



East Texas Orchid Society



"Creating a common bond between orchid enthusiasts in east Texas..."

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www.EastTexasOrchidSociety.com

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Officers

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Olie Garrison

1st Vice-President

Cindy McReynolds

2nd Vice-President

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Secretary & Editor

R. Justin Daniel

Treasurer

Wynn Logan

AOS Representative

Olie Garrison

www.aos.org

www.swroga.org

www.shreveportjudgingcenter.com

August Meeting

Date

August 1st

Time

1:30 pm

Location

Unity Church,
Nacogdoches, TX

Refreshments

Olie

Agenda Items

-Plan workshop
and/or Plant Sale
-Programs for
rest of year
-Show Schedule

Program

None scheduled

September Meeting

9-12-10

Water Quality Basics

Last month's newsletter included a reprint of the AOS publication, "The How and Why of Water." Knowing why, how, and when to water only paints part of the picture. In order to grow the happiest and healthiest plants possible, we must first understand the "what" of water as well as "why" and "how."

First, water quality *does* matter. This is an easy subject to overlook because your tap water probably will support healthy and normal growth. Indeed, orchids are able to adapt to less than optimal conditions in many ways. But even though orchids may survive in temperatures outside the ideal ranges, inadequate light, or in less than optimal humidity, we still try to create the best conditions possible. Our extra efforts pay off in the form of more flowers of better quality. Water should be no different.

Water "quality" in the context of growing orchids usually refers to the amount of dissolved solids or mineral content. Water from municipal sources usually contains some dissolved minerals, referred to as alkalinity. In general, water with high alkalinity contains more dissolved minerals. Most orchids prefer fewer minerals in water. However, DO NOT use water from water softeners! Most of these devices effectively "soften" water by the addition of salt – an effective plant killer.

Rainwater contains very little in the way of dissolved minerals and orchids seem to love it. Water that has been purified by either distillation or reverse osmosis is about as pure as it gets, and ideal for plants as well as long as nutrients are added. If using totally pure water, there are a few things to consider. Make sure you are using a complete fertilizer containing micronutrients as well as macronutrients.

At the risk of getting a little technical, there is another aspect of water quality that is related to alkalinity. pH is a measurement of how acidic (or basic) a solution is. Nutrients are most available to the plant within a pH range of 5.8 to 6.2. Fortunately, many fertilizers are acidic and will lower the pH of tap water into the desired range, but some fertilizers are specifically formulated for either pure water or well water. The main difference in these formulas is the effect on the pH. If the label doesn't say, than it's probably fine for use you're your municipal or tap water, but if you are mixing it with pure water you may want to check the pH. We are lucky to have fairly good water in this area so using it for most orchids is fine, but you'll never know for sure unless you check. -Justin Daniel, ETOS Secretary

July 2010 Minutes

The East Texas Orchid Society met on July 11, 2010 at Unity Church, Nacogdoches. Members present where: Gwen, Linda, Wynn, Larry, and Justin. We had a casual discussion about orchid culture before calling the meeting to order at 1:50 pm.

The May and June minutes were presented. Linda move to accept the minutes as presented, Wynn seconded. Wynn distributed the treasurer's report. No income, no expenditures, no changes. The balance in the ETOS account stands at \$237.80. We may still have some small reimbursements to make, and there may be income from last month's raffle.

Old Business

The Treasurer's report prompted another discussion about fundraising and membership. We talked about having some society fundraising plants on hand and in the care of a few members so that we could set up on a small scale on short notice.

Potting Workshop – Still set for this fall, once the weather cools. We should try to nail down one or two possible dates next month.

New Business

Justin shared some good news from Olie. One of Olie's Phals just received an Award of Merit at a recent AOS judging. Congrats Olie!

The discussion turned back to the topics of fundraising, membership, and advertising. Linda may look into a few ideas if she is able, but we all agreed to keep

The meeting concluded with open discussions about general orchid culture and some delicious refreshments courtesy of Gwen. The meeting adjourned at 2:35 pm.

Program

There was not official program, but there was a lively hands-on discussion. We passed around some of the blooming orchids and a few ailing orchids, noting the signs of trouble and signs of vigor.

Plant Raffle

We raffled off several nice plants to raise a few extra dollars for ETOS. Raffle plants included a few Phals, a Bl. Yellow Bird, and a few Tolumnia hybrids, and Thanks Larry and Justin for donating the plants!

July 2010 – Display Table

Phalaenopsis equestris

Blc. Wianee Leopard 'Ching Hua'

Caulavola Colmanii (*B. nodosa* x *Caul. bicornutum*)

P. Equalacea Grex Sapphire Dragon's Indigo

(*equestris* v. *cyanochillus* x *violacea* v. *coerulea*),

Tolumnia - AOS Culture Sheet

toh-LUM-nee-ah

The group of orchids now called Tolumnia were at one time called Oncidium section Variegata or commonly referred to as "equitant oncidiums". The foliage seldom exceeds 6 to 8 inches in height, and a 4-inch pot can house a "specimen" plant. The leaves are arranged in pairs overlapping or straddling one another at the base, accounting for the popular term "equitant" (derived from the Latin meaning riding a horse). Most of the species produce growths at short intervals along the rhizomes, resulting in a compact, clumping growth habit. A few, however, possess elongated rhizomes that create rambling tangles of growth. Flowers are produced primarily in the spring on 12- to 18-inch inflorescences that are often branched on older plants. Some types have much shorter, bouquet-like displays. Their petite size and ability to adapt to a fairly wide range of conditions make them suitable for growing spaces under lights or on windowsills. And wait ... don't cut off that spike after the first blooms fade. There is often a secondary spike waiting to form and provide several more weeks of bloom.

The key to growing Tolumnias is understanding their natural habitat. The species are endemic to the Caribbean Basin with many confined to a single island. Most of the species involved in modern hybrids are found in intermediate to warm conditions growing on twigs where they are exposed to bright light and air movement. Moisture is provided by high humidity and by daily rain showers or heavy dews. Due to constant air movement by the trade winds, plants never remain wet for long.

Grow Tolumnias almost anywhere an intermediate range of temperature (55° to 90°F) and relative humidity of 50 to 70



percent can be provided. Those cultivated in windows or under lights benefit from summering outdoors where climate permits.

Light Provide bright, diffused light that is somewhere between the optimal for phalaenopsis and that for

cattleyas. The general rule of thumb is if shadows on the orchid bench are just discernible, the light is about right. Plants that are growing well but reluctant to bloom usually need an increase in light intensity. Once conditioned to high light, tolumnias are fairly tough, but when moving tender plants to a higher light situation, increase their exposure gradually to prevent burning. This is especially true when moving plants outdoors for the summer.

Watering This is the most crucial aspect to success with tolumnias. There is no hard and fast rule for how often to water. Only close observation of your conditions will indicate frequency. Plants must dry out between waterings. Drying will be faster outdoors than on a humidity-enhanced windowsill. Damp, cloudy days will retard drying while bright, breezy days will hasten it. Plants on mounts can be misted daily because drying is rapid, but those in pots must be observed more closely for complete drying. The adage "if in doubt,



don't water" applies here. Avoid misting or watering during the heat of the day. Water that collects in the overlapping leaf bases can reach "cooking" temperatures and severely damage plant tissue, especially the tender young growths.

Fertilizing In the natural habitat, plants are bathed with nutrients derived from decaying plant and animal matter with every rain. So, for cultivated plants, frequent and dilute feeding is the preferred approach. A balanced fertilizer applied every second or third watering at half to quarter strength should be adequate. Flushing with plain water between feedings is important because residual salts can damage the roots.

Potting and Mounting Frequency of watering and selection of substrate are closely integrated. The objective is to achieve the proper combination allowing for good irrigation with adequate aeration and rapid drying of the root area. Mounting is the method of choice; at least for a start. Twigs, cork bark, small wood or tree-fern plaques all work well. Place a pad of moss or coconut fiber around the roots and secure the plant to the mount with monofilament line or strips cut from nylon hose. A daily light misting will help establish growth. If plants on mounts show a tendency to shrivel despite regular waterings, this may indicate conditions drier than optimum. Pare off some of the mount without disturbing the plant and simply set it in a clay pot (with no medium). This procedure may afford just the right amount of extra moisture around the root area. If conditions still seem too dry, sift potting mix into the container around the base of the plant. The medium used should be porous and drain readily. For those just starting to grow the tolumnias, this step-by-step procedure causes minimal trauma to the plant while it and the grower are getting acquainted. As you observe the results you will be able to choose the method that works best in your conditions.

Problems The airy, bright and dry cultural preference discourages most disease problems. Mealybugs and scale and aphids on the tender inflorescence are encountered most and may be dealt with simply by direct removal using a cotton swab soaked with ordinary rubbing alcohol. For larger infestations, wettable powder formulations of Malathion, Orthene, a product containing pyrethrins or one of the newer imidacloprid products (used according to manufacturer's directions) provide efficient control. Cygon seems to be toxic to the plants and should be avoided.

Unless plants are cultivated in a basket, a 3- to 4-inch pot full is the maximum size to which a plant should be allowed to



grow. When this size is reached (every two years on average), divide and repot the plant. Otherwise, as the central part of the plant begins to decline it may affect the healthy portion through

bacterial or fungal rot. Repotting should be done when new growth begins in the spring to assure quick establishment in the new quarters.