



St. Augustine Orchid Society

www.staugorchidsociety.org

June in St. Augustine

by Sue Bottom, sbottom15@hotmail.com

The warming days and cool nights of spring induced vigorous vegetative activity. Spring's mild days are gone and the summertime blues lie ahead. Summer officially arrives in June, when the mild spring weather gives way to the hot humid summer. The sun rises higher in the sky with more hours of sunlight every day up to the longest day of the year on the Summer Solstice. Your plants need excellent air circulation and protection from the midday sun to prevent overheating and sunburn.

Temperature. It is starting to get hot. Most orchids come from intermediate mountain regions and they do not like it really hot. Who does? Only the very tropical orchids such as many vandas, phalaenopsis, bulbophyllums and species from the lowlands tolerate high temperatures. Others will appreciate some sort of relief. Cooling may be accomplished in various ways, such as shade cloth or tree cover to reduce light intensity, fans to keep air moving, and underbench misting for evaporative cooling.



The high volume Fog-It nozzle is great for watering your mounted orchids and vandas.

Watering. You may have had difficulty keeping your plants hydrated during the low humidity spring months and switched over to nighttime watering. Once the summer humidity arrives in late May to June, your pots dry much more slowly, like that wet beach towel draped over the railing. Resume normal watering in the morning, and consider adding a day or two between waterings. Letting plants, particularly cattleyas go completely dry before watering can help prevent black rot from infecting your orchids during the summer months. Black rot is caused by a water mold that spreads by “swimming” zoospores. Keeping the plants drier

can help interrupt its life cycle. You should water less frequently in the humid summer months than you do during the low humidity spring and fall.

Repotting. The repotting season began in the spring, when many resting orchids began their annual growth spurt. Orchids repotted earlier in the year should be showing abundant root development and new growth.. Most orchids need to be repotted every 2 to 4 years as they outgrow their pots or the potting mix starts to degrade. Most can be safely potted in the spring as new growth begins or after they finish blooming. Finish up the bulk of your repotting chores by the end of June.

July and August are dangerous months for repotting. The water molds thrive in the heat and humidity and easily gain entrance into your plants through the wounds incurred during the repotting process. Use extreme caution if you have an emergency repotting situation during this danger period. After you clean your plants, let them dry before cutting them. Keeping everything dry will help prevent the spread of disease. Dust cut plant sections with a fungicide like Banrot. Do not water after repotting, let the wounds seal over for several days to a week before watering. Place the plant under a bench or in a shady spot while it is recovering from transplant shock.



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Orchids will suffer the least transplant shock if they are repotted right before they throw off new roots.

Catasetums. Catasetums should be repotted just as the new growth appears in late winter through spring. It is too late now to repot catasetums without doing too much damage. If there are some you missed, don't disturb the roots. Simply slip pot them by putting them in the next size up pot with fresh medium wrapped around the outside.

Cattleyas. Some of the bifoliate cattleyas are notorious for resenting the repotting process, and they will sulk if repotted when they are not forming new roots. Some varieties don't send out new roots until after the new growth matures and it is about to bloom. There are a few

different approaches:

- (1) sacrifice the bloom and repot the plant when new roots appear;
- (2) jet out any loose media in the existing pot and set it into a larger pot with a minimum of root disturbance; or
- (3) stabilize the plant in a new pot with a minimum of media leaving the roots exposed to the air, water normally and add a handful of mix weekly as new roots start to branch and form acclimating into the mix.

Phalaenopsis. Phalaenopsis need to be repotted when the top growth is too far out of the pot or the potting mix is degraded, usually every second or third year. Your spring blooming phalaenopsis should be repotted between Memorial Day and Independence Day. Cut off the remaining blooms and resituate the plants in fresh mix so they can reestablish themselves and build up sufficient reserves for next year's blooms. The summer blooming phals either have or soon will start blooming. They should be repotted in late winter, by February so they can be ready for their next blooming. It is too late to repot them now without interrupting their bloom cycle. Either slip pot them or wait until next February to repot them.

Orchid Pests. Watch for the insects that seem to multiply like rabbits in the summer. In the absence of a persistent problem, preventative spraying is not recommended. Be observant, and act quickly if you see a problem. Watch for scale on cattleyas, mealybugs on phals and paphs, mites on catasetums and thin leaved orchids and thrips causing dried flower buds or deformed flowers. There are many household cures and horticultural chemicals available for use. A very handy product to keep on hand is an affordable granular insecticide containing 0.5% imidacloprid that is sold as Grubs Away, among other trade names. It can be used to control scale on your palms, trees and shrubs as well as orchids. You simply spread some granules on the surface of the potting media and water it in, easy peasy.

Orchid Diseases. Certain fungal and bacterial diseases love the hot and humid months of summer. Strive to keep air moving around your plants to help minimize leaf wetness and



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prevent disease spores from settling on leaves. Keep a fresh bottle of hydrogen peroxide handy to treat bacterial problems, which can progress rapidly without intervention. Fungal problems are much slower to develop, so protective fungal sprays may be desirable when disease pressure is high, such as during the tropical storm season. If you notice a bacterial or fungal problem, consider moving the plant to a different location where it will be better capable of resisting disease.



June is Laelia purpurata season!

June is purpurata season, and the nodosa hybrids and bifoliate cattleya blooms are soon to follow, along with the summer blooming phals and catasetums, yahoo! Enjoy quality time while watering your orchids. Whatever else you do this month, take the time to smell your orchids!