



# Orchid Society of Western Pennsylvania

April 2021

[www.oswp.org](http://www.oswp.org)

## Upcoming Events

April 18, 2021

**Fred Clarke**

How to be an 80th Percentile Grower

## Looking Ahead

### Meetings will continue on Zoom for now

May 16 Ronald Midgett, New Earth Orchids, Santa Fe NM -  
Intregeneric Oncidiinae (Ron was an OSWP member in the 70's)  
June 27: David Haelterman, Cali Columbia (Photographer and Nature  
Guide): Orchids of Colombia in their native habitats. A huge richness  
to conserve in an incredibly biodiverse country

### **" UNDER NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES "**

OSWP meetings are held at the Phipps Garden Center on Shady Avenue and  
are open to members, their guests and the general public.  
Program Calendar is also available at [www.oswp.org](http://www.oswp.org)

HOWEVER, we are on Zoom for meetings , and those interested non members could use  
the 'contact us ' section of the website to get a Zoom invitation

#### OSWP Officers

Co-President: Sheila Nathanson and Mike Lyse

Co-First Vice President: Kathleen Arria and David Springer

Second Vice President: Timothy Choltco

Directors: Brooke Decker, Peg Kalupanov, Jinghua Ou, Aaron Vitron, Tamara Wurst.

Secretary : Lance Cheuvront

Treasurer: Janet Greenberg

### What's Blooming Now

### The Vanilla Orchid

#### Orchid Flavored Ice Cream or Jack and the Bean Stock

The use of vanilla started in the 15th century, in the mountainous regions of Mexico, where a tribe known as the Totonacs were the first civilization known to grow and cultivate vanilla pods. . The Aztecs demanded a tax of vanilla and combined vanilla with cacao in a ceremonial concoction called "xocolatl" (or chocolatl, also known as the first hot chocolate). Since the vanilla orchid turns black after maturing and is harvested, the Aztecs called it the "black flower." (hence the Black Orchid) Vanilla consumption took off in the budding United States and, largely thanks to Thomas Jefferson, who was known to add it to his ice cream. Jefferson's recipes for vanilla ice cream, is archived in the Library of Congress. Today there are five main variations of vanilla, each with different characteristics. Vanilla is the most expensive spice second only to saffron. Vanilla is a vine which is not normal for orchid plants. All of the flowers are hand pollinated driving up the cost of production. This is also the beans that (as story has it ) for which Jack traded his cow, so he could meet the giant.



Photo from internet

## **Co-President's Letter April 2021**

Of course we'll swing back and forth- warm sunny days and chilly nights, when it's not raining or snowing- Spring in Pittsburgh is here! I've repotted almost all my *Catasetum* to be ready when they really start growing furiously, and all my *Neofinetia*. Next, *Paphs*. Then I'll look closely for emerging roots on *Cattleya* that are outgrowing their pots, and repot as needed. This is the time you should be seeing new growth starting on almost everything, and resume a feeding schedule if you have cut back for winter. You may need to water more frequently as things warm up. It really is one of the best times of the year for orchid growers.

We've survived a strange year, and may soon see the end of this pandemic. For now, our meetings will still be via Zoom, and we've decided to change our meeting order slightly to accommodate any questions or discussions which arise from Show and Tell. We will have our main speaker after the miniclass, and Show and Tell after the speaker. This way, we hope to have better participant retention, and not have to rush through Show and Tell. We've adapted to many new habits (masks) in the past year, I think we can do this. Since we missed our show in March, we will be having an in-person Member Sales event on Sunday, June 6. Location TBA. Wayne Roberts, of Robert's Flower Supply, has agreed to take preorders of supplies which he will deliver to our event. Contact Robert's at [rfs@orchidmix.com](mailto:rfs@orchidmix.com), or 440-236-5571. He does have a website where supplies are listed. Our April meeting will include another visit by Fred Clarke. He is convinced he can make us all 80% growers - bring your questions!

Be well, stay safe and think orchids !

Sheila N. and Mike L.

## **April speaker Fred Clarke**

For our April meeting Fred Clarke of Sunset Valley Orchids will be making a return engagement to talk to us about "Becoming an 80 Percent Grower." We will be learning about the underlying reasons of how and why orchids grow as they do, then explore the fundamentals and advanced growing techniques to best grow them. Orchid plant culture is explained as you have never heard it before. Learn how to become an 80 percentile grower. Expect to be wowed by this talk, a number of our members heard it at other orchid societies' meetings and have raved about it.

Fred has been growing orchids for 42 years and has been hybridizing for 38 of those years. With over 34 years as a professional grower and manager in the horticultural industry, Fred applies these skills at his orchid nursery; Sunset Valley Orchids, located in San Diego, California. He is a passionate orchid grower whose curiosity in orchids is broad and varied. Although developing *Cattleya* hybrids has been his sustaining interest, he is also actively creating new *Paphiopedilum* and *Aussie Dendrobium* hybrids plus some others to be named if they work out! His pioneering work in *Catasetum* intergeneric hybrids led to the development of several notable hybrids, most recently the grex, *Fredclarkeara After Dark*, which produced "the blackest flower ever witnessed". This grex has received over 100 awards worldwide with nine FCC's and thirty AM's from the AOS judges! Fred is an Accredited Judge in the Pacific South Judging Region. His plants have received hundreds of quality awards from the American Orchid Society.

## **Orchid Gems**

Curiosity Embodied: Mary Ann Pike

By: Norma Raiff

When Covid-19 first started, many of us bemoaned the loss of our ordinary OSWP routines: annual show cancelled, Monthly meetings on Zoom, no goodies provided by fellow OWSP members. However, we have pivoted, and many feel successfully. In other words, in the “good enough” box. So it certainly piqued my interest when Newsletter editor and E-blaster in chief, Jim Yamber, e-mailed photos from Mary Ann Pike as part of his ongoing feature “Currently Blooming.” Her orchids were great, but what really caught my eye was this:

“I must say that this is the largest number of orchids I’ve ever had bloom indoors and at one time, and it’s because I joined the orchid society and have been regularly able to attend the Zoom meetings and learn a lot from the members. If you were having in person meetings, I probably wouldn’t be able to attend as regularly or learn as much.”

A double surprise: both happiness that a member is learning to grow better; and a second message, keep the Zoom coming. And just who is Mary Ann Pike?

The answer is simple. Mary Ann Pike was one of the very large contingent of new members who joined OSWP during last year’s OSWP South Hills Show. It turns out that she’s been faithfully attending our Spring shows for some 20 years, but never became a member because of her busy schedule and many other competing interests. However, as a South Hills resident, Mary Ann was now ready to sign on.

Mary Ann and her husband Tod live in Venetia, Washington County. Both of them are curious people and have numerous hobbies, but orchids are Mary Ann’s interest (however, read to bottom of article to find out more about Tod the Orchid Finder).

Mary Ann’s educational background includes a degree in Electrical Engineering from CMU and a Master’s in Professional Writing. The past 10 years of her career have been spent as a technical writer for Ansys, which designs simulation software and offers consultative services. “I’ve always done a lot of writing, from my high school newspaper to documentation for my engineering projects,” Mary Ann notes, including the fact that she is the current editor of her local Electrical Insulator Club’s newsletter.

Aside: The things you learn from talking to members: there is a devoted following of antique electrical insulators collectors with clubs all over the United States. So Mary Ann’s back-story fits in nicely with many of our other members’ out-of-Society interests, which range from running for political office, raising and rescuing snakes, to professionally acting/directing theater to a host of other well-rounded activities.

Mary Ann has been casually growing orchids since the early 2000’s. “I never had more than a dozen or so” and, like so many of us, she would often pick up reduced price orchids at the big box stores or would receive phals as gifts from family members. She is particularly attracted to Dendrobium Kaila Quintal crosses “because they flower regularly, the flowers last a long time, and they take a lot of abuse (before I generally kill them).” The photo that accompanied her latest successful flowering was bought from Mayfield Village Orchids at last year’s show.

Mary Ann credits our Zoom meetings and her other OSWP contacts for her recent success in raising so many blooming orchids this season. Our advice and support have inspired her to design an orchid growing area, a shelf, replete with plant trays with pebbles designed to raise winter humidity levels, and specialty grow lights. “I’ve just been amazed at how well they’re doing. I’m determined to keep them alive this year.” OSWP chats have also made her aware of other orchid resources so that she started to purchase plants from a variety of out-of-state vendors she heard about, including Windswept

in Time and Fred Clark.

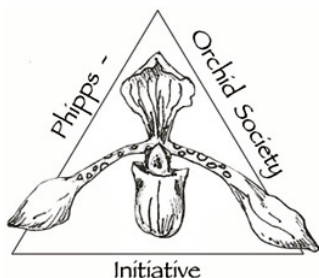
“The Zoom meetings are so easy to attend and provide lots of information; however, the downside is that you don’t get to meet people in person.” On the other hand, Mary Ann has also connected on line with OSWP members. When Janet Greenberg, our treasurer called her with a follow-up query about her email address, they became orchid buddies. Mary Ann has also talked with Tim Choltco and learned about our Society’s spring nature walks involving the search for blooming native orchids.

And as for Tod the Orchid Finder: here are two remarkable coincidences. Nine years ago, Mary Ann went to Wolf Creek Narrows Natural Area on a Botanical Society of Western PA trip (another one of her hobbies) and Tod accompanied her so that he could pursue his interest in geocaching. Geocaching is outdoor treasure hunting game where participants navigate to a specific set of GPS coordinates and try to find the hidden geocache (container) concealed at that location. “It’s a good way to get to explore on a day trip and to learn about an area,” says Mary Ann. However, that day something new happened. While Mary Ann and the other botanical society members were examining plants along the trail, Tod called them over and said, “Look I found a flower I’ve never seen,” which turned out to be an orchid, *Galearis spectabilis*, or Showy Orchis.

Then while on a trip to Machu Picchu, it happened again. Mary Ann was looking at antiquities and Tod went behind a wall and announced he had found an orchid. They believe it to be a type of *Stelis* orchid. It was growing on a rock and the plants consisted of tiny flower spikes that were at most 8 inches long. So, do you know this orchid? Take a look and email me at [normaraiff@gmail.com](mailto:normaraiff@gmail.com).







## P-OSI

A joint initiative between Phipps Conservatory and the Orchid Society of Western Pennsylvania to create and cultivate an orchid collection of note for enjoyment, education and research.

### April 2021

While we are still not permitted to continue our work with the Phipps orchid collection due to the pandemic precautions, we can still visit Phipps Conservatory's beautiful show.

The Phipps Annual Spring Show, "A Canopy of Color," runs until April 11th. Celebrate Spring and enjoy the warmth and beauty of Phipps Conservatory in full bloom!

We hope this summer to be back volunteering at Phipps to help with maintaining and "growing" the Phipps orchids collection in all aspects. It's a beautiful way to give back to our city and learn about each other and orchids as well.

In the meantime, Think Orchids and Celebrate Spring!!!!

Nancy Kline  
nancyk412@gmail.com  
412-367-1556

Demetria Marsh  
demetria117@gmail.com  
412-848-4349

## **Mini-class 2021 – April 18 1:15pm prior to the O.S.W.P. business meeting.**

Orchids at the Frick – Lori McDermott

Please join myself and the O.S.W.P. for the mini-class for the April meeting. This month we are taking a right turn from our regular meeting subject material. Our beloved Lori McDermott is a part time volunteer at The Henry Clay Frick mansion (Clayton). Part of Clayton's 5.5 acre grounds include a Victorian era greenhouse. This greenhouse is quite reminiscent of the original Phipps Conservatory. While undergoing renovation and partial reconstruction, this greenhouse has been in operation since 1897.

Part of the greenhouses collection includes / included many orchids. One of the museum's many goals is to obtain many of the Victorian Era orchids that were enjoyed by Henry Clay Frick and his family. Lori will discuss this project and some of its aims. Please join me and the rest of the OSWP for this presentation prior to the regular O.S.W.P. meeting.

Timothy Cholteo

2nd Vice President and all around decent sentient being.



### **Current Committees Chairs,**

AOS	Nancy Kline	Orchid Gems	Norma Raiff, Pam Horter-Moore,
Culture Corner	Nancy Kline		Cristina Eyler
Facebook	Lance Cheuvront	Pfun	Nancy Kline
Garden Club/Library Liaison	Karen Gibson	P-OSI	Demetria Marsh
Hospitality	Carolyn Bolton	Raffle	Natalie Turicik
Library	Rosa Graudins	Show	Sheila Nathanson, Tammy Wurst,
Membership	Kathy Collins		Norma Raiff and Janet Greenberg
Mini-class	Tim Cholteo	Speaker	Kathleen Arria and David Springer
Newsletter	Jim Yamber	Website	Jinghua Ou



First Class Mail

Orchid Society of  
Western Pennsylvania  
James Yamber (editor)  
380 Western Ave.  
Oakdale, Pa. 15071

quail1@verizon.net

The Orchid Society of Western  
Pennsylvania Inc. is a non-profit  
corporation organized to advance  
the propagation, horticulture and  
preservation of orchid species and  
hybrids through research, education  
and scientific endeavors

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**Upcoming 2021 speaker**

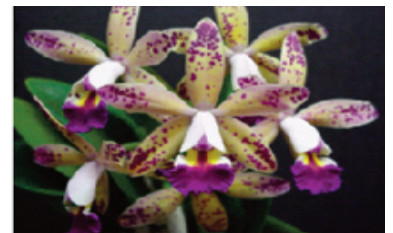
FUTURE PROGRAMS

April 18 ,2021

**Fred Clarke**

How to be an 80th Percentile Grower

More to come for the future programs for 2021



**WANTED**

**The American Orchid  
Society Judging Program  
is seeking highly  
motivated orchid  
enthusiasts to join the  
judging ranks.**

*Work with other such people and  
help maintain our awards  
programs and educational efforts.*

*For more information contact Dave  
Miller at: 330-307-7189 or  
dcnjpsmil@aol*