



The Orchidist

The South Florida Orchid Society Newsletter

SFOS June 17 2026 Program And Awards Presentation!

What's on the Tag? Decoding the Hidden Language of Orchids Presented by Rich Ackerman

Have you ever looked at a plant tag and felt like you were trying to read ancient hieroglyphics? What is the difference between a species and a hybrid? What do all those acronyms like FCC, AM, or HCC actually mean? And what on earth are “selfing,” “sibs,” or “polyploids”?

Whether you're an amateur grower just starting your orchid journey or a seasoned veteran looking to master the fine print, our June program has something invaluable for you.

This month, the South Florida Orchid Society is thrilled to welcome **Rich Ackerman**, who will present his highly engaging and practical talk, **“What's on the Tag.”** Rich will break down the essential code behind orchid labels, teaching you exactly how to glean a wealth of information about an orchid's ancestry, cultivation needs, and genetic potential just by reading its tag.



Rich Ackerman

About Our Guest Speaker

Rich Ackerman has been cultivating a massive variety of flora in Fort Lauderdale for nearly forty years, catching the official “orchid bug” right here in Miami at the 2008 World Orchid Conference. Today, his primary passion lies in the beauty and conservation of Florida's native orchids.

Rich is a **UF/IFAS Florida Master Gardener Volunteer** and an active partner in **Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden's renowned Million Orchid Project**. Deeply dedicated to our local orchid community, he is a Trustee and the **Former President of the Fort Lauderdale Orchid Society**, and serves on the advisory boards for both the **International Orchid Foundation** and the **UF/IFAS Extension for Broward County**.

Native Orchid Sales & Auction!

In addition to a fantastic presentation, Rich will be bringing a beautiful selection of native orchids and choice select plants for purchase. He has also generously offered to donate several wonderful plants to our monthly raffle and silent auction to help support the society!

**Come out early to shop the plant tables, catch up with fellow members, and celebrate our annual awards.
Let's give Rich a legendary SFOS welcome!**

**We'll also be recognizing our intrepid volunteers this month for their contributions to the
South Florida Orchid Society!**

**We look forward to seeing you all at 7:00 PM on Wednesday, June 17th at
Pinecrest Gardens!**

'Acting' President's Message

June 9, 2026

Dear South Florida Orchid Society Friends,

On June 1st, the South Florida Orchid Society president notified the Board of Directors of his resignation. Our president was instrumental in bringing energy, enthusiasm and new ideas to our society as well as new members and we appreciate the personal time and energy he gave in service to our society.

As Vice President, it is my privilege to step up to lead the society as President until our next election of officers, along with our very capable board. Be assured that we recognize the challenges that face us and also believe they are surmountable. It is my promise that we will work together with rigor and keep you informed as we go forward. It is every member of the board's intention to offer value to our members in the form of our primary objectives:

- **Continuous learning,**
- **Friendly camaraderie, and**
- **Having fun together.**

With those objectives top of mind, our June 17th meeting will held be in the Cypress Hall near the Pinecrest Gardens entrance. It will be a celebration of our members! Martin Rivas (Program Director), along with Chuck Asche (Board Director) have invited Rick Ackermann to teach us about understanding the information printed on orchid plant labels. I can't wait to hear Rick's presentation!

In addition, we'll present the annual certificates of appreciation and special awards to our members.

Please note, there will not be Orchid Judging at our June meeting; it will resume in July. Erna Maxwell, our long time Judging Chair will be passing the baton to Julie Rosenberg, who has been Vice Chair for many years. Erna has assured us that she will continue as an active society member. (Phew!) Words cannot adequately thank

her for her most valuable service and contributions. **Please read the profile of Erna in this newsletter, originally published in 2015 and written by our past president, Chris Alger who kept the society alive during the historic Covid 19 pandemic. We are eternally grateful for Chris's contributions.**

Regarding the Member Raffle, we heard you loud and clear. Everyone loves the Raffle! Over the last few years, this has been a costly expense, as revenue from selling raffle tickets has not covered the cost of the plants. We will be trying different ways to continue having the raffle ensuring we at least break even on the cost. **We will have a Member Raffle at the June meeting and have special plants. Buy more tickets!**

The Silent Auction, that our immediate past president help make so popular, will also be conducted at our June meeting. The plants purchased for this month will help us support our local vendors.

I look forward to spending time with each of you at our June 17th Celebration! See you then!

Sincerely,
Margaret Marshall
Acting President, South Florida Orchid Society





SOUTH FLORIDA ORCHID SOCIETY MINI-AUCTION SERIES

ALL PROCEEDS from items sold on the **MINI-AUCTION**
go to South Florida Orchid Society for the
benefit of the Society.

Members and guests may donate plants or other items to benefit
this fund-raising effort.

WE ACCEPT CASH, CHECKS, & ZELLE ONLY.

Thank you for your support,
The South Florida Orchid Society Board of Directors

South Florida Orchid Society

Membership Shirts Available in beautiful Royal Blue!

Ladies V neck cotton (a little lighter in color, but still blue)

- Sm, Med, L, or XL at \$18.25
- 2XL at \$19.25
- 3XL at \$21.95

Ladies or Men's -Polo- in either Polyester or Cotton

- Sm, Med, L, or XL at \$25.75
- 2XL at \$26.75
- 3XL at \$28.00



Shirts can be seen and ordered at our meetings. All shirts must be paid for when ordered.

Remember to wear your shirts to our meetings for a special perk!

“BLAME IT ON THE BRASSAVOLA...NODOSA” by Chris Alger

I met Erna Maxwell at the SOUTH FLORIDA ORCHID SOCIETY (SFOS) “Falling In Love With Orchids” show which was held at The Bank United Center in Coral Gables in October, 2013. She was volunteering at the SFOS membership table. I believe that I fell in love with orchids at that show, and this is story is about what happened when she fell in love with orchids.

In the early 1970's, Erna Maxwell responded out of curiosity to an ad in the newspaper and attended her first orchid show. It was at the Miami Beach Convention Center. As she was leaving the show she purchased her first orchid. A *Brassavola Nodosa*. Bare roots, not in bloom, with 3 pseudobulbs. And she remembers it was \$1.50. Remember, this was in the 1970's. The vendor told her “hang it in a tree”. So, the yellow allamanda vine she was growing on her 3rd floor apartment balcony (facing south), became the new home for her new orchid. When the allamanda got watered, her orchid got watered. And yes, one day it bloomed.

Sometime after that, she attended a springtime SFOS show at the former Bayfront Park Auditorium in downtown Miami. And she still recalls being amazed at a large, beautiful floor display which was produced by JONES & SCULLY, a grower who at that time was located near the Miami International Airport (MIA). At the show she met Bill Osment. He invited her to visit his nursery in Hollywood, Fl. She did, and he chose an *Oncidium Spacelatum* for her second orchid. She hung it up in her backyard. And yes, it bloomed. She was a “pink lady” at Baptist Hospital, and she would display an inflorescence on the desk in their auxiliary office. Sometimes she would display the pretty yellow blooms in the surgical waiting room. And she started sharing pieces of it with her friends she met at Baptist.

In the early 1980's she became a member of the SOUTH DADE AMATEUR ORCHID CLUB. The meetings were held at Ludlam Elementary School. At the same time, SFOS members were offering different classes in orchid growing at Ludlam, which she attended, and she eventually joined SFOS. Some of the long-time members will remember that



the SFOS monthly meetings were being held at THE POLISH AMERICAN CLUB on NW 22nd Ave & 12th St.

In 1984 she volunteered to welcome international visitors arriving at MIA to attend the WORLD ORCHID CONFERENCE (WOC), which was being held at the former Coconut Grove Convention Center. Later, she travelled to Costa Rica with a garden tour group to help rescue orchids from a forest where the trees had been chopped down. After the plants were identified by the LANKESTER GARDENS, they were allowed to bring the rescued orchids with them when they returned to the United States. In 1990, 6 orchid lovers concerned about the ongoing destruction of natural habitat, decided to form the COALITION for ORCHID SPECIES(COS), with the goal of educating the public. Erna became a Charter Member of the COS and later served as President for 1997-1998.

Over the years as her orchid collection has grown, she has always remained a hobbyist. But it seemed destined that she would eventually take the plunge (her words) to study and become an AMERICAN ORCHID SOCIETY (AOS) Judge. She was encouraged and mentored by fellow members of COS who were already AOS Judges. When the 21st WORLD ORCHID CONFERENCE was held in Johannesburg, South Africa this past September 2014, she was able to join a tour group and participate as an AOS Judge for the WOC. Erna is currently serving as Judging Chair for SFOS.

Born in Amsterdam, she knows now that when she made her decision in 1968 to make her home in South Florida, it allowed her to fall in love with orchids. I asked her, what she wanted to say to other fellow orchid lovers, and her answer was “if you haven't joined an orchid society, you are missing out on the best answers and advice for all your questions on being a successful orchid grower”. Oh, and now you see why she said, “blame it on the *Brassavola...Nodosa*”.

by Chris Alger

Brassavola Nodosa Photo Courtesy [RF Orchids](#)
Reprinted from the March 2025 issue of *The Orchidist*

Thanks to Chris Alger!

SFOS May 2026 Judging Report

Judges: Julie Rosenberg, Ariel Girardi and Erna Maxwell

Blue Ribbons:

- Myc. Rio's Little Treasure (Mcp. thomsoniana x C. Violacea) - Melissa Alatrasta
- C. (granulosa x C. leopoldii) - Melissa Alatrasta
- V. (Kultana Red x V. Mimi Palmer) - Melissa Alatrasta
- Max. tenuifolia - Maggie Echeverria
- Rlc. Suncoast Raspberry Cooler - Aida Walchli
- Enc. Judy Russ (Enc. Orchid Jungle 'Dale' AM/AOS x Enc. tampensis Maj AM/AOS) - Teresa Prol

Red Ribbons:

- C. Peckhaviensis - Melissa Alatrasta
- C. Ratina Spots - Melissa Alatrasta
- C. Pauline Portilla - Melissa Alatrasta
- C. (Horace x C. William's Drumbeat) - Melissa Alatrasta
- Ctt. Hawaii Island Bride - Melissa Alatrasta
- Onc. Aka Baby "Raspberry Chocolate" HCC/AOS - Teresa Prol
- Cym. finlaysonianum - Teresa Prol
- Max. tenuifolia - Margaret Marshall
- Pcv. Key Lime Stars - Margaret Marshall
- C. Schilleriana - Aida Walchli

Thank you for showing your blooms. Some plants have their names corrected using Orchidwiz, please, add the information to your plant label.

There will be no judging in June. We are looking forward to your Beauties in July.

Erna Maxwell, Judging Chair.

All Award Photos by, and Copyright © 2026, Ron Hunt



C. (granulosa x C. leopoldii) - Melissa Alatrasta



Max. tenuifolia - Maggie Echeverria

V. (Kultana Red x V. Mimi Palmer)
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Enc. Judy Russ (Enc. Orchid Jungle 'Dale' AM/AOS
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Rlc. Suncoast Raspberry Cooler - Aida Walchli



Myc. Rio's Little Treasure (Mcp. thomsoniana x C. Violacea) - Melissa Alatrasta

SUMMER ORCHID CARE FOR SOUTH FLORIDA

South Florida's sweltering summers—with their intense heat, high humidity, and frequent afternoon thunderstorms—can be either a blessing or a challenge for orchid growers. The good news is that most orchids actually thrive in tropical conditions, but you will need to adjust your care routine to keep them happy during these demanding months.



Watering and Humidity

Water more frequently, but ensure your plants have adequate drainage. South Florida's summer heat causes orchids to dry out faster, so check your plants every 2–3 days rather than the typical weekly schedule. Water thoroughly until it drains from the bottom of the pot, but never let them sit in standing water—this invites root rot in the muggy environment.

The humidity levels in South Florida (often 70–90%) are already ideal for most orchids, particularly phalaenopsis and cattleyas. A combination of morning dew and/or morning watering helps prevent fungal issues by allowing foliage to dry before nightfall. **Avoid watering in late afternoon or evening**, as wet leaves combined with warm nights create conditions perfect for mold and bacterial infections.

Light and Temperature Management

Reduce direct afternoon sun exposure. While orchids love light, the intense UV rays and heat of a South Florida summer can scorch leaves and stress plants. Move orchids to dappled shade or use 30–50% shade cloth from late spring through early fall, especially for plants in south or west-facing locations.

Temperatures in South Florida typically stay between 75–95°F in summer, which mimics the tropical nighttime and daytime fluctuations that orchids need. If you are keeping orchids indoors with air conditioning, try to maintain at least a 10–15°F temperature drop at night—this triggers blooming cycles for some varieties.

Ventilation and Disease Prevention

Air circulation is critical during summer. If necessary, use fans to keep air moving around your plants; stagnant air in high humidity promotes fungi and spider mites. If you grow orchids outdoors, South Florida's afternoon thunderstorms provide natural air movement, but indoor growers should run ceiling fans or position portable fans nearby.

Watch for spider mites and scale insects, which thrive in hot, dry spots. Inspect leaf undersides weekly and spray affected plants with horticultural oil or neem oil.

Feeding and Rest

Reduce or pause fertilizing in peak summer.

Orchids naturally slow their growth when temperatures exceed 85–90°F. Once July and August pass and conditions cool slightly, resume feeding with a balanced orchid fertilizer (such as 20-20-20) at half-strength every other watering.

Expect fewer blooms during summer heat. This is normal—most orchids gear up for flowering in fall or spring when temperatures are milder. Use summer as a growing and resting period rather than a blooming season.

The Bottom Line

The keys to summer orchid success in South Florida are consistent watering, shade during peak sun hours, excellent drainage, and vigilant pest monitoring. Your plants will reward your care with lush growth that sets the stage for spectacular blooms once temperatures moderate in the fall.

May 2026 Meeting Photos!



A small sampling of plants our members and friends brought for judging

Lots of bargains on our Silent Auction Table!



May 2026 Meeting Photos!



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The South Florida Orchid Society Presents...

"An Introduction to Orchids"

Everything you need to know in order to successfully grow orchids in south Florida.

Pick up your copy today at better orchid Growers or at SFOS Meetings!



South Florida Orchid Society, Inc Board of Directors

Acting President: Margaret Marshall

Membership Chair: Margaret Marshall

Program Director: Martin Rivas

Secretary: Nancy Crisler

Treasurer: Ariel Girardi

Directors, Terms ending in 2026

Erna Maxwell, Sally Taylor

Directors, Term ending in 2027

Maggie Echeverria, Charles Asche

Directors, Term ending in 2028

Charles Flick, Vacant

Immediate Past President: Javier Morejon

Special Directors: Ron Hunt & Julie Rosenberg

Meetings are held on the third Wednesday
of each month from 7 to 9PM

Orchid registration begins at 7:00PM.

No plants will be registered after 7:30PM

Program begins at 8:PM

Become a Member of the South Florida Orchid Society!

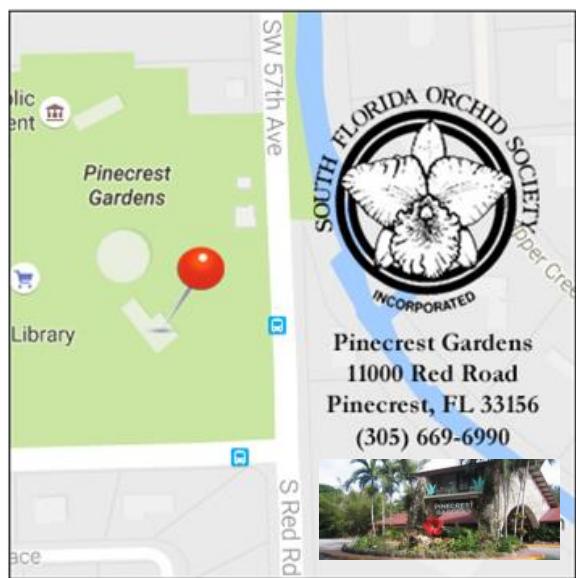
MEMBER BENEFITS AND PRIVILEGES

- **MEETING AND MIXING** with many friendly and helpful orchid “neighbors”, amateurs, advanced collectors and commercial growers.
- **WELCOME KIT** includes a copy of “*An Introduction to Orchids*” our book that covers just about everything you need to know to successfully grow orchids in South Florida.
- **MONTHLY MEETINGS** with lectures by leading local and national orchid authorities.
- **FREE REFRESHMENTS!**
- **MONTHLY SILENT AUCTION!**
- **ORCHID JUDGING** each month by qualified regional and national judges.
- **MONTHLY NEWSLETTER** that includes awards given and timely meeting notes.
- **FESTIVE HOLIDAY PARTY!**
- **AIR CONDITIONED** spacious conveniently located meeting location with ample **FREE** parking.

**CLICK THE ICON BELOW TO DOWNLOAD AN SFOS
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION. (PDF)**



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the West Palm Beach judging center of the
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