

# NEWSLETTER



**Editor's Note:** The newsletter will be distributed electronically to all members for whom we have an email address. If you wish to switch from paper to electronic delivery, please notify me at [robert.lucas@usask.ca](mailto:robert.lucas@usask.ca).

## Future Meeting Dates:

April 27, 2014

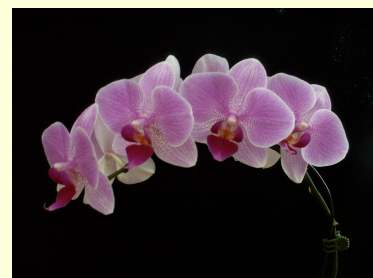
May 25, 2014

## SOS Executive

<b>President:</b>	Cal Carter
<b>Vice-President:</b>	
<b>Past President:</b>	Sherida Gregoire
<b>Secretary:</b>	Jennifer Burgess
<b>Treasurer:</b>	Cheryl Grummett
<b>Social:</b>	Shirley Keith Lori Pozniak
<b>Plant Orders:</b>	Heather Anderson Cheryl Adamson
<b>Resources:</b>	Yvette Lyster Pat Randall
<b>Librarians:</b>	Tracey Thue Jan Dougall
<b>Newsletter:</b>	Bob Lucas
<b>COC/AOS Rep:</b>	Eugene Kucey
<b>Speakers:</b>	Don Keith
<b>Webmaster:</b>	Jennifer Burgess
<b>Mail Address:</b>	SOS, Box 411 Saskatoon, SK S7K 3L3
<b>Web Address:</b>	<a href="http://www.saskorchids.com">www.saskorchids.com</a>

## March Meeting

The March general meeting of the Society will be held on **March 23, 2014** at John Dolan School, commencing at 1:30 p.m. Cal Carter will present a talk entitled, 'Judging Pleurothallids.'



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

Cal Carter will present a talk on judging Pleurothallids at the March meeting. **Since we do not have a visiting speaker, you are encouraged to bring your own plants for sale.**

The March meeting will have a raffle of plants donated by Safeway. Be sure to purchase your tickets from Tracey or Jan at the Library table, \$1 for one, \$2 for three.

The Society will be entering a display at Gardenscape to be held on March 28-30, 2014. We will need volunteers to help with the display and to serve as ambassadors during the event. A signup sheet for volunteers will be at the front table at the March meeting. We have arranged for an experienced member to be available for each time slot, so do not let inexperience with the Show be a deterrent in signing up. It is a good opportunity to share your enthusiasm for orchids with others. As an added bonus, ambassadors will receive an admission pass to Gardenscape.

If you have flowering plants for the display, they should be dropped off at the Show site, Prairieland Park, Hall D (same location as last year) on Thursday, March 27th between 4:00 and 7:30 p. m. Be sure to put your name on your plant pots. Those who have volunteered for display duty may pick up their passes at the same time. Plants are to be picked up between 5:00 and 5:30 on Sunday, March 30th. If you cannot pick up your own plants, be sure to arrange for someone else to do so. Further details about the display

setup will be provided at the March meeting.

In addition to the Society display, Society members will design an display for Gardenscape called an 'For the Love of Orchids.' Heather Anderson and Jenn Burgess are responsible for the planning of the Garden. The plants and other materials will be supplied by Gardenscape and the orchids will be auctioned off on Sunday evening along with other plants in the general auction.

The Orchid Society of Alberta will be holding its annual show on April 4-6, 2014. The location is The Enjoy Centre, 101 Riel Drive, St. Albert, Alberta. For further information, check out the OSA website at

[www.orchidsalberta.com/](http://www.orchidsalberta.com/)

The SOS will pre-order from some of the vendors attending the OSA Show. They are Ecuagenera, Ching Hua Orchids and Ten Shin Orchids. In addition, Forestview Gardens will attend Gardenscape. Plant lists have been posted to the Society website. The deadline for orders is March 15 and they should be sent to Cheryl [orchidcrazy.cheryl@gmail.com](mailto:orchidcrazy.cheryl@gmail.com) or Heather [heather.jane.anderson@gmail.com](mailto:heather.jane.anderson@gmail.com)

### Meeting Agenda

Announcements  
Problem Corner  
Show and Tell  
Coffee/Supplies  
Carter Presentation  
Plant Raffle  
Plant Sale  
Adjournment



Phal Precious Lauren Rae

## FEB. 23 MINUTES

### Announcements

Cal welcomed everyone to the February meeting.

Orchids of Croatia will be the presentation topic today by Cal Carter

Many orchids are available from the raffle table. Guests as well as members are invited to purchase tickets.

Thank you to Al, Marge, Wanda, Mercedes, Sarah, Ramsey and Yvette for bringing snacks.

Plant orders are due March 15th, see the newsletter and/or website for order lists. There was a question about orange highlighted plants on the Ecuagenera list. Cheryl A. will look into the significance of this.

There are many items available from the library to take out on loan, including a new book on hardy Cypripediums.

Potential COC 2015 names are posted on the front wall near the sale table. Please place your vote for your favorite name. The provider of the winning name will receive a mounted Catt Walkeriana.

Volunteer sign-up sheet for Gardenscape are at the front table. We need more people to man the

display. We also plan to sell cut flowers as a fundraiser for the COC next year. More information will follow at a later date.

Jackie Baldock has offered her talents to help the Society with web design and possibly a Facebook pag. The Executive will be in touch with her.

The OSA show is April 4-6. We will need members to lend their blooming plants, as there is a plan to have a display entered. More information will follow at the March meeting.

The April meeting is designated as the annual general meeting and it will feature elections to the Executive. We are accepting nominations for president and newsletter editor.

The April meeting will also feature a silent auction. A portion

or all of the selling price can be denoted to the SOS. Further details will be provided at the March meeting.

#### Problem Corner

An otherwise healthy Dendrobium in bloom has one cane of different coloured and shaped flowers. It was suggested that this could be a mutation or more likely two different plants growing closely together.

A Dendrobium has had no new growth, and has lost its leaves. It was suggested that it be watered sparsely for now and then to start fertilizing once it has stopped blooming and new growths have started.

#### Show and Tell:

Lynn Campbell, Tracey Thue, Ruthanne Hanbidge

Break

#### Presentation

Cal Carter gave a colourful PowerPoint presentation set to music entitled 'Orchids of Croatia.' Photos were shown of the many unique native orchids.

#### Plant Raffle

Approx. 34 plants were donated by Safeway. The majority were large Phalaenopsis, with a few large Oncidium/Intergenerics.

#### Plant sale

13 plants, including many blooming Paphopedilums and Phalaenopsis were sold.

#### COC Naming Competition

The winning name for the 2015 COC is "For the Love of Orchids" which was provided by Vicky Wiley. Vicky was awarded the Cattleya Walkeriana.

Adjournment: 2:40 p.m.

## ORCHID INTENSIVE CARE BY IAN JOHNSON

**EDITOR'S NOTE: THIS ARTICLE IS REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION FROM THE MAY, 2013 ISSUE OF THE OSA NEWSLETTER.**

Everyone has experienced the loss of a favorite orchid, and it always seems to be one that is not easily replaced. We all regret that we did not take some remedial action. Perhaps the method I suggest below will help save that precious plant.

What is needed is a small confined space that can be controlled in temperature, humidity, and rate of evaporation. First, you will need a common white plastic tray that is sold in any gardening store, about 11" x 21" and 2" deep. Also with this tray comes a clear plastic



*Can this plan be saved? Even wretched specimens like this one may thrive anew with intensive care.*

dome that is about 7" tall. For the bottom of the tray I cut a piece of carpet underlay which is about 6" thick and is very much like a sponge. The underlay should be soaked with water but not to the

point of having water lying on top of the underlay.

Now you have a miniature greenhouse that can be controlled for all the growing factors. I must concede that the plants to be placed in it will be limited by the height, which is 7".

The most important indication of plant failure will be the loss of the roots, for without a good root structure the plant is unable to obtain the necessities of life. The decayed roots or other rotting material should be cut off and the plant given a good wash. A good soak in a damp-off solution of

Benlate and water will stop this rotting.

Place the plant into the smallest pot suitable considering the size of the plant. It is important that the plant be underpotted at this point. The potting medium or mix should be clean, washed sphagnum moss that will be packed in the pot around the plant. This mix should not be compressed or packed too tight, for there must be some airspace around the root area if you feel there is just too much humidity therein.

One would think that with the high humidity and lack of air circulation the plant would continue to rot; however I believe the use of sphagnum prevents this from happening.

The rate of recovery will be fast and is first evidenced by the new root growths. A Paphio-

pedilum without any roots will produce many new growths in just one month. Back bulbs will produce new growths in the same time. If you have space in your ICU, leave your plants there as long as you can, but just short of blooming.

As an additional measure, hydroponic stores carry products that may help plant recovery. Most of these additives contain Vitamin B<sub>1</sub>, as well as many other substances which may or may not help the plant. The use of such additives is seen by most orchid growers as helpful, but there is no real proof that they are of benefit. With reserved recommendation, I will say that I have used an additive for years and believe it does promote growth.

When watering, a spray is probably the best method in this

unit. Leave the canopy off until the leaves have dried off and there is no water in the crown of the plant; then restore the canopy. This spraying can be done about once a week, or less if you can feel that the sponge underlay is wet and still contains some water. The tray is best placed under fluorescent lights or near another light source; however, don't put it in the direct sunlight or you will have stewed orchids by dinner.

Hopefully this may save some of our plants. I believe it is our responsibility to grow and save those species that are now lost because of habitat destruction in many parts of the world. Good growing!

**Ian Johnston is an award-winning orchid grower and a Life Member of the Orchid Society of Alberta.**

## ORCHID FEVER BY SUSAN ORLEAN

**EDITOR'S NOTE: THIS ARTICLE IS REPRINTED FROM THE JANUARY 1995 ISSUE OF THE NEW YORKER.**

John Laroche is a tall guy, skinny as a stick, pale-eyed, slouch-shouldered, and sharply handsome, in spite of the fact that he is missing all his front teeth. He has the posture of a dente spaghetti and the nervous intensity of someone who plays a lot of video games. He is thirty-four years old, and works for the Seminole Tribe of Florida, setting up a plant nursery on the tribal reservation near Miami. The Seminole nicknames for Laroche are Crazy White Man and Troublemaker.

My introduction to Laroche took place last summer, in the

new Collier County Courthouse, in Naples, Florida. The occasion was a hearing following Laroche's arrest for illegally taking endangered wild orchids, which he is passionate about, from the Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve, which is a place he adores. Laroche did not dress for the occasion. He was wearing wraparound Mylar sunglasses, a cotton-blend shirt printed with some sort of scenic design, and trousers that bagged around his rear.

At the hearing, he was called forward and asked to state his name and address and to

describe his experience in working with plants. Laroche sauntered to the center of the courtroom. He jutted out his chin. He spoke in a rasping, draggy voice. He stuck his thumbs in his belt loops and said, "I've been a professional horticulturist for approximately twelve years. I've owned a plant nursery of my own. . . . I have extensive experience with orchids, and the asexual micropropagation of orchids under aseptic cultures." Then he grinned and said to the court, "I'm probably the smartest person I know."



Laroche grew up in Miami. He says he was a weird kid. This is not hard to believe. When he wanted a pet, he bought a little turtle, then bought ten little turtles, then tried to breed them, then started selling turtles to other kids, then decided his life wasn't worth living unless he acquired one of every species of rare turtle, including a three-hundred-pound exotic tortoise from the Galapagos Islands.

Suddenly, another passion seized him. He became immersed in late-Ice Age fossils. Then he dropped turtles and Ice Age fossils and became obsessed with lapidary, and then after a while he dropped lapidary and got into collecting and resilvering old mirrors. His passions boil up quickly and end abruptly, like tornadoes. Usually, the end is accompanied by a dramatic pronouncement. When he was in his teens, he went through a tropical-fish phase, and he had sixty fish tanks in his house. He even went skin-diving for the fish himself. Then the end came. He didn't merely lose interest in collecting fish: he renounced it, as if he had kicked a habit. He declared that he would stop collecting fish forever. He also declared that he would never set foot in the ocean again. That was fifteen years ago. He lives a few miles from the Atlantic, but he has not gone near it since.

Laroche has the conversational manner of a Mr. Encyclopedia. This is not the result of rigorous and extensive formal education. He went to high school in North Miami, but

beyond that he is self-taught. In fact, it is almost impossible to imagine him in a classroom. On occasion, he gets wistful about the life he might have had if he had applied himself conventionally. He believes he could have gone to medical school and become a brain surgeon. He would have become distinguished and rich.

Instead, he lives at home with his father and has mostly made a living in unc customary ways. For instance, he once sold to a gardening journal an article he called "Would You Die for Your Plants?" This was after he had spilled granular pesticide into a cut on his hand—an incident that left him with permanent heart and liver damage and the persistent feeling that his experience would make a good and salable story. He is now writing a guide to tissue-culturing plants at home, which he plans to advertise in *High Times*, the marijuana magazine. The ad will ask for a lot of money for the guide but will neglect to mention that any marijuana grown following Laroche's precise methods will never mature enough to have any psychoactive properties. He defends this by saying that it will earn him money, it will teach kids how to grow plants, it will keep them from actually getting high, and it will give them an object lesson in how crime doesn't pay.

The spiral of logic entwining altruism and rule-breaking around a possible financial outcome is a Laroche specialty. Just when you think you've

figured out that he's a crook, he reveals an ulterior and principled but lucrative reason for his crookedness. He loves doing things the hard way, if it means he gets to do what he wants and leaves you wondering how he got away with it. He is the most moral amoral person I've ever known.

When he was growing up, Laroche and his mother would hike through the Fakahatchee Strand and other South Florida swamps, looking for unusual things. At the time, Laroche and his parents were living in North Miami. Laroche's father, a construction worker, had broken his back in a fall from a building and was disabled. Laroche was the only surviving child; a sister had died at an early age. "We're a family of ailments and pain," Laroche says.

He describes his mother, who died in 1988, as overweight, frumpy, Jewish by birth but serially passionate about different faiths. She doesn't sound like someone who would tramp through sloppy, sweaty backcountry, but that is how she and John spent many days.

Sometimes they would tag orchids that were in bloom and come back a few months later to see if they had formed any seeds. For a while, Laroche's passion was to photograph every single species of orchid in bloom in Florida; he and his mother would trudge through the swamp, carrying cameras, for hours on end.

As he got older, Laroche went from wanting pictures of orchids to wanting orchids

themselves. He got married in 1983, when he was twenty-three, and that same year he and his wife opened a nursery in North Miami. Before that, he worked in construction but, just like his father, he broke his back in a fall and went on disability leave. He and his wife called their nursery the Bromeliad Tree. (Bromeliads are spiny plants that usually, like epiphytic orchids, attach themselves to tree limbs instead of sprouting in soil. Some of them grow wild in the Fakahatchee.)

Laroche's nursery specialized in the oddest, rarest stuff. He had forty thousand plants, including some that were the only specimens of their kind in cultivation. Laroche says that in 1990 he showed up at the World Bromeliad Conference with an astonishing twelve-by-twenty-five-foot display featuring star-shaped bromeliads, Day-Glo paint, black light, and Christmas lights arranged in the shape of actual constellations.

The conference was a turning point for him. He became well known in the plant community and began calling people all over the world for leads to unusual plants; his phone bills were sometimes close to a thousand dollars a month. Lots of money flew back and forth, but he kept almost none of it. Once, he spent hundreds of dollars building a little air-conditioned box for a rare fern he got from a friend in the Dominican Republic. The fern died. Laroche has never regretted the expense.

He accumulated one of the country's largest collections of

Cryptanthus, a genus of Brazilian bromeliad. He had a startling, six-foot-tall *Antherium veitchii* with corrugated leaves that he says was "a gorgeous, gorgeous son of a bitch." He had dozens and dozens of orchids. He particularly enjoyed cloning them and mutating them.

He also figured out how to propagate certain species that had rarely been propagated in a lab. Day and night, people would drop by his house to talk about plants and to admire his collection. People would give him plants in exchange for his leading them on hikes through the Fakahatchee just so they could look at a plant that interested them.

One afternoon, while I was visiting him in his office, at the Seminole plant nursery, he began to talk about the amazing adaptability of plants, and mentioned that the plant with the largest bloom in the world, the *rafflesia*, lives parasitically in the roots of a tree and eventually devours its host. He said that back when he had his nursery many people would call him to talk about plants, but he could tell that they were just lonely and wanted to talk to someone, or that they were competitive and wanted to test their knowledge against his. He said, "I felt sometimes like they were going to consume me. I felt like they were the parasite plant and I was the big host tree."

The Orchidaceae are a family of perennial plants with one fertile stamen and three-petaled flowers that, depending on the species, can be anything from

pale specks to voluptuous masses. Generally speaking, orchids seem to drive people crazy. The people who love orchids love them madly, but the passion for orchids is not necessarily a passion for beauty. Something about the form of an orchid makes it seem almost more like a creature than a flower.

Many orchids are strange-looking, and others have bizarre shapes and jarring color combinations, and all orchids are rather ugly when they aren't in flower. Laroche told me that many species are so plain that when he shows them to people they invariably ask him what they will look like when they bloom, and he has to explain that they already are blooming.

Orchids have adapted to almost every environment on earth. They can be mutated, crossbred, and cloned. They can take the form of complex architectural structures or of garish, glamorous, luscious flowers. Not surprisingly, orchids have all sorts of sexual associations; few other flowers are as plainly erotic in appearance or effect. Even other creatures find orchids alluring. Some orchids are shaped exactly like the insect that pollinates them; the insect is drawn inside thinking it has found its mate.

**To be continued.**

For a youtube video of a ghost orchid (the subject of Laroche's trial) visited by a giant Sphinx moth, go to [www.youtube.com/watch?v=ca--GgEe2Zg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ca--GgEe2Zg)