

# *Central Vancouver Island Orchid Society Newsletter*



**Show Grand Champion , Mt Cheam Award and Best Cattleya species or hybrid: in the FVOS Show  
Blc Victoria 'Ambrosia' HCC/AOS, Poul Hansen  
Judith Higham, the photographer**

## *November 2013*

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Meetings are held September through June on a Saturday at the Harewood Activity Centre, 195 Fourth Street, Nanaimo, in the hall on the second floor, doors open at 11:30, with the business meeting starting at 12:00 noon.

**Coming Meeting Dates:** 2013 Nov 23, Dec 7.

2014 Jan. 18, Feb. 22, March 15, April 26, May 24, June 21, Sept. 20, Oct. 18, Nov. 22, Dec. 6.

**Program for November 23<sup>rd</sup>**

**Carnivorous Plants Are Orchid Companions  
For indoors and outdoors  
With Justin from Butterfly Gardens Victoria**

**Coming Events:**

Victoria orchid Society Show and Sale,  
Lady of Fatima Hall, 4635 Elk Lake Road, Victoria, March 7<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> 2014  
Vancouver Orchid Society Show and Sale, VanDusen Gardens Floral Hall, March 22-23<sup>rd</sup> 2014  
CVIOS Show and Sale, North Brook Mall (Rutherford), April 11<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> 2014

**Editorial:**

Another month and more rushing around and carrying on. The show in Langley was great please see separate report. Lots of good times.

The cold nights and some sunny days are driving the temperature in my greenhouse up and down like crazy but the plants seem ok with that. Some nice flowers and lots of growths that look like buds and flowers will follow. Maybe it will be a banner year.

The December meeting is our Christmas party and there will be an auction both live and silent of quality plants and other things so look through your plants and stuff. We will also have the card table sized individual display table so start thinking about ideas. You must have at least one orchid plant. Only the table is supplied.

Cheers Mike

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**CVIOS General Meeting**

Saturday October 19, 2013

Shelly called the meeting to order at 12:00 noon with 21 members present, including new member Alexi.

Dora moved the minutes of September 21 be accepted as printed in the newsletter and Sue seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Treasurer's Report: Joann reviewed the financial balances in the general, AOS and Harry's memorial accounts for September. Sue moved acceptance of Joann's report, Connie seconded the motion and it carried.

President's Report: Shelley's workshop at Dinter's Nursery went very well with about 40 people attending. Shelley pointed out that Diana's Garden is closing and our community will miss it.

Mike is doing our display at the upcoming Fraser Valley show that will be taking place in Langley November 2 and 3. Our display will be set up on Thursday and Mike will be picking our orchids up on Wednesday. Drop off points are Mikes, Shelley's in Ladysmith from 9:30 to 11:00 am, and Dora's, preferably on Wednesday morning. Please check the Fraser Valley Orchid Society for location and times. Mike encouraged us to all send our blooming orchids to the show and hoped that some of us might get together and come and see the show.

Vivian's membership question this month referred to the amount and time and energy we are willing to devote to struggling orchids in our collection.

Mike asked us to submit topics of interest to him for the newsletter. He brought the remainder of Don's collection of orchids for sale and told us about the Bell and Howel, Ultra Sonic Pest Repellers he was using to try and rid his greenhouse of ants, spiders and insects. He is hoping they will also work on wood bugs that many of us have.

Vivian indicated that Dr Bromer's peppermint castil soap purchased at London Drugs seemed to be working to get rid of her mealy bugs.

Refreshment: Thank you to Brad, Julia, Connie, Shirley and Terri for bringing goodies and REMINDERS to Bev, Maureen, Mary, Keith and Margaret for November.

The meeting adjourned at 12:20 pm.

Laurie and Maureen talked about plants on our show tables with input from those who brought plants. This was followed by refreshment and an interactive fun program on edible and other useful traits of some orchids as well as the opportunity for us to get to know each other better through 'orchid bingo'

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SELECTED SPECIES -

## **EUCHILE MARIAE (AMES) WITHNER 1998**

By Peter Taylor

In 1998 Withner elevated it to the genus *Euchile*, from the Greek Eu = 'true' and chilo = 'lip', a most apt name as the beauty of the lip is the outstanding feature of the flower.

*Euchile mariae* looks like a tough little customer with glaucous or grey-green foliage and small oval pseudobulbs about 4cm long. However, it has the reputation of being rather difficult to cultivate, perhaps because it requires rather specific culture. Surprisingly for an orchid as beautiful as *Euchile mariae* it was not described until 1937. Surely it would have created a sensation if it had been



*Encyclia mariae* Photo: Peter Taylor

discovered by one of Sander's operatives and I can imagine the prices it would have commended in the orchidmania of the late Nineteenth Century. Why did it escape detection for so long?

The species is distributed in northeast Mexico on the eastern side of the Sierra Madre Oriental at elevations of 1000 to 2000m in dry oak forests growing in narrow, steep valleys of sedimentary rock and with very difficult access. It grows in rather cool environments. Its habitat is in northern Mexico, rather near to the border with the USA and, as Rentoul (1982) mentions, 'before that time (1930s) the whole area was regarded as non-prospective' - so the mining and timber companies bypassed the area and the little species rested safely until discovered in 1937. I am unsure as to its safety in habitat today but a plant as spectacular as this deserves to be well protected by the Mexican authorities.

*Euchile mariae* generally flowers with two blooms per 20cm inflorescence and the large white, ruffled lip is its prominent feature - however the purity of the lip is enhanced by its colour contrast with the lovely olive-green petals and sepals. Apparently the lip shows as a light blue colour under ultraviolet light, which has led some authorities to speculate its pollination by the night-active sphinx moth.

Nominating the 'correct' cultural environment for an orchid is a difficult task as the adaptability of plants to artificial culture is remarkable. The very best *Lycaste* culture I have seen over the past thirty years varied from a specialist, automated environment at Carlingford, Sydney, to superb growth achieved by simply growing plants under trees at Wahroonga, Sydney where they experienced natural rainfall and quite cold winters. There are just so many variables in temperature, shade, humidity, extremes of wind etc. from one backyard to another. In my own experience, species I struggled with in Baulkham Hills, Sydney, have put on remarkable growth here at Port Macquarie, simply growing on the ground under trees in deep shade. Perhaps I should not worry about the soon-to-be built shadehouse!

So, with regard to *Euchile mariae* I guess it's very much a matter of trial and error. However, some basic hints: fairly bright light (but if possible, cool light), good air movement and copious water in the summer months. The species does not like hot summer temperatures (I know it's from Mexico but check out the elevation). For me it grows best mounted on cork bark. I have seen well-grown plants in other collections which were either in clay plastic pots with a bark or pebble mix. Rentoul (1982) makes

the interesting point that "the orchids may be fed with weak solutions of nutrients when in growth, the weaker the better, pouring the liquid on to the mount instead of the plant, so inducing the roots to seek it out." I have not tried this.

I have obtained better flowering after allowing the plants to have a virtually dry rest, apart from the occasional misting over the winter months. The mature growths must be left to gather their strength quietly over winter so that the little plants can produce their wonderful flowers to attract their pollinator and so continue their cycle of life.

Orchids Australia,

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### **The CVIOS at the FVOS Show in November**

All flower pictures by Judith Higham



**Our display of 35 plants by six of our members. Photo by Ed Higham**

I would like to thank Dora Glover, Donna McDonnell, Shelly Rattink, Laurie Forbes, Alexy Tretyakov and Mike Miller for supplying the plants for the Society display. The ribbon count was high on these plants 13 blue first place ribbons 10 red second place ribbons and 2 white third place ribbons. We also had 5 Best of Class rosettes, Best First Bloom Seedling *Tuberlabium kotoense*, Shelley, Best *Pleurothalis* Group *Masdevallia tonouzii*, Alexy, Best *Stanhopea/Catasetum*, Shelley, Best Other *Cypripedium* sub Family *Phrag pearcei*, Donna and Best of all Others *Stenoglottis longifolia*, Mike. We only had one of the 16 AOS nominations and that was to Alexy's *Masdevallia tonouzii*.

Four AOS Awards were handed out at this show. AM of 86 points to Paph Temptation, Victoria Poul Hansen, HCC 78 points to Phrag Baconis Fraser Valley Yolanda Breck, HCC 79 points Paph. Supersuk 'Eureka' Fraser Valley Yolanda Breck, HCC 76 points to Paph Gina Short Fraser Valley Anna McDonald and CHM 80 points to Polystachya anceps Paramount Orchids (really one of us).

Bryan also added 40 plants to the show, one table of his delightful mini things and another for Ting Sing of his Chinese Cymbidiums not in flower. He had a Nomination for *Bulbophyllum alageuse* and *Bulbophyllum pardalotum*. I should have counted Chuck and Bryon's plants and ribbons on the Paramount display but in truth I forgot. (But we do claim them as ours)

All to ether a showing by so few plants. Thank you all.

Cheers Mike



**Above Left: *Stenoglottis longifolia***



**Above Right: *Tuberlabium kotoense***



**Lower Right *Phrag. pearcei***



**Above: *Masdevallia tonouzii***



***Catasetum barthorium***

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CYMBIDIUM COMPANIONS #11

**EPIDENDRUM COCHLEATUM** by Paul Gripp

(Now *Prosthechea cochleatum*)

Drawing by Roxanne Gripp

One of the most exotic and unusual of all orchid species, and one guaranteed to be noticed in your greenhouse, is *Epidendrum cochleatum*. Known as the Cockleshell Orchid, *Epidendrum cochleatum* was the first epiphytic orchid to flower in England, in 1787.

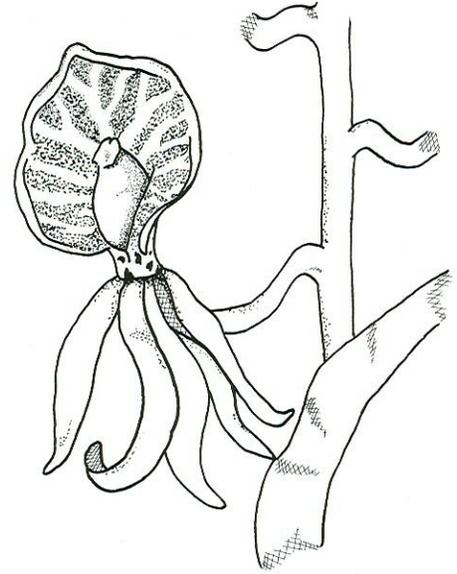
The most striking feature of *Epidendrum cochleatum* is the upside-down flowers, whose shape suggests an octopus. While this species can be quite variable, some characteristics are quite constant. The narrow sepals and petals are usually greenish-yellow in color, hanging down from a rich deep purple lip (almost black-purple). Because of this almost black lip, it is sometimes grouped with the so-called "Black Orchids."

One of the biggest variations in the plant is the size and shape of the bulbs. Sometimes they are short and a plump pear-shape, the height being no more than 3" or 4", while other times they are long and narrow, up to 8".

Another delightful feature of *Epidendrum cochleatum* is that it is almost ever-blooming. A long flower stem produces flowers opening successively over a long period, with 4-5 open at one time. Flower size is also variable. The largest flowers seem to occur from those plants found in Mexico, reaching up to 3 1/2". *Epidendrum cochleatum* is found ranging from Florida to Columbia.

Even though it is one of the stranger members of the orchid family, this charming species has common genes with members of the *Cattleya* alliance, as it has been used sparingly in hybridizing in combination with other species and hybrids. When used in combination with *Epidendrum atropurpureum* the result was *Epidendrum Saucy Tongue*; with *Epidendrum fragrans* it produced *Epidendrum Expectation*; crossed with *Epidendrum mariae* it made *Epidendrum Orchidglade*; with *Epidendrum prismatocarpum* it produced *Epidendrum Elfin*; with *Epidendrum tampense* the result was *Epidendrum Tamlea*; and with *Lc. Alcobaca* it produced the unusual cross of *Epic. Algiers*.

While it is a natural epiphyte, *Epidendrum cochleatum* is most often seen, and seems to grow best, in pots, better accommodating the long flower spikes. It grows well in a wide variety of mixes from *Cymbidium* type mixes to *Cattleya* type bark. It does well under cool to intermediate conditions with the same light intensity as for *Cymbidiums*, or the shade of *Paphiopedilums*. It is good for the lath house, greenhouse or even the home. If you are looking for an "attention-getter" to add interest to your collection, be sure to give this delightful species a try.



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# Indoor Culture Formula: Determination plus TLC

Susan Thomas

Five years ago I bought my first orchid plants. Of the two, one was in bud and the other had buds just starting in the sheath. I was totally unfamiliar with the culture of orchids and explained this to the man who sold me the plants. "Don't burn 'em," he remarked, as he handed me a pamphlet on orchid culture published by the University of California. In the car while my husband drove, I thumbed through the pages. The pamphlet dealt with diseases and pests, and some obscure kind of growing medium with scientific formulas. I was sure I'd made a mistake. Then it went on about the orchid plants themselves, covering them by genus. I looked at the labels on my plants, only to find a mysterious "Lc." written on the name tags. That didn't seem a likely abbreviation for any genus in the pamphlet, so we went back to the orchid grower. I was too embarrassed to go in, so my husband did. He returned with "Laelia" and "Cattleya" circled in the pamphlet.

At home, the one piece of advice I'd had was ringing in my ears - don't burn 'em. I removed a lamp from a corner table in the living room. This table was not in front of a window - it was not even opposite one. I placed the two plants there in dense shade. The first buds opened but the flowers didn't last long. Two or three months later, the second plant flowered and the blossoms lasted nearly a month. I was hooked.

I set about reading all I could find on the culture of orchids and bought some more plants. Unfortunately, the books in the local library were mostly old and contained little specific information. Each book related that orchids were first cultivated by the English in hot, steamy, unventilated places. The English were wrong, I read again and again, but the books neglected to say what was right! Some plants survived and flowered anyway, they said. From this, I took heart and decided orchids must be durable.

Slowly I picked up information about orchid culture. Nearly everyone growing orchids at one time or another has printed instructions likening the culture of orchids to that of African Violets. I've never been able to bloom an African Violet! However, these printed instructions dealt with light, temperature and humidity, so I experimented with all three. I learned that orchids did, in fact, need light, so mine were placed in an east window. One grower amazed me with the statement that the plants needed to be fed - I duly started monthly fertilizing. Another grower told me they needed more humidity than the average home provided. Each Saturday afternoon, therefore, I turned on a vaporizer and let it run till the windows dripped water. Talk about rain-forest conditions! With all this "information," my original score had not changed much. I was still flowering about fifty per cent of the plants.

Then, bravely, I tried something else. I moved most of my plants to a south-facing window. They didn't burn, and soon I was getting fatter pseudo bulbs, larger leaves, and more flowers. Sun was definitely the solution.

Half my orchids were, by then, housed on a two-tiered tea cart (I could jam about twenty-five plants on it) and sitting on the oft-mentioned "trays of pebbles partly filled with water." I used cookie sheets for the trays and could fit four on the cart. The cart was stationed at a south window in the bedroom, where it received about six hours of sun a day. I acquired an inexpensive hygrometer and discovered that the pebble trays made no measurable difference in the relative humidity, but I use them anyway, as they catch excess water and keep the floor dry.

Every Sunday morning, hot or cold, wet or dry, I wheeled the tea cart into the kitchen and doused the whole group in the kitchen sink. I had one of those hose-sprinkler things in the sink and soaked leaves and pseudobulbs as well as potting medium. This period was the most bug-free of any I've had, and I'm convinced that the weekly washing of foliage was responsible.

I purchased an inexpensive plastic insecticide sprayer, filled it with water, and sprayed the plants with it on sunny mornings. I did not just spray the area, as is often suggested, but actually wet the plants themselves, as this seemed the only way to keep the relative humidity around them elevated for longer than five minutes.

The other half of the orchids were housed on a deep kitchen windowsill, also facing south. The humidity in this room tended to be higher most of the time. In the winter, with artificial heat drying out the air, I compensated by boiling a pot of water on the stove, much to the amusement of everyone. This raised the humidity to about fifty per cent. I had trouble with the temperature, however. In the preparation of meals, when the oven was on for any length of time, the temperature would rise and stay up through the night. I could rarely get it below 65°F.

You will read that orchids enjoy the same temperature range as humans. Personally, I find 55°F.-60°F. at night quite chilly, and this creates problems when the orchids are in your bedroom. If you have a guest room with a southern exposure and rarely have guests in it, fine. Then it is easily possible to have this lower night temperature, at least in winter. If your orchids must share a room at night with people, however, you run into a problem - higher-than-should-be night temperature, which seems to keep some orchids from initiating buds.

The solution I arrived at was simple, costless, and slightly unattractive. Our windows had shades and curtains at them. I pulled the window shade down over the orchids, making a sort of tent. Then I clipped the curtains shut with a wooden clothespin over the window shade. This served to shade the plants from the room's lighting, also trapping the cool

air from the window in a pocket around the plants, lowering their night temperature and leaving my own comfort undisturbed. On warm nights the window remained open. Down to about 50°F. outdoors, it remained partly open. Below that temperature, I left the window open just a crack at the top. If you have storm windows, you can experiment with leaving the storm windows shut and opening the inside window a little to lower the night temperature. An additional benefit of this arrangement is a higher relative humidity around the orchids. If you try this arrangement, there is only one thing to remember. Open the curtains before the sun is at that window too long. If your orchids are at a south window, the sun probably doesn't come in until late morning. If they are in an east window and will be sunned for quite a while before you get up, leave some ventilation, or the temperature in the "tent" goes up very fast.

A few things are important to consider in selecting plants. If you live near a grower, go see his plants. That's the only way you'll know for sure what the plants you buy will look like. If you shop by mail (and who can resist?), order flowering sized plants. Seedlings, desirable because they are considerably less expensive, take longer to become established and mature. I found that my plants always made smaller pseudo bulbs and leaves in the house than they did in a greenhouse, and so I speculate that if you cannot resist seedlings, buy at least three-inch pot-size plants. I have some of these, which have adjusted successfully. Adult plants often miss a year's blooming in the adjustment process, and this can be disheartening, but I have found that after that year, they will go on and bloom vigorously.

Even if you have a nearby orchid grower, by all means send away for catalogs. They often contain cultural notes; many mention specific hints for particular plants; and many have fine pictures. To the uninitiated, seeing as many types of orchids as possible is the only way to learn about their delightful range of variation.

There is one other factor to consider. I have found that plants from growers in climates similar to mine adjust sooner. Plants from different climates adjust, too, but it takes longer. If you are impatient, or just starting orchid growing, buy plants from someone nearby or in a similar climate.

My first plants were potted in osmunda fiber, and for the first year or so I took them to a professional grower for repotting. Most growers are willing to do this for you for a small charge. After a while I decided to try saving this expense and pot them myself. I got a small amount of osmunda and used it for a while. It is tricky to pot with and, most of all, time consuming. Then I started using fir bark, and this turned out to be wholly unsatisfactory used alone. With the drier conditions of the house and my rather inflexible watering schedule, plants became terribly dehydrated, especially during the summer when watering at least twice a week would have been much better. Much to the horror of many orchid growers I talked to, I tried the addition of some milled sphagnum moss, and the results were excellent. The proportion of any addition to the fir bark, of course, must necessarily vary with the kind of attention the plants will receive. If, for example, you are able to pay closer attention to your watering schedule than I did, and water small pots more often than large, clay pots more often than plastic, and vary in accordance with the weather, then I think milled sphagnum would be a mistake. I would use the coarse sphagnum, perlite, redwood fiber, or any arrangement you and your plants prefer to retain more moisture than will straight fir bark.

As I have mentioned, the choice of plants must ultimately rest with your taste and the type of growing conditions you can provide. In south-facing windows you can grow just about everything. Plants needing less light can be placed away from the window, partly shaded by those in front. Under such conditions I have grown species and hybrids from the Laelia tribe, including Brassavola, Epidendrum, etc. I have grown many Oncidiums, and found that those with pseudobulbs are easier than the hard-leaved kinds, though *Oncidium splendidum* is often recommended for the beginner. I have grown Brassias, Coelogynes, Lycastes, and dozens of others. Primary hybrids, that is, crosses between two species, are generally very vigorous. *Cattleya mossiae* and *C. bowringiana* and their hybrids seem indestructible. All you really need is a little information and a lot of common sense. Orchid growers often disagree with each other. With only a little effort, you can find two who will tell you completely opposite things. Rather than allow this to become confusing, take it as heartening. If such different methods can work for different growers, orchids must be tough.

American Orchid Society

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PS if the members who won the best of ribbons I can send you the original pictures from Judy if you would like. Ed.