



Newsletter of the Spokane Orchid Society

May 2026

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- * Vice President: Erin Nelson
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- * Librarian: Scott Rettenmund
- * Refreshments: Jeanne McKinnie

Email:

Email: sosorchidsociety@gmail.com

Newsletter:

spokane.orchid.newsletter@gmail.com

Website: www.spokaneorchids.org

President's Thoughts

I believe that our orchids are having a tough time determining when to bloom! With early heat AND cooler nights, my orchids are nearly 2 months earlier than in the past; others are 1-2 months later. As long as they bloom, I'm happy.

Our trip to Botanica this summer will be on August 15th. This is a change from the original schedule in June. It will correspond with the Five Valley's (Missoula) meeting. I can not attend, and if we caravan there, we'll need at least 2 drivers to chauffeur. It's a 1 day tour. More info as we get closer.

I hope many of you were able to visit Scott's growing area and outside garden. If not there will be another tour this summer. Date TBD.

Edwin is scouting the area for our native orchid tour. Since those orchids are also having a tough time determining when, or if, to bloom, the notification to you will be by text and email; it may be short notice.

Finally, our annual re-potting event will be held at Jean Kelley's home, between here and Deer Park, on June 13th. We will begin around 10 am. Bring orchids that need dividing, and we will furnish media, pots, and donuts! Normally, everyone leaves with new orchids to bring home.

See you on the 13th. We'll have a forum on watering and lighting.

Jim

SOS 2026 Calendar of Events

Date	Event	Time/Location
Wednesday, May 13, 2026	* Orchid Society General Meeting Refreshments: Linda D. & Edwin Weber	5:30 PM: Social Time 6:00 PM: Meeting starts Manito Park Meeting Room * Need to leave Bldg. by 8 PM
Saturday, June 13, 2026	Orchid Re-potting Day	10 AM to 1:00 PM Home of Jean Kelley @ 21409 N. Hazard Rd. Spokane 99208

*The May 13, 2026 meeting will include a presentation about watering orchids and providing the best light for orchids. We will also have a farewell party for our long-time friend and SOS member Ernie Smith who is moving to the Tri-cities at the end of May. We will miss you Ernie!

Other Up-coming Summer Events & Dates

Native Orchid Hike: Edwin Weber will lead a hike to see native orchids in bloom in late May or early June. The date, time and meeting place to be determined and emailed out once Edwin starts to see native orchids in bloom.

Saturday, July 12, 2026: Annual SOS Picnic will be held at the home of Sharon Chatterton, who lives at 5524 N. Fleming, Spokane, WA 99205, with an 11 am start time.

Saturday, August 15, 2026: Opportunity to visit the Botanica Orchid Nursery in Missoula, Montana. Carpooling will be arranged at the August SOS meeting.

AOS CORNER with Harvey

For many orchid enthusiasts May is a transition month between spring and summer blooming orchids and an opportunity to prepare for the rest of the year. It is a good time to review the basics: watering, feeding, humidity, growing medium, and air movement. And, don't forget to remove all the algae and scum that has accumulated on your windows or greenhouse glass. Consideration for these cultural cornerstones goes a long way to your success as a grower. For pot bound plants, if new roots are visibly forming and are a couple inches long, you are likely due for repotting in fresh medium. Up-pot and possibly divide these plants this time of year. The plants re-establish most readily while starting new active growth.

Often potting medium on the top of the pot looks fine. It dries out quickly after watering and does not deteriorate much. Check a couple inches down into the pot to find out what is really going on with the medium. Sometimes one can more easily do this by tipping the pot upside down. The surface material may simply fall out. You can also use a probe to dislodge material until older roots start showing.

Tidbit

Note that plant pests like the longer days and warmer weather to propagate. Getting after them now works better than waiting until they have built up their numbers.

Happy Spring. Grow Well.

Harvey

Information about Re-potting Day

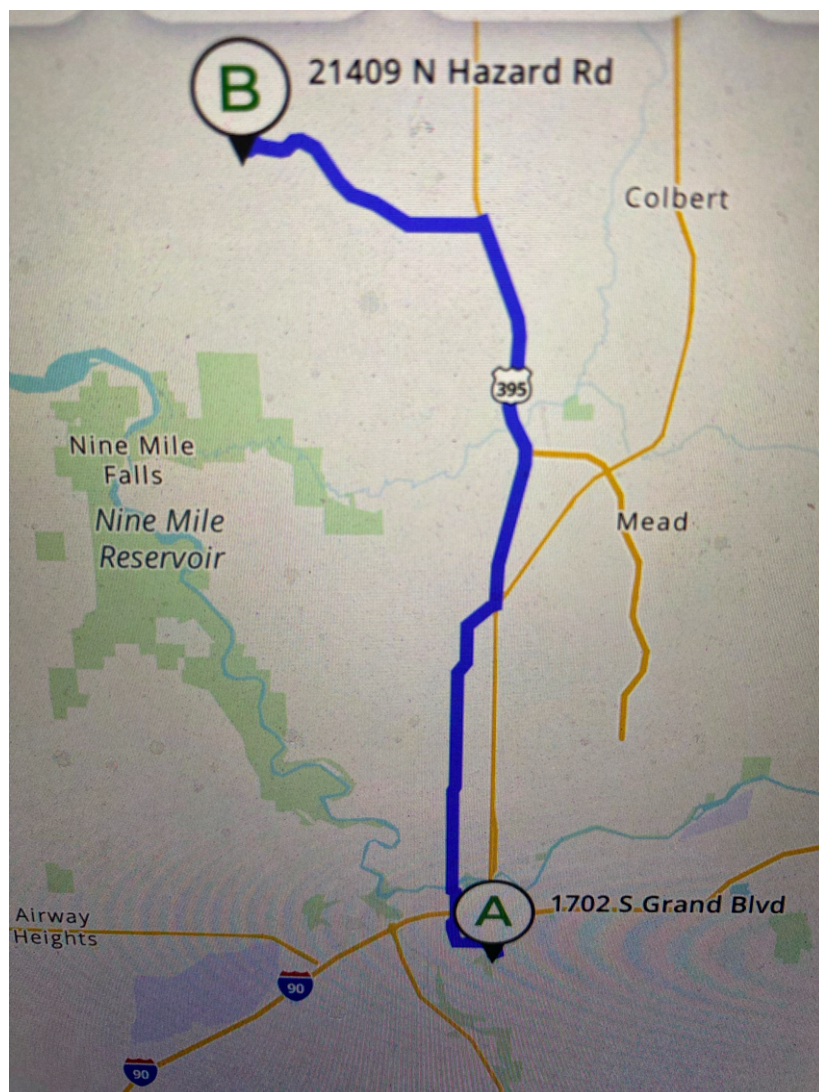
Re-potting day is coming up on Saturday, June 13th at the home of Jean Kelley, who lives near Deer Park, WA. Bring orchids that need to be re-potted and/or divided. The Society will provide bark and other potting media and also provide pots in a variety of sizes. Great opportunity to trade a division of one of your orchids for a division of something else. Also bring some drinking water and a snack. We will start at 10 am. Jean lives at 21409 N. Hazard Rd. Spokane.

From 1-90, take ramp onto US 395 North for 4.1 miles.

Turn Left on Monroe road 3.3 miles

Turn left onto Woolard Rd for .1 mile

Turn sharp left onto N. Hazard Rd for .2 miles.



Orchid Tips and Information for New Growers

What is a Species?

Source: Sue Bottom, AOS Magazine Contributor

The first time I was asked what a species is, I mumbled something incomprehensible. You might intuitively know what a species is, but putting a definition next to the word is easier said than done. A traditional definition of a species is a group of similar individuals that can interbreed but are reproductively isolated from other populations.



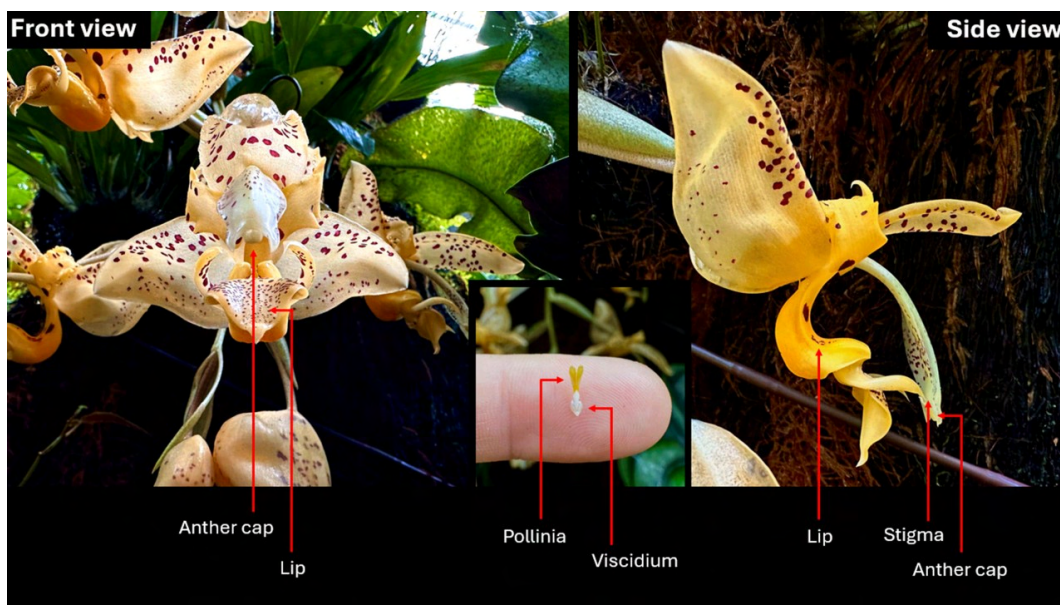
Geographical Isolation. A population of orchids can be reproductively isolated if it's separated from other populations by land or water. A simple case of too great a distance between populations can prevent them from interbreeding.

Ecological Isolation. A species of orchids can be reproductively isolated from others if it grows in different habitats within a given geographical area, such as those growing in shade or sun, low or high in the tree canopy, etc. or if it has different pollinators.

Seasonal Isolation. The time of year when plants bloom can be a big difference between species. If one species blooms in the spring and the other in the fall, they can't mix.

Genetic Incompatibility. Orchids of different species within the same genus can easily mix and make babies. Many orchid groups within a single genus can produce viable seeds when they cross-pollinate. But if the genetic differences are too big, two orchid populations growing in the same place at the same time can't mix and stay separate.

Structural Isolation. Sometimes, two species can't mix because of how their flowers are built. The size and placement of the column can physically prevent pollen from being moved or placed on the stigma. This is what happens with the Stanhopiinae. Many different types of euglossine bee visit the flowers, and the same bees can visit flowers of different species. But only the bees that are perfectly suited to the cavity created by the column and the lip will be able to remove pollen from one flower and place it on the stigma of another flower of the same species. In these cases, you can find male bees carrying pollen from multiple species at the same time.



Taxonomists categorize different species based on various factors, like the plant's structure, growth habits, and even DNA analysis. Sometimes, there are subtle differences within a species, like flower color or size, that don't warrant a subspecies designation. Instead, they're considered varieties of the same species. For instance, the Australian *Dendrobium speciosum* is a single species despite having nine distinct varieties with varying blooming periods, ecological niches, and flower colors. Similarly, the many beautiful color forms of *Laelia purpurata* showcase the natural variations that can occur within a species.

In nature, hybridization happens when different species overlap in their geographical range and flowering times. These species can crossbreed and produce viable seeds and sometimes even fertile offspring. In Brazil, for instance, the habitats of *Laelia purpurata* (lowland coastal rainforests), *Cattleya intermedia* (coastal areas), and *Cattleya leopoldii* (synonym for *tigrina*, lowland coastal swamps) overlap. Within these overlapping areas, naturally occurring hybrids are found, including *Cattleya x elegans* (*C. tigrina* x *C. purpurata*), *Cattleya x intricata* (*intermedia* x *leopoldii*), and *Cattleya x schilleriana* (*purpurata* x *intermedia*).

Sometimes, new species are born when an existing species population changes, gets closer or farther apart, and becomes genetically different from its parent species. This has happened with orchid populations in areas where the Earth's plates move or collide. When these changes happen, the weather can also change, and orchid populations adapt to different conditions like wetter or drier, warmer or cooler, etc. through natural selection. Eventually, this can lead to the evolution of new species. Many *Angraecum* orchids evolved in Madagascar after the island broke away from Africa.



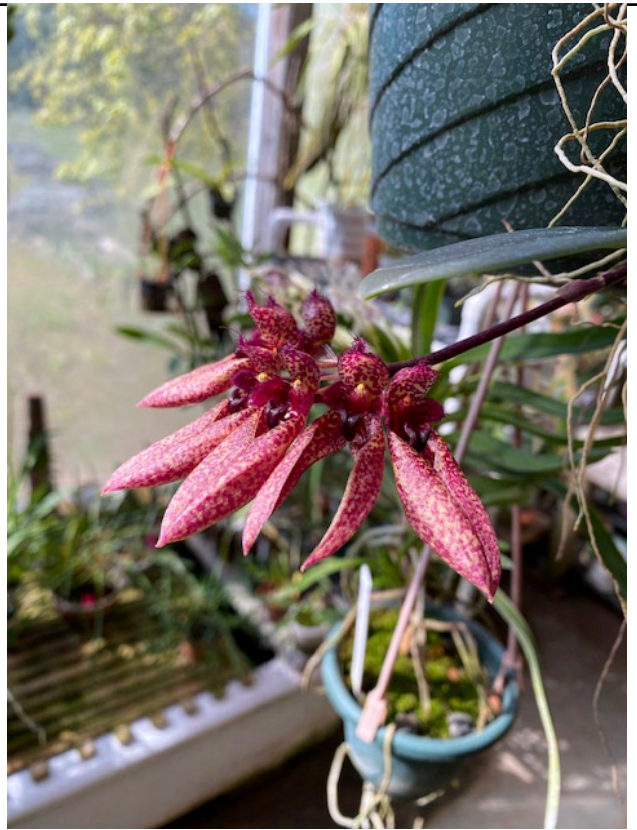
Determining if an orchid is a species is a breeze for me. I just look at the plant tag. But imagine this: you're out in nature, observing two orchid populations, trying to figure out if they're separate species. It gives you a whole new appreciation for the taxonomists who study these things. Sometimes, they even change their minds about which orchid species belongs to which genus and what the official name of that species should be.

(*Angraecum* Orchids of Madagascar pictured on left)

Orchid Show & Tell



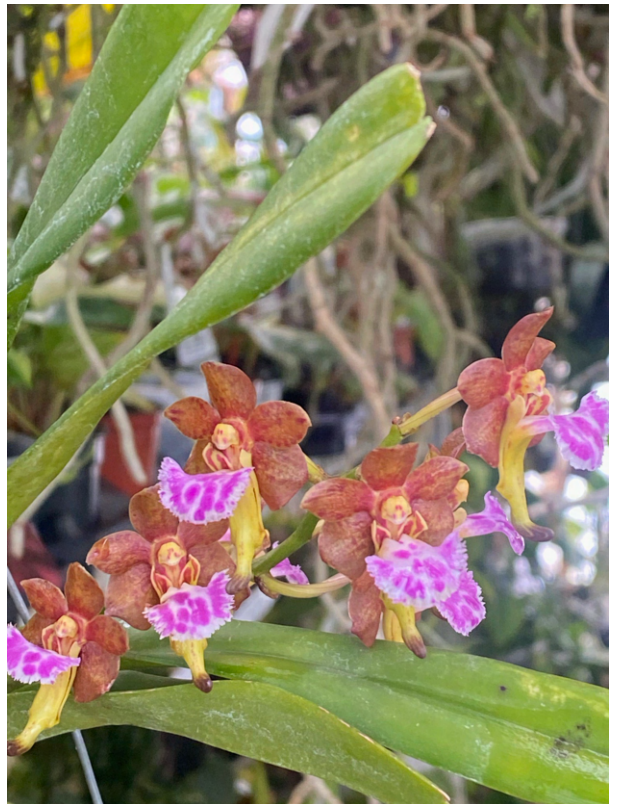
Miltoniopsis Bert Field 'Leash' AM/AOS
Grower: Suzanne Sawyer



Bulbophyllum Frostpoint
Grower: Suzanne Saawyer



Dendrobium fimbriatum v. *oculatum*
Grower: Mem Weisbeck



Aerides flabellata
Grower: Mem Weisbeck

Orchid Show & Tell (Send photos by the 5th of the month to be included)



Zygopetalum Rhein Moonlight
Grower: Mem Weisbeck



Brs. Mary Traub Levin
Grower: Mem Weisbeck



Dendrobium densiflorum v. luteo alba
Grower: Mem Weisbeck



Odeontioda Hibrida X Oda. Lovely Apple
Grower: Mem Weisbeck

Orchid of the Month

Phragmipedium Eugene Banziger



This terrestrial orchid was photographed at the 2026 Spokane Orchid Show, where it won a top AOS award. *Phragmipedium* Eugene Banziger is an outstanding hybrid, known to produce large flowers in a lovely shade of red. This one was grown by George Grantham of the Northwest Orchid Society and it received an FCC (First Class Certificate) with a score of 94 points by the AOS judges.

This hybrid is a cross of *Phragmipedium* Hanne Popow X *Phrag.* Fritz Schomburg. The cross combines vigorous growth with an outstanding floral display of large flowers that bloom sequentially. Here is some cultural information for growing this beauty:

- **Light:** Thrives in bright, filtered light conditions. Direct sunlight should be avoided, particularly during peak afternoon hours, as it can cause leaf burn. An east or north-facing window with diffused light, or artificial grow lights positioned 12-18 inches away, provides optimal conditions for healthy development.
- **Temperature:** Performs best in cool to intermediate temperature ranges. Maintain daytime temperatures between 16-22°C (60-72°F), with nighttime temperatures dropping to 10-16°C (50-60°F). This temperature differential is crucial for initiating and maintaining the blooming cycle.
- **Humidity:** Requires consistently high humidity levels between 65-85%. Ensure excellent air movement to prevent stagnant conditions that could lead to bacterial or fungal problems. A humidity tray or room humidifier can help maintain proper moisture levels.
- **Watering:** Demands constant moisture without waterlogging. Use a well-draining, moisture-retentive growing medium and maintain consistent dampness throughout the root zone. The growing medium should never completely dry out, but should never be soggy.

Orchid Trivia & Fun Facts

Did Orchids Co-exist with Dinosaurs?

Source: Orchid Muse, April, 2019

I was surprised to learn something fundamental (and fundamentally cool) about orchids (and many flowers) on my last trip to our local aquarium--which is that orchids evolved *after* most dinosaurs roamed the earth.

Flowering plants evolved millions of years *after* many other types of life had been on Earth! More specifically, orchids are one of the oldest flowering plant families, appearing in the late Cretaceous period, 65-85 million years ago.

How did paleobiologists figure this out? The story is straight out of *Jurassic Park*: just a few years ago, they found orchid pollinia on the back of a prehistoric bee that met its death in petrified amber. Dinosaurs faced a final extinction event about 65 million years ago, but they had been around in various forms since the mid-Triassic period, roughly 225 million years ago. If we were to add orchids (and flowering plants) to this timeline, they would appear just seconds before (in geological time) the dinosaurs die, which is the end of the Mesozoic era and the start of the Cenozoic era.

So, which dinosaurs lived when orchids ruled the Earth? None other than Tyrannosaurus rex! And Velociraptor! And Ankylosaurus! And Triceratops, Hadrosaurus, Spinosaurus, and Maiasaurus! - basically all the cool ones.

