



Spokane Orchid Society Newsletter

February 2026

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President's Thoughts

The time is at hand. Our show is 5 weeks away. Linda and the show committee have been working very hard to make this the best we've seen; now it's our turn. Plants for show and plants for sale must be clean and ready for presentation. Stake now, do weekly checks for bugs, find appropriate containers, and get pictures of the ones for sale.

Pre-registration packages will go out this next week. If you need help with filling out the forms, call, text, or email me. Pre-register as early as possible; if the orchid does not make it to the show, it is easier to delete it than to add it at the last minute. AND, as always. **IF IT IS IN BLOOM, I WANT IT IN THE SHOW!**

Ben Johnson, of the NWOS, is our featured speaker this month. He will be presenting information on his new business of preparing orchid flasks for sale around the world. This will be a very interesting program. Don't miss it.

Edwin Weber is our newly elected co-secretary. He has jumped in with both feet and will do an excellent job. Thanks Edwin!!

Get those plants ready and see you Wednesday.

Jim

SOS Calendar of Events/Feb. & March 2026

FEBRUARY						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

Date	Event	Time/Location
Feb. 11, 2026 Refreshments: Jennifer H. & Jaqueline S.	* Orchid Society General Meeting *Speaker Ben Johnson of Standard Orchid	5:30 PM: Social Time 6:00 PM: Meeting starts Manito Park Meeting Room
March 13, 2026	Set-up for SOS Orchid Show at Spokane Community College & orchid entries	Need Volunteers from mid- morning until early evening at the SCC Lair
March 14 -15, 2026	Spokane Orchid Society Orchid Show!	Spokane Community College Student Lair Bldg.

*Our speaker for the February 11th SOS General Meeting will be Ben Johnson of Standard Orchid, a Seattle-based orchid propagation business. Standard Orchid has a commercial laboratory specializing in seed propagation and tissue culture of orchids that are then sold as seedlings internationally.

AOS CORNER with Harvey

The show season for orchids has begun. Shows in the Southeast are in full swing, although the snow and cold weather are undoubtedly presenting some challenges. If you are interested in a show closer to home, the San Francisco “Pacific Orchid Exposition” is being held in Golden Gate Park February 26 - March 1, 2026. It has a massive number of vendors. Orchid events that don’t require travel include the AOS Greenhouse Chat webinar on Tuesday, February 10, at 5:30 PM PST with Ron McHatton. These chats are open to everyone. An interesting webinar titled “Happy Roots, Happy Orchids” by Harvey Brenneise will be presented on Thursday, February 12, at 5:30 PM PST. An AOS membership is required to see this webinar.

For those of you who plan to sell plants at the SOS March Show Member Table, and I encourage all of you to do so, it is time to begin preparing your orchids for presentation to potential customers. You know how much time and effort it has taken to grow your plants to their current size and quality. You know their intrinsic value. But, this is only one half of the equation. The other half is the potential customer’s perspective. They don’t and won’t know the value of your plants unless you tell them. You can start telling them by presenting a plant that has been groomed to win the sale. Along with that, have color pictures of the flowers, background and culture information, maybe include the tags that show how many times the plant has been repotted. Let them know how easy the plant is to grow, or how old, or how rare, or how pretty and fragrant it is, etc., etc.. The bottom line is, put yourself in the position of the potential customer and think about what you would want to know about the plant that would create value to you. That way you can create value in the customer’s mind that is greater than your price tag, and they will purchase your plant. Also, if you have a decently grown plant that is reasonably presentable, you probably should be thinking of a price that is \$30 to \$75 or more. There is no need to sell your efforts cheap if you present the plant properly. Also, think in terms of the overall benefit to you when you sell your plants. For example, my goal at the Show is to sell enough of my plants at a decent price so I will have enough money to pay for my orchid habit for the rest of the year.

Tidbit

A common repotting mistake is selecting the wrong pot size for the plant. For monopodial orchids like Phalaenopsis, use a pot just large enough to hold the roots. For sympodial orchids like Cattleyas, use a pot that is just big enough to hold two new growths.

Happy Winter. Grow Well.

Harvey

Orchid Tips and Information for New Growers

It's Nearly Spring - Time to Re-pot Your Orchids

** Information about Potting Media from the American Orchid Society*

I just placed a large order for potting media, as I prepare for springtime re-potting season. I knew exactly what I needed, but if you are new to orchid growing, selecting the right media can be confusing, so here is some information from the American Orchid Society that might help you make the best choice of media when re-potting your orchids.



What exactly is potting material, anyway? At its very basic, a potting material is simply a way to get an orchid plant to stand up- right in a pot so that we can grow it in the house (or greenhouse, if we're lucky). That's all we're really talking about here — a support system.

So why are there so many different potting materials? All these seemingly endless media are simply refinements on a couple of themes that are also important. The two things a potting material must do after giving an orchid support in a pot is to 1) allow plenty of air to the roots, and 2) allow water to run past the roots freely rather than letting it stand around them so they suffocate and rot, while still retaining enough moisture for the plant's needs. Remember, no orchid of its own volition would grow in a pot, for a pot is a much stuffier environment than on the side of a tree where orchid roots are exposed to the air. The key to understanding what orchids want is to realize they generally grow on things in nature, rather than in them.

Orchid Potting Media Continued

Organic materials available for orchid potting include barks, tree fern, sphagnum moss, peat moss, osmunda, cork, coconut fiber and charcoal. Inorganic, naturally occurring materials include gravel rock and volcanic lava rock. Inorganic, man-made (or man-manipulated) materials include Rockwool, expanded shale or clay, perlite and vermiculite.

Since the majority of commercial growers in this country use bark as their main potting material, chances are that any plant you buy will arrive in a pot filled with bark chips. Why is it so popular? Fir bark is relatively inexpensive, drains inordinately well, is easy to use and fairly easy to obtain, since it comes from firs found in many places in this country. An organic material, bark probably simulates the surface area of a tree more closely than anything else you might put into a pot. And until something better comes along to replace fir bark, it will remain the most popular orchid potting material.

How can you tell if a potting material is working for your orchid plant? Let the plant's roots be your guide. Once the orchid has been in the mix for a few months, check the roots, either by turning the pot on its side and tapping the plant out a bit or by brushing away the top two inches for closer inspection. At repotting time as well, pay close attention to the state of those roots. If they are healthy, white and/or green, the mix is excellent. If the roots are soggy, mushy or even black, the mix is not draining well enough nor is aerated enough for your watering technique and environmental conditions (you may also have waited too long between repottings). Remedy errors by fine-tuning the mix — adding a material or a mix of materials that will help with more drainage and less moisture retention (charcoal, expanded shale, coarser bark, Styrofoam, etc.), or that will keep more water in the mix (such as by using sphagnum moss). Get into the habit of checking the roots periodically; they are your most sensitive barometer to the changing environment within the pot. Remember that the potting mix is in a constant state of change as it ages and decays and breaks into finer pieces, and/or is subjected to fertilizer salts and impurities from watering.

A Rundown of the Commercially Available Potting Materials:

FIR BARK: Organic. Native to this country. Most widely used potting material. Holds 80% its weight in water. Drains freely. Relatively inexpensive, easy to use. Three sizes. Soak overnight before use. Water once a week on average. 30-10-10

TREE FERN: Organic. Central America. Second most widely used potting material. Drains exceedingly freely; holds little water. Water twice a week on average. Expensive. Very decay-resistant; deterioration is very slow. Use balanced fertilizer.

SPHAGNUM MOSS: Organic. Native to this country and others in bogs. Increasingly popular medium. Holds over 1,000 times its weight in water, extremely sponge-like. Water once to twice a week on average. Available live (green) or dried; sometimes rejuvenates from dried state. Soak before using; often difficult to re-wet once it dries; keep evenly moist. Many species of mosses exist; longer-fibered species such as New Zealand moss is more desirable for its body and resilience. Expensive. Excellent additive to mix to help retain moisture without standing water, but do not use in very wet environments. Do not pack tightly in pot, or aeration is markedly reduced.

OSMUNDA: Organic. Native to this country (roots of ferns). Two types, brown and black. Brown is the less decayed and more suitable for epiphytes; black for terrestrial types. Used to be medium of choice 50 years ago, but high cost and difficulty in handling it (stiff and unyielding) basically phased osmunda out on any large-scale basis. Chemical makeup similar to orchids; releases nutrients to plants, requiring less fertilizing. Repotting only necessary after 3 years.

CHARCOAL: Organic. Usually produced from wood when heated in a vacuum, producing pure carbon (and perhaps some impurities such as potash and phosphoric acid). Second-most popular additive to a mix. Does not absorb water, but gathers and holds it on its surface. Also very absorbent of impurities and fertilizer residues and used to "sweeten" mixes by absorbing unwanted materials; the down side is it can retain a lot of salts as well, which are not good for roots. Leaching with plain water helps flush charcoal immensely. Does not break down.

PERLITE: Inorganic. A form of natural volcanic ash mineral that has been manipulated by heating and popping like popcorn (expanded) at high temperatures. Lightweight, holds some water, but not much. Inert. Inexpensive, making it the most popular additive to a mix, creating aeration. Chunkier sizes best for orchids (rather than fine horticultural grade), helping to keep mix open as organic parts decay.

LAVA ROCK (Pumice, volcanic rock): Inorganic. Naturally occurring igneous rock formed by volcanic flow, mostly silica and metallic oxides. Porous, holds some water, so can water only once a week. Does not break down. Can absorb salts.

EXPANDED SHALE: Inorganic. Manipulated shale clay heated and expanded so that it becomes porous and holds water. Water one to two times a week. Does not break down.

VERMICULITE: Inorganic. A form of mica mineral, manipulated by heating and expanding at 1,400 degrees F, which makes it pop like popcorn. Thus becomes very light and porous, holding lots of water, much more than perlite, for which it is often confused. Also holds nutrients from fertilizers, releasing them gradually.

Happy Re-potting!

Orchid Show & Tell From Society Members



Pleurothallis sp.
Grower: Ken Nguyen-Scott



Grower: Harvey Singleton



Cattleya aurantiaca
Grower: Suzanne Sawyer

Everybody enjoys seeing orchids in bloom that have been grown by our Society members. If you want your blooming beauties in the Newsletter, please send them to me by or on the 5th of each month. The SOS Newsletter is always emailed out the weekend before our monthly meeting.

Orchid Show News from Linda Drummond

Five weeks to go until our orchid community comes together for this incredible event! The beauty of so many amazing plants in one place is only outweighed by the camaraderie and friendship shared over the weekend.

To that end, volunteer signups are ready. If you would like to sign up early to ensure you get the spot you want, please email me at Spokane.orchid.show@gmail.com or if you prefer, sign up at the meeting on the 11th. We will have the usual categories; welcome table, plant hotel, set up, take down and show area set up. There will be a new opportunity this year for floaters. They will provide breaks for welcome table and plant hotel and assist in vendor lunch delivery.

Sign up sheets for ribbon judging will be available at the general meeting. We will start at 8am on Saturday morning and again will have our AOS judges on each team. This is a great learning opportunity and not to be missed. The AOS judges are always impressed by how active our members are in the judging.

More info at the meeting Wednesday or if you have questions or suggestions send me an email

Linda

More Orchid Show News from Ken about pre-ordering plants

Tropical Exotique (Thailand) will be at the SOS show in March. You can pre-order from their website (tropicalexotique.com). Orders must be placed two weeks prior to the event, so February 28, and 50% of the order amount will be billed once they receive the order with the balance due when you pick up your order at the show. No shipping charges when pre-ordering. There's an order form you can download from their website on the "ordering info" tab.

Ecuagenera will also be at the show in March and you can place orders for orchids and other plants on their website (Ecuagenera.com). Orders for orchids must be placed by Feb 24 and orders for other plants must be placed by Feb 27. Orders are placed through their website and at checkout you select delivery to our show.

Orchid of the Month

Trichopilia suavis



Scott brought one of these orchids to the January SOS meeting and I really liked the flowers and their amazing fragrance, so *Trichopilia suavis* is Orchid of the Month.

This species is endemic to Costa Rica, Panama and Columbia. It is a medium sized epiphyte that typically flowers in late winter to early spring. The flowers are somewhat pendant in nature and hang down below the plant. The flowers are large, relative to the size of the orchid. Although there is some variation in flower color, most flowers are usually white or creamy with red or pink centers. The petals are ruffled along the edges. The throat of the flower is speckled in yellow, red or orange.



The fragrance of *Trichopilia suavis* is sweet and spicy with hints of roses. Very pleasant. The species name *suavis* has Latin roots which refer to plants with highly fragrant and sweet smelling flowers.

These orchids are reputed to be fairly easy to grow and will thrive under the same culture conditions as most *Oncidiums*. Here is some culture information if you want to add this beauty to your collection:

This species is sensitive to root disturbance and should only be re-potted when really needed. It can be mounted if you have high humidity levels. If grown in pots, use a well-draining bark/media. Keep bark somewhat moist for best results, but never let bark get soggy - it should dry out a little between waterings. This orchid will thrive best with intermediate temperatures. Light should be dappled or well-filtered and direct sunlight should be avoided, as the leaves may burn. Use a well-balance fertilizer weekly during active growth. This species is susceptible to leaf spotting caused by a fungus that is caused by poor air circulation, so provide adequate air movement.

Orchid Trivia & Fun Facts

Lepotes bicolor can be used as a spice

Most people know that the seed pods of *Vanilla planifolia* and a few other *Vanilla* species of orchids are used to create the spice we call vanilla. But there is another orchid that contains vanillin, which is the unique organic compound that gives vanilla flowers their sweet scent and wonderful flavor. ***Lepotes bicolor*** also has a fragrance similar to Vanilla orchids and the seed pods of *Lepotes bicolor* also contain vanillin and can be used to create a spice very similar to vanilla. The fragrance of *Lepotes bicolor* is said to be sweet and similar to vanilla, but with hints of ginger and citrus. The seed pods take nearly a year to mature and must be harvested before they are dried and begin to split. The seed pods then must be “cured” to bring out the flavor and to preserve the pods so they can be used as a spice.

Lepotes bicolor is endemic to Brazil and Paraguay where it grows as a small to miniature sized epiphyte on trees. It is considered easy to grow in cultivation.



Spokane Orchid Society's 38th

Orchid Show and Plant Sale



Spokane Community College

Student Lair

1810 N. Greene Street

International & PNW Vendors!

Orchid Culture Classes

Orchid Repotting

March 14th - 10am-5pm

March 15th - 10am-3pm

\$5.00 /person

Free Admission for Veterans (with ID) and Students (with ID)

Orchids on Display and for Sale,
Exotic Plants, Succulents, Cacti, Pottery,
Tillandsias, Anthuriums, Aroids, Ceramics,
Orchid & Houseplant Supplies

