

## Alan's Bench

Alan Gettelman

Climatologists tell us the weeks between the middle of January to early February are the coldest part of the year for the northern hemisphere. John Keat's poem of St. Agnes Eve, January 21, could literally send me shivering with the bleakness of the first lines: "St. Agnes' Eve- Ah, bitter chill it was! The owl, for all its feathers, was acold." For us in normally balmy Florida, that cold prediction came true with the triple nights of freezing weather in January.

Thomas Jefferson once wrote of a fear "like a fire bell in the night." When I lived in the Midwest, one of my jobs was as a firefighter/EMT where the alarm for a fire or medical emergency was most painful to respond to during the middle of the night in cold of winter. To get up from a warm bed and immediately get into a cold fire truck was not a great pleasure. But we did so despite the sometimes below zero weather.

I was reminded of working in the cold north during our January 20-22 blast of winter where night-time temperatures for much of the area went down to below freezing. I hope all your plants survived the multi-night freeze. My preparations started by taking all except the *Cymbidiums* and cold hardy plants such as *Encyclia tampensis* (Lindley) Small from my open lath house and crowd them into any available aisle space of the greenhouse. My 220v electric heater was checked and it worked putting out a blast of hot air. When the cold temperatures started I turned on the electric heater and it worked for all of a minute- the fan worked well but the heating element failed. This was late at night and I had no other recourse to provide heat. So during the night I would check the greenhouse every two hours. This so reminded me of going from the warm to the outside cold as when I was a firefighter/EMT. Fortunately the greenhouse without heat stayed above 41 degrees at 5 am while it was 32 degrees outside. As soon as I could I bought some electric space heaters when the hardware store opened at 6 am. Upon my return one of the greenhouse sprinklers was running, as I forgot earlier in the year to reprogram one zone after the time change. The thermometer under the sprinkler read 48 degrees because of the warmth of the water. During the remaining nights of the freeze the space heaters kept the orchids, if not toasty warm, at least above a danger zone.

We have many ways to grow and to protect orchids from cold, from taking the plants inside from the patio or pool area, or covering the plants, to greenhouses. One of our members took 200 plants from outside to inside her house, and I'm sure that task (if not that number of plants) was repeated by many others. But for those with numerous plants in a greenhouse, I have learned some lessons. Have a redundant system for heat in case the first system fails. If the temperature got colder, I probably would have been reduced to removing the energy efficient light bulbs in the greenhouse and replacing them with incandescent bulbs and leaving the lights on all night as the latter bulbs are 95% heat and only 5% light producers. Some indicate the large halogen lights on stands produce a lot of heat. Whatever system you have- ensure nothing flammable is anywhere near the heat source to protect from fire. If you are burning anything that may produce the odorless, colorless killer carbon monoxide (CO) such as a kerosene heater, ensure the unit is safe for indoor non-vented (with people around) use. Use a CO monitor- ensure your safety first.

The other lesson learned is most of our freezes are for a few hours in the late night and early morning. Weather folks tell us the coldest part of the day is up to one half hour after sunrise- as the sun has yet to warm anything before then. As a last effort I will turn on my overhead watering system in the greenhouse. This is different from the freeze protection the citrus industry uses where they spray water on groves and they keep the water running hoping to form ice on the plants. As long as the water keeps running, the latent heat given up as the water turns to ice will keep the plant and fruit at 32 degrees for several hours. That would be too cold for orchids, but my plan would be to keep the plants and surrounding area warmed by the temperature of the 60 degree water.

## Board Members 2008

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*Rhizome*: n, a creeping stem lying, usually horizontally, at or under the surface of the soil...

# The Rhizome

*Con'td from page 1:*

This is not a method I would recommend to others. However, it was interesting to observe as the water kept warm one part of the greenhouse, fog formed in the greenhouse in the area not getting wet from the sprinkler.

Several of you are experimenting with cold hardy orchids outside so it will be interesting to see how they fared. I was able to take some blooming *Cattleya*'s into my house from the lath house that is not heated. I know cold puts stress upon plants but it was nice to see plants that laughed at nighttime temperatures in the low 40's still bloomed well.

## Upcoming Events 2009:

February 11: PCOS Regular meeting. Program will be: Planning and preparation for the May PCOS Show.

Feb. 14-15: Boca Raton Orchid Society Show, Safe Schools Training Institute, 1790 NW Spanish River Blvd., Boca Raton, FL 33431. Contact: Jackie Wood, 1360 SW 18th St. Boca Raton, FL 33486; (561) 368-0278; bocaorchidlady@aol.com

Feb. 25: PCOS Back to Basics Meeting: Exhibiting flowers and plants at the PCOS show- Niche, single plants, displays! Plus, how to show your plants.

Feb 27-March 1: 63rd Miami International Orchid Show, Miami Mart Hotel & Exhibition Center, 711 NW 72 Ave., Miami, FL. Contact: Dr. Paul Wetter, 7330 SW 62 Place, Miami, FL 33143; (305) 232-2517; paul@sls.org. This is the same location as the World Orchid Congress last year.

March 11: PCOS Regular meeting. Program will be: PLANT SALE! 2009 paid members of the PCOS will have the opportunity to purchase popular hybrid crosses and some species at super bargain prices. This is one of the most popular events of the club year. This is a member's only sale. Paid members will have an opportunity to buy great fresh plants at very heavily discounted prices.

March 13-15: Fairchild Botanic Garden International Orchid Show, Fairchild Botanical Gardens, Miami, FL. Contact: Jill Sidran, 7971 SW 122 St., Miami, FL 33156; (305) 238-8762; cbsidran@bellsouth.net.

March 21-22: Jacksonville Orchid Society Show. Contact: K.Harry McElroy, 12010 Hood Landing Rd., Jacksonville, FL 32258; (904) 262-2163; cymbidiuman@msn.com

March 20-22: Port St. Lucie Orchid Society Show, Port St. Lucie Community Center, 2195 SE Airoso Blvd., Port St. Lucie, FL. Contact: Hellen Wagner 6936 NW Daffodill Lane Port St. Lucie, Fl. 34983 hellenwagner@aol.com

May 1-3: Platinum Coast Orchid Society ORCHID SHOW and SALE! Cocoa Expo Sports Center Arena. Friday-Sat 9am-5pm, Sunday 9am-4pm. Contact Alan Gittleman, Lychee@cfl.rr.com or phone 536-2896.

## February 2009

**Wed. Feb. 11, 2009:** Inauguration of Board for 2009, and regular meeting at 7:00. Board Members meet at 6:15pm. Cocoa Expo Center, 500 Friday Road, Cocoa, Florida.

**Wed. Feb. 25, 2009:** Cocoa Beach Back to Basics Meeting, 6:30pm, Cocoa Beach Library, 550 North Brevard Avenue, Cocoa Beach, Florida.

**Library:** Please welcome Sally and Peter Pancoast who have volunteered to be club librarians. Phone and email are: 459-1996 [sallypancoast@cfl.rr.com](mailto:sallypancoast@cfl.rr.com). We will be doing an inventory of the library to provide an on-line listing of resources. After they review our holdings, our librarians will make recommendations for new library acquisitions. Having access to a substantial amount of orchid printed material for you to check out is another benefit of

## To All PCOS Members

By: *Ginny Landreth*

As most of you know by now, the Orchid Show will be May 1, 2, 3, 2009. This is the week-end before Mother's Day. The theme of the Show is "An Orchid Affair," and will be held again at the air conditioned Cocoa Expo on Hwy. 520.

I am the new Sponsorship Chairman and have some very big shoes to fill. Charlie Bishop, who has done this job superbly for many years has decided to be the Show Photographer and needs to cut back in the Sponsorship area (he has done both jobs in the Past!) The Sponsorship Committee is responsible for obtaining sponsorships (money) for the Show trophies, and for collecting door prizes for the Show. All types of door prizes are accepted, such as merchandise and services, gift certificates, etc.

### WE NEED YOUR HELP!

I will have index cards with names of previous proven donors at our next meeting. Please join our committee of Glenda Beard, Ruth Jackson, and me, Ginny Landreth, to contact these donors to pick up door prizes and sponsorships.

Or you could help by asking a merchant that you deal with to contribute a sponsorship or door prize. Or you could give one yourself. That gift for Christmas that you don't want and is still in the box might make a fine door prize.

Some kinds of merchants that have donated in the past are: restaurants, hair dressers, insurance agents, realtors, jewelry stores, health and fitness centers, plant and tree nurseries, variety stores, etc. You get the idea.

There are some real benefits to donating to our Show.

The merchant gets free advertising. Their name goes on our big Sponsorship Board at the Show and we announce his name when we award prizes.

Their gift is tax deductible

They are helping the Candlelighters of Brevard, a charity that helps the families of children with cancer. PCOS has donated \$28,000 to the Candlelighters in the last nine years.

Sponsorship forms and letters will be available starting at the next meeting on February 11<sup>th</sup>. If you can't make that meeting, I would be happy to e-mail the forms to you and you can print them out. My phone # is 631-6316 and my e-mail is [rwlvll@cfl.rr.com](mailto:rwlvll@cfl.rr.com).

Thanks in advance,

Ginny Landreth



# Platinum Coast Orchid Society

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