President’s Message

We have had a relatively warm February. However, Tuesday the 7th proved to be a severe weather day. Numerous tornados were spotted in South Louisiana, and an EF 3 tornado hit New Orleans East. I was planning to meet my daughter in uptown New Orleans and decided not to cross the bridge. Then Fat Tuesday was nearly like a summer day. I hope the weather calms down and stays a little more predictable.

In addition to our Green Growers meeting in March, LSU is having its 15th Annual Baton Rouge Spring Garden Show and Arts and Crafts Fair on March 18th and 19th, 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM, at the John Parker Coliseum. Admission is free if you work at the show. We will have a display table and give orchid information to the public. We need volunteers to help man the table. If you can help, please let Carolyn Clay or myself know.

The Publicity, Program/Show Committees have been hard at work. In the month of February, Chip Thompson originated and organized 4 nursery personnel training sessions, with assistance from the Publicity Committee members. These orchid presentations were very informative. The workshops were also open to our members and the public. The Program Committee has almost filled the 2017 program schedule.

March Program - Let’s Set Up An Orchid Exhibit!

At our March meeting we will learn how to set up an Orchid Exhibit at a Show. A panel of our members who have experience with exhibit set up will teach us all about how it’s done. Since we participate in several out of town shows in addition to setting up an exhibit at our own show, this is a skill we all need to learn so we won’t feel too intimidated to volunteer to do a set up out of town. Come and learn!
Minutes of February Meeting

President Valerie Creehan opened our meeting at seven pm. Visitor and new member Jeanette Foster along with two students from Wednesday morning classes Amanda from Louisiana Nursery and Matt from Clegg’s were welcomed.

Announcements were as follows:

Please sign up to help with our out of town shows; this encourages other orchid societies to participate in our July show. This is a great learning experience. Beginners will be paired with experienced members to help with set up and take down. These dates will be posted in the newsletter.

All hands on deck for the BROS show in July. We will match your interest to the jobs available. New members are especially welcomed to work along side our experienced members for this unique learning experience. Nancy Morrison will chair the judge’s dinner on Friday night, July 7th.

We need a theme for our July show so please email Valerie with your suggestions. The winner will receive a nice orchid. Birthday orchids were given to Danna Spayde and Anne Dugas. The name of the orchid was BLC Roy’s Passion. Thank you Frank for supplying the birthday orchids for our monthly meetings.

March 18th and 19th is the LSU plant sale. Our Society distributes information about our July show as well as the several opportunities to learn how to grow beautiful orchids. Admission is free for those who volunteer to help at our table.

The following Saturday, March 25th, is the Master Gardner plant sale at Burden from eight am to two pm. Our society also uses this event to pass out more informational materials and answer orchid growing questions.

February Program

Our speaker for the February meeting was Dennis Wollard from the Acadian Orchid Society. The topic he presented was ‘Understanding Orchid Corsages’, a hands-on program. Some of the points made were:

Cattleya flowers you want to use should be opened for three days before picked for a corsage.

Put flowers in a one-quart solution of a can of sprite or 7UP; fill the container with water to make one quart; and add a few drops of bleach. This is also good to prolong the life of Christmas trees or any cut foliage. Put flowers the fridge to chill to set and firm the flowers.

Following Dennis’s directions members picked out orchid flowers from a wide selection, ribbon to match, and wire for wrapping to get started on their corsages. All enjoyed a good time creating their masterpieces.

Zach Highland won the door prize, and the rest of the raffle plant winners were chosen. The meeting was adjourned shortly after nine pm.

Patty Granier
Secretary
Planning has been initiated on our July Show, and show prep will be ramping up in the next several months. We need lots of volunteers to make our show a success. Some of the tasks include food preparation, measuring and marking the floor for exhibits and vendors, BROS exhibit set up, clerking for judges, and exhibit take down and cleaning.

Last month’s program on Orchid Corsages by Dennis Wollard was very interesting and enjoyable. I had a little trouble at first when trying to make a ribbon. However, with practice I believe I could master this task.

For our March program, we will be reviewing and practicing exhibit set ups. We need volunteers to assist with exhibit set up and take down for shows. Bring your bloomed plants to be utilized for the “brag” table and mock exhibit set ups. Our meeting is March 15th at 7:00 PM at the Burden Center.

Valerie Creehan
President

President’s Message Cont.

Nancy needs help with providing drinks for our refreshment breaks. She can no longer bring bottles of drinks to every meeting, and she’s asking that members volunteer to bring them. If different people bring some each time, then one person is not saddled with the chore & expense for all the meetings. Needed are two liter bottles, no more than four per meeting. Preferred are Coke, Diet Coke, Diet Caffeine Free Coke, Sprite, etc. Your choice.

A bit of Orchid Trivia
Phalaenopsis (moth) orchids are some of the most beautiful plants you can grow in your house. Not only will they add color, but they are a great air purifying plant as they are known to remove volatile organic compounds and other synthetic materials from the air.

URL: https://www.jacarandafm.com/lifestyle/house-home/6-best-houseplants-purify-your-homes-air/
Three opportunities to learn about orchids....

Baton Rouge Orchid Society - 7 p.m. - 3rd Wednesday ♦ Burden Center, 4560 Essen Lane ♦ Baton Rouge, LA ♦ featured speakers, growing tips, plant clinics, awards table, plant raffle.

Green Growers - educational program for novice orchid growers ♦ 7 p.m. on 2nd Wednesday of month except May, July, and December at 425 Nelson Dr. Baton Rouge.

Orchids for Seniors - 10 a.m. - 4th Monday ♦ January through October, except July ♦ Independence Park ♦ 7500 Independence Blvd. ♦ Baton Rouge, LA. Orchid programs, field trips, potting workshop.

Extending the knowledge and appreciation of orchids to members and the gardening community of the Greater Baton Rouge Area.

Green Growers Schedule

April 12
May 10
Meetings are at
7 p.m. at the home of
Gene & Thelma Berg
425 Nelson Dr.
Come for good fellowship,
refreshments, learning - and door prizes.

Happy March Birthday to the Following:

Kathy Conerly 2/29
Nora Connor 3/5
June Fitzgerald 3/27
Edward Gaskell 3/22
Jim Gershey 3/22
Janet Gianelloni 3/6
Zach Highland 3/16
John Nelson 3/2
Sarala Palliyath 3/12

Two Major Gardening Events This Month

Spring has sprung, as evidenced by two major gardening events in Baton Rouge in the next couple of weeks. March 18 - 19 is the weekend of the LSU Horticulture Show at Parker Coliseum. We’ll have a table, and volunteers are needed to staff it all day both days. Talk to Carolyn Clay at the meeting about helping out.

On Saturday, March 25, Master Gardeners are holding their annual sale at Burden from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. We hope to have a table there too. More details will be discussed at the meeting.

March, 2017
The Publicity/Membership Committee met on March 1 and discussed, among other items, the evaluations of the February workshops for staff of garden centers. The Committee’s next meeting will be April 5 at 11 a.m. at Hunan’s Chinese Restaurant on S. Sherwood Forest. If you would like to join in our efforts and receive meeting reminders, let me know and I’ll put you on the mailing list.

The Program Committee meets on the second Saturday each month at 9 a.m. at Jones Creek Library. It would also welcome participation from other members. Contact Patty Granier to get on their email reminder list.

**Upcoming AOS Webinars**

**My Favorite Curiosities**
Ron McHatton

**Wednesday, March 22nd, 2017**
8:30 PM - 9:30 PM EDT

*Orchids do the darndest things!*

Ever wonder why the outside of the flowers of Bulbophyllum phalaenopsis are covered with those odd rubbery little spines, the pseudobulbs of your myremecophilas are hollow or why some of your orchids grow fine spiky roots that stick straight up and defy getting them in a pot? Each of these has a definite evolutionary purpose. Join Ron McHatton as he discusses a selection of his favorite curiosities out of a family replete with curiosities.

**Wednesday, April 05, 2017**
8:30 PM - 9:30 PM EST - AOS Members Only

*Virus Testing and Identification*

Join Janet Lamborn of Agdia as she discusses the various types of viruses that can affect your orchids and how to test for them.

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**2017 Show Schedule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Show:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 21,22,23</td>
<td>Calcasieu/Lake Charles</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 2,3,4</td>
<td>NOLA Orchid Soc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 9,10,11</td>
<td>Acadian Orchid Soc. Lafayette</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 7,8,9</td>
<td>BROS/Baton Rouge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall - Date TBA</td>
<td>Central LA Orchid Soc Alexandria</td>
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At the meeting there will be a sheet for members to sign up for the Show for which they would like to volunteer. Volunteers are needed to set up the displays on Friday and take down on Sunday.

And, of course, everyone is needed to make our own Show in July successful!

You can learn a lot about orchids by attending a show and especially by clerking.

Not to mention that you get first crack at the plants for sale!! Always a bonus.

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A couple of months ago a man named Bill Hilton, who lives near Seattle, WA contacted me about his desire to acquire some of the beautiful blue cattleyas that were developed by our late member, Ervin Granier. He had read about them in an old AOS Orchids magazine and would like to get some. If you have any that you would like to sell to Bill, you can email him at billhil-
**February Workshops for Garden Center Staffs**

The workshops that we held in February were very successful and fun to do. The people who attended were very attentive and appreciated the information that our members provided. The three who attended all four meetings were presented with certificates attesting that they are now “BROS Certified Orchid Advisors”.

We asked them to complete a short evaluation form and these are their comments:

- “Great overall presentation of important, general orchid information. Really enjoyed everyone’s knowledge and enthusiasm.”
- “Trying to learn. Have more classes — Please!”
- “Very insightful! Information was presented clearly and understandable (sic) for both new orchid growers and enthusiasts”
- “Enjoyed this tremendously. I have enjoyed returning to work to share everything that I have learned. Look forward to learning more.”
- “Very enjoyable”
- “Great classes”
- “The presentation was great for professional nursery employees but may be too technical for more casual growers. Extremely informative.”

Thanks to Chip Thompson for spearheading this event and doing all the necessary legwork. And thanks to our other members who gave of their time and knowledge in making the various presentations.

Unfortunately, I’m having camera problems and can’t publish the pictures I took at the workshops. On page 13 are some pictures of the last session which Valerie took. I’ll try to get some of mine in next time. We’re already considering another series of workshops for the fall, at the request of the attendees and their bosses!

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**Editor’s Note about Article Starting on Next Page**

Starting on Page 6 is an article written by Clara Chow, who lives in Singapore. She wrote this article especially for our newsletter after I contacted her about an article I saw that she had written for the Singapore newspaper. She couldn’t grant permission to use it because it was copyrighted by the newspaper, and getting permission from them to use it would have been a major undertaking.

Consequently, she kindly and generously offered to write one just for us, and I quickly accepted her offer. She even sent pictures of some of her orchids that I have included with the article. I will send her a copy of the newsletter.

Thank you, Clara, for the thought, time, and work you put into the writing of this article. I and the Baton Rouge Orchid Society appreciate your generosity in sharing your talents with us. And, I want to add, you can write another one for us anytime you want to!

I found the original article in an orchid newsletter that I get daily from someone in Montreal named Viateur (viateur.boutot@videotron.ca). The URL for that article: [http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/education/how-i-help-my-kids-blossom-and-avoid-root-rot](http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/education/how-i-help-my-kids-blossom-and-avoid-root-rot)

Some of you might like to read it. Just copy and past the URL into your browser. I don’t think you’ll be able to open it directly from the newsletter.

Enjoy reading about Clara’s love affair with the orchids of her country.
As a child of the 1980s, I grew up listening to my bachelor uncles humming a popular Taiwanese ditty. *Lanhua Cao* (Orchid Grass) was such a huge hit across the Mandarin-speaking diaspora that one could hardly turn on the radio without hearing it. A campus folk song, it was recorded by Steven Liu Wen-cheng and catapulted him to Asian superstardom. Us, kids, however, became so sick of hearing it, we substituted its lyrics with rude, illogical phrases: *I come from the mountains/bringing orchid grass became I come from the mountains/bringing stinky feet.*

Decades passed, before I recognised what Liu had sung about with such wistful longing:

種在小園中 希望花開早
一日看三回 看到花時過
蘭花卻依然 苞也無一個

*I planted the orchid grass in my little garden/Hoping it would bloom soon
Looking at it thrice a day/Until the time for flowers was over
And still, not a single bud...*

In a few simple lines, *Lanhua Cao* articulated the quiet obsession a gardener could have for a wild mountain orchid, as well as the plant’s fickleness. In Liu’s song, the orchid serves as metaphor for a beautiful woman; the singer, a devoted lover pining away for her favour. Yet, there is also an undercurrent of homesickness and geographical displacement. Carried away from its native climate, despite careful tending, the orchid fails to thrive. This impossibility of return is political: a pop song carrying the seeds of Taiwan’s rupture from mainland China, and the larger narrative of Chinese migration. No wonder the song had drifted over the airwaves of Asia. It sounded a nostalgic note; conjured up a fantasy of reunion.

Thinking of that song now is complicated for me. In the 1980s, orchids in Singapore, where I was born and still live, had been very plentiful. Our tropical climate is so suitable for the propagation and growth of vanda and dendrobium species that it became a national industry. The Vanda Miss Joaquim, a hybrid recently re-classified as a Papilionanthe, remains the national flower - its delicate petals and year-round resilience signifying the country’s own values of multi-cultural pragmatism. Everywhere you turned - or so it seemed to me - there were pots and pots of orchids, decorating buildings; cut orchid flowers sprucing up restaurant tables.
Then, like all things common and taken for granted, orchids became passé. Young people preferred to express their feelings with imported roses and cheerful gerberas. I don’t know when or how it happened, but one day I looked up, and trendy joints were sporting terrariums full of moss from Iceland and air plants from equally far-flung places. Between 2014 and 2009, according to a 2016 report on Channel News Asia, Singapore’s orchid exports dropped more than 40 per cent - from S$33.5 million to S$19.3 million. And while the country ranks among the top orchid exporters in the world, the home grown orchid industry faces threats from land scarcity, rising production costs and greater competition from the likes of Taiwan and Thailand.

As a newbie orchid enthusiast, it feels a little frustrating to be late to the orchid party, having discovered that I’d had an invite crumpled at the bottom of my handbag all along. I hadn’t needed to painstakingly source for plants, arrange for certification or ship them at exorbitant prices to my doorstep. Orchids had been in my backyard. Orchid labs here led the way in cloning and hybrid research. There had been hordes of the plants at the sprawling Mandai Orchid Garden, until it closed in 2010. There had been truck- and float-loads of them at every National Day Parade or Chinese New Year chingay procession.

At least, that’s what I remember.

Perhaps, childhood, like a homeland forever lost, is green-white-and-purple-tinged with the exile’s desire - a mountain plain rolling with wild orchids that never quite existed.

* I am driving down a dirt road. Gravel. Horrible pot holes. My car’s suspension is bottoming out, and the steering column is making terrible creaking noises. I am at a crawl.

The sign a while back had said “Chye Heng Orchid Garden”. But, so far, no orchid garden in sight. I turn the car around and back track. A worker stands outside a modest nursery, filled with Chinese New Year kumquats and landscaping palm trees.

“Excuse me?” I ask, rolling down the window. “Where is the orchid garden?”

“What?” he says. “What’s that?”

“Orchid garden,” I insist.

“No, no. No orchid garden,” he says.

I jab a finger at his breast pocket. “It’s on your shirt,” I say, my voice rising a few semi-tones.

We both stare at his shirt. There, in white embroidery, was the legend: Chye Heng Orchid Garden.

He looked back at me, slightly embarrassed. “Ah, yes,” he says. “Inside.”

He waves me into a parking lot, and I ignore the knocking of my car’s wrecked suspension and kill the engine. Venturing further into the nursery, I find, hidden amidst all sorts of green leafy houseplants, a sad selection of orchids. Ten big pots, and a handful of miniatures. Perhaps, there had once been an orchid garden here, but, these days, it sure looks like the owners are focusing on other wares.
I get back into my car and high-tail it out of the place. It’s a similar story at some other nurseries I check near Mandai.

*

Some days, getting to gawk at a plethora of unusual orchids is as simple as swan-ning into a luxury hotel here.

Having read about a new orchid pod at the Shangri-La Hotel’s Valley Wing, I make an appointment with the hotel’s grounds manager for a tour. I’d imagined the place to be some kind of greenhouse, but it’s more like a display pavilion. Some 26 species and 300 individual plants decorate the pavilion and its surrounding area. The blooms in the bud-shaped pavilion are changed twice a month, and hotel guests and patrons may book a floral-inspired dinner to be served in the privacy of this orchid cocoon. Visitors can also go on a self-guided orchid walk: an ‘orchid concierge’ hands out maps identifying resident orchids, including a hybrid named after the hotel (*Dendrobium Shangri-La Singapore*).

I snap picture after picture of the bamboo orchids, with their frilly purple lips and pink petals, and stare at the leonine heads of *Vanda Pure’s Wax*. “I’m so envious,” I tell Zamri, the grounds manager, pointing at the thick, white-green roots of the orchids rambling up the palm tree trunks in the sun-ny garden. The roots of my orchids, grown in my government housing flat corridor, are never so healthy. Armed with a misting bottle, I can never quite get the watering schedule right, and am constantly fretting over root rot.

A few metres from us, tourists chew on their brunch at the buffet terrace, oblivious mostly to my orchid geek-out.

“It’s rare to see someone so enthusiastic about orchids,” says the hotel’s publicist, a young woman who had joined us on the tour. “We just have those big white ones in the office, because they don’t need a lot of light.”

*

For a while, the end-of-the-year blues kept me from getting out of bed.

“Let’s go for a walk,” my friend Clarinda texted me, when I told her I was feeling down and not writing. I’d just published my first book, in November 2016, and the high of the book launch meant that crashing down to earth, without a clear goal for the future, was inevitable.

At the Botanic Gardens, we wander into the National Orchid Garden, in search of the coolness of the mist house. Inside, we give our sons our iPhones and instruct them to take pictures.

“Look at this one,” I say, pointing. “It has a chin like Jay Leno.”

Later, I look it up, matching my photos to images on the Internet. Slipper orchid. *Paphiopedilum Maudiae Green*.

I have found a new mission: seeking out strange and unusual-looking orchids.
This is how a collection starts. A Vanda Robert’s Delight ‘Ink Star’ from a neighbourhood bazaar. A dendrobium stardust and an unknown cattleya from the Gardens by the Bay giftshop. A spidery bratonia shelob, named after the giant spider from Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings*. The famed ‘Miss Joaquim’, which - as I write this - is flowering like crazy. Even a vanilla planifolia vine that will probably never flower in the heat and humidity here.

Every morning, I get out of bed because there are orchids to be watered. There are orchid farms to be visited. Orchid-care websites to trawl.

Jeanette Winterson wrote: “Going mad takes time. Getting sane takes time.”

Here’s how discovering orchids saved me from myself.

“Why are you so interested in orchids?” asks my son, hanging on our front gate, watching as I potter about in my little corridor garden.

“Because they are so weird,” I say. “All so different.”

I carry my orchids around, aerial roots hanging like beards from their plastic baskets, trying to find the best spot in the apartment for them. They are finicky. Fussy. Prone to sunburn and over-watering. That’s another reason they are interesting. It’s constant detective work trying to figure out what they want. They respond in such quick and visible ways to their environment. They wear their thirst and hunger easily - on their leaves, in their roots. They are complex and oddly vocal. There is an JG Ballard sci-fi story, “Prima Belladonna”, in which monstrous Arachnid orchids emit vibrations come pollination season, singing like a roomful of competitive supersonic divas. I don’t find that far-fetched at all.

Orchids are interesting to me because they are so mutable. So bold. They are not afraid of being huge, feathery, hairy, waxy, almost black and stinky. They are not afraid of being bucket-shaped and forcing bees to go for 30-minute dips. They are not afraid of looking like antelopes, or rabbits, or moths, or talk-show hosts. They are resilient misfits. They are both sexy and symbols. Misfits and emblems. They have no qualms about going dormant or unfashionable. About making you work hard for their favour.

Better late than never to the orchid party then. To waking up to the appeal of these stubborn things that demand so much from you, that you demand more of and for yourself. To finding the exotic in the familiar, and to sustaining the ideal that is home.

*Clara Chow is the author of short-story collection Dream Storeys (Ethos, 2016), and the co-editor of WeAreAWebsite.com literary and art journal. Find her at clarachow.weebly.com*

Do you need orchid pots, stakes, ties? If so, let me know. I salvage all the supplies I can from the Trader Joe’s plants that are out of bloom or don’t survive, and I have plenty of all of the above to share. The plants that Trader Joe’s donates are for the Society, not me personally, so they belong to all of us. If you need anything I have, let me know at the meeting. I’m running out of space for storing all this stuff, but I prefer recycling to throwing away.
The February program was a hands on class on making orchid corsages, given by Dr. Dennis Wollard of the Acadian Orchid Society. It was a very intriguing and informative program.
Bc. Mai Kai ‘Mayumi’ HCC/AOS

Den. Spring Doll

Lc. Gold Digger ‘Orglade’s Mandarin’

Masd. Haneczka

Epc. Rene Marques ‘Tyler’

Lc. Yu Yu Lam ‘Firestone’ AM/AOS

C. Caudebec ‘Marty’s Orchids’ x C. Orchidom Brabant ‘Frecked Flamenco’ HCC/AOS
Nursery Training Session held 2-22-2017 at Burden

Dr. Terry Rehn gave a presentation on growing tips for cymbidiums. He brought a table of his own beautiful bloomed cymbidiums from his collection.

Carolyn Clay gave a presentation on oncidiums. Thanks to Chip Thompson for his ideas and efforts in organizing the 4 nursery personnel training sessions in the month of February. The sessions were open to society members and the public.
Our February meeting was on the day before Mardi Gras so I didn’t know if anyone would be there or not! But several of us did make it.

The program was again a potpourri of orchid information and discussion. I shared with the group some more “gadgets” that I find helpful in caring for my plants.

We also talked about everyone’s experiences with water culture of orchids since last month. Results are mixed. Some are doing well and others not so well. But some of us will continue to experiment with this method.

We were glad to see Sam Bergeron, who travels extensively and doesn’t get to meetings often. He talked with us about his experiences with the macrobiotics life style and agreed to do a program on it for us in October. It won’t be about orchids but will be something that can help all of us health wise.

We decided to change our proposed meeting schedule a little in regard to field trips. We decided to do our field trips in March, April, and May, instead of April through June. It’s been such a warm winter that summer may be a real scorcher. We thought that June might be too warm for visiting greenhouses so we’ll finish our visits in May and have our annual potting workshop in June. We can have it at Independence Park and be cool.

We want to visit Mary Jo Kellogg’s greenhouses and will probably do that in April or May. Whenever we go, we’ll change our meeting day to Tuesday so we can have lunch at the Dinner Bell in McComb. It’s closed on Mondays.

Another possibility is visiting some local nurseries. Madeline told us of a new one that’s opening soon near her and I had learned of a new one on Pecue Lane. It should be a fun and interesting “Field trip” season for us.

Our first field trip this month will be to Pat Huval’s Orchids Plus Nursery in Breaux Bridge. I’m working on reserving a BREC van but we’ll car pool if that’s not possible. If we can get a van, remember that we must pay $1.00 each for the trip. We’ll meet at Independence Park at 9 to board the van to get to Pat’s by 10.

Pat told me that she doesn’t have a whole lot of plants left, but I was there a few months ago and she still had plenty. They were pretty much all in just one greenhouse instead of three like she used to have. Any member of BROS who wants to go with us is welcome.

After the visit to Pat’s, we’ll have lunch at Landry’s before coming home.