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November 2009

NEXT MEETINGS
November 15, 2009 ~ 2:00 Vestal Library
December 20, 2009 ~ 2:00 Vestal Library

IN THIS ISSUE

- Warmth Tolerant Pleurothalids Meeting
- Monthly Checklist for November and December
- Orchid Viruses

Holiday Get-together!

Please watch this space for information on our annual get-together in December! We always have a great time – at least if we don't get snowed out and then we have it after the new year!

Memberships

Don't forget your membership renewals – it's that time of year. If you're wondering if you've already paid contact Dee.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Contributions, including pictures, to the STOS newsletter from members are welcomed. Contributions must be submitted by the 25th day of each month to the editor.

If you have difficulties with the electronic format of this newsletter, please contact the editor at: southerntierorchidsociety at gmail dot com

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summer's heat, and relatively soft and green, will be ripening -- hardening -- in preparation for a brief period of rest (in many cases).

Many of these ripening growths will have a sheath, presaging the coming winter or spring flowering season. In some cases, these sheaths will have been evident since as early as July. (Early sheath development does not mean early flowering on plants with winter-spring seasons.) You may notice that some of these sheaths are showing signs of yellowing. This is not abnormal. Autumn's more pronounced temperature fluctuation can lead to water condensation inside the sheath, hastening the normal process of senescence, so yellowing sheaths can be left on the plant only so long before they must be carefully removed to preserve the bud primordia within. Water condensation left unchecked can rot the bud primordia. The sheaths can be safely removed by slitting open and peeling down toward the pseudobulb.

Cool-Growing Orchids

One can almost hear a sigh of relief from all of the cool-growers, from masdevallias to odontoglossums. As day temperatures decline, one can see a noticeable improvement in these plants. Shorter days and lower light levels do not seem to bother them. Repot before winter arrives.

Cymbidium

Finally we begin in earnest the main cymbidium season. Cymbidium ensifolium can give some early and fragrant hybrids, but it is now that the bulk of the crop will be flowering. The season lasts for about seven months, adding color to any collection. Miniature varieties will peak for the next three to four months. There are three important things to do: stake inflorescences ramrod straight for best presentation, watch for slugs and snails (especially just after a rain), and fertilize with a mild balanced formula regularly.

Oncidium crispum Complex

This is the season for plants in Oncidium section crispum from Brazil to shine. Extremely vigorous hybrids come in wide varieties of markings dominated with chestnut and brown and butter yellow. Give plants high light to produce strong upright inflorescences. The pseudobulbs should be plump, so do not let the plants dry out while they are in bloom. Later, plants will enter a dormant period.

Paphiopedilum

The flowering season for the "toads" or "bulldog" paphs is just getting underway. These cannot be grown everywhere, but where cooler summer nights allow their growth, there is no longer-lasting or more exotic display than these. Paphiopedilums are, in general, not heavy feeders, and it is especially important with this type to reduce nitrogen levels now for best flowering and spike length. Be watchful for water accumulating in the growth around the sheath, or for the late-season warm spell, either of which can lead to the sheath's rotting. As the spikes emerge, do not change the orientation of the plant toward the light, as this can lead to a crooked or twisted spike.

While paphiopedilums rarely like to dry out entirely, water needs are significantly reduced beginning now. Overwatering at this time of year can quickly lead to root rot or erwinia problems. Now is the time to practice good sanitary practices in your greenhouse or growing areas, as pest and disease problems have a way of multiplying rapidly in the darker and more crowded conditions that generally mark the winter growing area. With paphiopedilums, especially, "cleanliness is next to godliness" and if the growing area is littered with old foliage, weeds and dying flowers, keeping the plants alive and flowering will be next to impossible.

Phalaenopsis

Shortening days and cooler nights are the signals for inflorescence initiation in phalaenopsis. In more northern climates, or on the west coast, growers have already begun to see the early inflorescences that may be ready for Christmas. In the eastern areas, nights in the greenhouse will now be in the low to mid 60s, depending on the thermostat setting, so the first of our phalaenopsis will not begin to bloom until Valentine's Day at the earliest.

A reduction in nitrogen levels will go a long way to giving the best possible spiking, as will a boost in potassium and phosphorus. In other words, a "bloom booster"-type fertilizer is definitely indicated in the next few months. Disease and pest problems are best dealt with now, especially as mealybugs hide in the bracts and flower buds. Once they have established themselves, they are difficult to eradicate, and flower damage or crippling results. Potential disease problems can be dealt with by the application of a copper-based compound to control/alleviate rot problems before they start. There is nothing more frustrating than to have shepherded your plants through a growing season, only to have them decline before your eyes.

Vandaceous Genera

Whereas the general decline in temperatures is beneficial to cool-growing orchids, it is not for vandaceous plants. The only cold-hardy member is Neofinetia falcata. Orient your plants in such a way as to take advantage of as much light as possible. This can be a problem in northern latitudes. Reduce watering and feeding schedules.

The AOS thanks Ned Nash and James Rose for this essay . (www.aos.org)

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spotting either yellow or brownish or reddish on their leaves. Yellow spotting and striping of leaves of any variety of orchid are symptoms which are suspicious and should be heeded. If you have an orchid with any of these symptoms, quarantine the plant away from others since viruses are very easy to transmit from one plant to another.

Viruses are the main reason that so much has been written about disinfecting tools and hands between plants. It is especially easy to transmit when the tool has been used for cutting a leaf or inflorescence of an infected plant and then used to cut another plant. Use a disposable razor blade for these chores to reduce the chances of passing on viruses. To disinfect tools use a 1:9 (one part bleach to nine parts water) bleach/water solution and dip your tools for at least one minute. Be sure to rinse tools to reduce the corrosive effects of the bleach on metal.

Virus testing can be done by sending a leaf to various testing laboratories or by ordering testing strips from a lab to do the test yourself. Agdia testing strips are available in groups of five for the hobbyist. In Europe visit Pocket Diagnostic for a similar product. Many orchid societies are ordering these strips for their members so that each person can get only as many as they need. Testing is done by taking a small sample of the orchid leaf or root, reducing the sample to a semi-liquid form and dipping a test strip in the sample. Results are read on the test strip. They are quite reliable if used correctly, however they are relatively expensive.

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sign up if you haven't already. Just let Dee Janis know if you can help. Her contact info is on the front page.

Current refreshments list includes:

November 15 ~ Shanna Messing

December 20 ~ Holiday party – Everybody!

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