Tolumnias

Tolumnias look like little ladies with the big full skirts just like Oncidiums. These little jewels were included in the genus Oncidiums for many years. The species has recently been moved to their own genera called Tolumnia because it has much smaller blossoms than the other Oncidiums. Interestingly all hybrids still labeled as Equitant Oncidiums are also known as Tolumnias. No matter what you call them, these plants are a delight to own. These miniature orchids originally made their homes in the Caribbean Islands. They are warm growers and love high humidity. The local climate of the particular island where they live determines the amount of water they need. For example, *T. guianese* is from the very dry area of Hispaniola and other species are found in the Bahamas where it rains almost every day. The endangered *Tolumnia bahamensis* is almost impossible to find in the wild, where there are only about 125 plants left in a very tiny area of Florida. Some growers are incorporating selective cross breeding and artificial propagation to ensure that the *Tolumnia Bahamensis* does not disappear. (Does this interest any of our members? the editor).

Tolumnias are very robust growers and will bloom in showers of bright blossoms ranging from bright sunshine yellows and golden browns, reds and oranges. The little “skirts” are decorated with many patterns of stripes or polka dots. In a breeze, the blossoms look like a group of square dancers all in a row along the inflorescence. Their leaves look like triangles rather than at like most leaves and form a fan shaped arrangement. This shape was adapted by the plant to survive the drier environments found on their native islands. Water is the most important step in growing Tolumnias. They have no large pseudobulb water reserve and Tolumnias should be watered well then allowed to dry out. The leaves and roots must not be wet by night. If kept wet, the roots will rot away killing the plant. A daily misting is also something that many are accustomed to. Let the plant dry before watering again. If they do not have enough water, the little orchids will soon turn brown and die. Morning sun is wonderful, but protect your little jewels from the hot afternoon sun. After watering and while they are still wet, you can water again using a balanced fertilizer at one half the recommended strength. Never fertilize a dry plant. This species can over at anytime of the year if given adequate light. The two inch growers can last for two to three months.

Repot this plant in the spring or fall months.

There are two basic requirements that must be observed; air movement must be good, and the plants must not be overwatered. In the wild, these plants grow on twigs with their roots freely rambling to catch the dew and rainfall, then quickly dry in the passing breezes. The temperature should range from a low near 60 degrees F to 80-85 degrees F. Extremes lower than 50 degrees F and higher than 90 degrees F for any length of time should be avoided. Keep warm in the winter chills. Light should be bright but diffused. Bright dappled shade outdoors is best, with care to avoid the direct sun during the heat of the day. Mount your Tolumnias using fishing line secured to a mount, either cork or tree fern. If constant humidity of 50% is hard to maintain, actual potting in a loose charcoal/bark mix will retain a little moisture about the roots long enough to avoid desiccation. Never overpot your orchids and use a media that will dry quickly. Watering should be done as often as the plants dry out. Mounted plants benefit from daily misting and the risk of overwatering is diminished. Those in pots should be carefully monitored to determine watering intervals. Overwatering encourages root rot. In oresences are produced on new or older mature growth. They produce a shower of blooms two to three times a year. AFTER BLOOMING, do NOT remove the in orescent until it is brown and dead as it will often branch and continue with anotherush of blooms.

*Courtesy of University of Connecticut.*

*Courtesy of Charlie, of Orchids, Etc.*

*Tolumnia Ralph Yogi ‘John’*
Minutes of the April Meeting

President Sam Boyd opened the meeting at 7:38 p.m. He asked Barbara Wagner of the Venice Area Orchid Society to tell us about the bus trip to the Redlands on May 15, 2004. A sign-up sheet was sent around for those interested in going. He then asked Wes Higgins to talk about the International Orchid Conservation Congress being held at a Selby Gardens beginning May 15, 2004. Wes announced that they would need volunteers at the registration table for that week, he then sent around a sign-up sheet.

President Boyd announced that Byrd’s Orchids would be having their annual sale “Spring Into Summer” on June 5, 2004 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Maria and Scott Donaldson are selling their extra plants. Please call 753-2391 anytime.

President Boyd then introduced our featured speaker, Mark Jones, who is an AOS judge and has been growing all types of orchids for many years. He gave an enlightening speech on growing species and specimen plants. He also showed many beautiful slides. There were many, many “Ohs” and “Ahhs” heard throughout Marks talk, so I think everyone really enjoyed it!

After our refreshment break, Mark reviewed the member’s plant table and the winners were announced. Mike then did the raffle plants, and the meeting was closed.

Respectfully submitted,
Jo Davis, Recording Secretary

Vandas in Spring

With vandaceous orchids grown in slatted baskets, most growers find that they dry altogether too well in April and May. Vandas can be watered almost every morning. A second light watering or misting in mid afternoon is often beneficial provided the crown and leaf axils of the plants have time to have dried by nightfall. Another strategy under high drying conditions is to bend the rules, and water heavily in mid to late morning. Late waterings on weekend mornings provide relief for plants that are more stressed on week days with their owners absent. Water thoroughly (not just mist) in the mid to late afternoon so plants can slowly absorb the water across the cool hours of the night. Be sure the roots have turned overall dark green when watering is finished. Two applications of water to the point of run off spaced several minutes apart should accomplish the required color change from white to totally dark green when watering is finished. Saturated roots are absolutely necessary to provide the plants the moisture they need to withstand heat and dry air typical of April and May. Sometimes, particularly at this season, the roots will not change color even after the second or third application of water. This lack of response to water is because the roots have become so dry that they are repelling rather than absorbing water. They are behaving like a cork in a wine bottle. The grower must exert special effort to resaturate the roots by applying four or five waterings to the point of run off spaced 15 minutes apart. Once the roots have been changed to the healthy overall green, normal applications of water should bring them around in future. With increased heat and light and the onset of growth, fertilizer becomes more crucial. All will benefit from an application of 20-20-20 at the rate of two teaspoons per gallon every two weeks. One can also apply high phosphorous “bloom booster” fertilizer at this time to stimulate them to ower in the next coming weeks. High phosphorous also stimulates root action and is important in getting all genera off to a good start on the growing season.

Courtesy of M. Motes


**Mark Jones** was our April speaker. He is an AOS judge and an expert in growing orchids. His speech concentrated on growing large specimen orchids and had beautiful slides to demonstrate how beautiful some plants are on a large scale. Some of us are really intrigued by growing specimens, whereas others find other aspects of growing orchids equally as fascinating. His slide program was really interesting and we thank him for taking his time and expertise to talk to us.

We will have the winners of the raffle table in the next newsletter, as right now **Bill Lanius**, our plant table chairman, is busy moving into his new house.

The raffle table was crowded and impressive, as usual, and **Mark Jones** commented on all of the plants with expertise.

The Venice Orchid Society is organizing a bus to go to the Redlands Orchid Festival on May 15th. Are you interested in going with them?

Our thoughts go out to **Dave Junka**, who is recovering from shoulder surgery. Get well soon, Dave.

Our speaker this May meeting will be **Bill Thom**, an AOS judge who will be speaking on “bulbophylums”. He will be bringing some nice plants for sale. We need to support our vendors by buying their plants when they bring them to the meeting.

If you are interested in helping at the IOCC Conference, please call **Jim Cope**. Volunteers are needed to help with the organization as many people are expected to attend.

**Faud Muwaysir** did a great job on the plant table, for his first time, filling in for **Bill Lanius** and we hope that he found the experience a happy one so that he can continue to help Bill.

**WE NEED PLANTS FOR THE RAFFLE TABLE!** If you are repotting or dividing, please bring your divisions to the raffle table. Also, the SILENT AUCTION seems to be a great way to get rid of your surplus plants… the Society keeps 10% and the remainder goes to the grower. That auction really drove some of those plant prices up and up… nice way to make money!

Unfortunately, we have a crisis… NO ONE is signing up for the refreshment committee... and we know how everyone likes to eat, but unless the great cooks in our group start bringing in munchies, we will have only one cookie per person soon... the guys could cook something too, or else chip in some money so that Lori can buy some food... we are planning on having a donation jar on the munchie table to make it easier... Please help us by bringing in good things to eat!

**BYRDS Spring into Summer Sale**, in Lakeland., Saturday June 5, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., 6302 Green Road, Lakeland, Phone 863-859-5060. Email orchidswb@aol.com. Vendors: Live Oak Orchids, Featherstone Orchids and Orchids of Distinction. Lots of fun!!

**Sorry about that**... we forgot to give credit to the following vendors who so graciously donated plants to our auction... **B&D Orchids** and **Ellenton Orchids**. A belated thanks.

Helpful hint. Some of the packing material referred to as “peanuts” is made from corn starch. Those that resemble tiny binoculars (two small tubes side by side) are soluble in water and should NOT be used when potting orchids. The dissolved sludge will support the development of bacterial and fungal growths and impede drainage.

Leaf removal. Ever experience the frustration of trying to remove a nearly all yellow leaf? It is such a pain to chase down a sterile tool. There is a way to safely remove (without mangling the plant) most plicate leaves without a knife. Try this for monopodials, at the tip of the leaf, carefully split the leaf at its midrib, then separate each half of the yellowed leaf from the plant’s base. (Bob Scully).

Friends are so much cheaper than a shrink.

Back cutting: Back cutting refers to the practice of severing the rhizome between older pseudobulbs to encourage the production of new growths. It can be considered analogous to pinching foliage plants where the apical dominance of lateral buds is overcome by the removal of the growing tip. (Ned Nash).

Do you need information? Log onto Jay Pfahl’s Internet Orchid species Encyclopedia... truly a site not to be missed! Jam packed with information, and pictures of over 3000 species.

Also log onto American Orchid Society... here you will find a wealth of information on orchids, orchid shows, orchid clubs, AOS judging, discussion group, bookstore, articles, and more! Join the AOS and receive their terrific monthly full color magazine.

**Bob Scully** would like to get a group together to buy some different orchids. We would save money by buying in a group. If you are interested, please tell our President **Sam Boyd**, and he will arrange it.

Our greenhouse tours will be commencing as soon as the IOCC conference is over at Selby, as some of the members are very busy donating their time to the conference.
Dendrobium Antennatum

Common name: Antelope Orchid
Family: Orchidaceae Juss

The country of origin for *Dendrobium antennatum* is Papua New Guinea to Northern Australia. It has slender cylindrical pseudobulbs to 24 inches in length and about 12 inches thick textured oblong leaves along the upper two thirds of the pseudobulb. Up to 15 white or pale green perfumed flowers are borne on racemes, up to 14” long, over a long period from fall through to early summer. It is suitable for growing outdoors in tropical climates only as it is a lowland tropical plant and must be kept from cold temperatures and drafts. This plant is almost always in flower, if given enough light and intermediate to warm temperatures. The flowers are long lasting and have a pleasant sweet fragrance. This plant prefers medium to high light.