



January 2016 Newsletter



Greetings!

Thanks for taking the time to check out our newsletter!

Enjoy!

Message From the President

Happy New Year to everyone. Thanks to everyone who participated in our holiday Christmas party. We had a great turnout. The food was great.

Our January meeting will focus on orchid growing in the backyards of our three club members: Dan de la Torre, Pam Hyatti, and myself. Don't miss this event. We will shed light on our own tips for growing, fertilizing, and watering.

This meeting will be the last chance to sign up for our **Tamiami Orchid Festival bus trip**. Members are \$25/ non-members \$30. Please pay at this meeting if you haven't already. The Naples club members will join us. This is a great trip. The festival boasts over 60 growers. The bus will depart from the parking lot north of the Edison Mall. There is a new Tile and Flooring store on this lot. We will park in front of the empty store front next door.



The bus will depart Saturday, **January 23rd at 8 am sharp**. We will briefly stop at exit 101 to pick up our Naples Club members. We should arrive at the Tamiami Fair grounds roughly at 10:30am. We will depart the festival at 3pm, arriving home at 5pm. Bring your own food and drink. Please be courteous to the bus company and clean up and dispose of all food and trash. The bus company is tolerant of food and drink on the bus **ONLY** if we clean up. Otherwise, our future trips will prohibit food and drink.

The bus has ample storage under the bus for purchases. Try to bring boxes or the like to keep your plants from bumping around. Some of the more delicate plants can be transported inside the bus. I bring a pull cart to collect my purchases. In this way I am not carrying plants in my arms while shopping. It's a great day and a good way to purchase plants not available in our area.

I want to thank those of you who volunteered to serve on the board. We are still short of a secretary. This is a low pressure job. The Club can use your input.



January and February are the busiest months for orchid shows. Jan 15-17 is the Fort Lauderdale Orchid Society show "An Orchid Masquerade". This show is held in the War Memorial Auditorium, 800 NE 8th St. Ft. Lauderdale.

Feb 6-7 is the Venice Area Orchid Society Annual Show and sale. This show is held at the Venice Community Center, 326 S. Nokomis Ave. Venice Fl . This is a great show to attend. It is less than an hour away.

Feb 12-14 is the Greater Orlando Orchid Society Annual show and sale. This show is held at the Orlando Garden club, 710 East Rollins St. Orlando, Fl.

Feb 26-28 is the Naples Orchid Society 2016 Orchid show. The show will be at the Naples Botanical Garden, 4820 Bayshore Drive , Naples, FL

Happy growing

Barb Murza

Renew your membership to the Southwest Florida Orchid Society !

New

Renewal

Date:

Single (\$25.00)

Household (\$35.00)

Name:

Street Address:

City: _____ State _____ Zip

Phone: _____ Alternate Phone

E-mail _____

Root Growth

The growth of plants is directly tied to a root system that delivers enough water and nutrients to accommodate the plants needs.

While your orchids may not consciously decide to grow additional roots because they need more water, the same effect occurs through plant hormones. What this means to the orchid grower is that the degree to which your orchids allocate energy for root or leaf growth depends on what they have in least supply relative to how much they require.



This is actually an old concept developed by a German soil scientist, called "Liebig's Law". If an orchid is being grown and has less water available than it needs, it will grow additional roots. Conversely, if a plant has an adequate water supply in the presence of lots of light and nutrients more leaves will be added by the plant.

In "the wild", the proportion of roots to shoots reflects what is limiting plant growth. More roots than shoots suggests water or nutrient limitations. Some desert plants have a 20 to 1 ratio of roots to shoots, while under almost ideal conditions in rainforests; this ratio can be almost 1 to 1. What is the ratio of roots to shoots on your orchids?

Most cultivated orchids are epiphytes, that is, they grow attached to trees or rocks and do not have access to soils where water and nutrients are stored in nature. Epiphytes in general are especially adapted to resisting water and nutrient loss and holding on to what they have, but still reflect a root to shoot ratio more than 1. One additional trick orchids use is to grow slowly to lessen their need for nutrients and water.

Cultivating epiphytic orchids requires us to be sensitive to the balance each plant maintains. Only when that balance is maintained will the plant favor us with exceptional blooms.

The orchids in my lanai came from many different growers that grow in all kinds of media, so there has been plenty of opportunity to observe both the quantity and quality of roots and the approximate root to shoot ratio. Phals have been especially noteworthy as a means of comparing roots because they are among the fastest growing cultivated orchids.

One commercial grower was noted for beautifully large, well-flowered phals grown in Promix. However, his phals had few roots when

repotted and had a root to shoot ratio below 1 to 1. Obviously, he had mastered the "art" of maximizing nutrients and water availability. His plants did not require additional roots to obtain either water or nutrients, and so spent their available energy on growing more leaves and flowering. Most amazing was that this was done in a dense medium without suffocating the roots. Most hobbyists have difficulty obtaining this kind of growth without killing roots.

Hydroponic-growers accomplish the same thing, i.e. a low root to shoot ratio, by constantly bathing their plants in water and nutrients in an oxygen rich environment. Remember that roots need oxygen to grow. Phal growers using sphagnum moss also obtain rapid growth and also do so by growing fewer roots. However, their roots are very thick and fleshy because phal roots grown in a constant supply of moisture take on a different form. If repotted in a more open mix, these roots will die.

Grow phals mounted, in lava rock or other coarse medium, and there will be more roots than shoots, reminiscent of their natural state. These roots will be hard and flattened for life attached to a tree. Repotting a phal that is adapted for such conditions will lead to the loss of most roots during and immediately after repotting. The result is usually fewer and smaller flowers the following year. The more growing time between repotting and flowering, the better the flowers will be. This is the reason most commercial growers repot after their plants have flowered. Growers that consistently get AOS awards have mastered Liebig's Law.

Winter Orchid Culture

Fall is a time when some kinds of orchids need very different care from what they required in the summer. In some cases, these differences are very great, while in others, the cultural changes required are more subtle.

Standard Phalaenopsis, those with large flowers and no

fragrance, require a cool down period of 7-10 days to initiate flowering. How cold should they get? Most experienced hobbyists let temperatures get into the low 60s or even upper 50s, which generally works well. This process is even more effective if day length is getting shorter and plants are allowed to get a little



drier than usual. It is also a good idea to only let phals get cooler when there is some assurance that day temperatures will warm up at least 10-15 deg F. Many commercial growers accomplish spike initiation simply by providing this day to night temperature differential and do not worry about how cool the night temperature. Many indoor growers of phals find that their plants do not initiate spikes until much later in the year because they do not let their home get as cool or experience this temperature range. Putting phals in an unheated porch can get them to spike.

Once the first spikes appear, it is important to maintain a night temperature of at least 65 deg F to limit disease. This becomes more critical when those gloomy days appear in winter. It is also important to increase fertilizer, especially nitrogen to growing spikes and buds. Conventional wisdom used to dictate a fertilizer low in nitrogen and high in phosphorus until buds began to form and then switch to high nitrogen fertilizer to get the most and largest blooms. Recent studies point to just using nitrogen-rich fertilizers throughout the process. While commercial or exhibition growers practice this, the hobbyist is better advised to use their normal fertilizer regimen if their phals are growing well.

Catasetums and related genera are in the process of becoming dormant. Withhold water and fertilizer as their leaves begin to yellow. A light misting is OK, but let the plant and medium become much drier than when the plant is actively growing. Any orchid that

loses its leaves needs to be treated similarly. Many semi-terrestrial orchids, e.g. *Eulophia* species, need similar treatment. Too much water at this time of year will cause the plant to lose its roots to rot and the entire plant could follow. The ideal situation is to set orchids with this requirement in a different growing area where water can be carefully controlled until growth begins in late winter or early spring.

Many members of the **Cattleya Alliance** will also benefit from drying more thoroughly. Bifoliate cattleyas and cattleya species are generally grown drier in winter, although there is much variation among them. Some species reputed to be hard to grow, e.g. *C warscewiczii* and *C dowiana*, need to be kept very dry from about October through February or they will not produce good flowers and might even die. Modern hybrids have had the tendency to "die if they do not dry" "bred out", but they still grow better if they are kept drier in winter. The exceptions to the rule are those small stature mini-catts that have a good dose of *Sophronis coccinea*. They usually are generally identified by their bright red, yellow or orange flowers. These need a constant temperature, above 60 F, regular water supply, and may not experience any dormancy.

Cymbidiums require cool weather to initiate flower spikes too, but they require far cooler temperatures and lots of light. Place them outside as temperature drop and keep them there until there is the forecast for a hard freeze or hard frost. They will tolerate light frosts.

Vandas are the last group that needs to be singled out. They like it hot and bright all year long, although they are perfectly capable of surviving nights in the mid 50s on occasion. They may, however, drop flowers or buds if the cold is prolonged. The exceptions are those members that have blue flowers. The parent contributing blue color to flowers comes from higher elevations and so, tolerates or even prefers cool nights.



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OFFICERS 2016

PRESIDENT Barb Murza

VICE-PRESIDENT Gary Murza

TREASURER Michelle Schooley

RECORDING SECRETARY open

CORRESPONDING SECRETARY
Lia Andrews

WEBMASTER Pam Hyyti

NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, January 12th

Board meeting @ 6pm
Culture Class @ 7pm Meeting
@ 7:30pm

Bring a friend to come
enjoy our club.

Visit our website at:
www.SWFOS.org

**TRUSTEES Jan Colbet, John Hampton, Steve
Bessellieu, Carol Worrell**