



*The Greater Whorled Pagonia
Official Flower of the Club*

Newsletter of the

AMHERST ORCHID SOCIETY

An affiliate of the American Orchid Society

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July, 2006

July Meeting at Verda Dale's

June picnic at the Grays

By Marc Gray

With all the rain that we have been having all year I did not think we would pull off the picnic at my parents house this year. But we did. It in fact was quite hot here in the 80's and muggy. The final count at the picnic was around 30 people. We had plenty of food to feed on. I would like to thank all the people who brought food for the picnic. There were a lot of plants on the show table from many people from the club. We did not have a meeting as I thought that everyone was enjoying him or herself too much.

The primroses were out a lot better than normal due to having so much rain this year, making them a little later than usual. The greenhouses have been blooming plants well, but we need more sun, to make them grow better. I finally got the shade cloth on the greenhouses. Been very busy due to so much rain this year.

Well everybody, don't forget the meeting will be at Verda's place for the month of July this year instead of the usual place at Roger West's.

For the July Meeting

Please come and help me, Verda Dale, to celebrate my 90th birthday! Following the meeting there will be a social time, followed by a buffet, provided by me.

No Gifts Please!

I live at 296 Pomeroy Lane. Pomeroy Lane is one of the streets across the South Amherst Common from the Munson Library. My house sets back from the street behind a brown fence. Parking in the driveway on the south side of the street.

Plant of the Month

Brassavola complex hybrid Bc. Maikai X Bl. Morning Glory

By Maryanne Laukaitis

At the December '05 meeting, Bill Hutchinson offered seedlings of various hybrids to new members as an incentive to write for the newsletter. I did some internet research on the cross I chose, and I hope it performs for me as well as it is described. Here's my contribution:

This is an un-named hybrid of Bc. Maikai X Bl. Morning Glory, each of which I'll describe below. Breeding with *Brassavola nodosa* often yields offspring which produce flushes of bloom more than once a year, the *Brassavola* flower shape usually predominates and often have fragrance in the evening hours.

Bc. "Maikai" is a cross of *Brassavola nodosa x Cattleya bowringiana*, thus a *Brassocattleya*, registered with the Royal Horticultural Society in 1944 by Hirose. "Maikai" is very popular for it's robust growth rate, ease of care, and is considered very floriferous. The ivory flowers are heavily blushed and marked with amethyst, and are fragrant as is the *B. nodosa* parent. Blooms tend to fade as they age, but retain their color for two to three weeks or more.

Bl. Morning Glory is a cross of *B. nodosa x Laelia purpurata*, which produces clusters of large, fragrant ivory to pink "stars", offset by wide magenta-veined lips.

Like its *Brassavola* parents, this hybrid does not have pseudobulbs, but has short slender stems concealed by tubular sheaths. Leaves are variable in size and shape, ranging from 4 to 12 inches long; they are usually erect, very fleshy, grooved on the upper surface, and often appear semi-cylindrical.

This complex hybrid thrives with the same care as its *Brassavola* parents, preferring moderate to bright light, tolerating more light than *Cattleya*. It is also considered good for windowsill or solarium culture. An ideal situation would offer full, morning sun and bright filtered sun throughout the day. Grow these in an inorganic mix, and vary the amount of water with the season providing a wet/dry cycle late spring through fall and keep drier in the winter when not as active. Or, grow on cork, bark or in a basket, as a quick drying mount.

Let's remind ourselves of how these parent species grow in their native habitats:

B. nodosa is native to Mexico, Central America, Belize, Venezuela, Colombia, found along the Gulf of Mexico, and both the Pacific and Caribbean coasts and also reported on islands of the West Indies. Plants are found in low lying coastal regions, generally below 1640 ft. (500 m), growing as epiphytes on trees in tropical forests or mangrove swamps, or as lithophytes on exposed rocky cliffs near the shore, forming clumps about 15 inches high. It is considered a warm growing species, but will adapt to a wide range of conditions in cultivation. Many plants are grown with average winter low temperatures of 58-60F. It may be grown even cooler, but may not bloom if winter lows are colder than 52F. If grown in cool conditions, it is important that they be kept dry.

Light requirement is 2500-3500 fc. Although, plants may tolerate higher light levels, if introduced gradually, keeping humidity high (80%) with brisk air movement. Water should be kept off the leaves during the brightest part of the day to prevent burning.

Watering should be heavy every 2 to 3 days during the summer growing season, using a ¼ to ½ strength balanced or low-nitrogen fertilizer. Leaching with plain water to prevent mineral build-up is important. Winter is a resting period requiring cooler and drier conditions.

Inflorescences are produced one per leaf axil and each inflorescence may have 1 to 6 long-lived evening fragrant flowers, giving rise to the name "Lady of the Evening." The flowers are white to pale greenish or yellow, sometimes marked with purple or red in the throat. This tendency for marking is often passed on to offspring of intergeneric crosses, with the color determined by the other parent.

Cattleya bowringiana is native to Central America in the countries of Belize and Guatemala and, along with *C. skinneri*, is the most northern growing of the *Cattleya* species. It is considered a good plant for beginners, being

(Plant of the Month, con't)

vigorous, nearly 'indestructible' and remarkably adaptable. It is sometimes found as a lithophyte thriving even in full sun, or growing as a terrestrial on quartz sand along streams, or as a typical epiphyte, on large tropical trees. Plants grow at altitudes just above sea level to as high as 3,500 feet. It flowers in autumn, producing a number of flowers several inches across on a spike

One could write whole books about *Laelia purpurata*, indeed several people have, so I'll keep this paragraph short and urge you to do some research of your own. (The web makes it convenient, and the books in our Amherst Orchid Society library are waiting for you.) This orchid is the beloved national flower of Brazil. It is a large orchid (up to 2 ft tall), which some argue should be classified as, or with, the Cattleyas. *L. purpurata* prefers bright light and a breezy air circulation, warmer days in the 80s F, and cooler nights. It is not particularly fussy in cultivation, naturally growing in the tops of tall trees, it can be grown in bark mix or "lava rock." Flowers are typically 4-5 inches across with sometimes 4-5 flowers per inflorescence. *L. purpurata* has been used extensively as a parent in creating hybrid Cattleyas and is often the "L" in Lc. or Blc. bestowing the brilliant, rich colors of its labellum to the lips of its offspring.

A website that I found very informative about the Cattleya species is: <http://www.chadwickorchids.com/Cattleya/index.htm> where reprints of articles from the American Orchid Society Magazine are available on-line. I made use of numerous books and websites to compare and confirm details about the orchids species and hybrids listed above.

June Plant Table

Steve Steiner

dendrobium cuthbertsonii
dendrobium laevifolium
colax jugosa x mcla grandiflora
dendrobium pseudoglomeratum
Zygoneria Pine Road
Brassia verrucosa
Bulbophyllum ovalifolium

Verda Dale

Phragmipedium Don Wimber

Tom and Dottie Sullivan

oncidium equitant

Marge Tanguay

Phal I Glow 'Rose Glow' x Kathlene x AI
Golden Buddha
Milt Hajime Ono 'Maui Dream' x Milt Hajime
Ono 'Maui Falls'
Encyclia cordigera 'Pink Petticoat' x Encyclia
cordigera 'Sweet Earth'
Phal Carmela's Wild Thing x Alyshas Big

Spots 'Big Spots'

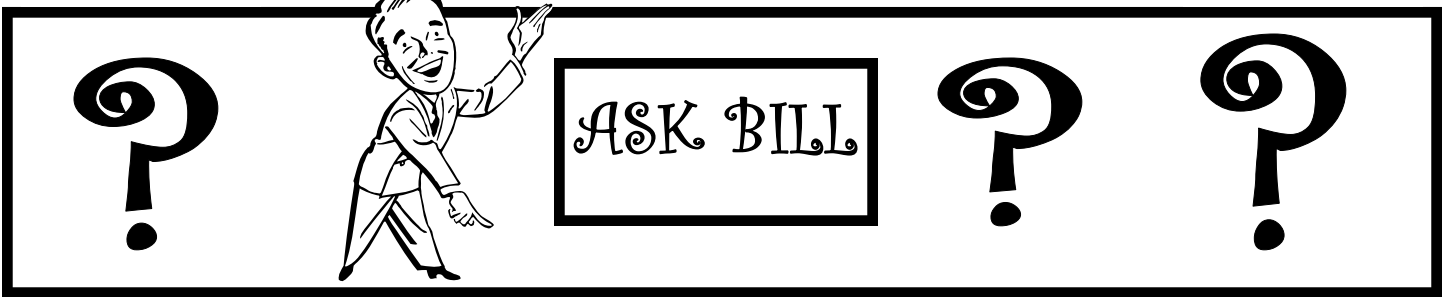
L. purpurata Vain carnea x self
Zygo Titanic x Zygo Freestyle
Phal Iridescent Glow 'Broadway Baby' AM/
AOS
Dtps Mino Princess 'Watercolor Artist'
Dtps Taida Pearl 'Black Horse'

Lani and Harold Norman

Blc Fantasy Maker 'H&R'
Onc Flaganse 'Midas'
Dendrobium Maiden Charlotte

Kim and Page Nyiri

neofanetia falcata 'White Tara' x 'Crystal Palace'
Masd. floribunda
Darwianara Charm 'Pink Star'
Haraella odorata
Epidendrum chonaylochcium
Coelgne brachytera
Phragmipedium schlimii
Brassia Little Stars



Questions for “**ASK BILL**” can be given to me at the monthly meetings. If possible write them out. If you prefer you may call me at 413-253-7036, write me at 52 Jeffrey Lane, Amherst, MA 01002-2532 or reach me via e-mail at >wa.hutchinson@comcast.net<. Answers to written questions may take one or two months to appear. The e-mail questions I nominally will answer within 24 hours or less. Keep in mind that if you are puzzled by a growing problem, etc. someone else is too.

Go to> www.larchhillorchids.com<, click on AmOrch and go directly an Amherst Orchid Society Web page. Additional information may be found on the Larch Hill pages. It has been completely redesigned, has a few zits but is up and running.

Q. Please review and comment on suggested potting media for growing in low humidity conditions for:

- **Phaleanopsis**
- **Paphiopedilum**
- **Oncidium and crosses**
- **Cymbidium**

A. What you've requested is a rather tall order but since the repotting clinic is coming up soon let's give it a try. You've put a caveat on the question by proposing solutions for low humidity. Some of the solutions, which will be suggested, will be ones that you must be very cautious about and that is watering. The addition of some sphagnum moss to most of the media will partially overcome the humidity problem but not entirely and if you are heavy handed with water you can create soggy conditions. Even orchids that require constant moisture to grow cannot tolerate soggy, stagnant media with little movement of air through into and around the roots. Plants that live in water often develop special modifications to solve this problem. Even plants growing in water, including orchids will exhibit such root modification. Roots of an Ivy plant grown in water are very different from those grown in soil.

Phaleanopsis. Since these plants have no pseudobulbs they cannot store water except in the fleshy leaves so they do not like to dry out. Media for your situation can be provided by using Pro-Mixä. I would add additional perlite to the medium and if possible obtain and add about 10 % sponge rock (coarse perlite). If you can find a source of living sphagnum a small portion can be placed on the surface of the medium after you finish potting. A note of caution: your plant will love it. If you put fertilizer on the moss you'll kill it and get mush and eventually a rotting orchid, so if you use it reduce watering. I often use other mosses, which are less sensitive and hold less water (sphagnum will hold up to 300% its weight, moist, in water). Pro-Mix itself is a peat based product and will also hold large amount of water. If you are heavy handed in the water department make your medium more porous or add some plastic peanuts to the bottom of the pot before you add the medium.

Paphiopedilum. They also have no pseudobulbs and the leaves are somewhat less fleshy than

(Ask Bill, con't)

the phals, they do not like to dry out. I would use a mixture of fine fir or redwood bark with added fine charcoal and perlite. If you have a source collect some 'punky wood' - wood that has started to break down and can be crumble in your hand and I rub it through a 1/4 inch hardware cloth screen. I use 3 parts fine bark to 1 part charcoal, 1 part perlite and then mix in a small amount of oyster shell or if you wish you can add some to the surface of the repotted plant. After potting is finished you might use a small piece of sheet moss, or 'Old Broom' moss. The latter is so called because when you see it, it resembles an old corn broom which has been used always in the same direction and has that old tired look. Be sure to keep this medium moist at all times. For some phrags you can put the pot into a pan so that it's in about 1/2 inch of standing water and capillary action will keep a constant level of moisture about the roots. Again be cautious and do not submerge the entire pot. I put my phrags into a tray with a few inches of stone chips and then bring the water level up. This will also raise the humidity about the plant. I would not use this for Paphs unless I kept the water level below the bottom of the pot. All fertilizing for this group is foliar only. See earlier Ask Bill on fertilizing paphs.

Oncidium and crosses. This group has finer roots than the first two and pseudobulbs are present and will aid you in solving your problem. I would suggest a mixture of NZ sphagnum or dried native (not living) and shredded tree fern about 50/50. I would moisten the mixture slightly before use just to help get a good pack when potting. Medium tree fern works well and you'll find it easier to work with than the coarser grade. Again use some plastic peanuts or other inert coarse material for improve drainage and aeration. Do not pack the medium too hard or you'll create dead soggy roots. The medium should be packed just tight enough so you can grasp the upper portion of the plant and lift without the plant coming out of the pot. I would also suggest that you use a watering regimen that lets the medium periodically dry out somewhat. This will promote healthy root growth. Note that this situation is somewhat drier than the preceding two but keep in mind that the pseudobulbs will even out the moisture requirements somewhat. If crinkle leaf develops, increase watering. The same approach should work for the crosses.

Cymbidium. In nature the cymbidiums are hummock growing plants in wet areas or swales. This means a good organic medium with good aeration about the roots. I use a medium based on diatomite, sponge rock and potting soils or pro-mix and to this I might add some medium fir bark. You could add a small amount of sphagnum but I would be very careful since the plants don't tolerate soggy medium very well. During active growth keep the medium evenly moist and as the vegetative growth hardens begin to run the medium drier. Some of the most vigorous Cymbidia I have ever seen were so dry I found it unbelievable. This was at the Hunnewell estate in Wellesley. But you should have seen the flower spikes. Actually look at the Cymbidia that Lynn Reynolds grows. She's got it figured out 'Dai Ichi-ban too!

This should give you some starting points to consider when you begin to repot. Keep in mind that there are few magic tricks to producing good plants under all conditions. The medium suggestions are only beginning points and what works for me may not meet your conditions or growing methods. The unhappiest grower I've ever met was one that every time someone told him how they grew and what mixtures they used would immediately change the entire medium in his plants. He had the sickest, sorriest looking collection you ever wanted to see. **RULE ONE:** Whatever works for you should be the answer and the beginning premise to all your growing. If you have a division of a plant experiment with it and try two different approaches. I've used washed pea stone, osmundine, sphagnum and sponge rubber chunks and yes even shredded insulation. Orchids are really not as picky as some of us think. Great Growing.



To find the bylaws of the Amherst Orchid Society go to:
www.larchhillorchids.com and click on Amherst Orchid
Society and then bylaws.

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Amherst Orchid Society 2006 Upcoming Events

July 16, 2006: Meeting at Verda Dale's house.

July 29-30, 2006: Summer Orchid Fest Parkside Orchid Nursery, Ottsville, PA

August: No Meeting

AMHERST ORCHID SOCIETY MONTHLY MEETING

Our monthly meetings are held the 3rd Sunday of each month except the month of August. Most of the meetings (except June and July) are held at the Munson Memorial library in South Amherst at 1046 South East St. next to the Congregational church. Meetings start at 2 pm with beginner programs some months at 1:30 pm.



*The Greater Wooded Pagonia
Official Flower of the Club*

Carol Mentos, Editor
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NEXT MEETING: July 16, 2006 at
2pm

Come celebrate Verda Dale's 90th birthday
at 296 Pomeroy Lane, Amherst. Details
inside the newsletter.

Note to Members: Submissions for the August/
September 2006 newsletter must reach the
editor by August 18, 2006 to be printed.