

*Richmond Orchid Alliance*  
*We are all about Orchids!*

*Jim Creech, Editor*

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*July 2005*

*Upcoming ROA events:*

August 7 - Road trip to Orchid Station and Pine Crest with culture and cuisine by the pool

September 11 - Monthly meeting; Speaker: Jose Exposito of Soroa Orchids, Homestead, Florida

September 26-29 - Education/market venue at the State Fair of Virginia

October 9 - Auction of quality orchids gathered from around the globe

November 13 - Monthly meeting; Speaker: Alan Koch of Gold Country Orchids, Lincoln, California

December 11 - No ROA meeting - Happy Holidays

**All ROA activities and speakers will emphasize the how-to and hands-on aspects of growing orchids.**

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# ROA Bulletin

## *From Your Leadership Team!*

Welcome to the Richmond Orchid Alliance and the first issue of the ROA Bulletin. As many of you are aware, ROA has now hosted two successful events (see the articles and pictures elsewhere in this issue), and is about to host a third. The next event will be a bus outing to Orchid Station and Pine Crest Orchids on August 7<sup>th</sup>.

Our goal is to serve all levels of orchid interests from the recent recipient of a gift orchid who wants to know how to take care of it, to those who have just a few orchids on their windowsill, as well as those with greenhouses filled with a vast collection. With your help, we will meet this goal at every meeting, as well as every event. We are happy that you've decided to join with us.

- The ROA Leadership



*Several of those enjoying the Repotting Picnic photo by Kathy Walker*

## *Richmond Orchid Alliance Launched in Area*

The new ROA, led by six of the Founding members, made its inaugural entrance onto the local orchid scene with resolve and anticipation for the organization's success. The Sunday gathering of present and newly located orchid hobbyists exceeded all expectations when 40-some showed up for the highly publicized event that took place at the Bellegrade area home of Bill and Sue Akin in Midlothian.

It was all about repotting, selling supplies and orchids (some from Hawaii, perusing culture literature and just enjoying visiting. A sumptuous cookout concluded the activities.

Spread out along a lengthy and beautiful patio setting on a pleas-

ant, sunny afternoon were located various stations for:

- repotting under a tent by Buddy Harvie, Wanda Andrako and Bayne Hawkins
- orchids and supplies for sale by Joe Mathias
- display of flowering orchids and literature for viewing by attendees
- tables of foods to compliment more food from the grill
- the Hawaiian plants and donated ones for sale in the adjacent garage.

It was surprising to many of the members that a number of area hobbyists were not members of a local society though some did belong to AOS. Through media publicity (continued on P. 2 "Repotting")

## Orchid Spotlight:

### *Phal. Memphis Music and John Androko*



*Phal. Music, photo courtesy of Stewart Orchids, (www.stewartorchids.com)*



John Androko

I cannot say that I have one favorite orchid. I enjoy most with a preference for *phalaenopsis*. I do have one orchid to which I have a particular attachment. It does not have a spectacular bloom; it is quite ordinary. Wanda and I got it in 1982 from Jones and Scully, which was then a well-known orchid house in the Miami area until Hurricane Andrew essentially wiped them out. The plant was the 76<sup>th</sup> plant we added to our collection that comprises 657 plants. This plant is a *phalaenopsis* hybrid, P. Memphis Music (P. Music x P. *violacea*). When it was purchased, the leaf span was about 4 inches and is now no more than 8 inches. It bloomed for the first time about two years after we got it and it has bloomed like clockwork every year since. The bloom is a light lavender-pink with dark reddish veining and a dark lip. There is a little to suggest that P. *violacea* is a parent. The plant is potted, as are all our *phals*, in Pro-Mix BX with added coarse perlite a mix that has worked well for us. We fertilize with most waterings.

I have been growing orchids since

about 1979. Wanda had some orchids that she had brought from Florida. Also Wanda was given a *cattleya* (probably Bow Bells) from a friend of mine. My orchid growing has been a joint venture with Wanda. We grow *phalaenopsis* and *paphiopedilums* primarily which together are about half of the collection. The other half consists of *cattleyas* (mainly medium size and miniature), *dendrobiums*, *oncidiums*, about 20 *phrags*, and 20 or so *vandaceous*. About half of our collection is grown in a 10 x 11 ft. greenhouse and the other half is under lights.

*(Editor's Note: The plan for this space is to feature an orchid and its grower from the monthly showtable. As this is appearing before ROA has had its first showtable, John graciously talked about one of his favorite phals. Unfortunately, he and Wanda did not have a picture of this orchid in bloom, but the orchid pictured above John is one of the parent that dominates the appearance of the cross; the Androko's have indicated that it looks much like their orchid in bloom.)*



*Dtps. (Phal. Haur Jin Diamond x Dtps. Linda Pearlstein), awarded an HCC (76 pts.) in March, grown by David Sombach, photo courtesy of the Carolinas Judging Center, (www.carolinasjudgingcenter.org)*

## Library Request

As a brand-new organization, we need to not only build membership, friendship, but our resource library as well. We are requesting your assistance in building this great culture resource by considering to donate books, periodicals and videos to ROA. A book plate will be completed for each item donated, with your name, as well as supply you with an in kind donation form for your taxes. Please bring your donation to our September meeting. Kathy Walker will assist in receiving your donations. - Kathy Walker

## Repotting (from Page 1)

and combing old files, the newcomers welcomed being invited and greeted by the new group.

Planning members included Barbara Noe, Bill and Sue Akin, Wanda and John Androko, and Bayne Hawkins among other Founding and Charter members.

- Bayne Hawkins

## ROA Goes on the Road to Sunrise Enterprises



Sunrise Enterprises owner,  
Eric Linn

Sunrise Enterprises production greenhouses. Phal. spiking greenhouse (right) and Phal. blooming greenhouse (far right)

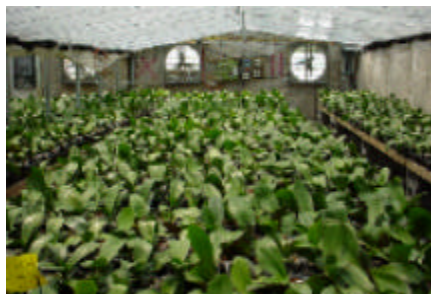
On Sunday, July 10, our spirited group of orchidphiles braved high temperatures and an interesting drive traveling to Sunrise Enterprises, a multi-state distributor of orchids for an enlightening several hours. Owner Eric Linn and his head grower Ruben were gracious hosts; answering our questions and providing information to use in our own growing spaces as we viewed a virtual sea of phalaenopsis from the pre-spiking stage to those waiting to be shipped the following day.

Most would not think of Chesterfield, VA as a significant distributor of orchids, but Eric said that Sunrise ships an average of 1,500 orchids daily

providing live plants and cut flowers to retailers from New York through South Carolina. Currently, their operation is almost exclusively phals, but they are in the process of expanding their production to include cymbidiums.

It was an awesome sight seeing thousands of healthy orchids thriving in greenhouses ranging from their very first home built on up to the state of the art ones recently put into service. As a special favor to ROA members, beautiful Phals were made available for purchase. We ended the day with refreshing cold watermelon and great interaction with our orchid friends.

- Barbara Noe



Waiting to tour the Sunrise greenhouses



Enjoying the watermelon and fellowship after the tour, photo by Kathy Walker

## On the Road Again: Orchid Station and Pine Crest Orchids

On Sunday, August 7, 2005, the Richmond Orchid Alliance will leave Richmond at 8:30 AM from the Wachovia Bank parking lot at the Bellegrade Shopping Center (at Huguenot Road and Polo Parkway, near Ruth's Chris Steak House and the Great Big Greenhouse). We have permission to park in the front. First we travel to Orchid Station, a major wholesale orchid house in Barboursville, Virginia that opens their doors to the public twice a year for sales. Our friends, Kathy and Paul Philhour have been gracious enough to make an exception and have agreed to our visit on this date.

After perusing the selected orchids the Philhours will have for sale, we will pack up our purchases and travel on to visit Pine Crest Orchids in Charlottesville. Le and Jay will be our hosts for orchid buying as well as an informal culture, cuisine and chat session by their pool. We should be returning to Richmond by 5:30 PM.

The cost will be \$18 per person (\$35 for two) for the transportation. Due to scheduling requirements for the bus, we need to have your reservation(s) by July 29. Let us know if you want to be included by calling Sue Akin at 378-0999 or by emailing us at [orchidalliance@aol.com](mailto:orchidalliance@aol.com)

-Barbara Noe/Bill Akin

## Calendar of Events Outside of ROA:

### July 30-31

Mid-Atlantic Summer Orchid Fest, Parkside Orchid Nursery, Ottsville, PA. Contact: John Salventi, (610) 847-8039; parkside@ptd.net.

### August 7

National Capital Judging Center, 12:00 p.m., National Arboretum, Washington DC.

### September 10

Hollin Hills Orchid Society, Annandale, VA; Auction; contact:

### September 11

Charlottesville Orchid Society, Charlottesville, VA; Speaker: Linda Wilhelm of Woodland Orchids; contact: Brenda Steigman, email: bsteigman@aol.com.

### September 18

Virginia Orchid Society, Richmond, VA; Speaker: Linda Wilhelm of Woodland Orchids; contact: Michael Mealy, email: Glendree@aol.com.

### September 19

National Capital Orchid Society, U.S. National Arboretum, Washington, DC; Speaker: Bill Goldner of Woodstream Orchids; contact: ncos\_information@yahoo.com.

### October 8-10

National Capital Orchid Society Show, US National Arboretum, Washington, DC. Contact: Jerry Rice, (301) 986-0659; jmricewas@aol.com.

### October 9

Charlottesville Orchid Society, Charlottesville, VA; Speaker: Tom Purviance of Parkside Orchids; contact: Brenda Steigman, email: bsteigman@aol.com.

## Growing Tips by Courtney Hackney (email: Hackneau@Bellsouth.net)

Many "Tips" readers have asked about the progress of my experiments with lava rock as a potting medium. While this experiment is still in progress, there are a few generalizations worth passing on. However, this is not a recommendation yet for the average hobbyist. As with all cultural recommendations, make the change on a few plants before wholesale conversion of your collection. If you are currently happy with your culture then do not change them.

Most lava rock sold in the Carolinas is mined in Oregon and is unweathered, meaning it has not had the actions of water working on it for years. My experiments have utilized red lava rock and not the black form. The only advice I was able to get from Hawaiian growers was to not use the black form, although I do not know why. Perhaps it has something to do with heat absorption. The rock is mined, crushed, and packed without regard for size so each bag needs to be sorted for size. It is, however, inexpensive.

Some bags contain more, larger pieces, while others contain more fine material. This is both good and bad, depending on how the rock will be used. It does require grading as none of the low priced lava rock is graded. The largest material, 1.5-2" diameter works well for vandas and bifoliate cattleyas. Cattleyas and phals go in 0.5-1.5" grade and the remaining fraction is used for seedlings and paphs. Typically, there is also lots of dust or very fine material that is attached to the rock that washes away relatively quickly. This fine material does contain significant soluble material and is best washed off first. Lava rock is relatively light with an extremely porous surface, but occasionally some dense rock, which lacks the

porous nature required for potting orchids, will be included. Discard this material. Some bags will have almost none of the dense stuff, while others may have lots of it.

Not all of my experience using lava rock has been positive. So what are the advantages of using this medium? First it is inexpensive and readily available. Most important for me, is that it does not decompose at all. In the hot South, many media break down before an orchid reaches its maximum growth in the pot. Bifoliate cattleyas hate to be repotted and grow relatively slowly so this can be a real problem. I also have limited amount of time to repot and would rather spend my "orchid time" doing other things in the greenhouse.

The key to the successful use of lava rock is to remember that the environment provided by lava rock is very different than what the orchid has already experienced. There is more air movement and less moisture than in more typical media. Roots grown in a pot with sphagnum or bark typically shrivel and die in lava rock. The first phals I put in lava rock became badly desiccated until they grew new roots. The second group were immediately placed in lower light and given more water until they began to grow new roots. The most recent group has been the most successful. Phals were removed from the pot and a core of the old material was left around the roots. The phal was then placed in the pot with lava rock already added so that the phal is properly placed relative to the top of the pot. Then lava rock is added around the plant and a few pieces placed on top of the old medium. This allows the phal to adjust (continued on P. 5 "Growing Tips")

## Merritt Huntington Memorial Symposium

The schedule for the inaugural Merritt Huntington Memorial Symposium has been announced. The Symposium will be held Saturday, November 12, 2005 at the Ramada 1776 in Williamsburg.

8:00 am	Early Bird Plant Sales and Coffee
8:30 am	Deadline for Plants Entered for Judging
8:50-9:10 am	Welcome
9-10:45 am	<b>Alan Koch</b> , Gold Country Orchids, Lincoln, California "Miniature and Compact Cattleyas"
10:45 am-12:15 pm	<b>Ervin Granier</b> , Gran Blue Orchids, St. Gabriel, Louisiana "The Search for the Blue Orchid"
12:15-1:45 pm	Buffet Lunch (included in Registration)
1:45-3:15 pm	<b>Luiz Hamilton</b> , Amazon Orchids, Manaus, Brazil "Cattleya Walkeriana and It's Hybrid"
3:15-4:30 pm	<b>Rob Griesbach</b> , USDA Judging Results, Wrap-up and Panel Discussion led by

Each presentation will be culture oriented!

Plant Sales 12:15 - 1:45 pm and 4:30 - 5:30 pm  
Additional plant vendors featuring various genera will participate in the sales area.

The pre-registration admission until September 30 is \$30, after that, the admission rises to \$40. In addition, space is limited, so the organizers suggest that interested persons should register early. Register with Dot Pierce, 917 Beryl Ave., Virginia Beach, VA 23464; email: pierce.db@verizon.net.

### Growing Tips (con't from Page 4)

gradually with new roots emerging from the old medium into the lava rock. So far this is working well.

The most important rule to follow when repotting into lava rock is to remember that it works best when the plant is growing new roots. This generally is when it is warm, so avoid repotting in the winter. While this is generally true for all orchids, it is even more important for orchids planted in a rapidly drying medium, such as lava rock, or if the orchid is mounted.

My bifoliate cattleya growth has excelled in lava rock; perhaps because they prefer drier conditions and are always repotted when they are getting new roots. The greatest surprise has been for paphs. Their requirement for more water suggested that the lava rock medium would not work. Fine, gravel sized lava rock was used and the paphs planted in clear plastic pots so that they could be repotted if new roots

were not observed. Rock was placed about a quarter inch higher around the plant than if bark had been used. Slow release Dolomite Lime was placed on the surface along with Nutricote fertilizer. Paphs grew so fast that some of the multiflora types split their pots.

Lava rock holds a surprisingly large amount of water, but still requires more frequent watering. Lava rock also holds fertilizers along with less desirable salts so flush at least once a month. Once lava rock has weathered moss and ferns will grow on the surface prompting me to wonder whether there may be some benefit to letting the rock weather a little before using it in pots. As with all media, it takes time to determine if a particular medium will work under your conditions. Lava rocks requires more time watering, but less time repotting. While it is to early to recommend this medium, it has potential for hobbyists that like to water or hate to repot.

The Richmond Orchid Alliance meets at the Science Museum of Virginia, 2500 W. Broad Street, Richmond, at 2:00 P.M. of the second Sunday of each month from January through November. Yearly dues are \$20.00 per individual, or \$25.00 per family. Dues should be paid to the ROA Treasurer, Sue Akin.

The **ROA Bulletin** is a publication of the Richmond Orchid Alliance and is distributed to the Society's members monthly, prior to all club meetings.

Submissions to the Bulletin should be sent to the editor early enough to arrive by the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month prior to a meeting. Unless otherwise credited, all images in this publication were by the editor.



Pictures above and below are from the Repotting Picnic, photos by Kathy Walker



## ***“Orchids for Dummies” A Must Read***

Promoted as “the fun and easy way to grow the world’s most amazing flowers,” Steven A. Frowine’s new orchid book belongs in every orchid hobbyist library. The 260-some page soft back is packed with photos including eight pages in full color and a handy guide on how to select the right orchids, keep them healthy, encourage blooms and even propagate your own plants.

Contents at a glance cover –

- Best Orchids for Rookies
- Ten Easiest Orchids to Grow
- Ten Most Frequently Asked Questions
- Ten Most Common Reasons Why Orchids Don’t Bloom
- Ten Most Common Ways Orchids Are Killed

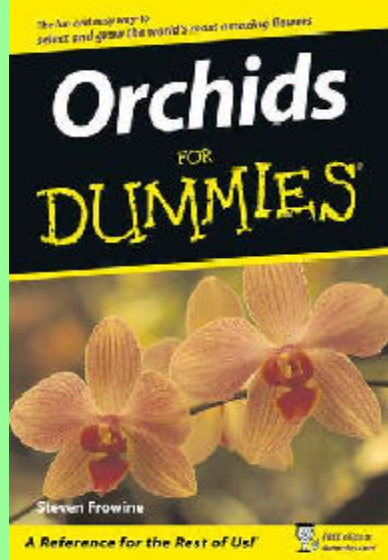
Author Frowine is a professional horticulturalist who grows more than 200 orchids in his Connecticut home. He first started growing orchids under lights when he was in high school. He tended orchids professionally as a horticulturalist, when he worked in

Hawaii at the National Tropical Botanical Garden and at the Missouri Botanical Garden, where he was Chairman of Indoor Horticulture and managed one of the largest orchid collections in the United States – over 10,000 plants.

“Orchid names are in Latin, which is a challenge for most people to pronounce and remember. Don’t worry about it. Just get into these names gradually. With such a complex group of plants comes names and jargon to match. This aspect of orchid growing is what scares most people off. Don’t let this happen to you! They are just names and words that scientists have assigned to plants because they had to call them something.”

Glen Decker of Piping Rock Orchids, Galway, New York, served as the technical editor of this highly educational and enjoyable read. A copy has been donated to the ROA library. Frowine’s second book, “Fragrant Orchids,” will be released this fall.

- Bayne Hawkins



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