

April 2009

MASSACHUSETTS ORCHID SOCIETY



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April 14, 2009

This month Linda Wilhelm
Of Woodland Orchids

Linda will speak on Brazilian
Miltonias www.woodlandorchids.com

Linda is an accredited judge for the American Orchid Society. She is Chair of the Carolinas Judging Center in Greensboro, NC and a recipient of the American Orchid Society's Certificate of Education. She is currently a member of the American Orchid Society's Judging Committee and is an AOS Trustee.



* **3 - 2 - 1** Represents the last three issues that George B will edit. It is time for an interested MOS member to step up. Contact George or Brian.

mos@massorchid.org

March – Getting a Jump on Spring

Ron McHatton - Director of Education

Depending on where you live, March may be more spring than winter but this month is definitely one of those where you get both. However, there are things that you can be doing to get the jump on spring. This is the time that many plants should be repotted. Candidates are those plants that are actively beginning to produce new roots and new growth. Orchids are pretty resistant to most plant pests but they aren't immune. This is the time to take advantage of those occasional warm days and treat your plants that have been inside all winter for pests that came in with them. By now, the hitchhikers will have made their presence known and it's also the time when you should be looking for the presence of the first aphid crops. These insects lay eggs in the fall when the temperatures drop and the eggs winter over waiting for the weather to warm. You can go from no visible aphids to a healthy, thriving colony in a matter of days this time of the year, especially on those juicy, tender flower spikes and buds.

Mites, thrips and whiteflies are the other creatures to be on the lookout for now. This has been a drier than normal winter in many parts of the country and mites and thrips thrive under these conditions. Spider mites are relatively easy to spot since these pests spin webs much like spiders. The other mites, effectively microscopic, damage the surface of orchid leaves allowing them to desiccate. The effect has been described as a "silvering" of the leaf surface but perhaps the easiest way to visualize the change is that your orchid leaves will take on a dull appearance. When left untreated, mites rapidly increase in number causing more and more pronounced damage and can even cause the death of the infested plant. I recently saw a number of cattleyas with dark black, hard lesions on the leaves and under the pseudobulb sheaths. The owner had been trying to treat what was perceived as a fungal problem with no success. These lesions weren't fungal but rather the evidence of an advanced mite infestation. In fact, on close inspection, the grooves along the pseudobulbs were filled with tiny white crystal-like deposits that, under a microscope turned out to be the old exoskeletons of mites cast off during molting. Mites are not insects and do not respond to insecticides designed to control regular insects. Make sure that you are using a product that specifically states for the control of mites. Otherwise it's a waste of your time and money and only serves to annoy the mites.

Thrips, on the other hand, can be seen with the naked eye and their damage is entirely different. These insects fly and can enter your collection in fairly large numbers through open windows or through greenhouse vents and multiply rapidly under dry conditions ruin newly opening flowers. Thrips suck the sap from the surface cells of the flowers, especially along the edges of the parts, causing the damaged surface to become brown and papery. The effect is misshapen flowers with dry, papery edges. If you see this on your flowers you

should be looking for thrips. They are often easier to see if you tap the flowers on a sheet of white paper. Look for tiny, cylindrical insects that move rapidly. On vandas (and perhaps other orchids with exposed roots), thrips cause dry, brown rings round the roots, the result of their feeding on the root covering and if you know what to look for, they can't be missed.

In warm, dry parts of the country whiteflies can be a problem on phalaenopsis and orchids with thin leaves and you should start watching for them now. Those in more northern climes aren't immune, whitefly just appear later in the season. You can't miss whiteflies. These tiny white insects resemble moths more than flies and when disturbed fly short distances. They are in discriminant with regard to the plants they feed on; any leaves with a good supply of sap will do. In addition, they can be carried on the wind and can look like tiny white bits of ash if present in high enough numbers. They can be controlled with the usual insecticidal soaps, alcohol mixtures and general pesticides rated for houseplants or ornamental. They are attracted to yellow and some control can be had with adhesive yellow cards sold in agricultural supply stores.

Reprinted from the March 2009 AOS Newsletter



Miltonia

Miltonia including Miltoniopsis

MIL-TOH-NEE-AH (MIL-TOH-NEE-OP-SISS)

These striking orchids, which are also known as pansy orchids, owing to their similarity to garden pansies, are enjoying increasing popularity. Miltoniopsis are cool-growing orchids that originate in the higher elevations of the Andes in Colombia, Panama and Ecuador. The warmer-growing species, properly miltonias, originate from the Minas Gerais area of Brazil and more closely resemble large-flowered oncidiums. Their flowers can be brilliantly patterned.

Light should be relatively shaded. Direct sunlight burns the thin leaves within a short period of time. However, the warmer growing types prefer more light than their cooler-growing relatives. The cool-growing species need approximately 1,200 foot-candles, while the warmer-growing species require closer to 2,000 foot-candles.

Temperature is critical for the cool-growing plants. Unless temperatures are kept under 80 F, they may not flower. The minimum temperature is 50 to 55 F. Thus, these are really better thought of as intermediate growers because they need intermediate temperatures throughout the year - not too hot, not too cold. The warmer growers will take temperatures over 90 F as long as humidity levels of 70 to 75 percent, or higher, are maintained. The minimum temperature is 60 F.

Water must be plentiful and the medium must drain perfectly. In their native habitat, the plants are drenched almost daily and, because of this, they are intolerant of salt buildup, so leaching every fourth or fifth watering is important when growing in pots. When they are not getting enough water or humidity, the leaves have a tendency to grow with accordion-like pleats. The warmer-growing miltonias should be grown like cattleyas; allow them to approach dryness between waterings. They also tend to be slightly more tolerant of salt buildup than their Colombian cousins so they can dry more between waterings.

Humidity must be at least 70 percent because of the plants' need for abundant water. Less humidity will stress the plants and can lead to susceptibility to disease, though too much humidity is worse than too little.

Fertilize at the same level as other orchids: half-strength, balanced fertilizer every two weeks. This can be reduced by half during overcast weather or in winter. A 10-30-20 blossom-booster formulation is beneficial in early spring when plants approach their flowering period.

Potting should be done after flowering when the new growth is starting. Miltoniopsis should be repotted every year as they are intolerant of stale conditions. The cool growers (miltoniopsis) do well in small pots. The warmer growers (miltonias) tend to have a relatively elongated creeping habit and, therefore, do better mounted. Any potting mix suitable for fine roots such as 70 percent seedling bark with charcoal and perlite or a mix of 70 percent tree fern and 30 percent chopped sphagnum is adequate. Mounts may be cork, tree fern or other hard wood. They should be longer than wide. For some reason, shallow pans work better than deep pots.

MOS Monthly Show Table/ March 10, 2009

Judges: Bob Winkley, Cliff Dardarian & Betty Levine. Scribe: Linda Abrams

Plants Displayed 37- Plants Awarded 10

L. Santa Barbara Sunset "Showtime" HCC/AOS	Bob Gladstone
Lc. Firedance "Blanche"	Harry Kubick
Cymbidium hybrid	Betsy Opitz
Trichoglottis pusilla	Ralph & Chieko Collins
Trichosalpnx pergrata	Ralph & Chieko Collins
Den. Kingianum variegated	Ralph & Chieko Collins
Aerangis fastuosa	Ralph & Chieko Collins
Tolumnia Shannon Elizabeth	Susan Shapiro
Paph. Impulse X Cyberspace	Bob Richter
Den. Delicatum kingianum X speciosum	Warren & Susan Wheelweight



Saturday, April 04 May 02	Northeast Judging Center Boylston, MA , Tower Hill Botanic Garden, 11 French Dr., Boylston, MA, Robert Winkley, rwinkley@aol.com . Presentations begin @ 10:00 AM. Judging begins at 12 PM. Directions
April 14	MOS Meeting , Suburban Experimental Station, 241 Beaver St., Waltham, MA, 7:30PM
March	Spring has Sprung
June	George Bonoff's last Newsletter
mos@massorchid.org newsletter editor: George Bonoff	

Upcoming Events

We're on the Web!

Visit us at:

www.massorchid.org

Chu Jung
 Massachusetts Orchid Society
 21 Coolidge Road
 Arlington, MA 02476-7736

