



BCOS Meeting and Program

November 20, 2014

Churchville Nature Center

501 Churchville Lane

Churchville, PA 18966

Show Table Setup-7:00 p.m.

Meeting 7:30 p.m.

The Orchids of Madagascar and Their Culture

Tom Purviance's orchid growing began as a hobby with two hundred orchids in the home. His passion continued and resulted in construction of an 8x16 foot greenhouse in 1986 which was quickly filled. A free standing 28X32 foot greenhouse was next and within a few years Parkside Orchid Nursery was founded. While Parkside has new ownership, Tom and his partner are still involved its day to day operation. Tom will be speaking about Madagascar, this unique island and its orchid plants. Madagascar is an island country in the Indian Ocean, off the coast of Southeast Africa. Following the prehistoric breakup of the super-continent Gondwana, Madagascar split from India around 88 million years ago, allowing native plants and animals to evolve in relative isolation. Consequently, Madagascar is a biodiversity hot spot and as much as 90% of its wildlife is found nowhere else on Earth. Madagascar has one of the richest and most distinctive orchid floras anywhere in the world. There are almost 1000 species in 57 genera. Some are large, spectacular and well known to orchid growers. But most are cryptic and grow in shady places under trees and shrubs or on the trunks and branches of trees in the forest. Tom will highlight some of the most popular plants and the basics of successful cultivation. Tom will also discuss a few of the less well known and unusual species from these islands. He will be bringing plants for sale, most likely from Parkside and maybe a few from his and his partner's personal collection.

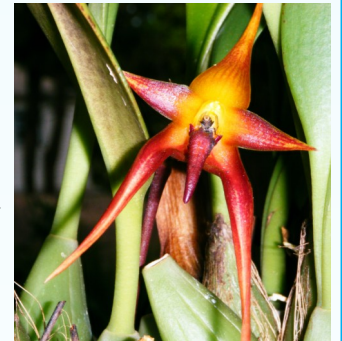


Bulbophyllum nymphopolitanum

By Carl Gustafson

Bulbophyllum is a large, very widely distributed, very variable genus of orchid. Although primarily old-world (Africa and Asia) in distribution, there are also some from South America. The plants range in size from miniatures like *B. odontopetalum* to monsters like *B. fletcherianum*, which can have leaves up to six feet long. Growing conditions range from cool to hot. Some are fragrant, although not pleasantly so. Some flowers need a magnifying glass to be seen, and some are enormous - *B. echinolabium* can have flowers 16" tall!

The subject of this article is *B. nymphopolitanum*. This is a moderately-sized species, with bulbs the size of a golf ball, and leaves up to twelve inches long. The flowers are four inches or so tall, and powerfully fragrant. Flies find them overwhelmingly attractive, but a plant with a few freshly -opened flowers can clear a room. It could be called the "Who-Stepped-In-It" orchid. It likes intermediate to warm conditions, and plenty of fertilizer and water.



I obtained mine some years ago from Carter and Holmes Orchids in South Carolina. It was a seedling at the time; I put it outside the first summer I had it, and almost lost it - a squirrel decided to eat the leaves. The plant eventually recovered, and did it ever recover. Eventually, it was packed, and I mean packed, into an 8" pot, and when I broke it up, I wound up with a half-dozen pieces. Some went to the Society auction, and I've kept a few. Here's how I grow it:

First, the plant is an intermediate to warm grower. I keep it in the warmer section of my fluorescent light garden over the winter, and outside during the summer (and blooming) season. My growing spaces are enclosed, so they are warmer than the surrounding living spaces. This species doesn't seem to need a cool season, or a dry season, or anything special in that regard. I move this plant outside in mid-May or so, once the nights are generally not too cool, and bring it in again in mid-September.

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Bulbophyllum nymphopolitanum

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This plant likes moderately bright light. In the winter, I grow under artificial lights and, in the summer, I hang it in a tree where it gets some morning and late afternoon sun, broken by leaves. Generally, you always want to give your plants as much light as they can take, and it's often more than you expect. Keep in mind that light intensities here in the Philadelphia area are nowhere near what they are in the tropics, or even the Southern US. The trick is to move the plant into brighter and brighter areas until it becomes just a little unhappy, then back off some. Unhappiness is not just sunburned leaves - it could also be slower growth, or diminished flower production.

Finally, Bulbophyllums have a reputation for being wet growers. However, that comes with a caveat: they don't like wet feet. By that I mean that along with plenty of moisture at the roots, they also need plenty of air. You need to take this into consideration when watering your plants, and this will also direct your choices for pots and potting mixes. The goal is to keep an even supply of moisture for the plant. This one has good sized bulbs, so it can take short drier spells, but I wouldn't grow it like a Cattleya, with a regular drench-and-dry cycle; it would probably be happier grown more like a Phalaenopsis. These species also have thin and fairly short roots, that suggests moister conditions, and a finer potting mix. However, the need for air suggests a coarser potting mix. I'm growing mine in a mix consisting of coconut husk chips (CHC), sponge-roc, and charcoal (in a 2-1-1 ratio). This works for me, as I tend to water with a heavy hand -

if you are more conservative in your dousing habits, you may want to add some sphagnum. I've got one plant in 6" basket using coarse CHC. To keep the medium from escaping, I lined the basket with coconut fiber - this is a mat-like material made from the outer husk of the coconut. I got some years ago, I don't remember where, but you can get it and CHC from Roberts Flower Supply (www.orchidmix.com). The division in the basket is now ready to grow over the edge, so I'll just put it, old basket and all, into a new, larger basket. I may stuff more coconut fiber into the slats of the old basket, just to encourage the roots some. The big advantage to using a basket is that it drains well, so you can water (and fertilize) almost every day - that really gets it growing well.

Humidity is also important - you want a humid growing area. With my enclosed spaces, it's not a real problem in the winter, but growing bulbophyllums on the windowsill might be. In summer, it's pot luck. Humidity here is never what it would be in the tropics (and thank goodness for that!), but it's enough.

Last year, I installed a high-pressure (150 psi, so not that high) misting pump for some of my cabinets. Between that and regular sprays with a weak fertilizer solution, the

bulbs and growths almost doubled in size. And that brings me to fertilization. They like it, unlike some of my miniatures, which are more dainty in their feeding habits. I'm using reverse-osmosis water, and provide a weak fertilizer solution in every watering. In the summer, that was daily. Inside, it's a lot less, and I use a somewhat weaker solution.

That brings us to flowering. Mine usually flowers in the summer. Good thing, says my family. This species is fly pollinated, and you know what flies like best. The flowers, once open, always have flies frolicking on them. This year, I'm not sure why, but possibly because the summer was cooler, the flowers didn't start opening until after I had brought it inside for the season. The flowers are four inches high, and a rich mahogany-red color, they're kind of attractive. Each inflorescence can produce five or more flowers, one at a time. Flowers last for only a few days, but then you get another, and so on. Each bulb can make multiple inflorescences, and bulbs will bloom at least a second year, too; so you can have a lot of flowers. My flowering plant has 10 bulbs, and 8 flower stems right now. As I alluded to earlier, the flowers stink; I mean they smell real bad, sort of like rotting flesh or dung. When I open the cabinet in which this one grows, it smells like a not-too-clean kennel or stable. One year, I brought a flowering plant in to work. Many of my male coworkers made a point of sniffing it, just to see. The reactions were priceless. One kept coming back, thinking no flower could smell that bad, he just didn't remember it properly. The women, however, didn't feel they had anything to prove, and had no interest in coming near it. I have noticed that the smell changes over the course of a day, and is much less pronounced in the evenings. This, of course, makes sense - why waste energy trying to attract a pollinator that's not available?

Anyway, this probably isn't a plant for the casual grower, but for the real enthusiast (or perhaps someone with a taste outside the mainstream). I quite like it, which should tell you something. (And I have a division available in case someone wants to give it a try.)

References:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bulbophyllum>
<http://www.orchidspecies.com/bulbodontopetalum.htm>
<http://www.orchidspecies.com/bulbfletcherianum.htm>
<http://www.orchidspecies.com/bulbnymphopolitanum.htm>

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SOCIETY NOTES

Hospitality Table

The Society is in need of 2 or 3 people to assume coordination of refreshments for the Hospitality Table.. Please contact President Allen Applebaum at sirapples36@gmail.com to volunteer.

Orchid Bark

The Society has **orchid bark** for sale. Contact **Gary Dunbar** to order at dragonkin@comcast.net. Med and med/fine are available for \$13 for 1 cubic foot, and \$25 for 2 CF. Gallon bags are \$3.

Plant Clinic:

You are encouraged to bring in that sick plant for evaluation by the expert orchid growers in our Society. Please, bring the needy plant in a closed plastic bag and we will try to advise you on bringing it back to good health.

Show Table Judging Rules:

The information for submitting plants for the show table is now located on our website, www.buckscountyorchidsociety.org/showtables/STRules.htm

Orchid Pickup:

If you may be available to pick up orchids for the raffle as needed, please send your name and email address to Alan Block at alan_block@hotmail.com

Officers, Other Societies and Vendors:

The list of officers, other societies and vendors is now exclusively available on the BCOS website. www.buckscountyorchidsociety.org/About.htm for officers and www.buckscountyorchidsociety.org/Links.htm for other societies and vendors.

Library:

Contact President Allen Applebaum at sirapples36@gmail.com to borrow any item in the BCOS Library (See the society's website for a list of books, equipment and videos.) www.buckscountyorchidsociety.org/

Orchid Tip of the Month

While addressing the Affiliated Society Reps at the Members' Meeting, I was asked about my **homeopathic approach to controlling pests and diseases**. I have three young grandchildren and have made the decision not to spray chemicals on my plants, due to their propensity to put everything in their mouths!

Here are the 5 key things that I use, that work for me.

For scale and mealy-bug- I use a mix of 409/alcohol/water in equal parts. I spray them daily until they are gone (be careful using this mix around Paphiopedilums, as it will cause the buds to blast and the flowers to collapse)

For crawling insects (like roaches and palmetto bugs here in Florida)- I use a squirt of Dr. Bonner's Organic Peppermint soap in a squirt bottle full of water (I also use this inside my house for any offenders that happen to sneak in)

For any wet or soft spots on leaves- I use brown Listerine (you can use any of the store brands, just make sure that it is brown/amber colored)

For black rot or crown rot- I use hydrogen peroxide (let it fizz and then pour it off)

Lastly, for all cuts or exposed tissue- I use ground cinnamon to keep them from getting infected.

Laura Newton, American Orchid Society

UPCOMING EVENTS

AOL is hosting a **webinar** on **November 20th at 8:30p.m. EST** with **Nile Dusdieker, M.D.** presenting "**Spiders, Gnats and Greenhoods**". Nile is an accredited judge with the Chicago Judging center and lives in Iowa. This webinar is **open to everyone**, so you do not have to be a member to attend. Please sign up on AOL's website www.aos.org (Webinars tab: <http://www.aos.org/Default.aspx?id=509>) Also check out the recorded versions of past webinars. It's great being able to listen to the talks in the comfort of your own home!

Dec. 18, 2014 - BCOS - Speaker, Andy Braun: "A Few of My Favorite Things" (Orchids I grow and why.) Please note that our usual holiday meeting, **Cookies and Culture**, has been moved to the January meeting.

Jan. 15, 2015 BCOS - Cookies and Culture: Everything you wanted to know about orchids- ask the in-house experts. Oh yes, lots of cookies. Churchville Nature Center, 7:30 pm



EDITOR'S NOTE – Contributions to the newsletter will be greatly appreciated.

Please submit relevant news, photos, awards or information relating to the Society, its members, the care and culture of orchids to the Editor at kaplrs@comcast.net. I am also looking for your favorite tip on growing orchids, for the feature, **Orchid Tip of the Month**. Please submit your copy by the first day of the month.