

The BackBulb

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

January 2026

January Meeting: **Saturday January 3rd, 2PM** at the Church

January Speaker: Chris Thomas

Basic Orchid Care

For our newest Carmel Orchid Society members, or anyone new to growing orchids, the January meeting is especially for YOU!

We've had some folks ask for information that's geared more to beginners – and we deliver! COS member Chris Thomas will explain the basics, packing her presentation with plenty of good tips, ideas that have worked for her, and a little bit of humor.



Maybe *Oncidium tipuloides* (above) and *Bratonia Golden Spider 'Copius'* (right) grown and photographed by Chris

Please join us for Basic Orchid Care. Bring your questions, and any blooming plants to show off on our display table. It's at 2:00 PM on Sat., Jan. 3, at the Community Church of the Monterey Peninsula, 4590 Carmel Valley Road.

In order to provide a selection of treats at our meetings, we are asking members with last names that start with the letter **G thru L** to bring refreshments to the meeting.



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Upcoming Events

January

1/3 Saturday 2pm COS January Meeting

2026 Central California Shows, Sales and Auctions

1/31, Gold Coast Cymbidium Society Annual Auction, San Mateo Garden Center, 605 Parkside Way, San Mateo

2/7 - Diablo View Orchid Society Annual Show and Sale, Cal State University Concord Campus, 4700 Ygnacio Valley Rd, Concord

2/26-28, 3/1 San Francisco Orchid Society/Pacific Orchid Exposition (POE) SF County Fair Building, 1199 9th Ave, San Francisco

3/14-15 Spring Sale/Sacramento Valley Cymbidium Society Sale, Shepard Garden & Art Center, 3330 McKinley Blvd, Sacramento

3/19-22 Santa Barbara International Orchid Show, Earl Warren Fair Grounds, Santa Barbara

3/27-29 Sonoma County Orchid Society Spring Show, Santa Rosa Veterans Building, 1351 Maple Ave, Santa Rosa

4/17-19 Sacramento Orchid Society Show, Carmichael Elks Lodge, 5631 Cypress Ave, Carmichael

4/17-19 Gold Coast Cymbidium Society/Peninsula Orchid Society Joint Show, San Mateo Garden Center, 605 Parkside Way, San Mateo

4/24-26 Napa Valley Orchid Society Show, Napa Senior Center, 1500 Jefferson St, Napa

4/25-26(?) Santa Cruz Orchid Society and Bonsi Club Show and Sale, Capitola Mall, Capitola

7/TBD Orchids In the Park, San Francisco Orchid Society, SF County Fair Building, 1199 9th Avenue, San Francisco



Stenorrhynchos speciosum in John's greenhouse. Picked up off the raffle table back in March.

The Happy Hobbyist – Tracking Your Orchids

What's your New Year's resolution? I've decided 2026 will be the year I get back on track and catalog my orchid collection. I used to be fairly dutiful about this, but since moving to California I've let it go. I've sold some plants, bought others and finally given up on a few scraggly ones.

If you're a new orchid grower, it's easy to start this process and a good habit to get into. Your first decision should be whether to go 'low-tech' (handwriting the info) or 'high-tech' (using an app on your cellphone or a program on your desktop).

Multiple YouTube videos confirm there are as many ways to keep track of your plants as there are orchid growers! One person recommends the home inventory program, My Stuff 2 Pro, which she has adapted to her plant collection. Another tracks all the info on an Excel spreadsheet. An app called Orchid Wiz apparently used to be popular – especially among orchid judges – but it was spendy and online comments indicate it no longer receives tech support, so usage has dropped off.

My longtime system has been to assign each plant a number and list them all, with basic info about each, on a simple table in a Word document. But I feel I need something a little more detailed.

I'm not interested in pecking a bunch of data into my phone or sitting for any more hours facing a screen. So, I chose an Orchid Journal – a notebook of forms

to fill out by hand, with places to attach photos. There are several good ones available for less than \$10 on Amazon. You don't even have to buy a journal – a 3-ring binder would do.

What do you track? Again, this depends on how much of an expert you want to be. The basics are, of course, the plant's name, where and when you got it, and maybe how much you paid for it. If it's in bloom when you buy it, take a photo to put with your records; if not, look it up and print out a pic from online. I look up information about how to care for each plant, which I can summarize or print out and attach to the page. One thing I'm going to focus on in the New Year is which plants have a dormant period, a time of year they benefit from minimal water and no fertilizer. I know I haven't paid enough attention to that.



Laelia autumnalis growing in John's greenhouse. John's records indicate that he bought this plant from Andy's Orchids in Nov. 2013 and that it blooms most years in December and January.

If it's a hybrid, you can list its "parent plants." You may also see the term grex, which means a whole group of hybrid plants from the same parents but with different, individual variations. I make note of when the plant bloomed (month and year), and when I repot or divide it – the stuff you also put on the

Carolyn's Tips for Cymbidiums and Zygopetalums

Many of our members grow Cyms (Cymbidiums) and Zygos (Zygopetalums) so successfully because of our favorable climate. Here are some of Carolyn's tips:

Not ready to repot, but have Cyms with several dormant backbulbs? Gently twist some of the healthiest looking bulbs to break them away from the underlying rhizome. This will tell the dormant eyes on the bulb to sprout new green leaves. Many growers use this technique because it saves time and space. If the bulb never sprouts, you can throw it away. The other option is to place groups of two or three bulbs in a separate pot to sprout when dividing your larger Cyms. You may even speed this process by putting backbulbs in a plastic bag in an egg carton to keep them upright while they sprout. Place on top of the fridge for warmth. Some will add a small amount of moist vermiculite to the bag for the bulb to sit in. You want the bulb upright so the new growth points upwards as you replant the bulb in new bark. It

plant's tag. I also note when it had (and was treated for) some type of pest – mealybugs, scale, etc.

Maybe in a few months, we can all compare notes for how we track our orchids and learn some new tips and tricks!

Chris Thomas

may take a few months for some bulbs to sprout so don't give up too soon!

Cyms set their buds in August so repotting should be finished by June. New growths need as much time as possible to mature for the winter bloom cycle. Feed with lots of nitrogen after repotting. Saving the biggest baddest Cyms for last? Bill Hale tells me of an "old time" grower who would clean up those huge Cyms, but let them sit outside the new pot for an extra day to let them dry out a little. Maybe that would cut down on that bulb or new growth rot they sometimes get.

In the late fall Cyms start to spike. Begin staking those spikes up early for upright growth. Keep them out of the rain if possible (place under the eaves) as the buds expose themselves to prevent that blight. You can wrap cotton around the spike below the buds to protect from slug damage. If you have a spike growing sideways, you can use pieces or whole wine corks at the base to begin forcing them into a more upright position.

Note: Carolyn recommends switching to 0-10-10 fertilizer in the Fall but some growers use a balanced fertilizer all year. Also, backbulbs root well in semi-hydro conditions.



One of the center pieces at the Holiday potluck. Phot by Cammie Jones

C A R M E L O R C H I D S O C I E T Y 2026 Membership Application

Please make checks payable to the Carmel Orchid Society and mail to: Carmel Orchid Society - Membership, P.O. Box 223462 Carmel CA 93922-3462
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