

ROA LIBRARY

The ROA Library has two excellent AOS booklets on orchid photography, *Handbook on ORCHID PHOTOGRAPHY* by Grenville Seibels II and *ORCHID PHOTOGRAPHY* by Charles Marden Fitch.



Seibels' book was published in 1980, well before the introduction of digital cameras and Fitch's very early in their availability, quality and affordability so the chapters on cameras and film are not as appropriate as they once were. (Yes, some photographers still use film but they are a dwindling group.) Both authors do, however, emphasize the benefits of focusing and metering through the lens which one can do with digital SLR cameras. Except for cameras and film everything in these booklets is pertinent.

Both authors recommend tripods with adjustable platforms and attachments for mounting cameras in several positions. Seibels emphasizes sturdiness whereas Fitch argues for portability. This is understandable since Seibels took most of his photographs in his back yard while Fitch ventured out into the wilds of Viet Nam or Borneo taking photographs of orchids in their natural settings.

Both authors stress the importance of good light. Daylight is best but not sunny midday which gives harsh shadows and contrasts. They also comment that photographs taken in the evening will have a red color shift. Filters can correct color cast. They also cover the use of strobe flashes (thyristers) as well as other lights. They offer ways to use lights effectively such as using two strobe lights mounted not on the camera but one on each side at camera height which will avoid a head on picture and eliminate shadows. They offer suggestions on how to diffuse light. Use of color and polarizing filters is covered.

Lenses are equally as important as light, and both authors recommend macro lenses. (90-105 lenses work best for orchids) Here the authors caution against underexposure because the lens is so close to the subject for macro photos and how this can be avoided by increasing the depth of field, that is, manually opening the iris.

Both authors stress composition, the essence of a good picture. Poor composition can be remedied to some extent with a good photo editing program but you can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. Seibels recommends black backdrops or, in some instances, neutral gray whereas Fitch recommends backdrop colors that will complement the picture colors. Seibels also suggests to have extra pieces of cloth to hide pots, etc.

Both authors give suggestions on presenting slide shows. Fitch closes with chapters on digital storage of slides, techniques for photography on field trips and sources of photographic equipment. Seibels emphasizes the artistic aspect of orchid photography while Fitch is more concerned with making accurate photographs for the record – shows, AOS awards, etc. Both authors agree that familiarity with orchid plants helps make good orchid pictures.

Both of these booklets are excellent. It is recommended that anyone interested in orchid photography read them – even the chapters on film cameras and film.

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