

The BackBulb

C A R M E L O R C H I D S O C I E T Y

March 2011



March Speaker: Bruce Davidson

Growing Orchids, Indoors and Out.

Bruce has been growing plants ever since he could walk. His grandparents owned a successful fertilizer and insecticide business and were responsible for instilling an appreciation for gardening which started with annuals and later turned into a passion for orchids. Bruce has been heavily involved the Santa Clara Valley Orchid Society, and has spent time studying in the AOS Orchid judging program. Bruce's specialty is non-commercial orchid culture with an emphasis on species that will grow under relatively extreme conditions outdoors. He is currently working on non-traditional potting methods.

His favorite orchids include *Laelia anceps*, *Laelia purpurata*, *Cattleya intermedia*, *Dendrobium cuthbertsonii*, *Dendrobium kingianum*, *Masdevallia coccinea*, *Masdevallia veitchiana* and *Psychopsis*. Which, with 1500 of their friends and relatives, he grows on windowsills, under lights, on balconies, sheltered and fully exposed outdoor locations (what, no greenhouse?).

Bruce's talk will cover:

- ✿ Knowing your growing area.
- ✿ Selecting orchids for specific growing conditions.
- ✿ Prepping orchids to grow in our varied conditions: potting, basket, mount.
- ✿ Providing proper nutrition and resources for the orchid based on it's growth stage.
- ✿ Conditioning orchids for outdoor growing in temperate climates.
- ✿ Some species for mild frost outdoor exposure.

The March meeting is on **Monday March 7th, 7PM** at the Community Church of Monterey Peninsula. 4590 Carmel Valley Rd.

Note: Due to a change in plans, Carol will not be collecting plants for the Alzheimer's Association luncheon at the meeting.

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Upcoming Events

March

3/3-6 Pacific Orchid Exposition, San Francisco CA.

3/7 Monday COS Meeting, Speaker: Bruce Davidson

3/11-13 Santa Barbara International Orchid Show, Santa Barbara.

3/19 Potting Party! 11AM at Carol's house.

3/21 COS board meeting, Carol's house, 7PM

3/26-27 Napa Valley Orchid Show, Napa Senior Activity Center

April

4/4 Monday COS Meeting, Speaker Paul Gripp.

May

5/7-8 Carmel Valley Garden Show, This is it, it's show time!

5/? After Show Party, Time and place TBD.



An
Ornithocephalus
from the Santa
Cruz show.

COS On the Web

As many of you know The COS has a website:

carmelorchidsociety.org take a look, all the BackBulbs from the past 6 years are there. Now it also has a [FaceBook page](#). So check out Joanie and the gang over at facebook.

Mixing It Up

Maybe you have noticed that a full-fledged orchid addiction tends to be a rather geeky obsession. In addition to obtaining a bunch of interesting plants, an addict will acquire an obsessive interest in: taxonomy, hybridization, genetics, dissolved solids, pH, fertilizer formulations, and the perfect potting mix. Only the reclassification of the plants of the Cattleya alliance stimulates more heated discussions than the relative merits of various potting mixes.

The devotees of bark, coconut husk, sphagnum, etc. all can argue passionately about their personal favorite. But I just can't make up my mind. At various times I have succumbed to the charms of: bark, coconut husk, pumice, sphagnum, diatomite, expanded clay pellets, treefern, rockwool... At least I have resisted the urge to repot the entire collection in my latest discovery. Instead I obtain a bag here and there and then combine them as my mood dictates. I went through a pumice phase where I tried pumice in clay pots, plastic pots, with treefern, coconut, and bark. Now, since I bought a bag of the New Zealand Moterey Pine bark I will probably combine it everything else I have. I can see bark-pumice, bark-green moss, bark-charcoal, bark-?, you get the idea. This has left my eclectic collection of orchids residing in an equally eclectic array of pots and

baskets filled with sphagnum moss, green moss, bark mixes, coconut mixes, inorganic mixes, corks, rocks and a little coconut fiber. It's either chaos, or a big diverse family. Over 30 different combinations of pots and potting mixes with sphagnum moss in terracotta pots a clear favorite with coconut mixes right behind. Not every combination works, I have made my share of mistakes, leading to a number of fatalities. Maybe I should be more methodical and run experiments with new mixes, or maybe I will just keep whipping up mixes with whatever is on hand. I like the adventure of trying something new and different.

If you want to try something new and different in a pot, bring a couple of plants to the COS potting party March 19th at Carol's house and we will see what we can whip up. We will also see what we can do with a few of Carol's giant Cattleyas, which are in dire need of repotting.

John

John's Epidendrum fimbriatum, a growing, blooming fool.



Potting Party!

Re-potting your orchids can be an adventure, a chore, mystifying, or terrifying. We would like to invite everyone who finds to mystifying or terrifying to come and learn from some of our more experienced growers. For those who find it a chore, well chores are easier with good friends and a glass of wine. Even if you don't have any plants to repot, come and help Carol repot some of hers. This will probably be a great time to snag some new plants, as people are dividing their large plants.

When: Saturday March 19th, 11-4

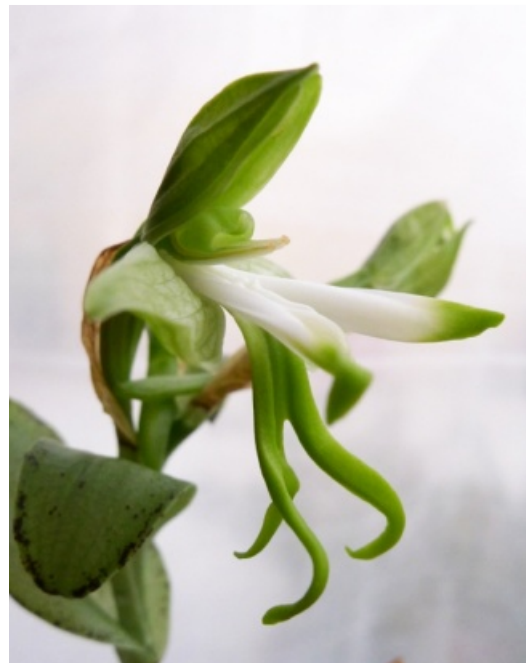
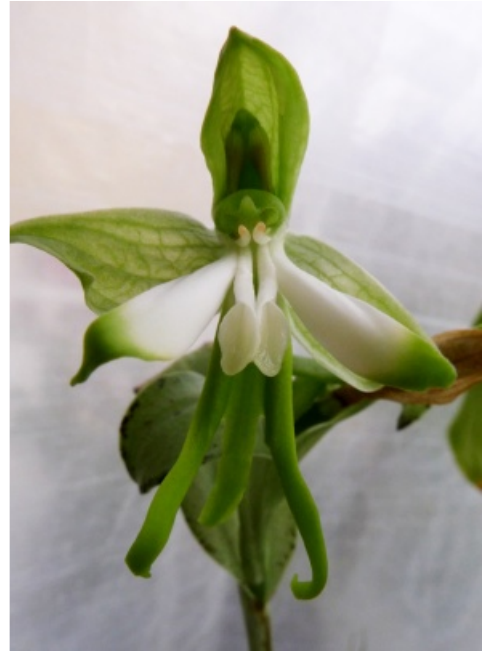
What to Bring:

- ✿ Plants to repot and/or divide, be reasonable, 3-5 max, depending on size. Please no giant Cymbidiums.
- ✿ Some potting mix, bring what you want your plants to go in, there may or may not be extra mix to go around.
- ✿ Pots, if you are potting up or dividing.
- ✿ Something to drink, wine, soda, tea, whatever quenches your thirst.
- ✿ Any extra potting supplies you want to donate, sell or trade.

Where: Carol's house.

Directions: Traveling out Carmel Valley Road, turn Left on Loma Del Rey, just past the Chateau Julien Winery, make an immediate right on an unnamed road, Carols house is the first on the right.

Food: Carol will provide lunch, bring drinks!



John's *Bonatea speciosa* "Green Egret". A terrestrial species from South Africa which is potted in a sand, peat terrestrial mix.

Silent Auction at the Garden Show

We are looking forward to having a variety of interesting items for the COS silent auction at the Garden Show in May. Several people have already given items, and we welcome more donations and ideas. Perhaps you think you don't have anything to share, but here are some suggestions.

- ✿ You could donate items from your house that you no longer use (or never did use) that are in good condition - unique vases, gift-ware, candles, etc.
- ✿ If you are the artsy/craftsy type, perhaps you could make something. I plan to donate a couple knit scarves made from my knitting stash.
- ✿ If you would like to donate something with a flower or garden theme, like decorative pots, gloves, tools, garden journal, garden books, etc., that would be terrific.
- ✿ If you have baskets that are collecting dust, use them for a

collection of small items, or bring them so we can make a basket collection item.

- ✿ We are not actively soliciting donations from businesses, but if you own a business or know someone who would like to donate an item, services or gift certificate, we would be delighted to have them for the silent auction.
- ✿ If you have time to help before and during the show, we could use your help. We plan to prepare items Thursday and Friday, May 5 & 6. Then we will need at least one person at the auction table during the show on Saturday and Sunday.

If you have small items for the auction, you may bring them to the April COS meeting and I will hold them. If you can bring them to Hidden Valley on May 5 or 6, that would be great. If you have an item to donate and cannot get it to us either of these times, let me know and we will try to make arrangements.

Janette Ford, Silent Auction Chair

Start Collecting Boxes

We will need lots of boxes and bags for the Plant Hotel at our Garden Show in May. If you do not need them for something else, please save your used grocery etc. bags and boxes and bring them to our February, March an April meetings. I'll collect them at the meetings and store them until May.

Kathie

Orchid Talk

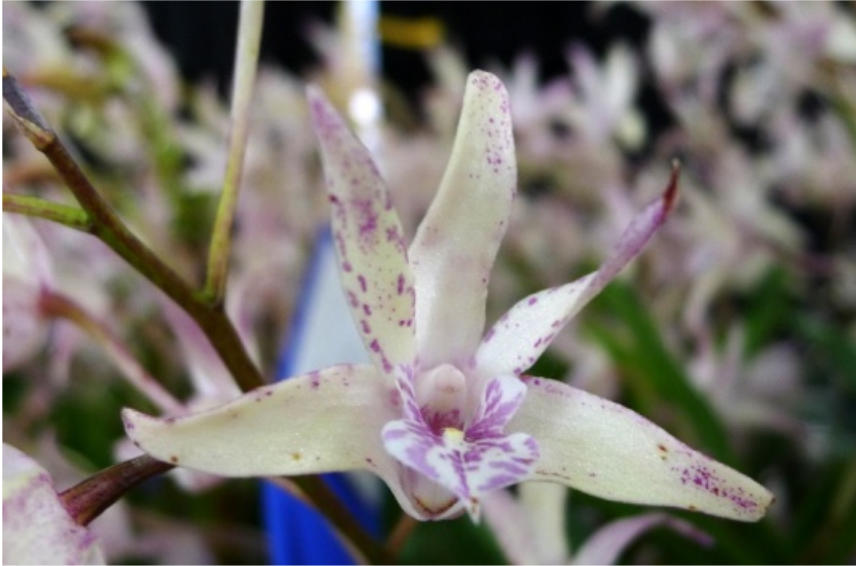
Brrrrr.....is all I have to say as I think about my orchid collection. Can you imagine bringing many orchids out of their winter rest two weeks ago? There must be a lot of confusion in the plant kingdom with our unusual weather patterns. I do see the sun's angle is changing, days are longer and my greenhouse is a lot brighter in the early afternoon, so spring can't be too far off. Whether you grow orchids inside or outdoors, do pay attention to the humidity as this cold air can be very dry. Most orchids really like that 60-80% humidity around them. At the same time they hate cold, wet conditions that will result in fungal or bacterial infections (rot!).

Some orchids like to be repotted in the spring. Signs to look for are new roots showing and/or new active growth which means new roots are coming. It is the best time for your plant will accept and grow into a new mix. Speaking of mixes....there are so many choices out there now. The latest rage seems to be 6# carpet padding as it is reputed to hold constant moisture with some air circulation and does not break down. Sounds close to perfect, but it is ugly to look at. People are using it instead of moss on mounted orchids for the same reasons. It is also a recycled product whereas moss is a non-



sustainable product. It is also cheap! If you subscribe to Orchids Magazine, there is an article describing use of carpet padding in a recent issue. Others are lining the tops of their benches with it because as it holds water, it enhances the humidity. I don't say one mix is good for everyone. I always ask where you live to determine micro climate, where you grow, indoors, greenhouse or outside and how much do you tend to water. Many folks kill orchids with lots of loving water. When you purchase those phals at the market, they are usually in moss. The larger pots may need watering only once a month. I mix, mix like soup. I don't really measure and I throw a little of this and that into it. I

use some bark, small red lava rock, perlite, charcoal, tree fern fiber and horticultural wool. That's just me. I figure the orchid will like something in there. For cattleyas, I use med bark and perlite only, similar to cymbidiums. I do tell folks to add a lot of fine bark to cymbidium mix if you live out in Carmel Valley, adjusting for the warmer, drier climate. Pots are a personal choice too. I like terra cotta because it breathes. But they can be heavy and the roots stick to the sides. When I was out to McClellan's in Watsonville, they were selling biodegradable pots. They look like a matte plastic in a variety of colors with open slits on the sides.



there are lots of ways to grow orchids. Each environment is unique and our habits are unique. Keep playing with it until you find success. Don't get easily discouraged. We have all killed hundred of orchids, but there is nothing more satisfying than when a plant thrives and blooms for your enjoyment.

I hope many of you can attend our next repotting party. We can all exchange

They are supposed to last 10 years, so I bought some to experiment with. I will top dress the new mix with blood and bone meal sometimes. Currently I am using pelletized compost made by Jim Cranford in Spreckles. My next experiment may be pelletized chicken manure. It is called Chickadee Doo Doo available at Orchard Supply Hardware. However it is fragrant! Monterey Horticultural Supply at 218 Reindollar Ave in Marina has supplies useful for orchids and general gardening. I purchased among other things, glacial rock dust to add complex minerals to my mixes as well. What you may glean from this discussion is that

ideas and learn from each other.....even share some divisions!

Carolyn



More flowers from the Santa Cruz show.

Membership Time!

It's that time again, time for your otherwise nice, friendly society board members to nag you about paying your membership dues. As much as we would like to have your money to pay for our fabulous monthly speakers, what we really want is for you to come hear the speakers, buy the raffle tickets and take home all the interesting plants on our monthly raffle tables. None of that will happen if you are not interested enough to pay the pittance we ask for or yearly dues. Most orchids that we will kill in less than a year cost more than a years membership! So all we ask is that you pay your dues, come to the meetings and have a wonderful time!

C A R M E L O R C H I D S O C I E T Y 2011 Membership Application

Please make checks payable to the **Carmel Orchid Society** and mail to: Carmel Orchid Society - Membership c/o Sharon Ashton 26966 Laureles Grade Road Carmel Valley, CA 93924

Please print

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If you were referred by a current member, please provide

his/her name _____

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| Membership Type | Receive Newsletter | |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
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| Couple | \$30 <input type="checkbox"/> | \$35 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Vendor | \$30 <input type="checkbox"/> | \$35 <input type="checkbox"/> |

Advertise in the BackBulb

If you have a business, or just want to advertise your yard sale, this may be the place. The COS is now accepting advertising in the BackBulb. Circulation is mainly to our members and visitors, around 100 copies per month. The rates are: \$5 quarter page, \$10 half page, and \$20 for a full page. If you are interested contact the BackBulb editor, John OConnell johnoconnell19@att.net.

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