



The Orchid Keiki



Special Points of Interest

- Huntleya Group
- Culture Class @ 6:15pm
- Membership Dues
- Dendrobiums
- Endangered Prairie Orchids

Photo and Article

Credits:

- Garland Hanson
- Carol Hollenbeck
- Jake Griffin/Daily Herald Staff
- Debbie Sauer



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“Huntleya Group” by Patricia Harding Tuesday, October 19th at 7:00 pm

Patricia is retired from the workforce and now focuses on orchids, as a traveler, observer, photographer, and writer, with a little orchid growing on the side. When she's not traveling she lives in Oregon.

Patricia studied Botany as an undergraduate, but the economy at the time provided no jobs in Botany, so she became a medical doctor. She started growing orchids at age 21, killed them all, started again at 25, killed them all, and again at 30, but this time she started by going to orchid society meetings to learn how to do it. At the first meeting someone had a *Dendrobium thyrsiflorum* with three massive inflorescences. They had collected the plant years before and they were selling it because it was too big. Patricia sat on her hands and let the thing go to someone else for \$20, as she vowed not to buy an orchid till she knew how to grow them. She felt so frustrated by this that she never sat on her hands again, buying every orchid she reasonably could get her hands on. This led to one greenhouse, two and now three greenhouses and about 5000 plants and of those there are 1500 different species.



She retired from medicine ten years ago, and decided to return to Botany, especially the part of Botany she found the most fascinating--taxonomy. She started the AOS judging program in the PNW region and had the good fortune to meet with Carl Withner. She volunteered to help him with some “projects”. The first project ended up being the book “The Debatable Epidendrums” covering a group of orchids Carl had



loved and had ideas of how they should be segregated but had never put it to paper. Patricia's part was to put it to paper.

She learned a lot doing the book and enjoyed sorting out the problems such a book presents. She decided to do the next work on her own. She decided to study the *Huntleya* group, which includes *Pescatorea*, *Chondrorhyncha*, *Kefersteinia*, among others. The result is the book “Huntleyas and their Relatives” which has just been released November 2008.

Along with writing books about orchids, she writes the occasional article for orchid magazines and in her travels she photographs orchids which seem to be all over the internet.

Patricia has been fortunate that as an AOS judge she has fallen into the small group of judges who judge international shows. This is not an elite group and it is surprising how few judges take advantage of these opportunities to judge internationally. Usually the cost to the judge is airfare and the rest is provided by the society so that the judge's in-country expenses are minimal. With a little effort one can arrange for some local people to take the judges to see orchids in the habitat, which is the part Patricia likes the best.

Patricia no longer buys orchid plants, she does take the occasional gift plant, but she now considers the greenhouses of collectors around the world as part of her own collection. Besides her greenhouses are full.

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Membership Dues and Culture Class

**The next culture class starting
around 6:15pm will be on
"Controlling Insects on your Orchids
in your Home without Pesticides"**

If you have not already paid your dues, please be sure to send payment of your membership dues to Betty Jo Fulghum at the address below.

Dues have not increased and are \$22.50 for single membership and \$30.00 for family and commercial members.

Betty Jo Fulghum
530 Coalbrook Drive
Midlothian, VA 23114.



Don't forget to sign up for the Symposium by September 30th to get their "Early Bird" Special!!
www.mhsymposium.org

Endangered Prairie Orchid—continued from back page

"It's such a mysterious orchid where some years you can have high numbers and then the next you have low numbers and you don't know why," she said. "Then when you find a new set of these spectacularly beautiful orchids, it just makes your day."

The orchids bloom in late June and usually disappear by mid-July. The top of each white blossom looks like a massive hood for a robed figure. The flower's namesake fringed petals jut out left, right and down, giving each bloom an ethereal, humanlike form.

Listed as a federally "threatened" species, the Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchid is "endangered" in Illinois. Kobal called it one of DuPage County's "top tier" plants for monitoring.

There's not a lot of funding available for such detailed documenting and rigorous research. There is, however, a lot of work that goes into bringing a flower back from the brink of extinction, and that's where the volunteers

come in.

"We can't do this kind of work without our partners," Pollack said. "A big deal in all of this is our volunteers."

And sometimes the volunteer work has to be hands-on. That's because sometimes the hawk moths that are supposed to do the pollinating don't get the job done.

"We have volunteers that do this every year and, depending on the site, they could have one to 100 plants they have to hand pollinate," Pollack said. "That can be tedious work that lasts three or four hours."

So why put so much effort into saving a flower that provides little more than its aesthetic beauty?

"Imagine if you would remove all the rivets that go into making an airplane," Ullberg said. "As we remove a rivet here and a couple over there you weaken the whole system and eventually the plane will crash. Imagine that plane is our ecosystem and that's why it's important."



Dendrobium Orchids

As we move into the fall season in Virginia, it is a good time to consider the culture of the dendrobium orchids, since some require special conditions to induce flowering. First, let's look at the different groups of Dendrobiums so that we can identify our plants and then look at the cultural requirements for each of them.

Group 1: This group of Dendrobium species requires the "cool-dry" treatment after the vegetative canes, developed during the summer, have matured. During the summer

with active growth, they need generous water and fertilizer, good light and night-time temperatures of 55-60° F. Examples of Group 1 species include: Den. nobile, Den. wardianum, and Den. moniliforme. In the fall, the D. nobile type require

a severe rest period combined with a night time temperature drop into the low 40s to upper 30s to induce flowering. During this cool period, the leaves on the new canes should drop and after this occurs, move them into the greenhouse and begin to water. Buds should develop a few weeks or so after the cool period has ended.

Group 2: This group does not require the severe temperature variation seen in the group 1 dendrobiums but does require a dry period to induce flowering. After the vegetative growth has developed, move the plants into the greenhouse and reduce watering. Examples of dendrobiums found in this group are Den. aggregatum (not deciduous), Den. anosmum, Den. parishii and Den. pierardii. Remember that **light should be adequate** to induce flowering during this dry period.

Group 3: The group 3 (**Callista** group) are evergreen and should not be allowed to dry out completely at any time during the year. However, they do need a cool a cool period to induce flowering. As with the other groups, water and fertilize during active growth in the summer, but in the fall, move to a cooler spot and continue watering, but reduce the fertilizer. After flowering and until new growth begins, the plants should be kept cool. Note that these dendrobiums are susceptible to red spider mites. Examples of dendrobiums in this group:

Den. chrysotoxum, Den. densiflorum, Den. farmeri and Den. fimbriatum.

Group 4: The **Formosae** are moderately cool growers requiring winter night temperatures of 55° F and summer nights in the sixties. With this in mind, it is wise to keep them in the house during the hot Virginia months of July and August. Light requirements are similar to the cattleyas, they do not require a severe rest period and should not dry out. Because they prefer cooler summer temperatures, this group may not be suitable for the novice grower in Virginia. Examples in this group are: Den. dearei, Den. formosum, and Den. sanderae.



Dendrobium aggregatum

Group 5: The **Spatulata** and **Latouria** groups – also known as the "antelope" type - can be grown with cattleyas but they prefer night temperatures of 60 degrees. The increased light levels results in heavier blooms. Examples are: Den. Blue Twinkle, Den. taurinum, Den. undulatum and Den. canaliculatum.

Group 6: The **Phalaenanth** dendrobiums are warm growers all year long. Water should be restricted after flowering and continued until the new growths appear. In general, they need bright light and if the light is insufficient, the buds will blast. Examples in this group are: Den. bigibbum, Den. phalaenopsis, Den. superbiens. To summarize the culture of dendrobiums in general, they like day time temperatures between 65 and 75 during the day, but can withstand higher temperatures with adequate ventilation and humidity levels of 50%. To flower successfully, dendrobiums need bright light, but not direct sun. If they are grown in the house, a South facing window, lightly shaded is the best area for them. Always water the orchids in the morning, allowing them to dry completely before night time and lower temperatures. Note that dendrobiums do not like to be over-potted so that they are frequently seen to be ten times as tall as the pots are wide. Usually watering twice a week is sufficient, except for those requiring a rest period to induce flowering. Give these plants and try and enjoy the blooms!

Schedule of Virginia Orchid Society Events

Tuesday, October 19th
"Huntleyas and their
Relatives"
Patricia Harding

October 27th - 31st
Merritt Huntington
Symposium

*Great Opportunity to
purchase plants not normally
offered at regular
sales booths.*

Cavalier Oceanfront
Hotel
Virginia Beach, VA
www.mhsymposium.org

Tuesday, November 16th
"Growing Cool Loving
Orchids in a Warm
Climate"
The Orchid Gallery

Saturday, December 11th
Winter Auction

**Note: There will not be
a Spring Auction!**





Endangered Prairie Orchid a "Hidden Treasure"



Tiny white ghosts flutter in the breeze.

No one is really supposed to know where the endangered Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchids are except the scores of botanists and hundreds of volunteers throughout Illinois who

have been busy in the past couple weeks documenting locations and collecting data on plant numbers.

The delicate blooms will wilt soon enough and the stalks that held them will wither away as well. But hopefully not before researchers are able to determine if recovery efforts are working and new seeds are collected to ensure the orchids' survival.

For more than a decade, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has been leading an effort to restore the persnickety plants' populations in several states.

"It's definitely working," said Cathy Pollack, a biologist with the federal agency, "because we're learning new things every day."

Researchers have learned it takes more than just spreading seeds on marshy soil to make the orchids grow. It turns out a specific fungus has to be present in the soil for the plants to thrive. In addition, it's only a particular nocturnal family of moths that are responsible for pollinating the flowers when they blossom. And it's important to regularly remove any vegetation that may shade or smother the orchids.

"I wouldn't say the plants are finicky," said Scott Kobal, a DuPage County Forest Preserve ecologist, "they're just finicky about their habitat."

Before mankind began drying up wetlands to make way for development, the flowers were a lot more plentiful, Pollack said. The plants

can grow up to three feet tall and may hold up to 40 flowers.

Two DuPage forest preserves are home to small populations of the wild orchids (officials don't want to publicize exactly where to protect the plants as much as possible).

They're not easily accessible, yet Kobal and volunteers have been monitoring them since the early 1990s. Year after year, they traipse through the same thickets and brambles to get to the plants to document things like how many blooms are on each stem, how many leaves are on the stalks and if there are any new plants that have sprouted in the area.

But this year, something different happened.

"This week we found a plant in a third preserve," Kobal said. "This was another site where we hadn't seen them in about 25 years, so we're very excited."

In the 1990s, seeds were planted in the area, but there also may have been a dormant plant already there just waiting for the right conditions, Kobal said. Experts may never know what was responsible for the new growth.

DuPage is not alone in discovering the orchids in unexpected places. In 2008, a new population was discovered in McHenry County. Another patch recently was found in Kane County.

"It's like a paleontologist working in the Gobi Desert for years looking for a particular dinosaur bone and then one day at lunch he throws an apple core into the sand and where it lands it knocks away some dust and there's the dinosaur bone they've been looking for," said Drew Ullberg, director of natural resources for the Kane County Forest Preserve District.

McHenry County Conservation District plant ecologist Laurie Boldt said finding the new plants was like finding "a hidden treasure."

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www.vaorchidsociety.org**