

The Sheath

November Meeting

Date: November 27, 2009

Time: Doors open 7:00 PM

Place: San Mateo Garden Center

605 Parkside Way, San Mateo, CA

Take the Alameda de las Pulgas exit off of Hwy. 92.
The Garden Center is located between 26th and 28th
Avenues

Mailing address: P.O. Box 6894, San Mateo, CA 94403-6894

Skill Session at 7:00PM

Anna Chai

Start on your show
preparation now!

Meeting plus Show and
Tell Table - 7:45 PM
followed by

Speaker: **Tom Mirenda**

**The Smithsonian
Orchid Collection**

Opportunity table by
White Oak Orchids

The Smithsonian Orchid Collection

Speaker: Thomas Mirenda

A survey of the history of the Smithsonian orchid collection, who started it, how it flourished, its ups and downs, exhibitions, plans and goals for the future.

About Tom:

An orchid grower since his childhood, Tom is a very enthusiastic orchid grower and promoter of 'the Orchid Lifestyle' i.e. Lots of plants...old worn-out clothes and furniture and a diet with no protein...Even though He studied Marine Biology in College on the West Coast,...(the world's most impractical Major) he always returned to Horticulture as a hobby and eventually a career. He has worked at some of the East Coast's most cherished Botanic Gardens and Private Estates.

Tom's interest in Orchids has influenced him to travel extensively through Latin America and he is an expert on the Orchids of Costa Rica and Panama.



Tom with *Odontoglossum*

Tom is in his 9th year as the Museum Specialist for the Orchid Collection at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington DC. The Smithsonian collection is an extremely diverse assemblage of species and hybrids from all over the world, collected for their educational, conservation and ornamental value. He is

also responsible for supplying blooming plants year-round for the many horticultural displays of the Smithsonian, including its annual, five months in duration (!), Orchid Exhibition.

President's Corner

We have another successful auction behind us, and I sincerely hope all in attendance enjoyed themselves. It's always fun being an auctioneer, although it takes a few days for my voice to recover. By now, I'm sure all the other helpers at the auction have recovered as well.

It was good seeing some people buy plants outside their comfort zone. As I've said before, one of the purposes of an auction or an opportunity table is to introduce each of us to new orchid challenges. Not all challenges are successful in the end, but each is worth the effort, and is a worthwhile learning experience.

What Amy and I have found is that growing a new type of orchid makes us wonder what the conditions are really like in the native habitat of that orchid. Yes, we know what it says in the books, but often the books can be simplistic or unintentionally misleading. Plus, actually experiencing the habitat in person allows you to 'feel' what the orchid 'feels' in its native habitat – the humidity, temperature, air movement, intricacies of lighting, all make more sense at home in the greenhouse once you've seen them in a natural habitat.

Plus, orchids are a great excuse to travel and see new places. Every year we go to Brazil to see orchids, but we also go because we really like Rio de Janeiro, and even enjoy the time we spend in Sao Paulo. We're on our way soon to Peru to see orchid shows in Lima and Moyobamba, but of course we'll be spending time in Machu Picchu and Cuzco.

My advice is to learn all you can about your new orchids from the auction, and when the opportunity arises, plan a trip to their natural habitat. In this way, orchids can open even more vistas.

Cheers,

Ken

Proposed Slate of Officers for 2010 - voting takes place at our November meeting

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Director at Large: Paul Reeve

Director at Large: Dan Williamson

(Ken Jacobsen will of course hold the board position of Past President)



Anna Chai on her patio, where she had her sales area



A crowd on the patio at Anna's open greenhouse on Oct. 10



Anna's husband Don



Anna's first greenhouse - outside and inside - still in use along with her large greenhouse and large covered growing space



A portion of the plants still available for sale at noon



There was even more chatting and advising going on than orchid buying



Judy, Fred S., and Clint have an interesting looking discussion



Donna found plenty to buy, while Jackie tries to escape the annoying camera



Olga and Janusz - looks like Janusz got the plant



Cordy, Fred C., and Amy enjoying the refreshments



The covered growing area and the main greenhouse, where the orchids have a fabulous view of hills and bay.



Dan helps customers at his open greenhouse on Oct. 10



A colorful wall full of *Dendrobium cuthbertsonii*



Visitors looking around the greenhouse



Looks like a zygo to me, but I am not an expert!



Dan's sister Bridey handled the cash register



Pleurothallis dilemma - each leaf has two horns



Dan checks the label on a plant



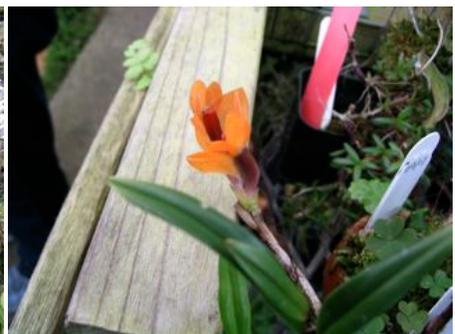
Lepanthes fiskei



Restrepia guttulata



Several people board their cool growing orchids at Dan's greenhouse - it is perfect for orchids requiring high humidity



Den. vexillarius v. microblepharum
(The Flag-Carrying Dendrobium)

Member News



A VERY HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO: Mike Rector, Ronald Gonzalez, Taik Kwun Yun, Virginia Jensen, Chaunie Langland, Paul Ziegler, and Elizabeth Lasensky.

Recommended website about orchids in North Peru: http://www.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://www.trekperu.org/to2_10.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.trekperu.org/travelo2.html&h=600&w=1020&sz=217&tbnid=eD2ETMkQ_WtJCM:&tbnh=88&tbnw=150&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dacineta%2Bsuperba&usq=_1U4NupMWzrB_l3PBAaxeOIJ1Zs=&ei=rdffSsyTJonQswPqssnlCA&sa=X&oi=image_result&resnum=5&ct=image&ved=0CBEQ9QEwBA

Editor's Corner

In October we were lucky enough to have the chance to see Ann Chai's greenhouses and to buy divisions of some of her wonderful plants. Several other hobby growers also brought some plants to sell and it was a special opportunity for many of us to add exceptional plants to our collections. Unfortunately, someone took this opportunity to steal plants from Anna. There were no strangers at the sale, everyone there was someone who already knew Anna. It is sad that Anna had her hospitality and willingness to share her home and plants with us abused in this way. The accepted way to acquire a special plant that someone has and you would like to have also, is to approach them, ask them to sell (or trade) a piece of that plant to you the next time it is divided, and wait for a while. This works well for most of our members.

You may notice that photos from the auction are a little further out of focus than usual. The energy of the subjects in the photos and that of the photographer were a little higher than at our regular meetings, resulting in a large amount of blur - think of it as portraying atmosphere.

The calm before the storm



Clint had only carried in a few early plants - he couldn't have imagined how tired his arms would be an hour later



Judy was ready and looking for entries - Rene was making lists



Rex was slaving in the kitchen after decorating the refreshments table

The auction storm breaks!



Carol and Rene warm up with their ergo exercises



The line to enter plants for sale formed - hurry up! We need to get inside to see what we want to bid on!



The pace picks up



Masd. princeps donated by Golden Gate Orchids



Den. laevifolium x sib donated by Golden Gate Orchids



Onc. Ewa (mule ear) donated by Napa Valley Orchids



Sorry, missed the tag!



Blc (Oconee x George King)



Odont. donated by Nurseryman's Exchange



Ken and Dennis did great jobs as auctioneers

Upcoming Events

November 7 & 8 - Orchid Society of California Show and Sale - Lakeside Park Garden Center (Lake Merritt), 666 Bellevue, Oakland - FREE admission - 10AM to 5 PM both days. <http://www.orchidsocietyofcalifornia.com/novo9show.html>

November 14 - Brookside Orchids - Open Greenhouse and Sale (excluding boarding areas) - 11AM - 2 PM. Brookside is located at 2720 Alpine Rd, Menlo Park, just east of Hwy. 280. Enter the parking lot for the Webb Ranch Farm Stand, then drive up the hill to the greenhouses. For more information contact Mark Pendleton at (650) 854-3711 or e-mail brooksideorchids@sbcglobal.com

November 28 & 29 - Orchid Society of Santa Barbara Fall Show and Sale - "Orchids in Paradise" Saturday 10 AM to 5 PM and Sunday, 10 AM to 3 PM. Show free with museum admission. For more information visit <http://www.orchidsb.net>; Email randumland@cox.net; or call (805)962-6004.

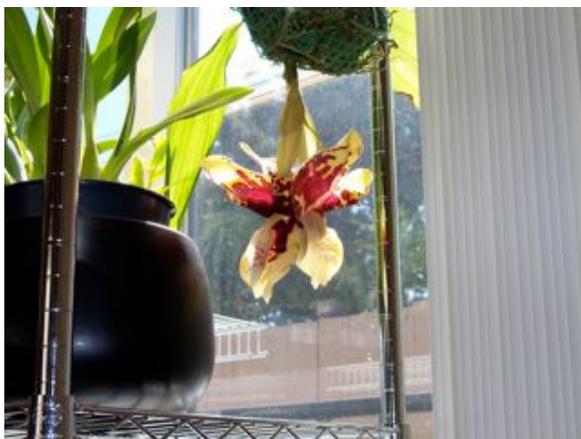
Auction Financial Results:

We made \$2,133 from the auction this year. Last year we made \$2,778. Not bad considering the economy - but our expenses don't go down with the bad economy, so this means we need to make sure our show in January is a success. Please start considering how YOU can help advertise our show. (Also, don't forget to start staking your plants now so they will look their best at the show!)

Thank you to auction donors!

This is a partial list of plant and item donors to our auction - my apologies to those of you who entered your donations at check-in time and are not listed here - the society is still very grateful for your donations!!

Blossom Planting Supplies	Grocery Outlet	Anna Chai	Kreg Martin
Brookside Orchids	Napa Valley Orchids	Barry Zimmerman	Mary Gerritsen
Bruce Rogers Orchids	Nurserymen's Exchange	Chaunie Langland	Mike Drilling
Cal Orchids	Orchid Design	Fred Shull	Nancy Francis
Conservatory of Flowers	Orchids & Gardens	Ginette Sanchou	Sue Rose
Equagenera	Roger Reynolds Orchids	Janet Rector	Todd Kennedy
Golden Gate Orchids		Judy Carne	Tom Mudge
		Ken Jacobsen	



Thank you **Dan Willamson** for sharing this photo of your Stanhopea (*tigrina* x Victory)!!



Thank you **Fred Cox** and **Cordelia Wong** for sharing your Paph. Kevin Porter - 4" bloom

Mexipedium xerophyticum Characteristics and Culture

by Marilyn M. LeDoux

(photo courtesy of Fred Cox and Cordelia Wong)



Mexipedium xerophyticum is a unique species from the southeastern Mexican state of Oaxaca that was originally described in 1990 as a phragmipedium. It is, however, very different from all phragmipediums in vegetative habit, with very thick succulent and relatively small leaves, and long above-ground rhizomes from which new growths develop. The diminutive white flowers are about one inch or slightly less in natural spread and have a pink tinge.

Habitat. In the warm and humid region of Oaxaca, Mexico the plants grow on vertical limestone cliffs without trees, in small cracks with humus or on the exposed rock. The cliffs face north and east so the plants are not totally exposed to the full intensity of the midday sun. The strongest plants are growing in the humus and not on naked rock. The elevation is 320 meters (1,050 Feet) above sea level and the area receives about 250 cm. (98 inches) of rainfall annually with a definite dry season during the spring. The average annual temperature is about 25 degrees C. (77 degrees F).

Plant Characteristics. This sympodial species has relatively short, rigid, fleshy light-green leaves that are distichous and arranged in a fan shape. New growths develop from brittle, elongated, above-ground rhizomes. In its natural habitat one specimen with all its rhizomes and growths was reported to cover an area of about one square meter. Roots do not form from the rhizome itself, but only develop when the rhizome begins to flatten out and expand at the tip, forming a new plant.

Inflorescence. The sturdy wiry pubescent inflorescence is apical, arising from the center of the leaf fan. In my greenhouse it usually becomes visible as an inflorescence in March or April and begins blooming in May or June. The inflorescence is a panicle that can bear several usually short branches. The flowers on each branch are normally successive with one flower open at a time, but all the branches can certainly be blooming simultaneously. Inflorescences on mature plants

can bloom for as long as six months, but a two to four month bloom period is average. The sturdy inflorescences need no staking.

Flower. In proportion with the small plant, the scentless flowers are also small but showy. Horizontal natural spread for AOS awarded cultivars range from 2.1 cm. to 2.7 cm. (about one inch or slightly more or less). The flowers are white flushed pink, especially on the outer surface of the dorsal sepal and on the staminode. The pointed petals are long, narrow, and arch inward, sometimes with a slight twist. The delicate rounded pouch has incurved margins and an inflated appearance. Individual flowers can remain fresh for approximately two weeks.

Culture. First it is important to consider the natural habitat of the plants: warm, humid, and growing on limestone rocks or in humus in the cracks of the rocks on east or north facing cliffs. I have grown and bloomed the plants successfully under artificial lights (a "Suncircle" for revolving light with one 1,000-watt metal halide bulb and one 1,000-watt high pressure sodium bulb) but even more successfully in the greenhouse. My best growth is obtained with light in the range of 3,500 to 4,500 foot-candles for at least four to five hours per day.

These plants love warm temperatures and are quite happy when summer heat reaches temperatures of 85-95 degrees F in my greenhouse on hot days. Even when the cooling pump went out in the summer and the temperatures reached 110 degrees F for several days the xerophyticums suffered no ill effects, unlike some of my other orchids. In nature where these grow, the average daytime high is 83-84 degrees F and nights are about 70 F. My greenhouse winter temperatures are generally around 60 to 62 degrees F at night, though cooling the temperatures to 55 degrees F in the autumn to help promote winter bloom of some other orchids does not seem to adversely affect the xerophyticums, though warmer temperatures are preferable. In nature the winter temperatures are 63-64 degrees F at night and 73-74 degrees during the day.

The humidity of the region from which the species originates is very high year-round, 80-90% even during the dry season. This high humidity is not necessary in cultivation, but plants will do better with adequate moisture in the air. In nature the plants experience heavy dew daily, so daily morning misting can be very helpful, especially in lower humidity situations. Plants growing on exposed cliff faces will naturally be exposed to excellent air movement so good air circulation in cultivation, especially in high humidity conditions, is important.

I thoroughly water my xerophyticums one to 3.5 times (every other day) per week, depending upon temperatures, light, condition of the potting media, and size of the pot. More watering is done under high temperatures and light conditions and less under cool cloudy conditions. Small pots are watered more frequently than larger ones. I also water new potting mix more frequently, and older, more decomposed,

mix less often. The one aspect of the plant's natural habitat that I ignore is that I do not decrease watering in the spring when the plants have a natural dry season. The plants are not picky about fertilizer and I usually water with a very weak fertilizer solution at least three out of four waterings. Occasionally using a fertilizer with calcium in it may be helpful, especially if there is not calcium naturally occurring in the water. With this species, and all other orchids, if reverse osmosis (R.O.) water or rain water is used, a fertilizer with micronutrients included should be used to prevent deficiencies in the plants.

Repotting and Dividing. My potting mix consists of 9 quarts of fine to medium sequoia bark, 4 quarts of extra fine (#4) to fine (#3) charcoal, 3 quarts of perlite, 3 quarts of Pro-Mix HP or similar peat-based potting mix, 1/2 cup bone meal, and 1/4 cup dolomitic lime. For plants in very small pots (2-3") I use the fine bark and extra fine charcoal. For plants in larger pots I add in more of the larger size particles such as medium bark and fine charcoal and less of the smaller bark and charcoal. The bone meal is optional but be sure to use the dolomitic lime since these plants grow in areas of relatively soluble limestone rock.

As the plants grow larger and larger due to their long rhizomes, larger and larger pots can be used. I prefer plastic pots, and shallow pots are more preferable than deep ones, especially as the pot size gets larger. In pots over 6" in diameter, I prefer "bulb pans", the most shallow type of pot. I also like to fill about 1/4 to 1/3 the depth of the pot's bottom with styrofoam peanuts before adding potting mix.

Repotting this species can be intimidating, especially as the plants grow larger. Carefully knock the plant out of the pot and remove as much of the old mix and as many dead roots as possible, trying not to damage the live roots. This is a relatively sparsely rooted species so do not expect to find a pot full of roots. Carefully break or cut off any divisions you wish to remove, then repot the remaining main plant into a pot slightly larger than the size of the remaining growths. If some rhizomes extend beyond the pot's edge they can be carefully curved inward and pinned to the potting mix with long U-shaped bent wires. Newer rhizomes that are still reddish in color are the most brittle and hardest to flex without breaking, but older rhizomes with brown outer sheathing and new plantlets forming on the ends are somewhat more flexible and more easily moved into new positions without breaking. Before pinning down the new rhizomes with new plantlets forming, I like to put a small piece of moistened sheet moss under each new plantlet, then pin over the top of the rhizome behind the plantlet and into the sheet moss and down into the potting mix underneath. Morning mistings help keep the sheet moss somewhat moist and aid in the rooting of the new plantlets.

For the divisions removed from the original plant, those with some roots are potted up in a similar fashion but in smaller pots. For small divisions without roots I have had good results planting them in small pots of moist sphagnum (the New Zealand or

Chilean types are best), with styrofoam peanuts on the bottom, pinning down rhizomes as needed. I keep these in a shadier spot, and during cooler seasons I keep them on a heat mat for bottom warmth, until they are rooted. I water lightly over the tops of the plants almost daily, and water thoroughly as needed to keep the sphagnum from becoming dry. Once the plants develop roots I remove them from the heat mat and repot into the regular mix. New plantlets that are at least half grown can often be rooted this way, but the larger divisions are usually most successful in rooting.

As previously mentioned, one plant in its native Mexican habitat covered an area of about one square meter. My largest single plant so far is in an 18" shallow bowl-shaped plastic pot and received a Certificate of Cultural Excellence of 92 points from the American Orchid Society (CCE/AOS) in June 2003 with 18 inflorescences and approximately 130 growths. New challenges for me will be finding acceptable even larger sized shallow pots!

Hopefully my tips will encourage you to become adept in growing this wonderful and unique species. It is unlike any other slipper orchid we know and should be in every slipper orchid enthusiast's collection.

Marilyn LeDoux
Windy Hill Gardens
4500 Boles Rd.
Labadie, MO 63055-1038

website: www.orchidmall.com/windyhill
email: ledoux@yhti.net

Windy Hill Gardens is a small orchid growing establishment founded in 1995 by Marilyn and Brian LeDoux in the picturesque rolling Missouri River hills near Labadie, Missouri. Many types of orchids are grown, but slipper orchids, both phragmipediums and paphiopedilums, are their specialties. Bulbophyllums are another group of particular interest. Marilyn was the first person in the world to successfully cultivate and bloom the rare and endangered *Mexipedium xerophyticum* and propagate it from seed. She wrote a very comprehensive article on this species in the *Orchid Digest*, Volume 60, Number 3. She has also written several other articles for the *Orchid Digest* and *Orchids* (formerly the *AOS Bulletin*). She is an accredited AOS judge and Marilyn and Brian have won many AOS awards for their orchids. A plant listing is available at our website or can be requested by email or regular mail.

Our thanks to Marilyn for allowing us to print her paper on *Mexipedium xerophyticum* and to Cordelia Wong and Fred Cox for the use of their photo of *M. xerophyticum*.

Thank You Auction Volunteers!!

Rene Biggs (computer, organization), **Carol Basey** (computer), **Sue Rose** (computer preparation), **Celine Dion** (back-up auction sheet), **Mike Rector** (donations), **Judy Evans** (check-in), **Clint Evans** (check-in), **Trudy Hadler** (cashier), **Katie Walden** (cashier), **Rex Castell** (refreshments, decorations), **Ken Jacobsen** (auctioneer, organization), **Dennis Olivas** (auctioneer), **Amy Jacobsen** (runner), **Olga Ostrovsky** (refreshments), **Cordelia Wong** (entries on web page, check-in), **Fred Cox** (set up pre-registration web page, check-in), **Chaunie Langland** (entries on web-page, check-in), **Nick Hughes** (runner), **Japheth Ko** (runner), **Barry Zimmerman** (white board), and **Paul Reeve** (donation).

Unclassifieds

Members may advertise orchid related items. The ad is free. E-mail your ad to the_sheath_editor@earthlink.net or mail to 878 Cashew Way, Fremont, CA 94536. Be sure to include your name and phone number. Ads must be received by the 5th of the month to be included that month's newsletter.

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*Remember
Dues are NOT due until February!*

*There will be no January 2011
meeting, our show is that weekend*

Come and vote!

*Peninsula Orchid Society
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Fremont, CA 94536*