



East Texas Orchid Society

March 2009 News – Volume 1, No. 4



Spring is Upon Us!

This is such an exciting time of the year. The Redbuds, Dogwoods, and Azaleas are a welcome sign of spring's fast approach. Many of us are busy tilling, fertilizing, planting vegetable gardens, and starting seeds. Local nurseries are getting in lots of new plants – and this is the perfect time to get mail-ordered orchids shipped. So much to do! The time change gives us a little extra daylight in the evening, but there never seems to be enough time for everything. Many local events, spring festivals, plant sales, and orchid shows are planned for this time of the year as well, so scheduling them can be a bit overwhelming. Here are a few fun events that you definitely won't want to miss:



March 27-29 - Alamo Orchid Society Show, San Antonio Garden Center, 3310 N. New Braunfels, San Antonio, TX.

March 28, Saturday: Spring Fling at the Farmer's Market – Local produce and goods each Saturday.

April 5, Sunday: ETOS April meeting – 1:30 pm at Unity Church, South St., Nacogdoches, TX

April 18, Saturday: SFASU Mast Arboretum Plant Sale – A variety of native and hardy plants – even the occasional orchid!

April 22-26, AOS Spring Show, Hosted by Houston Orchid Society – This will be one BIG show. Here's your chance to see thousands and thousands of orchids in full bloom, all under one roof (and practically in our backyard). Vendors from all over the world will have plants for sale so bring your camera and a little extra spending money.

May? Lone Star Regional Native Plant Conference – This is a great opportunity to see some orchids in the wild! Plant experts guide field trips to some interesting local ecosystems. In past years, Joe Liggio, co-author of "Wild Orchids of Texas" led at least one trip. Look for a link to this local, multi day event on the website soon. Registration will be required.



On the left is *Calopogon tuberosus* or Grass Pink. The one on the right is *Pagonia ophioglossoides* or Rose Pagonia. Both are native to east Texas and much of the southeast US. They are both found in Nacogdoches County, mostly in bogs, fens, and hillside seeps alongside our native pitcher plants and sundews. They inhabit the same sites but have distinct blooming periods that rarely overlap. Orchids "normally" have resupinate flowers, meaning their flower parts are technically upside down. The Rose Pagonia (right) and Southern Lady's Slipper (upper right) both have resupinate or "normal" flowers. As the developing buds form, they twist 180 degrees as they open so that the lip hangs towards the ground. The Grass Pink (left) appears to be upside down, but is actually in the botanically "correct" orientation. Since upside down is the norm for orchids, those that are right side up are referred to as non-resupinate. For tropical examples of non-resupinate flowers, look up the genus *Prosthechea*. ~



Monthly Culture tip: Re-potting is needed from time to time and newly acquired plants are often in dire need of a larger container. As the potting medium (usually bark or sphagnum moss) begins to decay, it breaks down into finer pieces that restrict air to the roots. Decayed media will stay wetter longer, and will eventually suffocate and rot the roots away. When re-potting, choose a pot that fits the root system snugly. Over potting should be avoided, and some orchids like *Dendrobium* love to be root-bound. Many local vendors carry orchid mixes well suited to most varieties we grow. Premium grade sphagnum moss, fir bark, coconut husk chips, and expanded clay, aren't locally available but can usually be purchased from most mail order orchid retailers. Go to the ETOS website and look on the links page for a few good vendors.

Timing is important for some orchids as they resent being disturbed. Spikes can break or buds can be lost, so it's a good idea to wait until after any blooms fade to re-pot. It's also best to wait until you see new root growth to be sure a plant will secure itself quickly in the new media. Since now is the time of year many of us are seeing new root growth starting, here are a few tips to make your next re-potting session go smoothly:

1. Be clean to avoid spreading bugs or disease. Only use new, fresh media and clean tools.
2. Pre-rinse and/or pre-soak the potting medium to soften it and clean it of dust.
3. Water the orchid thoroughly to soften the roots. Wet roots are less subject to damage.
4. Work slowly to remove as much of the old medium as you can with out breaking too many roots.
5. Trim away all mushy, dead roots to discourage further decay and to spur new root growth.
6. Hold the orchid inside the empty pot with the oldest growth against the rim to allow maximum room for new growth (center Phals and other orchids with only one central growth point). Place the new medium around the roots, one handful at a time, until the pot is full and the orchid is secure in the pot. Sometimes tapping or poking with your fingers will help fill all the gaps between the roots. Top-heavy plants need extra support until they anchor themselves. Clips or stakes work just fine.
7. Water thoroughly, then stick to a routine. Make sure the medium is fully settled by watering thoroughly, but then ease back a bit with your watering for a few weeks to encourage the roots to grow down into the new pot.

April Meeting Preview: Join us at 1:30 on Sunday April 5th for the next meeting. As usual, we will have refreshments and a plant raffle/door prizes. We will also form our first committees, and establish a schedule for election of officers and AOS affiliation. These first meetings have been somewhat improvised but formalization will enable our group to function and thrive as a true organization. Member participation is essential to our success!

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