

New Mexico Orchid Guild Newsletter

September 2008

Volume 7 Issue 9

8Paph druryi 'Truford'

Next Meeting:

- September 7th 1:30 pm
- Scheduled Program: Sandia Mountains Wild Orchid. Conservation
- 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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SOBRALIA—BEAUTIFUL BUT EPHEMERAL Steve Fischer

Sobralias are the most beautiful orchids that you'll probably never see at Show and Tell. Although the fragrant, large, showy, Cattleya-like flowers can measure 6 to 8 inches across, they are short-lived, some lasting only a few hours. So not only can't you expect to see them at S & T, there are few AOS awards to the genus. The genus is not well-studied and information about them is scarce.

Sobralias were discovered by Spanish botanists exploring Chile and Peru and named for Dr. Francisco Sobral in 1794. The genus, pronounced "so-BRAL-ee-ah," comprises around 100 species and 22 hybrids found in tropical America from Mexico through South America. They are tall terrestrials with reedlike stems that grow in clumps at altitudes ranging from sea level to 8,800 feet. The smallest species measure less than a foot, but at the other extreme, stems can grow up to 25 to 30 feet tall. They generally have pleated leaves all along the stem.

Even though the flowers are one day wonders, they bloom successively on the canes. A mature plant with a large clump of stems can produce quite a show. There are several species like *Sob. dissimilis* and *Sob. maduroi* whose flowers reportedly last up to 9 days. My *Sob. decora* with its crystalline white flowers and a bright pink lip, has bloomed 10 times in the last 2 months on 3 inflorescences.

The large flowered *Sobralia macrantha*, the most awarded of the species, grows to 4 feet and has luscious purple or white blooms. Tall, long, narrow stems are reminiscent of bamboo. In Central America, it is sometimes known as St. Anthony's lily. It is the most widely available (although expensive) species of the genus and one of the easiest to grow.

Sobralias are generally intermediate to warm growers that like medium to high light. They should be kept on the moist side while actively growing, but in the fall, they can dry out between waterings. Sobralias like to be potbound. For more information about these beauties, visit Nina Rach's Sobralia Pages at sobralia.autrevie.com.



SEPTEMBER MEETING—BACK TO THE BASICS

By Steve Fischer

More than once I have heard distress in the voice of new members who say that orchid terminology sounds like Greek to them (of course, many orchid names *are* Latinized Greek words, but that's not what they're talking about). The September 7 meeting is especially designed for beginners, new members, and all those with questions about growing orchids in New Mexico (they say it can't be done, but they're wrong).

We'll start with an American Orchid Society slide show entitled, "What are Orchids?" that highlights the diversity found in the orchid world and also features those wily orchids' pollination tricks, ruses, and frauds. That will be followed by a discussion of orchids' needs and how to meet them. Then we will go over some commonly used terms and initiate you into the arcane world of orchid jargon. Finally, we'll point you to some resources to increase your knowledge.

Although the meeting will be specifically geared to new members, it's important that our expert growers share their experiences. It's by coming together as the New Mexico Orchid Guild that we help each other become better orchid growers, which is the point, isn't it?

STATE FAIR INFORMATION

Flower Show Dates:

1. Friday, September 5th
2. Tuesday, September 9th
3. Friday, September 12th
4. Monday, September 15th
5. Thursday, September, 18th

Entries will be accepted from 7-9 am on the day of the new show. It is recommended that you arrive before 9 to allow time to fill out entry tags. All entered must be checked into classification by 10 am.

Exhibitors may enter through Gate 4, park in lot 4 until 9 am. Only unloading is permitted behind the Flower Building. Anyone staying after 9 am must move their vehicle to Parking Lot 1, 8 or 9 and pay a parking fee.

Exhibitors will register stating the number of exhibits they are entering, complete an entry for each exhibit giving exhibitor's name, section and class or sub-class number of the entry.

All entries must be passed by their respective Division/ Section Classification Committee. Exhibitors will be informed if entry does not conform and how to make necessary changes.

You must leave the Hall after your entry has been placed. The public will be allowed in after 12pm.

The State Fair is not responsible for any loss of personal property.

Ribbons will be awarded in each class and subdivision only if entries are considered worthy by the judges. On the final day of the show, a Special Award will be awarded to the exhibitors who have entered at least 3 shows and won the most blue ribbons for the total of five shows.

All horticulture must have been grown by the exhibitor and entered in only one show. They must be free of insects, disease or spray residue. No exhibit may exceed 48 inches in any direction. Each exhibit must have the correct botanical name.

An exhibitor may enter in as many classes as desired, but may enter only once in each class or subdivision of a class.

Container grown entries may be claimed **ONLY** by the owner. These exhibits must be removed from the show on its final day at 8 pm

Adrienne Carroll and Mark Vaughan will be setting up an exhibit for NMOG to attract more members. Please if you have the time contact one of them to see how you can help out. By either bringing your blooming orchids to be part of the exhibit or helping to set up the exhibit.

Phone number for Adrienne who is in charge of the the exhibit is: 681-1313 Cell

FYI: MY CAT IS EATING MY ORCHIDS

It seems that cats love orchids. And it seems to be a common problem with them eating them. So, although there isn't a spray to keep them away (wouldn't that be convenient) there are things you can do to stop your cat from eating your orchids or other plants. You can usually find sweetgrass at your local garden center in 2" or 4" pots. Cats find this yummy and it will distract them from eating your orchids. Another option is to put a small amount of cayenne pepper around the plants. Note that this can only be done for a short amount of time like 4-5 days to discourage your cat. After that it should be washed away otherwise it could be harmful to the plant.

SETTING UP A TERRARIUM FOR ORCHIDS

By Susan Taylor, Bellaonline.com

Many orchid growers graduate from the windowsill to a terrarium in order to better control environmental conditions, especially humidity, for their plants. An old aquarium can be used for this purpose fairly easily. If it was a fresh water tank, all it needs is a good cleaning with soap and water and an overnight soak in a bleach solution to kill any algae left in crevices. If it was a salt water tank, you will need to fill the tank with water and let it soak for several days, rinse and soak again, in order to make sure that all salt residues have been removed.

Although it is not very natural looking, most experts recommend using egg shell crate (material used for fluorescent light covering available at most hardware stores). This material is approximately 1/2 inch or 2 centimeters high with openings in squares of approximately 1/4 inch or 1 centimeter. The effect when this is used as the substrate is then to keep all materials from the bottom of the terrarium while holding water and allowing it to evaporate up through the spaces.

You will want to choose props much like those used in a fish tank in order to make the whole thing look natural. Drift wood, rocks, cork are all good choices. Be sure that you clean and sterilize anything that you bring in from the wild. Materials purchased from pet stores are probably already sterile and will not need to be treated. Place your props, the largest in the background and smallest in the front before you put in your plants.

Plants should be chosen carefully for size and the larger plants can be placed in the back or growing up cork. Small plants such as Masdevallia, Pleurothallis and the smaller Paph species are good choices. Jewel orchids should always be considered since their foliage is always interesting when nothing else is blooming. Choose contrasting leaf colors for the best effect. Ferns make very good companion plants and will add a pleasing texture change to the scene.

Place your plants still in their pots and then add sphagnum moss around the plants and cover the egg crate so that it no longer shows. When assembled like this repotting is very simple – just take out the plant and pot, put in new media and then replace. Some orchids will tend to grow into their environment and should not need repotting if they have acclimated such as growing on a cork backdrop.

MINIATURE ORCHIDS – MASDEVALLIA

By Susan Talor, Bellaonline.com

For the home grower, the Masdevallias offer one of the best choices for indoor growing. They are uniformly small growing, normally flower year round, and are fairly easy to grow. They belong to a genus of approximately 350-500 species, depending upon which expert you cite, which have been widely hybridized for their small highly-colored flowers. Most are from the higher reaches of the Andes Mountains where they grow as epiphytes (growing on trees), lithophytes (growing on rocks), or rarely as terrestrials (growing in humus on the ground). Their natural environment is the cloud forest which indicates that they need a quite humid and cool environment to grow well.

They do not resemble most other orchids but are truly unusual and extremely colorful. They are one of the best plants for terrariums since they stay small and generally bloom for long periods of time.

Most species and hybrids need cool to intermediate temperatures and will do best if night time temperatures are reduced to 60 degrees Fahrenheit or 15.5 degrees Celsius; daytime temperatures should be no higher than 75 degrees Fahrenheit or 24 degrees Celsius. They will grow and flower well under the same light conditions as Phalaenopsis and Paphiopedilums which makes them perfect for growing on windowsills or under lights. As noted above, they require good humidity at all times since their leaves are somewhat sensitive and thin – 60 to 70 percent is perfect.

Water is another important factor for these plants. They are particularly sensitive to salts in water, so the best thing to do is to use rainwater or distilled water. They should be kept uniformly moist and repotted yearly in good quality bark or sphagnum. What you use of course depends upon your culture conditions. When purchased, most come in a medium or fine bark mix which allows for very good drainage while still providing good moisture. Sphagnum is best used in a terrarium environment.

These little orchids are rarely seen for sale in the big stores where you can find Dendrobiums, Phals and Oncidiums. Your best bet is to purchase them from a reliable vendor at an orchid show or over the web. Be sure to plan on having these plants sent during the cooler months of the year so that they do not become overheated in transit. This is very hard on them and will keep them from growing well until they **recover**.

Two nurseries well known for their quality are Hills View Gardens in Portland, Oregon, and Parkside Orchid Nursery in Pennsylvania.



Epi. cristatum
Owner: Steve Fischer Div i
Photographer: Kathy Mancini

The species *Epidendrum cristatum*, or “comb” *Epidendrum* is a tall, clump- forming epiphyte that can grow up to 25 feet in the wild. It is found in the northern portion of South America, Central America as well as Mexico at altitudes ranging from 750 feet to as high as 2000 feet in the cloud forests of Venezuela although in earlier years sightings were seen as high as 6250 feet in Ecuador. The oblong-elliptic, leathery, yellow-green leaves can range from 7-9 inches with sharply pointed tips. When young, the long, leafy, canelike stems will be erect but arch with pendent inflorescences when mature. There are many spreading flowers on each inflorescence having oblong sepals and wider petals that are lime-green or yellow green with purple or red-brown spots. The lip is highly lobed. The flower is slightly fragrant. Light should be filtered or the

diffused with no direct midday sun. Strong air movement should be provided at all times. Temperatures range in the mid 80’s during the day and the low 60’s at night year round. It is a high humidity plant at 80% 9-10 months out of the year with the remaining time only dropping to 75%. This is because the rainfall in their habitat is very heavy all year. Cultivated plants need heavy watering while actively growing with excellent drainage and aeration around the roots. You can give them a rest in the winter by just reducing the water but never allowing them to completely dry out. They usually bloom in May and June in the Northern Hemisphere. Steve grows his under suncloth in the summer.

The miniature, sympodial species, *Masdevallia constricta* (*urosalphinx*), is found in Ecuador and Peru in wet, montane forests on old trees. The one, creamy, white flower per inflorescence is large for the size of the plant. Leaves range around 4 inches with the inflorescences only being around 2.8 inches long. The sepals are connected to the base of the flower to form a gaping orange cup that is about 0.6 in long. The sepals form long tails with the lateral sepals being somewhat shorter than the dorsal sepal. It likes filtered or diffused light, no direct sun and strong air movement at all times. Blooming usually occurs anywhere from April to November. Summer temperatures average in the mid 70’s in the day and mid 50’s at night; however, with their range of habitat elevation, temperatures can vary 6-8 degrees warmer or 4-5 degrees colder. Winter temperatures average in the mid 70’s during the day to low 50’s at night. They are high humidity seekers ranging from 85-90% summer and fall, dropping only to the 80% in the winter and spring. Rainfall is moderate to heavy most of the year in the habitat so you should keep them evenly moist from spring to fall with only a slight drying between watering. By late fall, water should be reduced but never allowed to become completely dry. Just like the water, fertilizer should be reduced until the spring. Plants may be mounted if humidity is high and you should water at least once a day to several times a day during hot, dry periods. Since it is more difficult to keep mounted plants moist, a fast draining medium, which contains materials that retain moisture, such as sphagnum or perlite, is used as well as charcoal. Repotting every year is recommended in late winter or early spring or anytime that does not interfere with flowering. Karen grows this in her Edwardian case.



Masd. onstricta
Owner: Karen Bryan Div. II
Photographer: Kathy Mancini

Burageara Nelly Isler 'Swiss Beauty' is an oncidiae intergeneric complex hybrid cross between Burr. Stefan Isler and Miltonia Kensington that combines *Oncidium*, *Miltoniopsis* and *Vuylstekeara*. The fragrant has rosy orange red sepals with a white, red, orange and peach spotted wide lip. This plant blooms in the fall and spring or whenever new growth matures. Each pseudobulb can produce up to 2 flower spikes that can branch. It is easy to grow under a wide range of conditions and can bloom twice per year. It prefers low to medium light as in an east window or under a fluorescent or a high pressure sodium fixture. This plant will tolerate a wide range of temperatures due to its genetic heritage. Ideal temperatures should be from 55 to 68 degrees at night to 68 to 85 during the daytime. This plant would ideally prefer a 5 to 10 degree temperature drop at night. Humidity should be 50% or higher. Water as the mix approaches dryness but do not allow the mix to become completely dry between watering. Fertilize every other watering in the summer and every third watering in the winter.



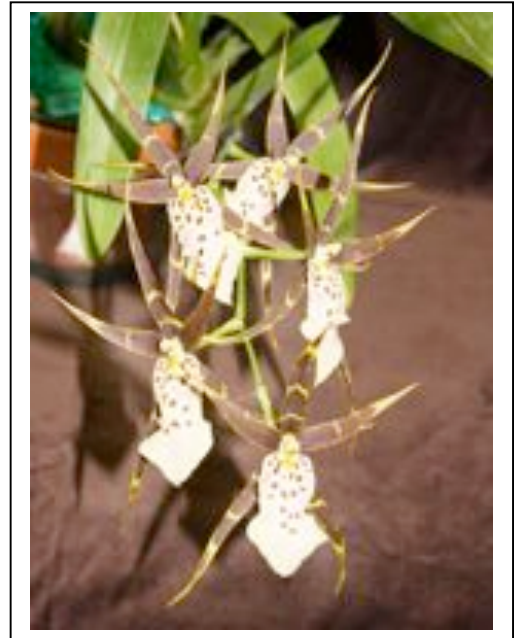
Psychopsis Mariposa 'Majestic' is a complex cross between *Pyp. papillo* and *Pyp. Kalihi*. *Pyp.* are epiphytes consisting of 5 very similar looking species growing in humid forests at low elevations from Trinidad, across N. South America and down the west coast to Peru. *Pyp. papillo* was originally classified as an *Oncidium*. The inbreeding has resulted in often flattened flowers that are significantly larger than the wild species. The orchid produces one, large, showy flower sequentially per inflorescence over a period of months. Sepals are a mahogany brown with irregular blotches; petals yellow with irregular chestnut barrings. The frilly, lip has a tear-drop shape. They require well watered, well drained culture that can make them challenging. Good air circulation is important to keep new growth and the base of the plants from rotting. Not having enough water and humidity can also lead to death. They prefer low light and intermediate to high temperature conditions. The most outstanding hybridization program for these orchids takes place at Carter and Holmes in Newberry SC.



Pyp. Mariposa 'Majestic'
Owner: Mark Vaughan Div III
Photographer: Kathy Mancini

Mtssa. Shelob Web Master
Owner: Barbara Kenemuth Div II
Photographer: Vicki Ventura

Miltassia Shelob Web Master, a cross between *Mtssa.* Olmec and *Brs.* Edvah Loo, was awarded its HCC/AOS in 1999 after being registered in 1998 by James McCully Orchid Culture of Hawaii. *Miltassia* is a combination of *Miltonia* and *Brassia* and this particular orchid is a combination of 6 species, 3 of each, with the most abundant species being *Brs. arcuigera*. The long lasting, slightly fragrant, star shaped, flowers are chartreuse, sepals and petals a dark chocolate brown interspersed with chartreuse bars with pink tips, the lip a dark muted rose with yellow haloed brown spots and a chartreuse anther cap. It prefers bright indirect light, cool to intermediate temperatures ranging from 58 to 85 at night and 50-80 % humidity. Water frequency according to the thinness or thickness of its roots with a heavier amount during its active growth.





Habenaria riodocheila is a species found in Thailand and its neighbors, Southeast China and the Philippines from mountains to lower elevations of 1500-2300 feet. There are 5-15 flowers on a dense spike measuring 1-2 inches with its lip being the showiest feature having 3 lobes with the midlobe widening from a narrow base., It also has a spur of around 2 inches extending downward and backward from the base of the lip.. The species ranges about 8-12 inches tall. It prefers moderate shade with filtered or diffused light. Do not expose to direct midday sun and provide strong air movement. Summer day temperatures avg 84 with nights in the low 70's. The hottest time is spring where days are in the mid 90's.. It likes high humidity, 80-85% in the summer dropping to 60-65% in late winter. Ample water in growing season but keep roots open if in pots. Reduce water after new growth matures in the fall.. Water should be withheld after foliage dies back, increasing when new growth appears in the spring. Corms can be divided at that point or left to produce more plants.



Misnamed Paph.
Owner: Pam MacKenzie Div II
Photographer: Vicki Ventura



While this Paphl. orchid had a birth certificate, the parents of said orchid did not look anything like the offspring so it was decided that someone had made a mistake when labeling the orchid. This particular Paph. has a creamy hood striped in chocolate maroon. Its lateral petals are extremely long and twisted while its pouch or third petal is yellow and is a lightly veined chocolate maroon coloration. They include about 65 species found in India, China, SE Asia, Philippines, Indonesia and New Guinea having no pseudobulbs, mostly terrestrial, producing tufted growths from the center of which extends the flower spike, The spikes may have a solitary flower or carry from two to a dozen blooms sequentially. They are noted for their longevity. They produce sparse roots that are brown and hairy and prefer repotting annually but with minor root disturbance into as small a pot as possible.

Temperatures should be in the intermediate out of direct sunlight and evenly moist all year round

PRUNING YOUR ORCHIDS CAN STIMULATE MORE GROWTH

The flowers have all died so when should you prune your orchids or cut the flower stalk back and how far? This is part of the basic care of orchids. Once the stalk turns yellow or brown and it is obvious that no blossoms will be produced. You can then prune your orchids to within an inch from where the blossom stalk originated on the plant. You can also cut it (preferably with a new one sided razor blade or a sterile cutting blade) there when it is green if you don't mind losing potential blossoms. Another option is to just remove the end of the blossom stalk to shorten the stalk, but retain enough so that it may bloom again. If you do this, cut it back to about 1/4 inch above a node (indicated by a small leaf-like bump clasping the stalk).

In general, this might produce another flower stalk a little sooner than if you cut the stem off completely. This method is more appropriate for Phalaenopsis orchid however it can be harder on the plant itself, forcing it to flower a little sooner. This method is NOT appropriate for the Dendrobiums that flower from the leafless canes. Some of the plants in this group will flower repeatedly from what appears to be a spent cane. If you cut this cane off the plant you will not see it rebloom.



SO YOUR ORCHID WON'T REBLOOM!

Reblooming is still the biggest problem for orchid growers and enthusiasts. There are certain times of the year that most orchids bloom. You can see when these times are in my book, *Mastering Orchids* in the flowering table. There are three or four steps you can try to get your orchid to re-bloom.

1. One of the first things to look for is light. Without the proper lighting your orchid will not have new flowers. Light is the most important factor to help with this process. This is one of the first things to try. Remember in the winter the amount of light is lessened and this can have an effect.
2. Next is a change in temperatures. This is especially true for phalaenopsis orchids but does hold true for other genera of orchids. It is recommended that your temperatures vary about 10 - 15 degrees between day and night time. This is easier to do in the Northern climates. It may be as simple as putting your plants outside when the weather gets cooler. This may need to be done in Southern climates.
3. After your orchid is finished blooming you should cut the spike back. You will notice little "bumps" on the spikes, these are called knuckles or more properly nodes. About 2 inches above the 3rd node from the bottom of the spike cut the rest of the spike off. After you have done this the spike needs to be protected from disease. This is accomplished by using cinnamon powder or melted wax over the cut area. Cinnamon should be used on any cut area.
4. If all else has failed there is one last trick to reblooming you can use. And that is to get the orchid into darkness. Yes, I said darkness. There are some experts who recommend this as a first step. I don't. This may be true especially for cattleyas but can be done for all orchid genera. To do this the plant needs darkness for at least 12 hours a day. This can be accomplished by putting it in a dark basement or putting a lightweight dark cloth over it. These steps will get your orchid to produce more of those great looking blooms.

ANOTHER LITTLE WOODLAND ORCHID

By Ken Moore, Carrboro, NC

The downy rattlesnake plantain, *Goodyera pubescens*, another little native orchid, is not nearly as hard to spot in the local woods as is the crane fly orchid described last week. Keeping an eye out for the distinctive basal rosette of three or more white-veined, evergreen leaves helps you discover the three-to-six-inch-tall flowering spike of snow-white flowers at the end of mid-summer. You'll find it in piney woods and hardwoods forest everywhere.

Appreciating the worthy medicinal heritage of this native begins with knowing that its official Latin name, *Goodyera*, honors John Goodyer (1592-1664, who assisted with the preparation of one of the editions of John Gerard's famous *Herball*, the early bible of medicinal plant use. The species name, *pubescens*, is physically descriptive; a close look at the flower cluster will reveal a very pubescent or downy-haired flower stem and an even closer look will reveal that the flowers themselves are downy.

James Duke's *Handbook of Northeastern Indian Medicinal Plants* describes the uses of specific tribes. The Seneca used the herb for nervousness; the Delaware made root decoctions for pleurisy and rheumatism; the Cherokee applied wilted leaves to burns; soaked the leaves in water to make an ooze for sore eyes; made a tea for colds, kidney ailments and toothaches; and, most interesting of all, added whiskey to improve the appetite.

Note here that I am not recommending any of these uses. There are not enough orchids in the woods for such use. They are best enjoyed for their beauty and their place in nature, and the medicinal heritage is a wonderful reflection back to a time when the Earth was far less burdened with human population.

Why is it called rattlesnake plantain? I always imagined that long ago the close-to-the-ground rosette of leaves reminded someone of the larger leaf rosettes of the common plantain, *Plantago major*, and I've simply used my own imagination to see a rattlesnake-tail resemblance in the orchid's dried fruit stalk.

There is, however, a definite snake connection. I enjoy Paul Green's account of rattlesnake plantain in the *Paul Green Plant Book*. "This pretty tufted, white, vein-leaved plant appears in all parts of the Cape Fear River Valley. It has been reputed to be a cure for hydrophobia and snakebite. Legend tells that the Indians had such faith in its virtues that they were not afraid of snakebites at all and, when bitten, would apply these leaves to the wound and soon go on as if nothing had happened." Now that's impressive.



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Board meeting
September 14th 2008,
1:30 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 09/10/08

We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.nmog.org

RECENT BOARD MEETING

The NMOG Board would like to welcome Mark Vaughan as its newest member replacing Lillian Zilius who resigned last month. We wish her well and know that she will be enjoying traveling with her husband who has recently retired.

Roger Easton Award: The board agreed to establish an award in Roger's name. A special ribbon or trophy will be awarded at each show to an outstanding Paphiopedilum. Further discussion on how to chose a winner has been tabled at this time.

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.