



# Central Vancouver Island Orchid Society Newsletter February 2015

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Masdevallia Lollipop 'Yodiehead' AM/CCM/AOS

Grown by Thomas Hobbs Photo by Judith Higham

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:** 2015: Feb 21, March 21, Apr 25, May 23.

## **Program for for February 21<sup>st</sup>**

Member Tips with Vivian, Brad, and Donna.

**Also we are having a bag draw for food items**

## **Coming Events:**

VicOS Show, March 13-15

VanOS Show, March 27-29

CVIOS Show, April 9-12

**Editorial:** Here we are, another month gone by. We are now in the beginning of show season, The Grand Prix in Japan is on now, the Toronto show happened last weekend (around 3000 attended the Toronto show!) Coming up we have the Victoria Show, then the next weekend is our meeting, then the following weekend is the Vancouver show (also the COC in Saskatoon, and the Montreal show) then two weeks after the Vancouver show is our show... I hope everyone has their running shoes at the ready! We are still looking for someone to set up the Victoria show, Don and Nancy have offered to bring the staging to Victoria and help with registration, so it is just a matter of bringing plants and setting up.

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CVIOS General Meeting - January 17, 2015 Bryan called the meeting to order at 12:00 with 23 members present including new member Linda Kelly. Dora moved acceptance of our November minutes, Margaret 2nd the motion and motion carried. Correspondence this month includes the December AOS bulletin, which contains many excellent articles including one on Zygopetalum culture.

Note: The March date for our meeting has been changed to March 21 so it will no longer conflict with the Victoria show. Joann presented her financial summary of current bank balances. Maureen moved acceptance of her report, Mike 2nd the motion and motion carried.

Shows: - Victoria show is March 12 - 15. Volunteers are needed to transport our orchids to the show and do our display. Details will be finalized at our February meeting. - Vancouver's show is March 27 - 29. Mike volunteered to take our orchids and do our display. There was discussion concerning transporting our orchids to this show and there will be decisions made regarding this at our next meeting. - Our CVIOS show will be at the Nanaimo North Town Centre from April 10 - 12. Don asked for information about our show so that he can advertise it on our website. Bryan indicated that this information was still in the works and posters would be available for our February meeting. He also indicated that we are still working on changing the dated of our show to another time of the year so there are not so many shows close together in the Spring. The fact that other groups do not know long enough in advance when their shows will be complicates these discussions.

Programs: Nancy indicated that Patricia Harding will be at our May meeting and Roy from H&R orchids will be coming in June. Our next meeting will be on 'Orchid growing Tips'. March is still a ? and Alexey will be doing April's program.

The membership list will be the same for this year with the addition of two new members and Dora will see that we get their information to add to the list.

Mary is still going through magazines etc for good culture articles to highlight for members.

REMINDER: We will be having a 'BAG DRAW' of CONSUMABLES at our February meeting. This is always popular, so don't forget to bring your baking, jams and pickles, confections etc for the draw.

REFRESHMENTS: Thank you to Julia, Dora, Maureen, Nancy and Flemming for bringing goodies this month and reminders to Connie, Donna, Mary, Keith and Laurie for February.

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"Tip of The Month" We will have 3 tips this month, Vivian, Brad, and Donna

The Dr is in! The orchid Dr will be available to answer questions

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# What's in bloom at the Muttart February 2015

## **Cattleya walkeriana 'Best Grower'**

This plant is found over a large region of the interior south of the Amazon Basin growing in two distinct types of habitat. In one type, plants are found on very rough barked trees which grow in an alkaline environment on limestone bluffs, ridges, and mesas. While the region is very dry much of the year, the limestone is able to soak up and retain large amounts of water during the rainy season. This moisture is given up very slowly as the surrounding trees respire it into the air through their leaf surfaces, providing a relatively stable source of high microclimate humidity in an otherwise dry environment. The second type environment is when the relatively flat granite plateau has been cut by eroding streams, leaving almost perpendicular cliffs as much as 1000 ft. (300 m) tall on either side. In this habitat, the orchids are found where streams plunge over the edge of the cliffs. Moisture rising from the waterfalls condenses as soon as the temperature starts to drop in the evening and quickly covers plants and rocks in the vicinity with large amounts of water, even during the dry season.

The orchid is named after Walker who was an [English Orchid Collector in Brazil in 1800, and is one of the oldest plants in the collection. It is grown in our hot greenhouse in bright indirect light

### *Dendrobium spectabile*

Commonly known as The Grand Dendrobium for good reason, this orchid is a hot growing epiphyte in primary rainforests, mangrove swamps and moss forests of Papua & New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. They can also be found growing in planted coconut or Casuarina trees

This plant is grown in the hot greenhouse with indirect bright light, high humidity and strong air circulation

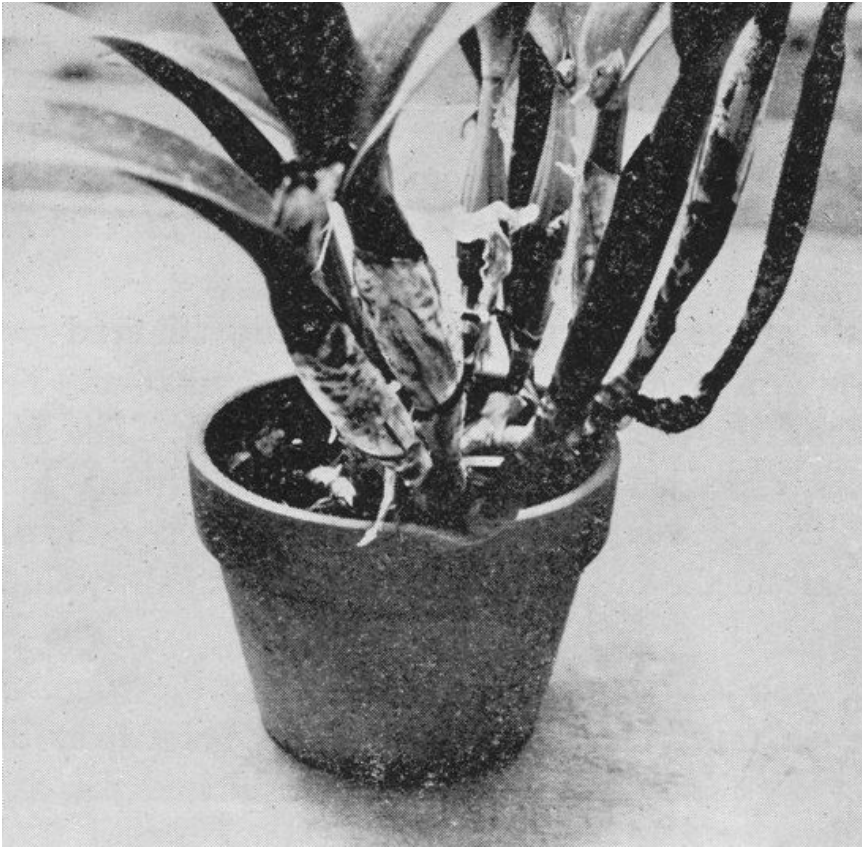
## **Hints on Potting and Potting Media**

**Leo Holguin** - originally published February, 1968

**THE QUESTION WE HEAR MOST OFTEN** is "When is the best time to repot?" Some people prefer to pot only in the spring, assuming that this is the growing season and therefore the best time to repot. In some cases this is true. When potting cattleyas or allied genera, one must remember that some species have a definite resting period and it is probably better, in most cases, to wait and pot when the growing season starts. However, the majority of cattleyas today are complex hybrids with little or no resting period.

Repotting is usually done when plants are through blooming and are crowding the inside of the pot, or growing over the edge. The best time is when there are signs of renewed root action, such as roots commencing to grow from the base of the new growth. Whenever possible, it is best to wait for the new growth to make up and pot just before the new roots start to show at the base of the rhizome. However,

if the medium is broken down, or sour, it is best to move the plant into fresh material as long as it is not in bud. If the plant is in bud and in poor condition, it is best to remove buds before repotting



**Figure 1:** A plant growing over the edge of its pot; obviously in need of repotting.

In some cases, root action will begin before the growth is made up. It is best to pot at this time to save the roots. In any event, potting should not be done just prior to blooming. This will prevent the flowers from developing properly. Allow sufficient space in the pot for two years' growth. Be sure and tamp the material in good and firm. In this manner it will retain moisture for a longer period of time and less watering will be necessary. If the material is too loose, you will have to water more often and you may have to repot before two years.

If one has a very good variety of cattleya and wants to keep it growing with as little setback as possible, I would suggest adding what I call an "annex." Some people call it a "nose bag" or "piggyback". This is especially good if the plant is over the edge of the pot, starting to root and in bud about ready to flower. By use of an annex, you can save roots and flowers, and the plant will grow on with more vigor. Later, when the plant is well rooted in the annex, you can remove it without disturbing the medium and pot on if you wish, or leave it for another season.



**Figure 2:** An "annex" attached to the pot, allowing the new growth to establish itself therein.

Assuming the plant is in a 6" (15-cm) pot, the idea is to get a 6" (15-cm) pot and try to break it in half (not easy). The best way is to find one that is already cracked on one side. Hold the opposite end along the rim, then hit downward with a potting stick near the crack - and a V-shaped area should be left. Trim this V-shaped area with a pair of pliers to fit against the original pot. Next, take a piece of flexible wire about 24" long, bend together at the center and twist the two wires together about two inches, then bend like a hook, and hook over the rim in back of the pot. Bring under the rim of the pot around the annex and twist the wires together again, then pull up to the rim of the annex and loop over. To tighten, take a piece of wire about three inches long, make a hook at one end, and insert this hook in the rim of the original pot at a point where the two join together. Then loop around the wire and pull up tight. Do the same on the other side. With a little patience, it will work. If you want to miss all this fun, take a plastic pot, use clippers and cut it to fit.

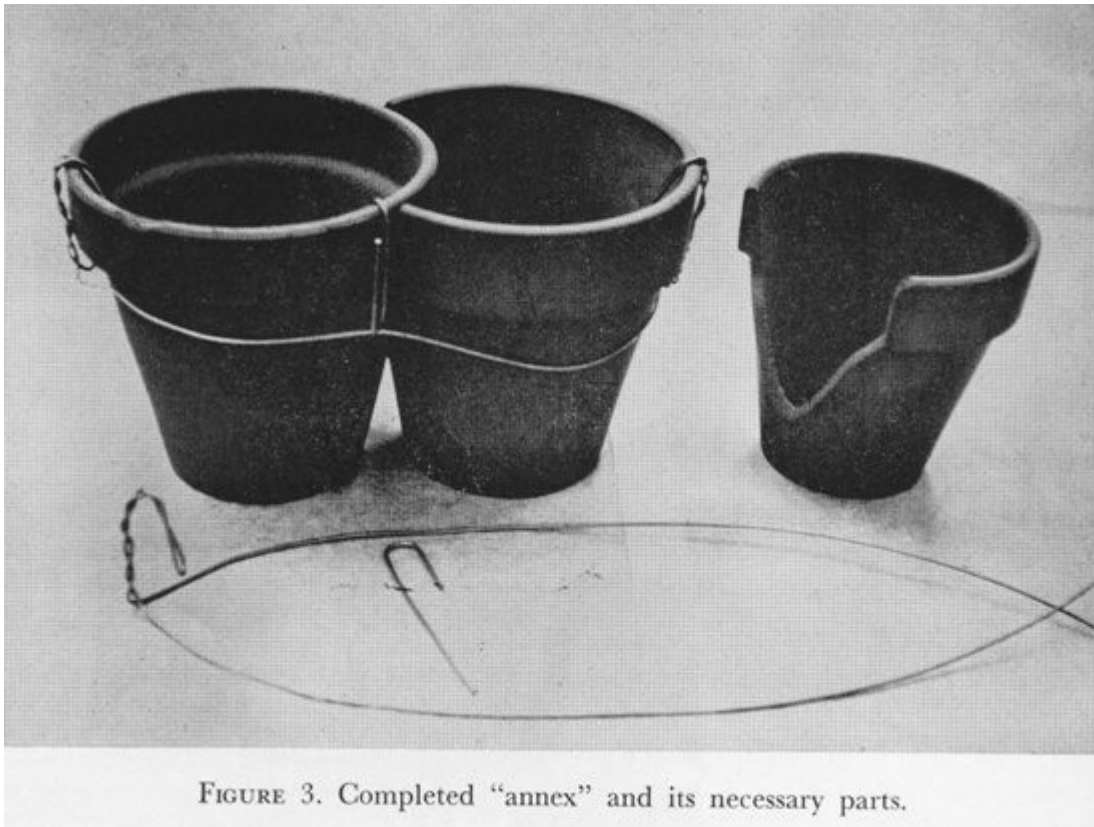


FIGURE 3. Completed "annex" and its necessary parts.

In regard to potting media, I think that just about every material with any possibilities at all has been tried. Fir bark and redwood bark mixes are very popular (Editor's note: Fir bark and mixes of fir bark are less popular in hot, humid climates because they break down too rapidly – especially when plants are grown outside without protection from natural rainfall) because of the ease in potting with these materials. A mixture of one part redwood bark to three parts of fir bark seems to work very well. This mixture, assuming you use a good grade, and depending on how well it is packed around the roots, has lasted three years (Editor's note: Today's fir bark is of much poorer quality than when this article was first published. As a result, fir bark available today last typically about 18 months to two years at the most). Add ten pounds of dolomite lime to a cubic yard of material, or approximately one pound to a 2.5 cubic bag. Moisten the material before using and you will find that it packs better.

Some growers use straight fir bark as well as straight redwood bark with no additives, and with good results. At one time these materials were inexpensive, but like everything else, the price has gone up. As quality decreases and price increases, other materials will continue to be tried. For adult cattleyas, use medium grade; for seedlings, use the fine grade. For best results when using this material, regular feeding is a must.

Another mixture that has come into use in the past several years consists basically of 3 parts fir bark, 1 part German peat moss (This is a very different product from domestic or Canadian peat moss commonly available in garden centers. As it has become more and more difficult to find, other moisture holding products like chopped sphagnum moss and coconut husk chips have been used as

replacements), 1 part sponge rock, and 1 part redwood bark and dolomite lime. I do not know the amount of dolomite lime used, but would assume ten pounds per cubic yard is about right. There are some modifications to this mix. Some growers add other ingredients, some less, depending on their area and success in growing in this type of mix. As with straight fir bark, regular fertilizing is recommended.

I hope the above suggestions will be of some help. However, most growers have their own preferences as to potting mixtures, and you will have to learn by experimentation to see which will do the best job of growing for you in your particular area. *2005 Armacost Ave., West Los Angeles, Calif. 90025*

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### ***Controlling the Plague: Mealybugs (vaccine presently unavailable)***

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*By Tricia Workman*

*Editor, Kingston Orchid Society*

In most of North America, the long-tailed mealybug

(*Pseudococcus longispinus*) is probably the most common and problematic species on orchids, particularly in homes and greenhouses. White and fuzzy, they use their piercing mouthparts to suck out plant juices. (Is that creepy, or what?)

Mealybugs have a three-stage life history: egg, larva (nymph) and adult. Eggs are laid within a

waxy coated egg sac. After ten days they hatch. The highly mobile nymphs, or crawlers, appear as diminutive adults. The crawlers are the most active stage, moving between plants and developing through several growth periods before becoming adults. In a warm greenhouse or indoors there may be upwards of eight overlapping generations per year. This short and overlapping life cycle means that repeated applications – every 10–14 days – of any treatment is required to kill the immatures.

Furthermore, treatments are most effective against the small crawlers.

Fortunately, this pest responds to household remedies if treated early, ie. *immediately upon discovery*. If we eliminate the more imaginative “remedies” like Listerine and Worm Tea, we are left with isopropyl alcohol and/or soap. The soap dissolves the waxy covering of the bug, while the alcohol actually kills it. For treating small areas, I have found that weekly swabbing with an alcohol-soaked Q-tip works just fine, followed by a rinse in lukewarm water. Do not use other alcohols, such as ethanol or methanol, as they can penetrate and damage plant tissues. You’ll need to treat a second and a third time as well.

Like most pests, mealybugs don’t like light, so look for them in the crotches, on the undersides of leaves, and where leaves meet stems.

Isolate the plant in case you’ve missed any bugs or eggs, and check the lips and cracks of pots, as well as trays and benches, because the females will leave the plant to find hiding places. Also check plants other than orchids as these may be a cause of infestation.

#### **Biological control**

The keeper of many plants in a large greenhouse or a commercial grower may try using one or more

parasitic or predatory insects to keep mealybugs under control. Montrouzier's lady beetle, or mealybug destroyer, *Cryptolaemus montrouzieri*, an Australian beetle, is highly effective for control of mealybugs in greenhouses. Both adults and larvae of this ladybird beetle are very effective predators, especially when mealybug numbers are high. They do best in warm, humid conditions. Biological controls aren't practical for keepers of small collections as the beetles run out of food and leave.

### **Chemical Control**

Horticultural oil, neem oil, and mineral oil smother the insects, so complete coverage of all sprayed plants is essential. These oils are mixed with water and a plant-safe detergent to enhance the spreading and sticking of the oil. The flowers of some orchids such as *Miltonia* and *Masedevallia* are sensitive to neem oil.

Insecticidal soaps are usually solutions of a synthetic pyrethrin and a plant-safe detergent. As with oils, the detergent acts as a surfactant and spreader for dispersing the pyrethrin evenly, and as a mild caustic against the insects. With both oils and soaps, to prevent sunburning, apply the chemical and allow it to dry in the shade.

### **Growth regulator**

Growth regulators are relatively expensive, but the cost per application is less than for botanical oils.

Kinoprene (trade name = Enstar II) is a synthetic form of juvenile hormone which works by disrupting the normal development of the insects. It appears safe for humans and pets under usual-use precautions.

Experience with its use in greenhouses and home collections suggest that this may be the best new pesticide for controlling many orchid pests, including mealy bugs.

Never use an insecticide not labeled for ornamental plants. Whether you use oils, soaps or insecticides, be thorough, change formulations frequently, and do not use less than the minimum concentration of mixture, or more than normally recommended. Too little of a chemical enhances resistance, while too high a concentration may damage the plant. Always follow label directions and never exceed the minimum recommended concentration given in mixing directions. On the bright side, if all efforts fail and you have to destroy a plant, that can be justification for the purchase of a new and healthier plant!

References:

Paul J. Johnson, Ph.D.

Insect Research Collection

Box 2207A, South Dakota State University

Brookings, SD 57007

<http://nathist.sdstate.edu/orchids/pests/mealybugs>

and

<http://floriculture.osu.edu/archive/oct97/mealybug>

*Reprinted in part with permission from Kingston Orchid Society News, November 2009.*

*In Mos2011 May newsletter.*

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## **How to Repot Orchids**

By Jon VanZile, About.com Guide

Repotting your orchids is one of the most important steps you can take for growing and blooming healthy plants. Ideally, you should repot *before* there's a problem—but don't do it too early! Repotting should be done in spring, just before the plants' growing season begins. And don't repot a blooming plant if you can help it! Done correctly, repotting shouldn't stress your plants, but set them up for a successful growing season and even better blooms. So, as you're repotting, just remember: cleanliness is key, orchids are tougher than you think, and remember to match your media to your moisture.

**Difficulty:** Average



**Time Required:** 10-15 minutes

**Here's How:**

**1. Assess the Situation. Do I really need to repot?** This is a key question. You need to repot if:

- The plant has clearly overgrown the pot, with exposed roots hanging over the edges of the pot.
- The plant has grown too top-heavy for the available pot and it keeps falling over.
- The potting media has disintegrated into mush, which can harbor deadly bacteria and fungus.

If any of these conditions are present, it's time to repot.

**2. Pick Your Pot.** There are many ways to grow an orchid. You can mount them on slabs of wood or tree fern, you can grow them in plastic or clay pots, you can grow them in hanging baskets, and some kinds you can simply hang from a wire in the air. Unless you have a greenhouse or conservatory, it's easiest to grow them in pots. Orchid pots have slitted sides to allow for good drainage. There are plastic net pots available, and I use them for very small orchids. However, in general, I prefer the heavy clay pots, which are heavy enough to stay upright and retain just a tiny bit of moisture.

**3. Pick Your Potting Mix.** Potting media is a controversial subject among orchid growers, and many dedicated growers insist on mixing up their own with ingredients like coconut husk, clay pellets, bark, tree fern, perlite, styrofoam, vermiculite, sphagnum moss and more. Whatever mix you use, these should be your guiding principles:

- Organic mixes decay faster. If you use pine fir bark (commonly available in most commercial mixes), it will decay within a year or so of adequate watering.
- Your mix must match your watering. If you water daily, choose a free draining mix that won't hold water.

**4. Gently take the plant from its old pot.** Remove your plant from its old pot as kindly as possible. Roots will often have adhered to the pot sides, and you might break a root or two. It probably won't kill the plant, but try not to. Once you've got the plant free, inspect the roots carefully. Cut away any dead and blackened roots with sterile snippers and gently, with your finger, remove any rotted potting media.

**5 Divide the Plant if Necessary.** Sympodial orchids, or those that grow from advancing pseudobulbs, can be divided at repotting. Keep at least three pseudobulbs on either side of your cut, and make sure there are healthy roots in both divisions. Cut the stem with sterilized snippers and plant each half individually. Some orchids with very small roots, such as oncidiums, can be teased apart into two individual clumps. Division of phalaenopsis is rarely possible unless the mother plant has produced plantlets on the stem of a flower (called a keiki).

**6. Prepare the Pot.** Drainage is essential. If you don't want to fill up the pot with expensive orchid potting media, you can add broken clay pots or even styrofoam packing peanuts to the bottom of the new pot.

**7. Position the Plant.** Orchids aren't like terrestrial plants: they aren't packed in dirt. To position your orchid, balance it on potting media gently so the top of the plant is level or slightly above the rim of the new pot. Gently fill in around the orchid with more potting media. I frequently rely on orchid clips to hold a newly potted in place until the roots grow enough to anchor it in place. If you don't have an orchid clip, that's OK, but be aware that the plant is not stable in its new home until new roots have grown.

**8. Water Thoroughly.** *Your newly potted orchid will need some TLC for a while, until new roots begin to emerge and the plant goes into active growth. I have found that some orchids will fail to bloom the year after they are repotted. This is OK. Orchid growing forces patience, and oftentimes, the plant will be more vigorous than ever once it has become established in its new pot.*