



## CLUB NEWS



Mark Rose

### February 6, 2018 Monthly SAOS Meeting

By Janis Croft,  
[secy@staugorchidsociety.org](mailto:secy@staugorchidsociety.org)

#### Welcome and Thanks.

Bob Schimmel opened the meeting at 7:00 pm sharp with 50 attendees. Bob thanked Dottie Sullivan for her tasty treats and Jeanette Smith and Shirley Browning for organizing the refreshments and reminded all to drop a dollar in the basket while enjoying

their refreshments. Bob next informed all that the Best of Show voting would occur between the Show Table discussion and the presentation as well as the end of the silent auction. He encouraged all to vote for their favorite orchid.

Carolyn Smith introduced our guests and new members, Lucy Pederson, Josie Blancuzzi and Amita Banerjee Lahiri as well as Jim Soll who joined the club at the Ace repotting clinic. Sue Bottom reminded everyone that last month's new member, Steve Hawkins, is the Orchid Specialist and had him stand so all could recognize a new resource for orchid information. We should also have introduced the club to Lucinda Winn, who was one of the owners of J&L Orchids before moving to St. Aug, and is a great source of information on miniature orchids.

**Club Business.** There are four orchid shows in February: Boca Raton, Columbia SC, Port St. Lucie, and Naples. Check [SAOS website](#) for details.

2018 Membership dues are now due. \$20 for individual and \$30 for family. Bring your check to the next meeting or use the PayPal link on SAOS website to sign up for membership.

Our Sunshine Coordinator, Linda Stewart delivered free raffle tickets to the two people with birthdays in February.

Bob Schimmel announced that the next Keiki meeting will be on Feb. 25 at 1pm at Janis Croft and Alan Winer's home at 8311 County Road 208. We will discuss

our plans for the Jacksonville Orchid show exhibit and Linda Stewart will have a hands-on demonstration on how to prepare your plants for display at either an orchid show or our own show table.

SAOS hats and potting supplies were available at the sales table. Email Sue Bottom ([sbottom15@hotmail.com](mailto:sbottom15@hotmail.com)) if you need potting supplies, special quantities or different items and she will bring them to the next meeting for purchase. Next month we will have coarse mix, phal mix, time release fertilizer and "Purely O." fertilizer for sale.

Email SAOS Librarian Penny Halyburton ([librarian@staugorchidsociety.org](mailto:librarian@staugorchidsociety.org)) with your book request and she will bring the item(s) to the next meeting. Library list is on the [SAOS website](#).

**Show Table.** Courtney Hackney started the discussion with a beautiful purple cattleya Triumphal Coronation whose flowers were 6-8 inches wide. He then went on to the next plant, a multi-floral purple nodosa hybrid Punakea that was well grown. He commented that this will be a good specimen plant in future years. Next Courtney picked up a yellow dendrobium Spring Bird and stated that it will remain a smallish compact plant and should remain in a small pot. The next white and purple flowered plant led Courtney to tell the story of how he first obtained it. He was in Hawaii and saw the plant on a friend's bench. His friend did not like his hybrids so Courtney offered him \$10. When he got it home, he split the plant into two parts—kept one for himself and gave Sue the other half. As we could all see, it had grown into a beautiful specimen plant.



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## Upcoming Orchid Events

### February

- 9-11 South Carolina Orchid Society Show  
Riverbanks Zoo&Botanical Garden  
West Columbia, SC
- 10-11 Boca Raton Orchid Society Show  
Safe Schools Institute
- 13 JOS Meeting, Encyclias, 7 pm  
Marv Ragan, JOS
- 17-18 Port Saint Lucie Orchid Society Show  
Port St. Lucie Community Center
- 23-25 Naples Orchid Society Show  
Moorings Presbyterian Church
- 25 Keiki Club Get-Together, 1 pm  
The Orchid Show Season  
Janis Croft and Alan Winer's Home  
8311 CR 208, St. Aug 32092

### March

- 2-3 Englewood Area Orchid Society Show  
Englewood Methodist Church
- 2-4 Martin County Orchid Society Show  
Martin County Fairgrounds
- 3 SAOS at Ace Hardware, 9 am til 1 pm  
3050 US 1 S in St. Augustine
- 3-4 Tampa Bay Orchid Society Show  
Tampa Scottish Rite Masonic Center
- 6 SAOS Meeting, 7 pm  
Bulbophyllums  
Bill Thoms, Bulbophyllums
- 8-11 Gulf Coast Alliance Orchid Society Show  
North Collier Regional Park, Naples
- 9-11 Orchid Society of Coral Gables Show  
Fairchild Botanic Garden
- 17-18 Jacksonville Orchid Society Show  
Garden Club of Jacksonville
- 24-25 Orchid Society of Highlands County  
Bert J. Harris Jr. Ag Center, Sebring
- 25 Keiki Club Get-Together, 1 pm  
Potting Mixes and Repotting Orchids  
Sue and Terry Bottom's Home  
6916 Cypress Lake Ct, St Aug 32086

### April

- 3 SAOS Meeting, 7 pm  
Phalaenopsis  
Phillip Hamilton, Bredren Orchids
- 6-8 Deep South Orchid Society Show  
Central GA Botanical, Savannah
- 7 SAOS at Ace Hardware, 9 am til 1 pm  
3050 US 1 S in St. Augustine
- 10 JOS Meeting, Angraecums, 7 pm  
Tom Kuligowski, Angraecum Blog
- 21-22 EPIC Celebration of Spring  
Annual Flower and Garden Expo  
Ag Center, St. Augustine

## St. Augustine Orchid Society Organization

President	Bob Schimmel <a href="mailto:schimmelr55@bellsouth.net">schimmelr55@bellsouth.net</a>
Vice President Events	Dianne Batchelder <a href="mailto:ladydi9907@aol.com">ladydi9907@aol.com</a>
Vice President Membership	Linda Stewart <a href="mailto:lindstew@hotmail.com">lindstew@hotmail.com</a>
Vice President Programs	Sue Bottom <a href="mailto:sbottom15@gmail.com">sbottom15@gmail.com</a>
Secretary	Janis Croft <a href="mailto:croftie1984@gmail.com">croftie1984@gmail.com</a>
Treasurer	Bill Gourley <a href="mailto:wgourley@bellsouth.net">wgourley@bellsouth.net</a>
Directors at Large	Susan Smith <a href="mailto:2manysmiths@comcast.net">2manysmiths@comcast.net</a> Tom Sullivan <a href="mailto:tomjs91@gmail.com">tomjs91@gmail.com</a> Suzanne Susko <a href="mailto:suzsuskso@bellsouth.net">suzsuskso@bellsouth.net</a>
Exhibit Committee Chair	Janis Croft <a href="mailto:croftie1984@gmail.com">croftie1984@gmail.com</a>
Librarian	Penny Halyburton <a href="mailto:phalyburton@comcast.net">phalyburton@comcast.net</a>
Newsletter Editors Webmasters	Sue and Terry Bottom <a href="mailto:sbottom15@gmail.com">sbottom15@gmail.com</a> <a href="mailto:bottom406@gmail.com">bottom406@gmail.com</a>





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Courtney moved onto a Casita Springs hybrid that is commonly bred with many other plants for its beautiful form and large flower size. Courtney brought in Mahogany Rock 'Sunshine Dolly' with notable yellow flowers, because the cultivar was named for our guest speaker's wife. The fragrant Lc. Siamese Doll 'Kiwi' orchid with its spotted petals and striking fuchsia lip thrives under low water conditions. The next unusual plant was a *Trichopilia suavis* with flowers that hung downward on their inflorescences. After asking permission, Courtney took the plant out of its ceramic pot to reveal a smaller plastic net pot. Courtney said that this trick of putting the orchid in a ceramic pot, allows one to keep the plant moist for a longer period of time. There was a unique bulldog *paphiopedilum*. One of the first hybrids of this type was named after Winston Churchill and by its looks one could understand why. Courtney stated that all *paphiopedilums* like lime and most growers add dolomitic lime once a month to their plants. Check out the photos of our show table examples at the end of the newsletter and on the SAOS website.



**SAOS Program.** Courtney introduced the evening's speaker, Mark Rose, who Courtney says is a very good grower of orchids having operated Breckinridge Orchids for many years. Mark is from Boone, N.C. and spoke about Native Orchids of the Eastern U.S. He is a director for the Native Orchid Conference and encouraged all to go to the website for further information, <http://www.nativeorchidconference.info>. Mark's interest in orchids



started when he was nine years old and while out squirrel hunting, he stumbled upon a display of pink Lady Slippers and became enamored. He then joined the AOS and has been an orchid as well as a botanical lover ever since. He encouraged us to look for native orchids in our area and try to preserve their habitat. Mark then showed slides of all the varieties of native plants along the eastern half of the United States and Canada and pointed out the ones that we could find in Florida. You can do an internet search to find native orchids for sale and plant them in the fall or very early spring in our area. Some examples that would grow well here are the *Platanthera* group of Fringed Orchids and the *Spiranthes* group of Ladies' Tresses. If you are interested, some potential sources include [Plant Delights Nursery](#), [Gardens of the Blue Ridge](#), [Great Lakes Orchids](#) and [American Meadows](#).



**Meeting Conclusion.** Harry McElroy announced the Member's Choice Award as a tie between the *Trichopilia suavis* grown by Linda Stewart and the Blc. Triumphant Coronation 'Seto' grown by Sue Bottom. Dianne orchestrated the raffle. Thanks to all the helpful hands that stayed to reset the tables and chairs and clean up the room.



Thanks to Watson Realty and Jeanette Smith for the use of their meeting space at 3505 US 1 South



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## Time to Pay Your 2018 Dues

We will be collecting dues at the March meetings, after which we will update our roster. Dues are \$20 for an individual and \$30 for a family. You can mail your membership check to SAOS c/o Bill Gourley, 807 Kalli Creek Lane, St. Augustine, FL 32080. If you prefer to renew your membership online, you can pay using PayPal from the link on our SAOS website. The online dues for an individual are \$21 and for a family \$31, which includes the fees PayPal charges.

## Meet Your Mentor

### January Keiki Club Get Together

We kicked off the 2018 Keiki Club season with a Meet Your Mentor get-together at Sue and Terry's house. Mentoring Coordinator Susan Smith introduced mentors and mentees to initiate our new mentoring program. We discussed everyone's goals and objectives and how best to achieve them using our existing keiki club and Ace repotting clinics as resources. Susan even baked a cake to celebrate our new program, yum yum!

## Show 'em Where You Grow 'em

This is our final plea asking you to send pictures of where you grow your orchids during the cold months. We will use these in our September presentation to the SAOS focusing on where our members grow their orchids and how they deal with cold temps during the winter months. Start snapping pictures and [email us](#) with some of your tricks! You might even be asked to talk a little about your winter practices at the monthly meeting when we reveal our members winter orchid care secrets.

## American Orchid Society Corner

### Upcoming Webinars:

February 21, 8:30-9:30 pm, Members Only  
[I See Spots](#) – C. guttata, A. Coghill-Behrends

### [Photos of Latest AOS Awards](#)

Orchids Magazine: [request free issue!](#)

Genus of the Month: *Caucaea*

The Story of White Cattleyas

*Dendrobium bigibbum*, Part 2

Red Vandas

For the Novice: Calcium Deficiency

## March 6 Monthly SAOS Meeting Bulbophyllums

Bill Thoms will talk about Bulbophyllums, those oddballs of the orchid world that often have very distinctive odors and very unusual shapes. He will discuss culture and growing tips in his own unique style, showing some of the most unique and exotic looking species and hybrids. Bill is an internationally recognized speaker who wrote the whimsical book *Bulbophyllums: the Incomplete Guide, From A to Why*.

Bring your flowering orchids to exhibit on the Show Table. We will have our normal raffle at the end of the meeting. Friends and guests are always welcome!



## February 25 Keiki Club

### The Spring Orchid Show Season

The Keiki Club will focus on the orchid show season, and the upcoming Jacksonville show on March 17 and 18. Janis will talk about our plans for the SAOS exhibit, highlighting all the jobs that need doing. Linda will talk about how you prepare plants to exhibit, either at an orchid show or on the show table, by cleaning leaves, staking flower spikes, etc. Sue will talk about what to look for when you are buying plants and what you should do when you bring them home.

**Moderators:** Janis Croft, Linda Stewart and Sue Bottom

**Where:** Janis Croft and Alan Winer's Home

[8311 County Road 208, St. Augustine 32092](#)

**When:** February 25, 1 - 3 pm





# INSPIRATION

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*Spiranthes vernalis*

© Terry Botta



# CULTIVATION



## Orchid Questions & Answers

by Sue Bottom,  
sbottom15@gmail.com

**Q1.** I left these outside during the cold wet weather. Yikes! They're inside now, what do I do?



**A1.** The phalaenopsis may be a goner. Whether the damage is from the freezing temperatures or dripping cold water, the cells have collapsed and been invaded by bacteria. You can remove the leaves, spray the entire plant with hydrogen peroxide or one of the copper fungicides/bactericides. Put it in a warm place and then you wait, perhaps a basal keiki will form.

The other orchid, a *Grammatophyllum* perhaps, also has some extreme cold damage. Remove those leaves that are totally or mostly brown. If you choose to keep some of the greenish leaves, spray them with peroxide and watch the leaves. If the discolored areas continue to enlarge, remove them. There is a lot of energy stored in those pseudobulbs, so your hope is that they will sprout new healthy growths in the spring.

**Q2.** I have had this phal type dendrobium for several years. The plant is in a southeast window with some phals (house temp about 65F, about 60 miles north of NYC). It hasn't produced many spikes over the years but it has 6 canes that had, until a couple of days ago, green leaves and was looking pretty happy. Is the leaf yellowing a bad thing?

**A2.** The phalaenopsis dendrobiums are very cold sensitive. I am guessing it was too close to the window on a cold night. The good news is that dendrobiums are tough. As long as the canes are hard, they'll probably come back. Feel the canes from the base to the top looking for any soft or desiccated spots.

It looks like the canes are a little deep in the pot, why don't you try picking some of the bark out of the top of the pot until you can see the rhizome, then feel the cane at the very



base to make sure there is no rot. If nice and hard, find the brightest spot you can in the house and just wait and watch, cut back on watering to say half your normal rate until you see some new growth.



**Q3.** Just noticed the base of leaves of this *Psychopsis* are turning yellow. Do you think the two nights below 60 caused this?

**A3.** I don't think it's the cold weather; those *Psychopsis* oncidiums can be very temperamental. I think it is a form of rot that comes up from the roots through the pseudobulb to the leaves, possibly rhizoctonia because it isn't fast like black rot. When that yellowing occurs, that part of the plant is probably toast. Move the organic matter away from the pseudobulbs and from above the rhizome.



See if there are any roots attached to the oldest pseudobulbs and whether the bulbs are hard or soft. If the roots are gone, the bulbs softening, cut them away and then decide whether you should repot, which could hasten the end, or let the plant try to recover, in which case give it a Banrot drench.

I keep mine in a somewhat shadier spot than the cattleyas in a mostly inorganic mix. Just leave them alone, let them grow out of the pot and don't disturb the roots, sometimes a leaf yellows and drops and as long as the bulb is hard, just let it do its thing.





## Phalaenopsis and Potting Mixes

Courtney's Orchid Growing Tips

It can't be winter without at least one month's column about Phalaenopsis. Phals are now the most popular orchid in the world thanks to the mass production of this group as a pot plant. The growing of Phals has been left to the commercial growers by most that enjoy their flowers, but there are still a few of us that prefer to grow our own. Opinions as to the best media in for growing Phals is about as changing as the weather.

Many growers attempt to use the same media as pot plant growers. If you have had success or not with these media, remember that commercial growers have the luxury of discarding plants that do not grow and are able to carefully control water and fertilizer to maximize growth. At the slightest hint of disease, plants are given a potent treatment. One of the most important elements of commercial culture is the ability to get plants into and out of a specific pot size in months instead of years. This allows the grower to use media that degrade quickly, especially when high levels of fertilizer are used; media such as ProMix and other peat based mixes.

For many years a wide variety of media have been used on Phals in my greenhouse with varying degrees of success. Each year has included an evaluation of what worked and new ideas for next year's efforts. This year there will be very little new media experimentation because my Phals seem to have maximized both flowering and growth with my present media, fertilizer, and light regimen. For those still searching for the right media here is my current technique that has worked well in a greenhouse with no summer cooling and high heat. It has even done well during this year's drought when well water was used. What is my reason for stopping and not doing additional experiments? Plants are now as large as I have ever obtained, with more, larger flowers coupled with almost no rot problems for the entire year.

Species are all grown differently. Hybrids with *Phal. violacea* and *Phal. lueddemanniana*-like species are grown in baskets or mounted. *Phal. schilleriana* hybrids are grown in higher light and allowed to dry thoroughly before watering. They are also grown in 50% coconut chips and 50% sponge rock. *Phal. gigantea* and its hybrids are grown even drier and brighter receiving light levels designated for Cattleyas. They are potted in clay pots with bottom 1/3 of the pot filled with lava rock and the remaining part filled with

a mix of half lava rock and half coconut chips. Plants are allowed to dry thoroughly before watering. *Phal. amabilis* and other large flowered species are grown as hybrids except they have extra sponge rock in their mix.

Hybrids in 4" pots or less are potted in 50% ProMix and 50% #3 sponge rock and put in plastic pots. All larger plants are placed in standard clay pots. Air and water can move through clay pots preventing stagnation of the media. In each clay pot, the bottom one inch is covered with lava rock. After the plant is placed in the pot, roots are covered with the same 50/50 ProMix sponge rock combination as above, but not all the way to the final level. The final 1/2 to 1 inch is covered with either medium fir bark or coconut chips. The presence of bark or coconut at the surface facilitates the entry of roots into the media and prevents the ProMix from being splashed out. Phals in 4" pots must be repotted within a year, usually by the end of nine months, even if they are not ready for larger pots. When plants in 4" pots stop growing repot, even if it is less than nine months. ProMix has a good dose of fertilizer that lasts 6-9 months under these conditions.

Phals in larger pots can go longer without repotting. Roots were still in good shape after 15 months when they were repotted. Most of the ProMix washes through after a year leaving just sponge rock and bark from above. Most of these plants were repotted last spring, but a few just had additional bark added on top to determine if they could go another year without repotting.

Large plants benefit greatly from the extra drainage of both the lava rock and sponge rock, but like the extra moisture and fertilizer in the ProMix as they grow new roots. The bark at the surface seems to allow the whole pot to dry at about the same time, even when the pot size was 10". Best of all, the weight of the clay pot and lava rock kept the pot from falling over when in full flower. When repotted, *Phal* roots were tangled all around the lava rock indicating that roots were living and growing all the way to the bottom of the pot.



*Note: Dr. Courtney Hackney wrote a monthly column of his orchid growing tips for about 20 years; we are reprinting some you might have missed, this one from February 2002.*





# CULTIVATION

## How to Grow and Propagate Bletillas

by Richard E. Weaver Jr (REW) and Warren F. Sunitumire (WPS)

Courtesy of the American Orchid Society

Every gardener has tricks for growing any given plant and we will share some of ours for growing bletillas. *Bletilla striata* is an adaptable plant. It is the hardiest species and WPS grows and blooms it successfully in Akron, Ohio (USDA Zone 5), but always heavily mulched with leaves. On the other hand, it succeeded for REW in Puerto Rico (USDA Zone 11), although the bloom diminished in time unless the plants were periodically forced into dormancy. The range for optimum growth and bloom of this species would be USDA Zone 6-Zone 9. *Bletilla ochracea* and *Ble. formosana* are less hardy, although both survived 2 F (with snow cover) at We-Du Nurseries in western North Carolina (USDA Zone 7a), and both were vigorous there. The former did not bloom well in Puerto Rico; the latter bloomed reliably and for extended periods of time and was the only species actually successful in the garden. The range for optimum growth and bloom would be USDA Zone 7- Zone 9 for *Ble. ochracea* and USDA Zone 7-Zone 11 for *Ble. formosana*. Although the pseudobulbs can withstand cold temperatures, the shoots of all species are blackened by even a single degree of frost. Freezing is not detrimental if it occurs when the shoots are only a few inches tall. However, *Ble. ochracea* and *Ble. formosana* generally begin growth after the threat of freezing temperatures is past. We suspect that heat intolerance may well be a limiting factor in the successful cultivation of *Ble. szetschiuinica* and *Ble. yunnanensis*, so that the range for optimum growth and bloom for these species would be Zone 7-Zone 8. We have not grown most of the hybrids for extended periods outdoors, but we feel most would be successful in USDA Zone 7- Zone 9; some would be more cold hardy.

**CULTURE** Bletillas can be successfully grown in a variety of soils, as long as the pH is not too high, with a pH of six or seven being ideal. They thrive in poor sandy soils in Ocala, but they require supplemental watering during particularly dry periods, especially while the plants are actively growing. On the other hand, Tony Avent of Plant Delights Nursery recommends rich, moist to waterlogged soils. A general rule regarding moisture would be: do not allow the plants to dry out during active growth, or else the shoots will be stunted and the flower buds may blast; during dormancy, excessively wet or waterlogged conditions are not recommended. Amending sandy soil with organic matter will lessen the need for supplemental watering. A mulch of pine needles or shredded leaves will conserve moisture and help to protect the pseudobulbs during the winter months. We believe that bletillas should be fertilized

during the growing season for best growth and bloom. A water-soluble fertilizer with an acidic reaction is ideal, applied full strength every month or so, starting as the foliage expands and continuing into midsummer. A time-release fertilizer applied according to the manufacturer's recommendations also works very well. Of course, adding composted manure to the planting mixture or applying an occasional top dressing of the same is a more natural and still efficacious solution.



***In autumn, the pseudobulbs and roots are placed into a shallow hole and covered with 2 to 3 inches of soil.***

We have seen recommendations that bletillas should be grown in partial shade. The emphasis here should be on the "partial." Planting in dense shade, such as under coniferous trees or live oaks, or on the north side of a building, will result in weak, spindly plants with sparse bloom. High deciduous shade will produce satisfactory results, as will shade during the hottest part of the day. But in general, the more light the better for most of the species and hybrids. In the northern half of the United States, full sun would be best. Even with the intensity of the sunlight of Central Florida, REW's plants thrive with full sun until 2 pm in the summer. Under these conditions, growth and bloom is excellent, but the foliage becomes yellow and unsightly by midsummer. For those gardeners lucky enough to find them, *Ble. szetschiianica* and *Ble. yunnanensis* would probably do best with a bit more shade.

**CONTAINERS** For those who cannot or wish not to grow them in the garden, *Bletilla* species and hybrids do well in containers; we prefer ones made of clay. A commercial soilless mix, with peat, perlite and vermiculite is fine but we recommend adding some coarse sand. Give the plants as much light as possible and keep them evenly moist. We recommend a soluble fertilizer (such as Peters 30-10-10) at full strength once a month. In northern Ohio, the plants defoliate in October, and they can be overwintered in their pots (kept completely dry in a frost-free place). When starting them in the spring, increase the watering gradually to avoid rot. Repot annually and divide when necessary. Division is easiest during the dry, dormant period, but be careful not to break the long and very fragile buds. Set the pseudobulbs so that the lips of the buds are about 2





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inches (5 cm) below the surface of the medium. Bletillas are remarkably free of ailments. Aphids attack the buds and the tender vegetative parts during the early growth cycle, and these should be controlled because they can transmit plant viruses.



**Plants of *Bletilla striata* in a garden near Fukuoka City, Kyushu, Japan, where they start flowering in mid to late April and peak in mid May. The soil is a loamy, coarse, water-retentive sand, yet it drains well. Grower: Tom Velardi.**



**PROPAGATION** If the cultural needs of bletillas are met, they spread rapidly and often form dense clumps that should be divided periodically to maintain vigorous growth and profuse bloom. Division can be part of routine maintenance as well as a simple but effective means of propagation. If done in the autumn, as many gardeners prefer, care must be taken not to break next year's fragile buds. We prefer dividing in the early summer, soon after the foliage is mature. Doing it then lessens the chance of damaging the buds, and the divisions are able to become established before the onset of winter. However, if the plants are divided in the early summer, the front bulb may not be fully developed, and it is best to leave last year's pseudobulb attached in each division. The older pseudobulbs should not be discarded. Bletillas, like many other orchids, grow sympodially, annually producing a new growth that flowers in season and then becomes dormant, eventually to wither and die. The old pseudobulbs or backbulbs have dormant buds, which become active if the front bulb is damaged. These backbulbs can be manually removed and planted, and even those several years old will produce shoots and eventually new plants. This can be done in conjunction with routine division, with backbulbs in hand. But for most efficient propagation the procedure is best performed in the fall, when the front bulb is well developed, or in the spring just before the plants break dormancy.

*This article appeared in the American Orchid Society's monthly publication Orchids in May 2005 (Vol. 77:5, pp 372-373). This issue also has articles about different species and hybrids in cultivation by the same authors.*



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## Bletillas Offered by Plant Delights Nursery

**Editor's Note:** If you would like to grow some orchids in your yard, Bletillas are a good choice. They are not particularly fussy, as you might guess based on their growing throughout a wide geographical range from Ohio to Puerto Rico. We dug up the *Bletillia striata* we planted in our yard when we moved over to St. Augustine from Houston, and they have not missed a beat growing well and blooming each year despite the benign neglect they receive. If you would like to try to naturalizing orchids, Plant Delights Nursery in Raleigh, North Carolina has a nice selection of Bletillas; here are some of their offerings and suggestions.

In climates where they are winter hardy, *Bletilla* is the easiest hardy orchid to start with because it is very adaptable to a wide range of environments. The genus contains 8 species that are native to Asia. Three species, the pink flowered *Bletilla formosana*, the yellow flowered *Bletilla ochracea* and rose-purple flowered *Bletilla striata* are common in horticulture. Mature bletilla form a series of inflorescences (racemes) for up to 10 weeks in the spring or early summer. Each inflorescence arises at the tip of a stem and has 3 to 10, 1.5" wide, nodding florets.

*Bletilla* also have shallowly pleated (plicate), narrow leaves that are attractive even when the plant is not in flower. The plants are deciduous and grow to about 1.5' tall. In their native environment, they grow in dappled shade under a canopy of tall grasses but they adapt well to a wide range of woodland sites. In the garden, bletilla prefer evenly moist, well-drained soils and a position in half-day sun or light shade. *Bletilla* are fairly drought tolerant, but the growth rate slows dramatically when they aren't kept moist. When they are growing well, they quickly form large clumps.

At the northern end of their hardiness range bletilla need a winter covering of mulch to protect the roots. At the southern end of their range they may emerge early during warm spells, and are thus susceptible to late freezes. When possible, plant them in a cooler spot in your garden to delay their spring emergence.

*Pictures and descriptions are from the Plant Delights Nursery website, reproduced with permission. You can order from their website [plantdelights.com](http://plantdelights.com). Be careful though, visiting their website and viewing their catalogue may be hazardous to your wallet.*



*Bletilla striata* 'White Pearl' is a Plant Delights introduction that we selected from the variable seed-grown commercial *Bletilla striata* 'Alba'. *Bletilla striata* 'White Pearl' is a very fast-multiplying clone with 28" tall stalks of pleated green leaves topped, starting in mid-April (NC), with 30" stalks of small, pure-white orchid flowers. Moist, rich, organic soils and plenty of light grow some amazing specimens. Expect well-grown plants to make a 3' wide patch in five years



*Bletilla striata* is a hardy and very easy-to-grow terrestrial orchid with upright, heavily textured, iris-like 18" long x 3" wide green leaves and forms a slowly spreading clump. In early spring, stalks to 30" tall of very small lavender with a dark purple lip, cattleya orchid-like flowers are held atop the foliage. The rhizomes spread slowly and eventually form a nice mass. *Bletilla striata* grows best in moist-to-damp soils in 1-6 hours of sun. While they may grow in shade, flowering will be sparse if at all.





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***Bletilla x yokohama 'Kate'*** is a Bill Mathis hybrid, a cross of *Bletilla striata* 'Big Bob' x *Bletilla formosana*. *Bletilla* 'Kate' makes a typical clump of upright, sword-like, pleated, green leaves topped, starting in late spring, with 40" tall spikes terminating in an open cluster of medium lavender flowers, each highlighted by a dark purple stripe down the back center of each petal and a very dark purple lip surrounding a yellow throat. If we had those last few symptoms we'd call the doctor but, in this case, just grab a shovel and everything will be all right.



***Bletilla striata 'Kuchibeni'*** is a hard-to-find but easy-to-grow cultivar from Japan, distinguished by its two-tone flowers. The upper part of the flower is white while the lip is a contrasting purple. The foliage and growth habit are the same as in the species. I have seen this occasionally incorrectly offered as *Bletilla striata* 'Alba', which should be solid white.



***Bletilla striata 'Gotemba Stripes'*** is a unique variegated form of the hardy ground orchid that comes from Japan's famed Gotemba Nursery. The typically long, green, pleated leaves are vertically streaked with gold and, like the species, the clumps are topped in May and June with 2' tall floral spikes of terminal dark purple flowers, an incredible color

combination. *Bletilla striata* 'Gotemba Stripes' fares well in both dry (once established) and moist soils. Several hours of morning sun produces the best clumps.



Each ***Bletilla ochracea*** flower stalk is topped with 3-5 small, creamy yellow flowers, each highlighted with a purple and yellow speckled lip that emerges from below-ground pseudobulbs that top the iris-like pleated leaves from June through August. We have found that *Bletilla ochracea* is not as winter hardy and prefers more sun to grow well as compared to *Bletilla striata*. Moist rich soil and morning sun or high filtered light shade are best. 'Chinese Butterfly' is a particularly vigorous, precocious flowering seed strain introduced by Linda Guy of the former Carolina Nursery.





# ORCHID ADVENTURES



## Tamiami Orchid Festival January 2018

Courtney, Terry and I drove down to Tamiami to deliver the rest of Ben's plants to him, and did a little shopping while we were there! The greenhouse is full and I had done some serious shopping with Ben before the orchid show, but still managed to come home with a few new things. Also did some schombocatt shopping for Leslie whose orchid addiction is coming along quite nicely, with the help of her enabler Chip. Rumor has it she's got expansion plans. We sure do enjoy our obsessive hobby!





# SHOW TABLE



**Grower Carolyn Smith**  
**Den. Spring Bird 'Kurashiki' AM/AOS**



**Grower Lois Muller**  
**Onc. No Name**



**Grower Yvonne & Bob Schimmel**  
**Epi. polybulbon 'Golden Gate'**



**Grower Steve Hawkins**  
**Lc. Siamese Doll 'Kiwi'**



**Grower Courtney Hackney**  
**Blc. Mahogany Rock 'Sunshine Dolly'**



**Grower Ralph DePasquale**  
**Bc. Punakea**



**Grower Harry & Celia McElroy**  
**Cym. Carpenter's Golden Anniversary**



# SHOW TABLE



**Grower Sue Bottom**  
**Blc. Triumphal Coronation 'Seto'**



**Grower Linda Stewart**  
**Trichopilia suavis**



**Grower Annalee Philomy**  
**Paph Bulldog type**



**Grower Courtney Hackney**  
**Lc. Starting Point 'Unique' AM/AOS**



**Grower Glo MacDonald**  
**Onc. Tsiku Marguerite**



**Grower Bob & Yvonne Schimmel**  
**Cym. Mimi 'Lucifer'**

