling cross and not a hybrid.

Iris Cohen

Orchid Trading Post

Club Member Mike Candella would like to close down his personal greenhouse for the Winter, and is thinking of selling his orchids. Anyone who has interest should contact Mike at his home in Marcy, NY or at the family business Candella's Greenhouses also in Marcy



Phragmipedium besseae var. *flavum*

The Orchid Enthusiast

The CNYOS Newsletter, *The Orchid Enthusiast*, is a publication of the Central New York Orchid Society and is distributed to the Society's members ten times per year, prior to all club meetings, events or functions.

Charles Ufford, Editor
PO Box 626
Oriskany, NY
(315) 768-7466
cunet@surfbest.net

Central New York Orchid Society

President: Judi Witkin (315) 422-0869
V. President: Kim Boronczyk (315) 455-7587
Treasurer: Carol Haskell (315) 468-0811
Secretary: Pat Cotter
Newsletter Editor: Charles Ufford

Club website: <http://www.cnyos.org>

The Central New York Orchid Society meets at St. Augustine's Church, 7333 O'Brien Rd., Baldwinsville, at 2:00^{pm} on the first Sunday of each month from September through June, with Beginner's Sessions at 1:30p.m. right before the regular meetings. Yearly dues are \$15.00 per individual, or \$17.00 per family. Dues should be paid to the CNYOS Treasurer, Carol Haskell

The Central New York Orchid Society
Your local AOS& Orchid Digest Affiliate
PO Box 626
Oriskany, NY 13424

January Issue - Meeting date, 1/14/07 1:30p.m.

**January Meeting: Kim Boronczyk - Orchid Potting Media Presentation
Beginner's Session: (at 1:30pm) Judi Witkin - Open Questions Session**