



East Texas Orchid Society

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ETOS Planning First Orchid Show in Nacogdoches for Fall 2010.

The East Texas Orchid Society has begun planning the first-ever orchid show to be held in Nacogdoches! Although the actual date isn't pinned down, we are shooting for fall of next year. It seems like a long time to prepare but it will be a valuable learning experience for our small group.



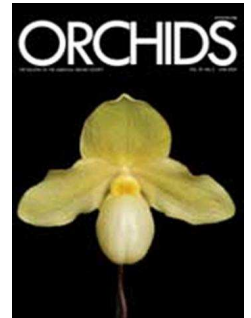
Above: a modest but beautiful display at a show

These pictures just give an idea of what to expect from a display at an orchid show. We anticipate entries from nearby orchid societies. Hopefuls include Tyler, Beaumont, Houston and maybe some others. As the host society, we will be responsible for the logistics such as providing a venue, securing American Orchid Society accredited judges, and arranging for orchid vendors for plant sales. We have lots to learn a lot about creating an exhibit, preparing our orchids and flowers for display, and AOS judging criteria. Having this goal to work towards should give us plenty to discuss at future meetings. Feel free to join us sometime, we can learn together. ~



American Orchid Society

The American Orchid Society is more than just a flower club. Throughout its 85-year history the AOS, in keeping with its vision and mission, has strived to bring its members timely and state-of-the-art orchid information, support basic and applied research in orchids, and monitor and support conservation effort both here in North America as well as throughout the World. They [we] support education programs, fund research grants, and participate in conservation of orchid habitats. Individual membership is sixty dollars per year and entitles you to many resources and benefits including a subscription to *Orchids*, the monthly publication of the AOS. The magazine is informative to growers at all levels and it is chock full of pictures. This month I'm renewing for the first time since I only joined last year, but I have learned so much I wish I had joined earlier! Much of the information on their website (www.aos.org) is free to non-members.



AOS Judging – The American Orchid Society's judging system is one of the most highly respected horticultural award systems in the world. At nationwide monthly judging and worldwide sanctioned shows, highly trained AOS judges evaluate and recognize new and superior forms of orchid species, improved forms of orchid hybrids, and plants exhibiting superior culture. Our own ETOS president is an AOS accredited judge, so I'll leave the detailed article on judging up to him, but I do want to kind of explain a little bit about it from a beginner's point of view. It sounds kind of exclusive, but it really isn't.

Like Arabian horses or pedigreed golden retrievers, many orchids have been bred to an ideal, a unique aesthetic quality depending on the variety. Flower size, color, shape, flower count, and unique breeding directions can all make an orchid exceptional. *Unlike* horses and retrievers (and lucky for us), orchids can be cloned by tissue culture and have exact duplicates made available to the hobby grower. These clones will carry the same award since it is genetically identical to the original awarded plant, and is given a clonal name or cultivar that identifies it as such. Common awarded clones can be purchased cheaply, but some command high prices as breeding stock. Since quality parents pass down desirable traits, and because offspring show variation, a plant purchased as a seedling may turn out to be a cut above the rest and worthy of an award. In this way, superior plants are not just reserved for the expert collector/breeders. Having judging centers spread around the country means that any grower may participate in this process and have their orchid judged by the experts.

Here are just a few of the AOS awards with their criteria:

Award of Merit (AM/AOS) – Awarded to orchid species or hybrids scoring 80 to 89 points inclusive on a 100-point quality scale.

First Class Certificate (FCC/AOS) - The highest flower-quality award, awarded to orchid species or hybrids scoring 90 points or more.

Certificate of Cultural Excellence (CCE) - Awarded to the exhibitor of a well-flowered specimen plant of robust health. The plant must score more than 90 points on a 100-point scale. Plants receiving this award represent the highest level of orchid culture.

Certificate of Botanical Recognition (CBR) - Awarded to rare and unusual species with educational interest that has received no previous awards.

The entire plant must be exhibited.



This photomontage shows the extreme variation in just one species, *Cattleya aelandiae*. Note the variation in lip color, degree and pattern of spotting, shape and fullness of the petals, and overall presentation. The far left picture shows the cultivar 'Krull-Smith', awarded an FCC (93 points) just last month.

To contact ETOS or view previous newsletters, visit our website at: www.easttexasorchidsociety.com.

Upcoming Events

July 10-12: Baton Rouge Orchid Society Show, Baton Rouge Garden Center, 7950 Independence Blvd., Baton Rouge, LA.
July 12, Sunday: ETOS July meeting (2nd Sunday due to July 4th holiday**)** – 1:30 pm at Unity Church, Nacogdoches, TX
August 2, Sunday: ETOS August meeting – 1:30 pm at Unity Church, Nacogdoches, TX
August 7: Houston Orchid Society Annual Workshop, Univ. of St. Thomas, Crooker Center, 3900 Graustark, Houston, TX.
September 19th: Re-potting Workshop - ETOS to host a seminar on re-potting orchids. This “hands-on” event is sure to be a blast! There will be a nominal registration fee, but attendees take home their newly re-potted orchids!

Where Can Growers in East Texas Find Quality Orchids?

That’s a good question! East Texas is a beautiful place to live and grow orchids. There are many East TX growers with vast collections, but good plants can be hard to find. There are, however, a few gems out there, and some tips and tricks to finding quality orchids at reasonable prices. The world of orchids is vast, but building a diverse collection can be difficult in an area without specialty orchid vendors. Here are a few of our options:

Option #1: Local Nurseries – Dragonfly Nursery in downtown Nacogdoches is the only place I’ve ever seen a nice variety of tropical orchids for sale. They are usually large and in bloom, which does affect price. I have mostly seen Phals, Oncidiums, and Vandas offered, but I bet they would stock others if they knew there was a demand. Cook’s Nursery and other local nurseries may offer the occasional terrestrial orchid such as *Phaius tankervilleae* (Nun’s Orchid) and *Bletilla striata* (Chinese Ground Orchid) which is a hardy perennial in this area and up to around zone 5. What we still lack is variety with a consideration for our local climate and botanical diversity. Nobody sells species or primary hybrids of Phals, Paphs, Vanda, Laelia, Brassavola, Encyclia, Cattleya, etc. These can be some of the most interesting and variable orchids, and some of the easiest to grow here in east Texas. Let’s make our voices heard and ask for orchids locally.

Option #2: Grocery Stores – These stores offer blooming orchids for special occasions like Valentine’s Day. These are usually mass-produced in laboratories and shipped or trucked into town already in bloom. These factory greenhouses grow thousands upon thousands of plants for sale in these types of chains and are often only identified as a “Phalaenopsis” or “Moth Orchid”. These can be extremely rewarding plants that provide blooms year after year if cared for, but many wind up in the garbage after serving their purpose as a table centerpiece or bathroom decoration. Without labels, these really aren’t marketed to serious orchid growers who collect species and hybrids, but rather the general public who merely want a pretty but temporary

white or pink flower, and never really intend on caring for a plant. This is totally fine for the casual orchid fan, but fanatics like myself are looking for a plant to enjoy for years, not months.

Option #3: Big Box Stores – Lowe’s and Wal-Mart occasionally offer orchids as well. Their blooming orchids probably come from the same factory greenhouses. Many big chains over-water their orchids, rapidly decaying the potting media so re-potting is sometimes needed. Some stores are now offering smaller plants, out of bloom, actually intended to be grown – imagine that! The same big orchid suppliers are stocking Lowe’s and Wal-Mart stores across the country with what I call “bagged” orchids, wrapped in mesh and hung on a rack in a plastic bag. Most are Cattleya and Vanda hybrids, but Wal-Mart has been known to offer different varieties this way. If not purchased quickly, they may linger for weeks, never seeing a drop of water. But when purchased early, these can be vigorous and healthy plants if given a larger pot and fresh media. Options are limited to the few varieties are stocked at any given time. Also, some stores take better care than others. Our local hardware chain neglects them terribly, but the Lufkin store maintains them very well.

Option #4: Trading – This is one of the most fun and exciting ways to build your orchid collection. Trading or just sharing divisions of plants in your collection is a great way to spread the enjoyment of orchids with a friend. Hopefully your friends will start collections of their own and the trades become more and more interesting. I’ve traded through the mail with orchid friends in Waco to Florida, and even Puerto Rico. Trading is a great way to discover new plants you might have never considered growing.

Option #5: Mail Order – Mail order has become all the rage in the plant world. The postal service and other carriers make it safe and quick to ship and receive plants in the mail. It sounds a bit scary at first, but it’s simpler than you think if you know where to look. Mail order opens up all sorts of options, too much to cover here so I’ve included a list of some of my favorite vendors with descriptions of their respective specialties - give one a try. Even if you’re not in the market for a new plant, these sites have lots of great photos and cultural advice for the beginner. Happy hunting!



July Meeting Preview: On July 12th (second Sunday) we will be taking our next steps towards AOS affiliation. Other agenda items include planning the re-potting workshop in Sept., settling on potential topics and speakers for programs this fall, and of course another show-and-tell table. As usual, we will have refreshments and will close the meeting with an orchid raffle. We hope to see you there. ~