



# The Informer

Newsletter of the Greater Omaha Orchid Society

PO Box 241871 Omaha, NE 68124 greateromahaorchidsociety.org March 2012

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Submission deadline for the

**April** Informer: April 2, 2012

## Omaha Orchid Society Membership Information

### Annual Dues:

Single: \$15.00

Family: \$20.00

Annual dues are paid to the treasurer by January 1 of each year and are delinquent the day after the February meeting. Dues for new members joining after July 31st are one-half the annual rate.

Dues should be made payable to G. O. O. S. and may be mailed to the G. O. O. S. post office box: G. O. O. S., PO Box 241871, Omaha, NE 68124.

## IN THIS ISSUE

This month's meeting

pg. 1

Thank you & plant sale

pg. 1

Gladys Messman

pg. 2

Membership renewed?

pg. 2

25th annual orchid show

pg. 2

Orchid events everywhere

pg. 2

How and why of water

pg. 2

Humidity and air movement

pg. 3

Monthly Reports

pg. 5

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS MEETINGS

(NOTE: All GOOS meetings are held at Monthly Meeting at the Douglas/Sarpy Cty Extension Office, 8015 W. Center Rd., Omaha, NE unless otherwise indicated)

### March 14, 2012

7:00 PM New growers group

7:30 PM Program - Show

preparation activities

Refreshments :Ron Fechner

Greeter: TBD

### March 21, 2012

6:45 PM

Board Meeting

Papillion Library

### April 11, 2012

7:00 PM New growers group

7:30 PM Program - Annual

repotting program

Refreshments: Loris Purtzer

Greeter: TBD

## EVENTS

### March 10-11, 2012

Illowa Orchid Society Show, Wallaces Garden Center, 2605 Devils Glen Rd., Bettendorf, IA. Contact: Suzanne Dennis, 9 Chrison Ct., Colona, IL 61241; (309) 441-6038; minicatt@mchsi.com.

### March 24-25, 2012

Great Omaha Orchid Society Show, Lauritzen Gardens, 100 Bancroft St., Omaha, NE. Contact: Jim Pyrzynski, 2107 Alberta Ave., Bellevue, NE 68005; (402) 734-4112; jpyrzynski@cox.net.

### March 30-Apr 1, 2012

Fort Worth Orchid Society Show, Contact: Mary Butler, Joma.butler@sbcglobal.com

### April 25-29, 2012

Kansas Orchid Society Show & AOS Members Meeting, Hyatt Regency, Wichita, KS. Contact: Max C. Thompson, 1729 E. 11th Ave., Winfield, KS 67156, (620) 221-1856, maxt@cox.net

### April 28-29, 2012

Heart O'Texas Orchid Society Show, Zilker Botanical Gardens, 2220 Barton Springs Rd., Austin, TX. Contact: Geoffrey Frost, 1011 Strickland Dr., Austin, TX 78748-4847, (512) 413-3199, geoffreyfrost@yahoo.com

### April 28 - 29, 2012

Illinois Orchid Society Show, Chicago Botanic Gardens, 1000 Lake Cook Rd., Glencoe, IL. Contact: Jeanne Becker, 901 Sunset Court, Deerfield, IL 60015, (847) 945-8107, beckerjeanne@hotmail.com

## THIS MONTH'S MEETING: SHOW PREP

Our annual orchid show and sale is less than 2 weeks away, therefore the program for this month's meeting is show preparation. We are low on 1 gallon bags of medium potting mix but we have a couple of large sacks that need to be broken down into a couple of dozen of the one-gallon size – a somewhat messy job, so be prepared. We've made some changes to the prices of our sales items so new price tags need to be affixed to reflect the current prices. Our show judging books, the white binders that hold different sections of the Show Schedule, need to be put back into their proper order; a good task for familiarizing clerks with the various classes. And we will take some time to look over various orchids and where they belong in the schedule.

## THANK YOU! &

## PLANT SALE TIME

Thanks to all of you who helped at the recent Home and Garden Show. We interacted with a large number of people at the event, publicizing our upcoming show, discussing the growing of orchids, the activities that our society has, and selling our books, potting media, fertilizer and plants.

We have a number of plants remaining from the Home and Garden Show and we will be selling these at the meeting at bargain prices. A few may find their way to the raffle table. So come to the meeting prepared to take a plant or more home with you; they need a good home.

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### GLADYS MESSMAN

Our deepest sympathies are with Mel Bates on the loss of his dear friend Gladys Messman. Gladys passed away on February 8 at the age of 85. She frequently accompanied Mel to orchid society meetings and other events. A donation was made to the American Orchid Society in her memory.

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### MEMBERSHIP RENEWED??

If you renewed your membership, a BIG THANK YOU! If you forgot, you should have received a "FINAL NOTICE" membership application/renewal form with your newsletter and we would like for you to consider renewing your membership. Please give it a thought.

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### IT'S SHOW TIME

The show is only about 2 weeks away. Vendors for the show include: Bird's Botanicals, Orchid Inn, Natt's Orchids, Iowa Orchids, Paradigm Gardens, Fantasy Orchids, Michel Orchid Nursery, Prairie Orchids, and The Plant House. Check the Society website for links to these vendors and how to contact them. In some cases you may be able to pre-order plants for the show.

The signup sheets for the show will be circulated one more time at the March meeting. Look them over

and see where you can help. We have plenty of places where you can show what you can do: show setup Friday morning, setup Friday evening, show clerking early Saturday morning, information table staffing during the show (10 AM- 4 PM both days) and show cleanup. Also look over the hospitality signup list and see what you may be able to donate to the cause.

Of course an orchid show means orchid displays, and the Society will have a display at the show BUT we need plants for the display – your plants. Your orchids should be clean (pest and disease free – no one wants their plant to catch a pest from someone else's), labeled as to who the owner (a piece of masking tape on the side of the pot with your name on it might be a good spot), and a label as to the name of the plant would be helpful for entering the plant for judging. Please come back to the Gardens when the show closes to pick up your plant.

Thanks to all who already have volunteered, we appreciate your support and efforts. We will also have \$1 off coupons cards for entrance to the Gardens on the show days at our March meeting. So if you have someone you know who is interested in coming to the show and is not a Lauritzen Gardens member, take a couple to pass out to your friends.

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### ORCHID EVENTS ARE EVERYWHERE!

The spring meeting of the Mid-America Orchid Congress (MAOC) will be held April 13 – 15, 2012, in conjunction with the Central Indiana Orchid Society

Spring Orchid Show. The show is at Garfield Park in Indianapolis, IN and the meeting is at the Embassy Suites Hotel. Speakers for the show include Greg Allikas, noted orchid photographer, and Dr. Melissa McCormack. Greg Allikas will give talks titled "Orchid Photography for the Digital Age" and "The 25 Best Orchids I have seen in the Past 3 Years." Dr. McCormack talk is titled "A focus for orchid conservation and restoration." More information and registration forms can be found at <http://midamericanorchids.org/meetings/>

The Kansas Orchid Society will host the spring American Orchid Society Members' Meeting as well as the spring meeting of the Southwest Regional Orchid Growers Group (a regional orchid organization similar to MAOC) April 25 – 29 in Wichita, KS. There will also be meetings of the International Phalaenopsis Alliance, Slipper Orchid Alliance, and the Pleurothallid Alliance. They will have 7 speakers and eleven vendors. More information and registration information can be found here: <http://www.kansasorchidsociety.com/OrchidShows/Showindex.html>

The Heart O' Texas Orchid Society will hold its 41st Annual Orchid Show and Sale, "Orchid Heaven" on April 28, 29 at the Zilker Botanical Gardens Center in Austin, TX. There will be 8 vendors and hundreds of blooming orchids for sale. Hours are 10 AM to 5 PM on Saturday and 10 AM to 4 PM on Sunday. The Botanical Gardens is located at 2220 Barton Springs Road in Austin, TX. Admission is free. More information can be found here: <http://www.hotos.org/>

The Illinois Orchid Society presents "Celebrate Orchids," its 60th anniversary celebration on April 28, 29 at the Chicago Botanic Gardens in the Nichols Hall and Krehbiel Gallery. The Gardens is located at 1000 Lake Cook Rd. in Glencoe, IL. They will have 16 vendors. More information can be found here: <http://www.iosoc.com/show/spring.shtml>

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## AMERICAN ORCHID SOCIETY ORCHID CULTURE INFORMATION

### The How and Why of Water

More orchids are killed by incorrect watering than by any other reason. There are two separate components to proper watering; when and how. The vast majority of orchids grown by hobby growers are epiphytes, growing on trees above the ground where the light is more plentiful. These plants are adapted to having their roots exposed to light and air so in addition to water, orchid roots need air. The central core of an epiphytic orchid root is covered with a spongy material called velamen designed to store water. When this spongy material remains wet too long, the central core suffocates and begins to rot. Once the roots begin to rot, the plant can no longer take up water properly and a whole host of problems begin. At worst, root rot will spread upward into the rhizome and cause the death of the plant. In other cases, the loss of roots

prevents the plant from absorbing sufficient water to maintain the plant in good condition and the leaves will take on a wrinkled appearance. Unfortunately, the symptoms of over-watering and under-watering are superficially similar and the tendency is to increase watering rather than inspect the roots. Over-watered roots will be brown and mushy while those on under-watered plants will be white or gray and obviously dry. Let's look first at when to water.

### **When do I water?**

Orchids should be watered just as they dry out. This rule applies to all orchids with slight variations depending on whether your plant has pseudobulbs (thickened stems that are designed to store water) or not. Orchids such as cattleyas and oncidiums should be allowed to just dry completely between waterings while orchids such as phalaenopsis and vandas that have no water storage organs should be watered just before dryness occurs. For vandas, this may mean daily watering during the warm summer months. Vandas and ascocendas that are properly watered will have actively growing root tips at all times. If the root tips on your plants dry up and seal over, you are not watering often enough.

There's unfortunately no magic formula; i.e., water a plant in a 6" pot every 7 days and you'll be trouble free. This is because your growing area is different from anyone else's. Humidity, air movement, potting medium (type and age) and light levels all play a role. There are several ways to determine when a potted orchid is almost dry: 1) the surface of the potting mix will appear dry; 2) dry pots will feel lighter when lifted; 3) clay pots feel dry; 4) a wooden stake or skewer inserted into the potting mix will come out almost dry. If in doubt, a finger inserted into the potting mix is perhaps the best tool to determine the moisture content of the potting mix. It will cause no harm to the plant. And remember, fresh potting mix will always dry out faster than the old medium.

### **How do I water?**

How to water is just as important to proper culture as when to water. When orchids are watered, they should be watered copiously. Water should be provided until it runs freely from the drainage holes. This serves several functions. First, thorough, copious watering is necessary to soak the potting medium. In addition, thorough watering helps to flush away the salts that naturally accumulate in the potting medium from the dissolved salts in our water supplies and the fertilizers applied for good growth. Also, this is your opportunity to examine how the potting mix behaves. If you cannot pour water rapidly through the pot, the potting mix is too dense and you run the risk of starving the roots for air. If you see finely divided material that looks like coffee grounds in the water coming from the drainage holes, your potting mix is breaking down and it's time to repot into fresh medium. At a minimum, try to thoroughly water your plants at least once a month.

Finally a couple of notes about mounted plants and those like vandas that are grown in baskets without additional potting medium. First, avoid dunking these plants in buckets of water. This practice very easily spreads diseases. If one plant has a disease, all those dunked in the same bucket of water will have been exposed as well. Also, two short waterings a few minutes apart are much more effective than one long watering. Once water runs off the plant, the roots will have absorbed essentially all they can at that time and excess water simply runs off to the ground. The proper technique is to water your plants and then a few minutes later water them again, always beginning with the first plant you watered. This allows time for the roots of the last plant watered to finish absorbing water before you wet them again. Roots that are completely saturated will be a solid color while those that are not will appear mottled.

*Ron McHatton, AOS Director of Education*

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## **The Importance of Humidity and Air Movement in Successful Orchid Culture**

The simple secret to good orchid growing is achieving a balance between the six or so factors; light levels, temperature, humidity and air movement, watering, potting and potting media, and nutrient supply, as they relate to your plants. This isn't really difficult, but it does require knowledge, understanding and careful observation. Humidity and air movement are best handled together because they are intimately linked in both positive and negative ways. First let's look at each factor individually and then we'll take a look at their relationship to one another.

### **Humidity**

Virtually all orchids do best when humidity ranges from 40% to 70%. Even those that are adapted to growing under rather desert like conditions such as *Zelenkoa* (*Oncidium*) *onusta* are exposed to periods when the humidity is in this range. In this particular example, the species flourishes in coastal deserts where breezes from the Pacific bring nightly dews and resultant relatively high humidity even though it may not rain for long periods.

Investing in an inexpensive humidity gauge is a necessity for all but the smallest collection if you want to grow orchids well. In virtually all parts of the United States outside of Hawaii and Puerto Rico, at some part of the year, it will be necessary to add supplemental humidity to the growing area. In some parts of the country such as the South

and Southeast, humidity during the summer months will be adequate to even excessive while winter humidity levels may be too low, especially following strong cold fronts. In the Pacific Northwest, the situation may well be reversed with humid, cool winters and relatively low humidity during the warmer summer months. If you grow your plants in areas where supplemental heating is a requirement such heat sources dry out the air making humidity measurements critical. Having a simple humidity gauge takes the guesswork out of the growing area. Also keep in mind that humidity is usually highest at night and lowest during the afternoon peak of sunlight and warmth.

There are a number of ways to increase humidity in your growing area. If you only have a couple of plants, addition of some ferns or other houseplants to your growing area may be sufficient. These plants do a reasonable job of adding humidity to the air around them. For small collections grown under lights or windowsills, humidity trays may be sufficient. These trays are nothing more than a water-holding tray filled with small gravel (aquarium gravel works well). The gravel-filled trays are filled with water to a level just below the surface. To prevent plants sitting on constantly wet gravel the plants are placed on small saucers or pieces of plastic or metal grid placed on top of the trays. The next step up in the humidity game would be an ultrasonic humidifier or one of those fog-generating ultrasonic devices you see sold for terrariums. If you are fortunate enough to have a greenhouse or grow your plants outside, you might want to invest in a set of misting nozzles connected to a timer or humidstat but just simply wetting down the growing space during the mid to late afternoon may be sufficient.

### **Air Movement**

Orchids like air movement. Indoors, an overhead paddle fan set on the slowest speed or a small oscillating fan set to face AWAY from your plants may provide adequate air movement. Air movement at night is just as important as air movement during the daytime so fans should run continuously. One of the mistakes that new growers make, especially those with new greenhouses, is to put their fans on a timer and shut them off at night! Don't forget that what you are trying to simulate is a buoyant atmosphere and close, humid nights are anything but buoyant. If you don't believe that, try walking on the beach in August in Miami without a breeze.

### **What is adequate air movement?**

The answer depends on humidity to a certain extent (see below), however in general enough to cause GENTLE movement of thin foliage is about right. A hurricane is a hurricane - not air movement. If the leaves of your cattleyas are moving you might have too much air movement depending on humidity levels.

### **How are the two factors related?**

Simply put, the higher your humidity, the higher can and should be your air movement. Air movement is beneficial to your orchids but, under certain circumstances it can be detrimental as well. If you have adequate humidity, air circulation helps to carry stale air away from your plants and replace it with fresh air. This is especially important on hot humid nights. High humidity coupled with minimal air movement is a terrific recipe for the growth of fungus or physiological problems created by the buildup of moisture within the leaf tissues.

Moving air keeps leaf temperature down. Some orchids close the pores that allow transpiration of air and water from their leaves during the day. The leaves of these plants can rapidly become overheated and damaged without adequate air movement to cool them. Air movement avoids the stratification of cool moist air below the growing area and warm dry air above, where the plants are and "dead spots" are minimized and, equally important, damp stagnant areas - breeding place for disease - are eliminated.

However, where natural humidity is low rapid air movement can be destructive by draining away humidity in the growing area, drying out the plants and retarding growth. Under these situations the roots of the plants simply cannot take up enough moisture to balance that lost through the foliage resulting in shriveling of the leaves and growths and, in the worst cases death of the plant.

When balance of humidity and air movement is achieved, coupled with adequate water at the roots, your orchid plants will thrive and their physical appearance will clearly be healthy. That look is hard to explain but it's one of those things that once you've seen it you will recognize it. Many orchids have growth cycles that involve the formation of pseudobulbs that are full and smooth in their early stages followed by the formation of features like angular edges or furrows at maturity but outright wrinkling isn't normal. Even the pseudobulbs of *Dendrobium sulcatum* that are curious, flattened canes that look like they've been pressed are still smooth and firm when these factors are balanced. Many orchids have thick, fleshy leaves but their surfaces should be smooth and their texture should be firm. Leaves that appear to be wrinkled or crumpled aren't normal. Lastly, the roots of plants grown in an environment with balanced humidity and air movement will be plump and their tips will remain green and active throughout the growing season.

## MONTHLY REPORTS

Greater Omaha Orchid Society General Meeting  
January 11, 2012

The meeting was called to order at the Douglas/Sarpy County Extension Office at 7:30 pm.

President Roberta Ginavan welcomed visitors and members to the meeting.

The minutes of the January meeting were approved.

Treasurer's Report. Treasurer Sandy Rome stated there was income in the last month from membership renewals, interest on Certificates of Deposit, and vendor fees for the upcoming show.

Home & Garden Show. Jim passed out free passes to the show, good only for opening night. The schedule of workers was finalized during the January meeting.

Jim Pyrzynski circulated signup sheets for the annual orchid show March 24 – 25.

Show Hospitality. Jacque Lewzader discussed the needs for the show hospitality room and circulated a signup sheet for monetary or food donations.

Orchid Wear. Jacque discussed the purchase of T-shirts and sweatshirts with the GOOS logo. Julie Westman suggested that there might be interest in clothing showing a large or multiple orchids. Jacque replied that the purpose of the clothing was more for being able to identify members at an event such as the show. In the past we have not used the logo outside of the organization but that other types of orchid wear will be explored later. The price of the item will be rounded up to the nearest 5 dollar (or 10) amount.

IRS Application. Roberta Ginavan advised that there a few remaining items to be completed for submission of the non-profit application to the IRS.

Council of Garden Clubs. Roberta discussed a bus trip to southern Iowa by the Council on June 30. More information can be found on the Council's website: <http://www.omahagardenclubs.com/52201.html>

Program. Joe Lankton discussed the Show Schedule which is used for entering and ribbon judging of plants entered in the show. He recommended that clipboards and felt-tip pens need to be provided.

Refreshments were provided by Roberta Ginavan

Raffle plants were provided by Dave Taylor, Norm Larson and Jim Pyrzynski.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jim Pyrzynski, Secretary

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Greater Omaha Orchid Society Board Meeting  
February 22, 2012

The Greater Omaha Orchid Society Board met at the Papillion Public Library at 6:45 PM. In attendance were: Roberta Ginavan, Sandy Rome, Jacque Lewzader, Linda Schroeder, Ron Fechner, and Jim Pyrzynski.

Home & Garden Show. Jim discussed the Home and Garden Show. Many plants did not sell. Although the plants initially looked good upon arrival, it become apparent that at least some had suffered cold damage in shipment. It was relatively mild here when the plants arrived but they could have been improperly stored somewhere along the way. But that was probably not the reason for the lack of sales. Most people expressed little interest. Nice looking Phalaenopsis are available at Bakers, etc. for \$10 – 20; the Phals that were shipped showed some wear from shipment beyond any cold damage. Another factor may have been that the Dendrobiums were not what interests buyers. And

most of the Cattleyas lost their buds from cold damage. The plants will be sold at the March meeting at essentially cost and some may end up on the raffle table.

A different strategy needs to be tried for next year. Buying Phals from Bakers, etc. when the price is right might be one possibility (the price went up to \$20 (with a fancier pot) just prior to the H & G show (and Valentines Day). Another might be to raise some plants over a bit longer period time of a different type. In any case, less plants should be purchased and try to make sure they are attractive to potential buyers. Parking passes were also a significant cost (\$138); reducing the number of passes by having people volunteer for somewhat longer shifts might help.

Another suggestion to draw interest was to have some activity at the booth that might attract more visitors, repotting demo, care demo, etc. The business cards were well received.

Annual Orchid Show. Jim advised that another Lincoln growers group had submitted a show application. He was awaiting show/vendor applications from Fantasy Orchids and possibly Michel Orchid Nursery. A number of items are yet to be accomplished (judges luncheon, plaque and other awards ordering, rosette order, etc.)

March Program. The March program is dedicated to show preparation. Jim will bring a couple bags of medium potting mix for rebagging into gallon bags. Prices on books and fertilizer need to be changed to reflect the amount included for sales tax. The judging books need to be put back into order. And Jim will have members look at the plants brought in for show and tell and discuss their classification according to the show schedule, etc. as a “real world” test of the program given by Joe Lankton last month and the articles in recent newsletters.

Papillion Library Facilities. There was another detailed discussion about using the library for meetings. On the second Wednesday of the month (the normal night for GOOS meetings), the Red Cross has the room prior to our meeting time. So if they are slow in vacating the room we will have to wait. The new growers group could meet in the small room across the hall but it is limited to about 8 persons. The possibility of using a different night was raised. The fourth Wednesday would conflict with LOS meetings. And changing to that day of the month would eliminate our relationship with OSGKC and St. Louis societies and with the Utah and Denver Societies for speakers, although there may be other societies that we could work with.

The Extension Office pros and cons were discussed. One problem was the noise from the cleaning crew. But they have changed their policy on coffee and they were helpful in allowing us to store our plants over night for the H & G show.

The Papillion library advantages were cost (none). Space might also present a problem but all of the facilities are there (projector, screen, sink, etc.). We must however end the meeting precisely at 8:45 PM. Jim suggested that the board attend a meeting of the Omaha Cactus and Succulent Society (held the first Sunday of the month) to see if the room works or not. A suggestion was made to have a “trial” meeting, using the library for a meeting that did not include a speaker and not the next two (March and April) meetings. The May meeting was considered a likely candidate. Comments would be solicited after the meeting.

Ways and Means. Jacque summarized the order for the sweatshirts and they should be ready for the March meeting.

Tax matters. Some organizations have a “Conflict of Interest” clause for their officers/members. A sample statement was reviewed and there was consensus that we probably should have one since there could be situations where something could arise. Roberta is trying to tie up the loose ends. An updated inventory of sales items is needed and she is looking for additional historical items of interest.

Educational Outreach. Sandy discussed the possibility of holding mini-seminars at Whole Foods. They have small meeting facility; it needs to be booked 2 months in advance.

Gladys Messman (the lady friend of Mel Bates) passed away February 8. She was a member with Mel. A donation will be made to AOS in her memory.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jim Pyrzynski, Secretary