



St. Augustine Orchid Society

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My Favorite Orchids

January 2007

by Dr. Courtney Hackney, hackneau@comcast.net

Hardly a month goes by without an email from someone asking what the best orchid is. Often the individual asking the question has limited space and wants to spend their money wisely. If you have been one of those asking the question, then you know that my answer has been somewhat evasive. In fact, you likely got more questions than answers. The following is how I approach the question.

My collection is a real mix of genera and reflects my personal taste, available space, and growing conditions. About half of my plants are my permanent collection, i.e. mature plants. Because there is no space for new plants, every new addition to the permanent collection requires getting rid of a plant.

New hybrid and species seedlings are acquired each year to see what various parental combinations will produce. In most cases, once they bloom, I take a photo and sell or give the plant away, hopefully creating new orchid addicts in the process. Some seedlings become mulch or are occasionally so interesting or different that I cannot part with it. Often this new discovery replaces a similar orchid that is not as good with respect to flower quality or growth characteristics. My goal is to have a collection of vigorous orchids with at least one of each color combination, especially in cattleyas and phals.

My interest in classic [old] hybrids and clones of cattleyas continues, and these are added at the expense of new hybrids. Most orchid hobbyist gravitate towards some group, color, etc. of orchid. Getting to see what types of orchid each orchid hobbyist likes best is what makes club meetings so much fun.



Phal. Balidan's Kaleidoscope
(Hausermann's Candy x Daryl Lockhart)

So what are the characteristics of some of my favorites? In phals, Dtps Newberry Parfait 'Picotee' has a unique picotee around the edge of each well-formed white flower, which is an unusual combination. It grows like a weed, will remain in flower all year long, and can easily be grown into a specimen plant. Phal Balidan's Kaleidoscope 'Golden Treasure' or 'Orchidheights' is another unique orchid. It is a non-fading, relatively large yellow flower with stripes that is extremely vigorous. Virtually all other similar hybrids grow poorly and fade as the flower ages.

These have both been made available through cloning and are inexpensive. Similarly, Dtps Martha Dolge is an easy growing white with stunning red lip with flowers as large as most standard white phals. Best of all, it is also very easy to grow, unlike many semi-alba phals. There are also clones with a unique orange lip. There are many different clones of Dtps Anna-Larati Suekarde in a variety of colors and all are desirable. This true miniature phal produces multiple spikes each year and the plant itself multiplies in the pot. After a few



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years a plant may produce 10 or more spikes in a 4 inch pot. Sadly, I have not seen this one available as a mericlone yet.



Bulb. Elizabeth Ann 'Buckleberry' FCC/AOS
(*longissimum* x *rothschildianum*)

There are also orchids in my permanent collection that I would maintain even if the flowers were not beautiful because of their fragrance. Many, such as *Phal lueddemanniana* and *pulchra*, are extremely fragrant for months. There are also some I love despite their fragrance, such as Bulb Elizabeth Ann 'Buckleberry', which produces whorls of unusual flowers covered with tufts of tiny hairs, and Bulb *echinolabium*, with spidery red-orange striped flowers almost 30 cm in length that is almost always in bloom.

Stay tuned next month for my "A-list" of cattleyas that should be in every collection.