

New Mexico Orchid Guild Newsletter

October 2008

Volume 7 Issue 10 Paph druryi 'Truford'

Next Meeting:

- October 5th 1:30 pm
- Scheduled Program:
Orchids of Peru: In-house
Talk and Slide
Presentation
- Location:
**The Bureau of Land
Management
435 Montano NW**
It's almost a mile west of
Interstate 25 (take the
Montgomery/Montano
exit). Go past Bob
Turner's Ford Country
but not past the Sonic
Drive-In. Turn at the
Sonic, one block east of
Edith, and you'll
see a dark brick building
on the north side of the
street. The conference
room is straight ahead
once you enter.
- As always there is a
potluck with a plethora
of wonderful food.

NMOG offers its
members the opportunity
to learn about orchids
each month!

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THE ORCHIDS OF PERU

Peru is one of the most biologically mega diverse countries in the world. Out of the 247 countries in our planet, 17 of them concentrate 80% of the biological diversity of the world. Among them Peru is the third one most bio diverse country!

Peru is also the fourth country with the widest areas of tropical forests and the ninth country in the world with the widest forest surface.

Peru is located in the central western region of South America, with a territorial expanse of 1.285 million Km² out of which 756,866 Km² are Amazon forests making Peru the second largest Amazonic country after Brazil. It limits in the north with Ecuador (1,420 Km.) and Colombia (1,496 Km.), in the south with Chile (160 Km.), and in the east with Brazil (1,560 Km.) and Bolivia (900 Km.). To the west Peru has a coast of 3500 km. with the Pacific Ocean.

Peru is divided by three natural and strategic regions: Peruvian Sea, Peruvian Andes and Peruvian Amazonia. These three natural regions are crisscrossed by 11 eco regions: Cold sea, tropical sea, coastal desert, equatorial dry forest, Pacific tropical forest, mountainous steppe, puna (very high steppes), bleak plateau, highland rainforest, lowland rainforest and palm tress savannah.

The coastal deserts (with 3500 km. of the most amazing and wild beaches) are crossed by 40 valleys. Peru is watered by 1,007 rivers that descend from more than 6,800 meters high in the Andes. These rivers crisscross Peru 80,000 Km. of waterways with a volume of 2000 trillion cubic meters of water. This amazonic, Andean and coastal rivers are born from the melting glaciers in the Andes that form 12,200 lakes and lagoons.

The Peruvian coastal climate unlike other tropical and subtropical zones of South America is configured by the Humboldt Current, which bathes the Peruvian coasts with frozen waters brought from Antarctica. Another phenomenon that maintains the Peruvian coastal waters frigid is the upwelling of very deep cold waters from the continental abysses formed in front of the western coasts of South America. This flow of cold waters drags plankton that feeds the lowest part on the marine nutritional chain. It is thanks to this upwelling phenomenon that the Peruvian sea is one of richest in the world.

The cold ocean water creates a mild weather for the Peruvian coast where precipitation depends of the latitude. Most of the time the Peruvian coast is one of the driest deserts in the world with very few precipitations with exception of the northern area of the country close to the equatorial line.

El Niño is a special case where warm waters from the western Pacific Ocean migrate east and southward as far as the northern coastal regions of Peru. Strong El Niño effects can largely influence Peru's environment generating disturbances to the rich fishing industry as well as the blooming cycle of orchids, draughts and flooding. Recent archaeological discoveries suggest that the end of the Mochica culture could be generated by a strong El Niño that lasted for several years.

If we combine the various microclimates determined by the latitudes and we add the altitude of the Andes as a factor it creates several geographic and ecological configurations.

The Andes are a big natural barrier for the heavy clouds coming from the Amazon rainforest, determining different landscapes clearly defined by their location in the east or west of the Andes. These configurations also form a series of inner valleys with very particular conditions generating small microhabitats allowing for the development of new endemic species.

Continued page 2

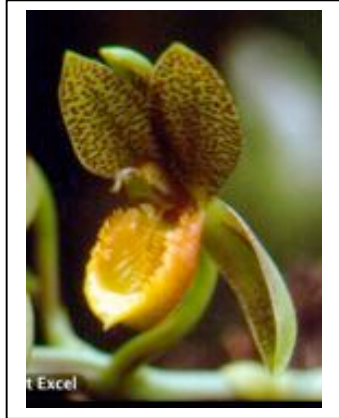
In the eastern side of the Andes where the clouds are trapped by the mountains, cloud forests are formed. It is in these valleys where the mayor biodiversity of orchids and other species can be found, even up to 4000 meters high.

Contrary to the common believe the lowland Amazon jungle or Rupa Rupa, watered by the Amazon River is not too rich in orchid species, although several species of orchids are spread out in the entire amazonic watershed. In this sense, it is obvious that orchids don't respect political frontiers. It is very probable that many orchids that are classified as natives of neighboring countries are found in Peru too. These frontier areas are inhabited and they haven't been studied in detail as has happened in neighboring countries like Ecuador, Colombia or Brazil.

Come join us at the October meeting where three of NMOG's members, Lewis Wilcox who spent the summer in Peru and Jane Cole and Debby Lieberman who spent a week there, will give a talk and slide presentation on the wild orchids of Peru and their habitats. It promises to be an interesting and informative meeting.



Anguloa virginalis



Catesetum



Acineta superba



Pleurothallis

WHAT IS AN ORCHID ADDICT?

By Susan Taylor, Bellaonline.com

It seems that orchids are addictive. Ask anyone who has started with one of them from the local hardware store and now has a greenhouse full and is considering if there is anywhere else that they can put more.

What is it about these plants that causes this disease? I've looked back at the progress of my addiction and found what I think is the answer...there are just so many different possible types of orchid...so many colors and varieties that challenge us to try to grow them. And the more that you find out and study about them the more you feel that you need to try.

Every one of us who has gone down this path has decided at some point that it is extremely important to try to grow species orchids of their favorite variety to gain a background into the parents of the hybrids they are growing. I have recommended this, but there are a number of caveats that must be addressed before you try it. Most hybrids will grow in a wide range of conditions. Species must be provided with a rather narrower range of conditions if they are to grow well. Trying to grow cool orchids in the south can be done, but it's expensive. You either have to air condition your greenhouse or provide perfect conditions under lights in your home. Likewise, growing warm varieties can even be a challenge in the summer in far northern climates. Make sure you can provide at least minimum conditions for your plants before you try to grow them. Otherwise you're just going to get discouraged and eventually kill a number of plants.

Another thing that I noticed was that I had to have every color of whatever it was I was interested in at the moment. I love the big Cattleyas, the bigger the better. I have them in lavender, purple, white all doing well. I also have a number in the yellows and reds and art shades (oranges, light pinks with a yellow blush, etc.), which have not done well for me. Undaunted, I continued buying them in the hopes that they would suddenly start to grow. I have finally come to the conclusion that they are not for me. I have changed how I grow them in order to see if I can revive the ones that are still alive, but will not buy any more until I'm getting some to bloom. It's just a waste of money for me.

Then, when I had multiple colors of one thing covered, I decided I'd see what else I could grow. Oncidiums, Dendrobiums, Phalaenopsis all had to be added in various colors. By this time my husband had built me a greenhouse so he could move in the house again and I had a wonderful time filling that up.

And now, I have to start giving away, selling or throwing away those that are not growing well, just sitting there, or were not what I expected when I bought them. Your tastes change as your addiction grows and you need to weed out those plants that no longer interest you. Give the best ones to your society newcomers; they will love to get them!



ORCHID VIRUSES: DON'T CATCH THAT BUG!

Among all of the diseases that can affect orchid plants, viruses are probably the most feared. Bacteria and fungi will do their damage—many of them are lethal—but, if caught early enough and measures taken to eliminate their effects, can be brought under control. Once a plant has been infected by virus however, it's as good as gone: there is no practical cure for viruses once they've invaded a plant's tissues. What's worse, infected plants that have been weakened by virus will often show signs of secondary bacterial and fungal infections that mask the viral presence, making the identification of a virus problem difficult if not impossible. There is currently no way to positively identify the presence of virus in orchids without special testing, but infected plants do show some tell-tale signs which should at least alert the grower that testing may be necessary.

So what are these signs? How do you differentiate between a fungus or bacterial infection, and a viral one?

Fungus and bacterial infections are usually characterized by black or brown spots, often soft, watery, and mushy looking, that can appear on any part of the plant. These spread quickly but, if caught before the infection reaches the plant's crown or rhizome, can be eliminated before the plant dies. Other fungal infections appear as spreading, chestnut-brown stains on the leaves, and still others, usually species of *Cercospora*, cause varying degrees of leaf spotting that appear as tiny dots peppering leaves in a haze. The usual remedy for these is to cut away the affected portions using a sterilized knife or razor blade, then to apply an appropriate disease control to the entire plant. Many growers use cinnamon powder as an effective, natural fungicide, and common Listerine works very well against disease-causing bacteria.

But viruses are a different story. The three most common viruses that affect orchids are ORSV (Odontoglossum Ringspot Virus), TMV (Tobacco Mosaic Virus), and CYMMV (Cymbidium Mosaic Virus), and they debilitate the plant by disrupting normal growth and causing malformation of plant structures. There is no practical cure. Symptoms that appear include chlorosis (the breakdown of chlorophyll that causes yellow and light brown patches) in diamond-shaped, spiraled, or mosaic-like patterns, elongated yellow spots that grow longitudinally along a leaf's veins, the distortion and curling of leaves and flower spikes, and, classically, color-break in the blooms. (Color-breaks are streaks and patches of darker or lighter color that "break" the flower's normal color-flow.) To help with identification, photographs of virally infected orchid leaves can be found here: [Orchid Virus Photos](#)

Virus can be mechanically transmitted from an infected plant to a non-infected plant by any tool or procedure that exposes or comes into contact with the plant's sap. These include knives, pruning shears, plant stakes, wire ties, even used pots—that have not been properly sanitized before re-use. Plants rubbing together in a breeze which induces the leaf edge of one to cut into the other can transmit virus. You can transmit virus yourself by running your fingers along the length of a plant's leaves or exposing it to rough handling, and that risk is multiplied by orders of magnitude if you're a smoker or have handled tobacco just before contact. Chewing and piercing insects can also transmit virus: scale, mealybugs, grasshoppers, and aphids are all suspected carriers, so growers whose collections are plagued by these pests run a far greater risk of viral contamination. And because viruses are so tiny, they can enter through wounds that may be completely invisible to the naked eye.

At this time, the best defense against viral attacks is good cultural habits. And while many of these practices may seem fussy, finicky, and outright paranoid to the new orchid grower, their value will be quickly appreciated once an expensive plant is lost due to virus and the loss could have been avoided.

Always sanitize / sterilize any implements you use on your orchids, before and between each orchid you work with. Knives, blades, and shears can be flamed using a soldering torch or, after wiping off any organic debris, soaked in a 10% bleach solution for five minutes. Wooden or bamboo stakes cannot be effectively sterilized due to their porosity, so should never be reused or transferred from plant to plant. Plastic pots, if reused, should be scrubbed clean and then soaked in bleach solution. Clay pots, again, because they are porous, cannot be effectively sterilized by soaking, but can be reused if heated in an oven during a "self-cleaning" cycle or baked for an hour at 500 F. Old bark medium should never be reused on another orchid plant. (Instead, mix it into the soil of your vegetable or flower garden. Your vegetables and flowers will love you for it.) Wash your hands with soap and hot water before and between each orchid you work with. If you choose to use latex gloves, be sure to change them for fresh ones before handling a new plant. The work surface you use for repotting should ideally be made of nonporous material you can easily wipe down with disinfectant before and after each repot. But if a non-porous surface isn't available, put down sheets of newspaper to do your repotting on, and discard them after each plant that you do.

If an orchid of yours has tested positive for virus, dispose of it as soon as possible, preferably by burning. If burning is illegal in your area, wrap the plant in a plastic bag, tie it, and throw it out. There is no cure, and keeping the plant around for sentimental reasons will only dramatically raise the risk that your other orchids will become infected as well. Please don't give the plant away to some unsuspecting soul or leave it out on the sidewalk for someone to pick up. Virused orchid plants are useless to everybody!

Continued on page 4

Viruses are a very real and persevering threat to orchid growers, and the risks are greater if you're careless or sloppy in your growing technique. But if you keep your growing environment clean, buy plants only from reputable dealers, and remain fastidious in your orchids' maintenance, your plants will stand a much better chance of staying virus-free and delighting you with beautiful blooms year after year.

For orchid virus testing services, this is a good lab to contact:

Critter Creek Laboratory
 400 Critter Creek Road
 Lincoln, CA 95648
 916-645-7111
 Email:

www.Crittercreeklab.com

SHOW AND TELL WINNERS



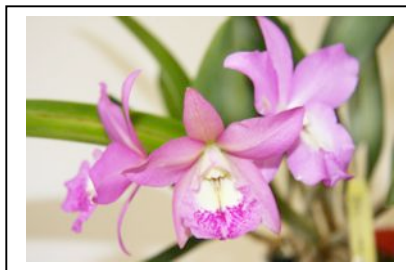
Dendrobium Maiden Charlotte 'Janet' is a mini primary cross between two species, Den. rhodostictum and Den. aberrans, registered in 2001 by Tsiku Taiwan Orchids. Both of the species are found in Papua New Guinea growing on tree fern and shady tree trunks in the mossy forests of the Bowutu Mountains at 1000-6250 feet. It has 2-6 flowers per inflorescence that are 0.4-0.6 inches across. Both parents have purple markings while this particular cultivator is a creamy

white. Sharon bought this from Allan Koch last year when he was here speaking. It has been blooming since July. She gives it morning sun and waters 1-2 times per week. In general it prefers being moist in the spring and summer during its active growth, reducing feeding and watering during the cooler months. The pot should be small for the plant size like all dendrobiums.



Den. Maiden Charlotte 'Puff'
 Owner: Sharon Hendrix/George Gibson Div I
 Photographer: Lathy Mancini

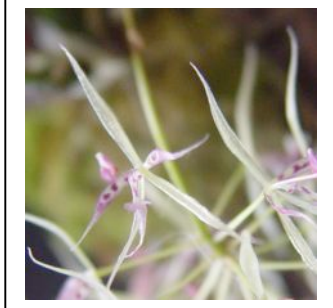
Brassocatanthe Little Mermaid 'Janet' is a mini cross between Cattleya walkeriana x Brassanthe Maikai, which was registered in 1997 and is made up of three species. It has fragrant flowers that are usually four in number per inflorescence. Its sepals and petals are light lavender-pink, with a lavender lip that has spotted, dark purple coloration in a waterfall pattern on the outer halves and creamy yellow side lobes. Its column is white and the flowers have a firm substance and sparkling texture. Pam grows her orchid in an atrium with 60-75% humidity, high day temperatures and low nights of around 55 degrees. It MUST dry out between waterings.



Photographer: Vicki Ventura

Bc. Little Mermaid 'Janet'
 Owner: Pam MacKenzie Div. II
 Photographer: Kathy Mancini





Ocm. (Notylia) aurora
 Owner: Karen Bryan Div II
 Photographer: Barbara Smith



The species, *Macroclinium* (Notylia) *aurea* was previously a subsection of *Notylia* but is now recognized as a separate genus. This is a wild, little micro-mini twig epiphyte found in Junin, Peru at elevations of around 750 meters. It has very small, inconspicuous pseudobulbs enveloped completely by 3-4 sheaths. Its richly textured leaves are green, heavily peppered with blood red, and wiry, pendant spikes that bloom repeatedly. The flowers grow in a crowded sphere of 9-15 that are spidery, translucent, pale blush with purple spotting on the petals and having a small dagger-shaped lip. Karen said it usually blooms in the spring but this year the spikes died. It surprised her when it respiked and bloomed. It is grown in an Edwardian case.

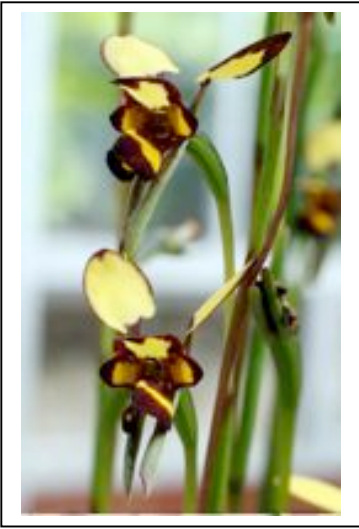
According to Walter, his orchid, *Laeliocattleya* Edgard Vanbelle x *Cattleya intermedia* x *Brassolaeliocattleya* Magic Meadow, is an ugly plant but it produces amazing fragrant flowers. It had around 6 beautiful huge flowers that have creamy green sepals with the petals and lip having splashes of medium lavender. It grows in a greenhouse with intermediate temperatures, 55% shade and the addition of water about every five days. Walter basically treats all his orchids about the same so the orchids have to learn to acclimatize. He says he is too old to change so it is up to the orchids. The plant is growing in bark but he is replacing his mediums with rock to grow more of his orchids hydroponically. This beautiful orchid was purchased in CO.

Dendrobium Burana Sundae 'Hawaii' is a complex cross between *Den. Kaneohe* and *Den. Burana Sunshine* comprising 11 species. It was first registered in 1999. This orchid had one tall inflorescence bearing 10 dark, reddish, maroon flowers. It may be tolerant of bright indirect light, hot temperatures including at night although it may tolerant intermediate nighttime temperatures as low as 68 degrees. Keep it at 50-60% humidity, moist during its active growth, which is usually in the spring/summer time. Keep pot bound. Vicki threw both of her dendrobiums outside this year as a "grow or die" philosophy having had no luck in producing flowers inside. It worked.



Den Burana Sundae Hawaii
 Owner/Photographer: Vicki Ventura Div III





ORCHIDS IN THE NEWS

West Australia: A rare orchid discovered in Kewdale has raised hopes WA's delicate native flora can be saved from extinction. The brown and yellow flower, which is so new that it has not been named, is one of the star attractions in a Kings Park and Botanic Gardens initiative to preserve and collect the seeds of almost 1000 native plant species by 2010.

Kings Park science director Kingsley Dixon said the orchid was believed to be closely related to the popular donkey orchid, but its different coloration, size and leaves distinguished it as a new species. But while new orchids continued to be discovered almost annually in WA, other orchids such as the colorful Queen of Sheba orchid were approaching extinction.

"Orchids are the barometer of how well the ecology is travelling, because when orchids vanish from bushland areas, then you know the area is starting to show signs of stress," Dr Dixon said.

He hoped to be able to harvest enough seeds from the new orchid to aid its conservation, with enough seeds left over to sell to visitors at next year's Kings Park Festival. The festival's seed kits, which this year contained seeds for the green spider orchid, raised awareness about orchids' plight while raising money for conservation.

"Salinity, clearing weeds and disease have resulted in loss of habitat and species to a degree that is a national crisis," Dr Dixon said.

"The Queen of Sheba was once common and widespread, but in the past 15 years numbers have declined and we suspect that climate change may be adversely affecting the orchid more than any other plant."

He added that scientists had already discovered at least 400 different orchid species in the South-West.

New Zealand: There were more garlands for a conquering hero today with an orchid that grows in the Himalayas being named the Sir Edmund Hillary. It is an honor Lady Hillary approves of more than some of the other suggestions being made, including a public holiday in Sir Ed's memory. The Himalayan wild orchids grow in the shadow of Everest, but do just as well in New Zealand gardens, which is more than Lady Hillary was prepared to say for her former beekeeper. "Ah, no, not really," says Lady June Hillary of her beekeeper. "And I don't remember him ever digging the garden either...but he certainly enjoyed what I did in the garden. So that was nice."

New York: A rare orchid the size of a Volkswagen Beetle is blooming for the second time ever at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, a blessed event that has spurred envy among the handful of orchid growers who will even try to grow a plant this big.

Considered the queen of orchidaceous plants, and one of the world's largest orchids, this particular *Grammatophyllum speciosum* is 12 feet in diameter and weighs about 200 pounds. It last bloomed in 2003 and has four huge flower spikes, at least one of which should remain in bloom for the next week or two, said David Horak, curator of the garden's orchid collection.

Known as the tiger or leopard orchid, the plant is native to Malaysia, Sumatra and New Guinea, where it grows in the crotches of trees more than 100 feet in the air. Plants can weigh up to two tons.

"There are all kinds of anecdotal stories about workers being killed trying to remove one from a tree," Mr. Horak said.

If it is rare in nature, this Gulliver of the garden is even rarer in captivity, because few people or institutions can afford to grow it. Mr. Horak bought the plant 10 years ago for \$75 at an auction from the widow of Don Richardson, who was the orchid grower for Greentree, the Whitney estate on Long Island. It now hangs in a 30-inch square basket, 15 feet in the air above a pond. As plants go, it is fairly high-maintenance, he said. It is watered every sunny day, and fed two or three times a week.

"The last time we potted it, it took five people and a rope and pulley to lower it into the current basket," Mr. Horak said. "They resent being repotted, and for some time after we repotted it, it kind of sulked. It didn't grow very well for a couple years. In an August 2007 article in *Orchids*, the bulletin of the American Orchid Society, Erich E. Michel, the operations manager of the Hoosier Orchid Company in Indianapolis, described trying to get a *Grammatophyllum* to bloom. In the essay, titled "I Need to Grow a Giant Orchid" (a need his wife as defined as "childish competitive dementia"), he

Continued page 7



In an August 2007 article in *Orchids*, the bulletin of the American Orchid Society, Erich E. Michel, the operations manager of the Hoosier Orchid Company in Indianapolis, described trying to get a *Grammatophyllum* to bloom. In the essay, titled "I Need to Grow a Giant Orchid" (a need his wife as defined as "childish competitive dementia"), he described trying to coax blooms from the plant, which he variously referred to as "the beast" and "the monster."

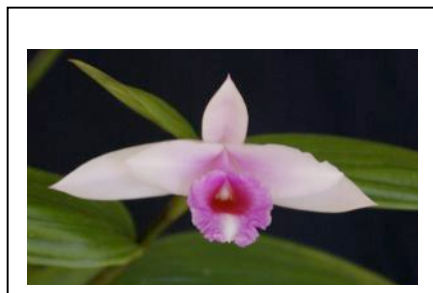
The plant's spiny rootlets, which dry and harden until they are thornlike, catch plant and animal litter from above and form "a self-made composter" that helps feed the plant.

"These barbed roots were just one way the plant could hurt you," he wrote, before describing how, after nine years of waiting, the growers decided to force the plant to bloom by starving it. "We were going to make it think it was going to die," he wrote.

He succeeded in 2004, and again in 2007, when the plant produced eight flower spikes. The Brooklyn orchid's next feat will be to produce a seed capsule the size of a Nerf football, Mr. Horak said. It will have about two million dustlike seeds in it, which may be offered to some other institution or firm that wants to try growing its own. The seeds are considered an aphrodisiac by some, Mr. Michel wrote.

Unlike Audrey Junior, the voracious plant from "The Little Shop of Horrors," the Brooklyn plant has not been named, Mr. Horak said. "On any given day, if it's creating trouble, it gets names nobody wants to hear," he said.

MEMBER'S CORNER



Sobralia decora 'Santa Barbara'
Owner: Steve Fischer

Sobralia decora 'Santa Barbara' has crystalline, pale pink flowers with dark centers on very dark 2-foot canes with attractive, broad leaves. An easy to grow plant that blooms year-round! Alas, like all *Sobralias*, the flowers are very short lived. Intermediate growing. June - July blooming. Species from Central America

Keith Mead Treasurer
PO Box 12938
Albuquerque NM 87195

PHONE:

(505) 898 0975

Email:

kjkm@comcast.net

News Contributions:

E-MAIL:

smith_nmog@earthlink.net

Board meeting
October 23rd 2008, 6:30
pm at the home of Joanne
Bodin. All members are
welcome to attend. If
you want to express an
opinion, bring up ideas,
etc, you must be on the
agenda.

Contact Debby
Lieberman at
deblieberman@earthlink.net
or 286 0196 no later
than 10/21/08

We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.nmog.org

NEW MEMBERS

The NMOG Board and members would like to welcome our two newest members, Irene Anderson and Melanie Yanke. Please make them feel welcome by introducing yourselves at the next meeting.

2009 ORCHID SHOW

Adrienne Carroll will be the chairperson for the upcoming spring show. Some Publicity deadlines will already be in effect by the end of September so work has already begun. Putting on our show takes 8 months of preparation so it is vital that you support and help out in any way you can even this early in the process.

HOSPITALITY POSITION OPEN

For the last two years, Connie Smith has made sure that when you come to the meetings, there is water, plates, utensils and napkins available for the potluck. She would like to step down and give someone else a chance to get involved with NMOG. Please let her or Steve know if this is something you can do. We try to have a backup person just in case you can't make a meeting. Someone volunteer so Connie can have a much-needed