

Laelia purpurata by Wanda Andrako

June 2014

ROA Bulletin



Orchid Adventures in Belize

Most of us are acquainted with Allen Black who has spoken to us on several topics. Allen will be the speaker for our June meeting and will show us his hunt for orchids in Belize. To go out in the wild looking for orchids you must be able to deal with giant flying somethings and giant crawling somethings and then there is an orchid! Well, Allen did that in Belize. This will be an entertaining orchid hunt minus the creepy crawlies and you will see what it is like. Remember, there are no bathrooms but there are bugs, snakes, etc. No air conditioning available in the wilds, but there are orchids if your guide can find them.

Allen will explain all about his trip to Belize at our next meeting **June 8**. You will really want to see the videos he took while on the trip. Come join us and enjoy learning about what is involved in an orchid hunt in the wild.

Programs 2014

June	8	Allen Black "Orchid Adventures in Belize"
July	13	No program
August	10	No program
September	14	Members Plant swap
October	12	Paul Storm "Schomburkias" Joint meeting with VOS
November	9	"Growing under Lights" and Social

June Birthdays

Robyn Voytilla	1
Valli Vaneve	7
Michael Matthias	8
June Pierson	13
John Hutcheson	26
Janis Ranck	28
Frank Drew	29



Lc. Mini Purple 'Blue Hawaii'
by Stan Baker

Trip to Tom and Robyn's Greenhouse

We had a great trip to where Tom grows his great orchids and saw his really neat greenhouse, all the plants he was growing, and those that would be in bloom soon. It wasn't the main blooming season so there were not a lot in bloom. There were some beautiful ones in bloom but not for sale. Other orchid dealers order their plants either ready for sale or shortly before they were ready to sell from Caribbean or Asian growers, but Tom grows his own plants. This is partly due to his unique method of growing in semi-hydroponics and the fact that the plants grow so much faster using this method.

John and Mike brought some delicious cookies and bottles of water for us and we had a great time checking the names of the plants that are in the "making" and "ooh-ing and ah-ing" over the ones in bloom. Did you see that gorgeous deep rose paph? I would have had that in a second if he had just said yes.

Thank you Tom and Robyn. We will come again when it is blooming season.

Does My Orchid Have to be Repotted?

by Sue Bottom

We get more questions about repotting than any other subject. Some folks never repot their orchids because they are intimidated by the whole process, so their potting mix ultimately rots causing their roots to rot and their orchids are well on their way to orchid heaven. Other folks repot their orchids several times a year because they say their plants are just not blooming for them. Their plants never get a chance to get established, so they too will soon find their way to orchid heaven. There are really only three reasons I can think of to repot an orchid.

Repot

All New Additions Before Adding to Your Collection.

I almost always repot an orchid I bring home, immediately if it is not in bloom. If I buy a blooming orchid, I enjoy the flower and don't touch the roots until the plant is bloomed out. Then I pot the orchid in my mix of choice for that kind of orchid. All my cattleyas and dendrobiums are in a coarse, freely draining, largely inorganic mix so they can all be watered every second or third day during the growing season. My phalaenopsis are all in a soilless peat mix so they can all be watered every week or two when they approach dryness.

When you bring orchids home, they can be growing in wildly different potting mixes, from pure sphagnum moss, pure bark, pure clay pebbles or gravel, or mixes containing these materials. Each of these mixes retains water at a

different rate. If you bring orchids home and just water them all on your normal watering schedule, you'll find the ones potted in sphagnum moss stay too wet, the ones potted in gravel/clay pebble mixes stay too dry and the ones potted in a bark/coco mix may be just right.

Some growers also set you up for failure when they grow their seedlings in sphagnum moss and then pot them up to a larger pot by packing bark around the sphagnum core. These plants are impossible to water correctly because if you water when the bark approaches dryness, the roots in the sphagnum moss will be smothered from overwatering and if you water when the moss approaches dryness, the roots in the bark will wither from dehydration.

If you repot your orchids into your mix of choice when they first enter your growing area, you will know when you repotted them and how long they should grow well in that mix. You can water all your similar type orchids in the same mix at the same time without water logging or dehydrating them. It makes taking care of your orchids much simpler.

Potting Mix is Degraded.

Many people use organic matter in their potting mixes. It retains moisture, helps buffer pH and holds nutrients for later uptake by the plant. Of course, being organic, it will degrade over time and degrade is a nicer term than rot. When the potting mix rots, the roots that are

growing in the potting mix will likewise rot because the potting mix smothers the roots.

Different organic materials degrade at different rates. The generally available 'premium' sphagnum moss tends to have a life of between 6 and 12 months. The much more expensive sphagnum mosses like the AAA to AAAAA grade long fiber New Zealand Sphagnum moss will last for 2 to maybe 5 years for the highest quality moss. Coco husk is widely used and has a useful life span of 1 to 2 years in the pot. The quality of bark varies wildly and I use bark hesitantly as a result. The highly touted Orchiata bark is reported to be long lasting and we'll be testing this claim over the next couple of years. Tree fern fiber is also variable. I stopped buying the medium grade because it had so much fine material in it, now I only buy the coarse grade. I have gotten bad batches of tree fern where snow mold appeared in mixes barely 2 years old, though good quality tree fern has a life of from 3 to 4 years. The highly desirable redwood bark is no longer available commercially. Regardless of the quality of the organic matter, it will ultimately rot and it is best to repot your orchids before the mix rots.

The easiest way to test whether your potting mix is past its prime is to try to lift the plant up by its leaves. A well-established plant growing in a still fresh mix can be picked up by the vegetation. If it is wobbly in the pot, stick your finger an inch or two deep inside the pot. If it feels soft and dirt-like, odds are the mix is rotting. If you catch it early enough and repot before there is too much root loss, perhaps your plant will not suffer.

Many times though, I discover the degraded mix because my plant starts to look unhappy. Trust your instincts, if your plant doesn't look happy, if it is wobbly in the pot, you've got your excuse. Knock it out of the pot and put it into some fresh mix.



Rlc. Lawless Romeo 'Juliette' by Roger Horman

Orchid Unstable from Growing Out of Its Pot.

The longer you can grow your orchid without disturbing the roots, otherwise known as repotting, the happier your plant will be.

If it is a monopodial orchid like a phalaenopsis, it may be growing well out of the pot with lots of aerial roots and not many roots anchoring the plant in place. It then becomes top heavy and a candidate for repotting. For a sympodial orchid like a cattleya, it seems like it always blooms better when there is a bulb or two out of the pot. Eventually there will be four or five

bulbs out of the pot and your plant becomes unstable and unwieldy in the pot. Once your plant is physically unmanageable for you, repot it so it will be able to grow and bloom for you for another two or three years without touching its roots.

Don't repot unless you have a reason to repot. Each time you disturb your plant's roots, it will go through transplant shock and take some period of time to recover. You can minimize the transplant shock by repotting just

before your plant starts throwing off new roots. You can also help your plant recover from transplant shock by adding root stimulating hormones when repotting. Some people spray seaweed, Superthrive or other root stimulants on the bareroot plant or add these supplements to their water/fertilizer mix for the next month or so. I add a protective drench of the fungicide Banrot plus seaweed after repotting to minimize the inevitable damage that occurs during the repotting process.



Phal. (Dawn Treader x Frosty Dawn) x (Golden Daybreak x Starry Eyes) by Jim Culbert

Raffle Table

Hello to everyone from Stan and Baulo Alfonso. Thanks for all the donations to the Raffle Table. Please remember to bring in items for the raffle. Orchid-related items are preferred but not required.

Thanks!

Stan and Baulo Alfonso



Lc. Cinnamon Crisp 'Whiligig' by Stan Baker

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Patrons

Several years ago ROA started a new category of Patron for funding our speakers and activities. This has become the major source of income and has helped greatly. Anyone that is able to afford to donate \$100 for the year is designated a patron. We appreciate the support of our Patrons. Thank you. Patrons for the 2014 are as follows:

Stan Baker & Baulo Rodrigues

Susan & Roger Horman

Mike Chambliss

& John Hutcheson

Bob & Karen Woehrle

Van Williams

Wanda & John Andrako

Buddy Harvie

Library

The Board has decided that since we have a library and no one uses it that the individual items, books, magazines, etc. will be sold at the meetings. The volume takes up too much space at the home of the Librarian and the apparent lack of interest has led us to sell these items. Some very expensive books will be sold so if you are interested please come and buy the ones that interest you.

Honorary Members

John Andrako

Wanda Andrako

Buddy Harvie

Bayne Hawkins (deceased)

ROA Information

The Richmond Orchid Alliance meets at Hermitage, 1600 Westwood Avenue, Richmond, at 2:00 P.M. of the second Sunday of each month from January through November. Yearly dues are \$30.00 per individual, or \$35.00 for a joint membership. Dues should be paid to the ROA Finance Director, Forrest Tignor, 322 Willway Dr., Manakin Sabot, VA 23103

Bayne Hawkins Memorial Fund

Donation \$150

Donations

ROA is a tax-exempt organization so that all donations can be counted on your income tax. At this time of the year many of us try to catch up on the annual donations to charitable organizations. We start now so that we don't have such a large number in December. We have the Patron list for gifts of \$100 but there is no real limit to the amount you may donate. We have been in a depression or recession for five years and times are tough for many. If you are able and wish to donate feel free to donate any amount and it will be greatly appreciated.

The money is used to pay the costs of our organization such as programs, speakers, rent and other expenses. Thank you.

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