



November / December 2005 - Volume 2 Number 11

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## 2005 SFOS Holiday Party

December is approaching which means we should take time to be thankful for our health, good friends, and family and, of course, our beautiful orchids. Which brings up our next and favorite subjects – Christmas, Chanukah, and everything that goes with December, like our Holiday Party? There will be no judging. Dress code will be semiformal.

The party will be on Sunday, December 4th at Signature Gardens, 12725 S.W. 122 Ave. (see map on back page), from 6:30 P.M. until 10:30 P.M. If you've never been there, this will be a real treat for you. Plenty of parking and large banquet rooms decorated beautifully for the holidays. The food is wonderful and there will be an open bar!

The meal will be a buffet and will include: Caesar Salad, Cold Pasta Salad Primavera, Whole Honey Glazed Ham, Roast Vermont Turkey with Old Fashioned Stuffing, Giblet Gravy and Cranberry Sauce, Tender Pork Slices, Sweet Potato Soufflé with Crushed Pineapple and Marshmallows, Steamed Long Grain White Rice, Black Beans with Chopped Onions, Assorted Cakes and Pies, Rolls and Coffee. Happy Hour will begin at 6:30 P.M. and dinner will be ready at 7:00 P.M.

Carla will be our DJ for the evening. She will be playing music for all generations. We will also have our gift exchange. There is a \$5.00 limit on the gifts and please put tags stating male or female. You don't have to participate; this is optional, but fun! There will be a raffle during the evening. All members will, of course, receive

a beautiful seedling upon presentation of their membership badge; if you have lost your badge, please notify the office (305-255-3656).

Remember the party is scheduled for Sunday, December 4th, and admission is by reservation only. We must know by Tuesday, November 29th, if you plan to attend. The price for members is \$15.00 and \$30.00 for non-members. Tables of eight can be reserved. If you have any questions, please call the office (305-255-3656) or Marlene Clark (305-253-7627). We invite all of our members, especially our new members, to join us for a delightful evening.

*- Please see page 11 for the Holiday Party Registration Form -*



## President's Message

Dear fellow orchidists,

I hope that all of you are recovering well from Wilma. I know that many, many of our members have been without power and water, some have had an overabundance of water (i.e. flooding), many have suffered damage to their homes and greenhouses, and almost everyone has lost some (or all) of their orchids. It is certainly a long, slow road that we're on to recovery in South Florida – especially with so many traffic lights still out of service! I trust that all of you are coping with fortitude and patience as we begin the process of rebuilding.

We will not be issuing a newsletter in December. Our holiday party will replace our monthly meeting, so be sure to sign up now. It will be a wonderful event, as always. Be sure to read through the details of the party that are covered elsewhere in this newsletter.

In the meantime, Michael Coronado has planned a fabulous program for our November meeting. Be on hand to learn about cattleyas from one of the best – Gene Crocker of Carter and Holmes. We'll have a wonderful raffle table and also plant sales at the meeting, so you might want to begin restocking your collection this month.

I'm hoping to see you all at our coming meeting and, certainly, at the holiday party.

Sincerely,

Robert Fuchs  
President



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## November Program: "Modern Cattleyas – Today and Tomorrow"

*presented by Gene Crocker*

As 2005 nears its end, our members can certainly see that we've saved one of the best for last this year. At our November meeting we will learn all about the current trends in modern cattleya hybrids from one of the nation's leaders in this field. We've all seen the wonderful cattleyas Carter and Holmes produces. This is our chance to explore them in depth.

Gene Crocker is currently Vice President of Carter and Holmes Orchids, a position he has held for the past 19 years. He is responsible for the general orchid production, including the hybridizing program which was started in the early 1950's by Bill Carter. Gene also writes the catalogues and advertisements and does the photography for the company. He was a hobby grower for thirty years before coming to Carter and Holmes.

Gene's professional training was as a Textile Chemist and Meteorologist, but orchids have been his main obsession through these many years. After 49 years of growing orchids, he has still not lost his enthusiasm. He and his wife, Kitty, have one daughter and two sons – and three grandsons.

Gene travels extensively on behalf of Carter and Holmes. He is interested in all genera of orchids, although cattleyas are his favorites. He made his first cattleya hybrid in 1961, and has already gone through three generations of orchid hybrids at Carter and Holmes. His "orchid claim to fame" may be the fact that he coined the term "mericlone" in 1964.

Gene Crocker will be providing the raffle table and will sell plants at the meeting. You DON'T want to miss this one.

Since we won't be having another newsletter this year, let me also take this opportunity to remind you to sign up now for the holiday party. Our SFOS holiday party is one of the highlights of our year and will replace our December meeting. All the details of the party are covered elsewhere in this newsletter, be sure to mark the date and make your reservation early!

Michael Coronado  
Program Chairman

## HOLIDAY GIFT SUGGESTIONS

**An Introduction to Orchids** - A wonderful Guide to growing orchids in the subtropics. All 15 of South Florida's orchid experts share their knowledge on orchid care.

**FLORA'S ORCHIDS** - For those who love a good book the newest edition from Flora comes the definitive reference for orchid enthusiasts. This book contains more than 1,500 orchids described in detail. More than 1,350 stunning photographs show specimens in close detail.

**MASDEVALLIAS** - For the indoor plant hobbyist. Intermediate orchid grower or anyone wild about Masdevallias this is the first complete reference to these collectible orchids.

**AOS Calendar** - Get your copy of the most beautiful orchid calendar on the market. All the pictures are award winners. This makes a great gift for anyone who loves flowers.

**Orchids and Orchid Related Gifts** - Don't forget your local Orchid nursery or the American Orchid Society. They will also help you make a selection. If you are unsure a gift certificate is always a safe gift.

## For Your Holiday Breakfast Table

### **Sourdough French Toast with Orange Bourbon Butter and Spiced Pecans**

*Recipe courtesy Black Eyed Susan's*

#### **Ingredients**

2 loaves par-baked sourdough baguettes  
4 eggs, beaten  
Melted butter, for brushing griddle, optional  
Orange Bourbon Butter, recipe follows  
Spiced Pecans, recipe follows

#### **Instructions**

Preheat a large nonstick griddle or large skillet over high heat. Slice the bread on a diagonal into 1-inch slices. Thoroughly coat the bread with the beaten eggs, but do not soak the bread in

the egg mixture—it will fall apart. Lightly brush the griddle with melted butter, if desired. Place the coated bread slices on the griddle. Cook over high heat until golden brown and cooked through, about 5 minutes per side. Remove from the pan to warm plates. Top each serving with 1 tablespoon Orange Bourbon Butter and sprinkle with 2 tablespoons Spiced Pecans. Serve immediately.

#### **Orange Bourbon Butter:**

8 tablespoons (1 stick) unsalted sweet butter, softened  
1 tablespoon bourbon (recommended: Jack Daniels)  
2 tablespoons orange zest

Cream butter in a mixer. Add the bourbon and orange zest and mix well. Leave at room temperature and serve with the French toast. Refrigerate any leftovers.

Yield: 8 servings

#### **Spiced Pecans:**

1/4 cup sugar  
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon  
1/2 teaspoon ground cloves  
1/2 teaspoon ground fennel seed  
1/2 teaspoon ground star anise  
1/2 teaspoon finely ground black pepper  
1/2 cup pecan pieces  
1 egg white, beaten until foamy

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.

In a small bowl, mix the sugar and spices and set aside. In a medium bowl, mix the pecan pieces with the egg white until well coated. Add the sugar and spice blend to the pecans and toss together until well coated. Turn the nut mixture out onto a nonstick cookie sheet and bake until nuts are golden brown, about 20 to 30 minutes. Remove from the oven, let cool and then chop into small pieces.

Yield: 8 servings

*Continued on next column*

## FACTS & FANTASIES ABOUT ORCHIDS

Orchids have always appeared mysterious, and have therefore been the object of intrigue and curiosity of people for centuries. Ancient cultures believed magical cures for all sorts of ills could be from the roots.

In *Theatrum Botanicum* which was first published in 1640, a r. John Parkinson wrote: "If a man ate a large orchid tuber, he would begat many children".

Culpepper writing in the *British Herbal* stated: "The roots are to be used with discretion... They are hot and moist in operation under the dominance of Venus, and provoke lust exceedingly which the dried and withered roots do restrain."

The ancient Chinese were one of the first people to use orchids as medicine, and some of the earliest painting of orchids can be found on the oldest of Chinese vases.

In India in the 1800's a nutritious drink made from the roots of several orchid species was produced and known by the name of Salep or Saloop.



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## Coconut Husk Chips (CHC)

by Susan Taylor

Orchids will grow in almost any kind of open medium – it all depends on the rest of your culture regimen. If you get 100 orchid growers together and you ask them what medium they use you will probably get 100 different answers and they may all work very well for that particular grower. It is what else the grower does that makes the difference.

Coconut husk chips (CHC) are one of the newer mediums being used for a variety of reasons. Fir bark, which has been a staple for many years, is becoming more expensive. In addition, there is a serious fungal disease in the western United States and elsewhere in the world, *Phytophthora ramorum* which has attacked Douglas Fir trees – a major source of fir bark for orchid growers. There is no evidence at

*Continued on page 5*

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### SFOS Meeting Schedule

Wednesday, November 16th, 2005

Fire Fighters Memorial Building  
8000 N.W. 21st Street  
Miami, Florida 33122

- 7:30 pm - Registration & Judging of Plants
- 7:45 pm - Announcements
- 8:00 pm - Program
- 8:45 pm - Orchid Clinic & Refreshments
- 9:00 pm - Awarded Plants Discussed
- 9:15 pm - Raffle

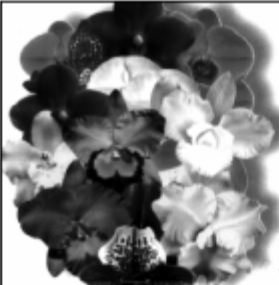
this time that the fungus attacks our plants, but concerns about spreading the disease further will no doubt make fir bark more expensive and harder to get in the future.

There are essentially three different types of coconut husk products on the market the majority of which are manufactured in Sri Lanka. Coconut Husk Chips which are chunks cut into fairly uniform size and are available in three sizes for different orchid applications. These may be purchased in bale form (generally will expand to 3 cubic feet of chips); in bricks (will expand to approximately 7 litres of product); and many different sized smaller bags. Coconut Coir which is ground up coconut husk and is generally only used as an additive to increase water retention, usually for seedlings. Coir is available in bricks only. Coconut Husk Fibers are used primarily in place of peat moss in agricultural applications.

One of the most important things to remember about using any of these products is that you must first hydrate them (soak them in water, preferably one or two days), drain them and soak again several times. Most growers recommend that this be done a minimum of three times before using for any kind of orchid growing. Coconut husks are usually harvested from ocean areas and may contain large amounts of salts. Most of the suppliers do wash their products, but you want to make sure that you do so as well so that you don't take the chance of harming your plants. Serious fungal disease in the western United States and elsewhere in the world, *Phytophthora ramorum* which has attacked Douglas Fir trees – a major source of fir bark for orchid growers. There is no evidence at this time that the fungus attacks our plants, but concerns about spreading the disease further will no doubt make fir bark more expensive and harder to get in the future.

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*Continued on page 6*

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Chips which are chunks cut into fairly uniform size and are available in three sizes for different orchid applications. These may be purchased in bale form (generally will expand to 3 cubic feet of chips); in bricks (will expand to approximately 7 litres of product); and many different sized smaller bags. Coconut Coir which is ground up coconut husk and is generally only used as an additive to increase water retention, usually for seedlings. Coir is available in bricks only. Coconut Husk Fibers are used primarily in place of peat moss in agricultural applications.

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Using CHC as a potting medium should decrease the amount of watering necessary to keep your orchids happy. It also has the great property of absorbing water extremely rapidly, even from a dry state, somewhat like a sponge so if your plants get completely dry it's easy to get the medium damp again. As with any change from a medium you have been using, CHC simply changes the way you culture your orchids. It's important to check down in the medium since the top may dry out completely while there is still adequate water retention below the surface.

## HOW DO YOU PRONOUNCE THAT?

Acacallis	a-ka-KALL-iss	Arpophyllum	ar-poh-FILL-um
Acampe	a-Kam-pe	Arundina	a-run-DEE-na
Acineta	a-sin-EE-ta	Ascozentrum	ass-koh-SEN-trum
Ada	AY-da	Aspassia	a-SPAY-zi-a
Aerangis	ay-er-RANG-giss	Batemannia	bayt-MAN-nee-a
Aeranthos	ay-er-AN-theez	Bifrenaria	bye-fren-AIR-i-a
Aerides	AIR-i-deez	Bletia	BLEE-shia
Aganisia	ag-un-IZ-ee-a	Bletilla	ble-TILL-a
Angraecum	an-GRYE-kum	Brassavola	bra-SAH-vo-la
Anguloa	an-gyow-LOH-a	Brassia	BRASS-ee-nh
Ansellia	an-SELL-ee-a	Broughtonia	brow-TOH-nee-
Arethusa	a-reh-THEW-za		

## WHAT IS PLANT NUTRITION?

Plants use inorganic minerals for nutrition, whether grown in the field or in a container. Complex interactions involving weathering of rock minerals, decaying organic matter, animals, and microbes take place to form inorganic minerals in soil. Roots absorb mineral nutrients as ions in soil water. Many factors influence nutrient uptake for plants. Ions can be readily available to roots or could be "tied up" by other elements or the soil itself. Soil too high in pH (alkaline) or too low (acid) makes minerals unavailable to plants.



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## FERTILITY OR NUTRITION

The term "fertility" refers to the inherent capacity of a soil to supply nutrients to plants in adequate amounts and in suitable proportions. The term "nutrition" refers to the interrelated steps by which a living organism assimilates food and uses it for growth and replacement of tissue. Previously, plant growth was thought of in terms of soil fertility or how much fertilizer should be added to increase soil levels of mineral elements. Most fertilizers were formulated to account for deficiencies of mineral elements in the soil. The use of soilless mixes and increased research in nutrient cultures and hydroponics as well as advances in plant tissue analysis have led to a broader understanding of plant nutrition. Plant nutrition is a term that takes into account the interrelationships of mineral elements in the soil or soilless solution as well as their role in plant growth. This interrelationship involves a complex balance of mineral elements essential and beneficial for optimum plant growth.

## ESSENTIAL VERSUS BENEFICIAL

The term essential mineral element (or mineral nutrient) was proposed by Arnon and Stout (1939). They concluded three criteria must be met for an element to be considered essential. These criteria are: 1. A plant must be unable to complete its life cycle in the absence of the mineral element. 2. The function of the element must not be replaceable by another mineral element. 3. The element must be directly involved in plant metabolism. These criteria are important guidelines for plant nutrition but exclude beneficial mineral elements. Beneficial elements are those that can compensate for toxic effects of other elements or may replace mineral nutrients in some other less specific function such as the maintenance of osmotic pressure. The omission of beneficial nutrients in commercial production could mean that plants are not being grown to their optimum genetic potential but are merely produced at a subsistence level. This discussion of plant nutrition includes both the essential and beneficial mineral elements.

## WHAT ARE THE MINERAL ELEMENTS?

The use of soil for greenhouse production before the 1960s was common. Today a few growers still use soil in their mixes. The bulk of production is in soilless mixes. Soilless mixes must provide support, aeration, nutrient and moisture retention just as soils do, but the addition of fertilizers or nutrients are different. Many soilless mixes have calcium, magnesium, phosphorus, sulfur, nitrogen, potassium and some micronutrients incorporated as a pre-plant fertilizer. Nitrogen and potassium still must be applied to the crop during production. Difficulty in blending a homogenous mix using pre-plant fertilizers may often result in uneven crops and possible toxic or deficient levels of nutrients. Soilless mixes that require addition of micro and macronutrients applied as liquid throughout the growth of the crop, may actually give the grower more control of his crop. To achieve optimum production, the grower can adjust nutrient levels to compensate for other environmental factors during the growing season. The absorption of mineral ions is dependent on a number of factors in addition to weather conditions. These include the cation exchange capacity or CEC and the pH or relative amount of hydrogen ( $H^+$ ) or hydroxyl ions ( $OH^-$ ) of the growing medium, and the total alkalinity of the irrigation water.

## pH: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

The term pH refers to the alkalinity or acidity of a growing media water solution. This solution consists of mineral elements dissolved in ionic form in water. The reaction of this solution whether it is acid, neutral or alkaline will have a marked effect on the availability of mineral elements to plant roots. When there is a greater amount of hydrogen  $H^+$  ions the solution will be acid ( $<7.0$ ). If there is more hydroxyl  $OH^-$  ions the solution will be alkaline ( $>7.0$ ). A balance of hydrogen to hydroxyl ions yields a pH neutral soil ( $=7.0$ ). The range for most crops is 5.5 to 6.2 or slightly acidic. This creates the greatest average level for availability for all essential plant nutrients. Extreme fluctuations of higher or lower pH can cause deficiency or toxicity of nutrients.



## AN ADVENTURE IN BLUE

Most of the concern with blue cattleyas and laelias centers around the production of the large blue hybrids, or at least attempts at attaining them. Size has been a limiting factor due to the parental stock used, primarily *Cattleya Ariel* *coerulea*, *C. Portia* *coerulea* and *Laeliocattleya* *Blue Boy*. But, small size should not be a factor to overlook, nor should "unusual" character, for from these can come some "real jewels." In the blue laelias and cattleyas we have several of the smaller species which can be developed into very exciting hybrids, primarily among themselves, with many variations of shape and coloration, but still retaining the blue areas. Of this group, there are about six which come to mind that seem worthy of further development. These are the blue varieties of *C. amethystoglossa*, *C. schilleriana*, *C. nobilior*, *Laelia anceps*, *L. pumila*, and of course, *C. bowringiana*.

*Cattleya amethystoglossa* is one of my favorite blues. Its blue polka dots and forelobe of the lip form a lovely contrast to its off-white sepals. The lavender bar coloring in the lip does not really mar its appearance. If only it didn't "blast" so readily. Breeding usually must be done utilizing it as the pollen bearer.

Of the laelias, *L. pumila* has no comparison, in my way of thinking. Here, one specific clone is concerned, the variety *coerulea* "Werkhauserii." Every fall, the white-tipped, dark blue, solid lip flower is eagerly awaited. Each fall it drops its pod of the selfing, or anything else for that matter, and smog has taken its toll on the flower. But, the pollen is usually good so some breeding can be done.

*Cattleya schilleriana* var. *coerulescens* is another intriguing subject. The blue veining of the lip offers us a good contrast to the greenish bronze sepals and maroon pin dots. The potential here is most interesting. Unfortunately, my only photograph is from a friend and the plant has yet to bloom for me.

*Cattleya nobilior* var. *coerulea* is another lovely blue. The lack of darker blue color on the lip is a feature. It is a good breeder, excepting when selfed, and is touchy about repotting. It offers some interesting off-shoots to follow in breeding.

*Laelia anceps* var. *veitchiana*, though lacking somewhat the depth of color found in other laelias, can be used with success. The lovely white sepals and blue lip are certainly worthy of any collection. The tall spike, rambling habit, and star shape should not be drawbacks and its fertility certainly isn't.

The place of *Cattleya bowringiana* in this group for breeding is established with its use with *L. pumila* to make *Lc. Paryeatis*. But involving it with the others can prove interesting, also.

This group can be very rewarding since they grow rapidly and mature early, especially the laelias, as do their progeny. Success, however, is not always that simple. Mine has been limited to only three crosses out of nearly six times that many attempts.

The first successful cross was between *Laelia anceps* var. *veitchiana* and *L. pumila* var. *coerulea* "Werkhauserii." It has been previously registered as *L. Amoena*, but searching through the literature gives no information on the outcome of it in regard to size, shape, veining, etc. Currently, the expectation is for white sepals and blue lip as the primary consideration. As for size, three inches is probable. By applying the geometric mean to the number of flowers and the size of the spike, two flowers per six inch spike is determined. The flower is expected to be more round than *Laelia anceps*, with the pseudobulbs spaced more closely, and to have good substance and texture. The yellow in the throat being different in the two parents, the presence or absence of veining will make for interesting genetic observations. Personally, this cross had high priority as a "natural," and I am very enthused about it. It should be very lovely and may prove useful for further breeding.



We hope you'll come back next year!

I also want to thank each of the speakers that lectured to the sparse audiences in the mall. We appreciate your time and the great extent of your knowledge:

- Axel Cahiz, Peter Kouchalakis, Mac Rivenbark, and Ruben Saulea

You have helped us meeting one of our group's most



important goals -- education. Also, in keeping with our goal of educating the public, Maria Wood placed a wonderful educational table display in the mall. Thank you, Maria!

The most important thank you of all goes to Michael O'Dea for coordinating the SFOS table, and to the volunteers on his committee: Sheila O'Dea, Carol DeBiase and Gene Stevens. Although we didn't gain many new members this time, we were able to spread the word about our Society. Thank you so much for giving your time for our organization.

I hope to see you all again at the 2nd Annual Southland Orchid Fair in 2006.

Sincerely,

Dorothy Bennett  
Fair Coordinator



## Members at the October Meeting



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## **Important Notice**

**This will be the last Newsletter for this year.  
The December Holiday Party will take the place of  
the meeting. See you at the Holiday Party, if not,  
Happy Holidays to all!  
- The Editor**

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### **2005 Holiday Party Registration Form**

Please make \_\_\_\_\_reservations for the SFOS Holiday Party.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_Members @ \$15.00 each

\_\_\_\_\_Guests @ \$30.00 each

Total Amount Due \_\_\_\_\_

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Mail reservation form with your check before November 29, 2005 to: South Florida  
Orchid Society, 10801 S.W. 124 St., Miami, FL 33176

