



St. Augustine Orchid Society

www.staugorchidsociety.org

Fall Preparations - Cull Your Orchids

September 2010

by Dr. Courtney Hackney, hackneau@comcast.net

[Orchid Growing Tips](#)



Whether you grow on a window sill, under lights or in a greenhouse, the start of fall brings the realization that cold weather is around the corner. Will all of those fantastic acquisitions you got last spring and summer fit into your growing space once cold weather arrives?

Like it or not, this is the time to evaluate your orchid collection and decide if there are some

orchids that are not living up to your expectations. That does not always mean that they are poor orchids. Every hobbyist has growing conditions and culture habits that favor some orchids, but not others. If you have an orchid that does not grow for you, consider it a space-making candidate. If it is a clone or a plant that has nice flowers, find a good home for it. It is not hard to find a new hobbyist that will be excited to get it. Often, the same orchid that would not grow for you will thrive for someone else.

There are also some orchids that are prone to disease and are destined to eventually die, no matter what you do. Save yourself years of grief and toss it. When you do, you will join the company of many an accomplished orchid grower who fill garbage cans with orchids that did not live up to expectations. Some of these throw-away orchids are genetically inferior, while others had the bad fortune of contracting a disease at some time in their life and could just not grow out of it.



My own collection is definitely filling every inch of growing space. Many seedlings moved up into larger pots this year. Some of my favorite clones were divided this summer and I always keep an extra piece of my favorites. Eventually, these will find a good home, but it is always a good idea to hold on to a division of your favorites for a year or two after the plant is divided just in case one division does not thrive after repotting.



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The hardest orchids to part with are those that grow extremely well, but just do not produce high quality flowers. An orchid that grows well and flowers every year is a keeper. When all of your orchids grow like weeds, consider keeping those orchids that both grow well and produce high quality flowers.

Be sure that your definition of a good bloom is not being influenced by judging standards. If you like an orchid or enjoy its fragrance regardless of its status in the judging arena, keep it.

One of the great aspects of local orchid clubs is that one can see all kinds of orchid species and hybrids. It is the great diversity found among orchids that keep orchid hobbyists' attention year after year. It is not necessary, however, to possess all of them, which is easier said than done. If you find something you really like, discuss its culture with the owner and decide if this is something that you can grow under your conditions.

Most clubs have nice libraries with books on just about every type of orchid and hybrid. Find out everything you can about an orchid that piques your interest. If you take some time before you buy that unusual orchid, there will not be as many orchids to discard in future years. Nothing is more discouraging than having a window sill full of orchids that will just not grow and flower under your conditions.