



# Hilo Orchid Society Newsletter

December  
2020

## Online Meeting

Note: the normal meeting scheduled for Sat., December 12, 2020 has been replaced by an online Zoom meeting.

Date: Sat., December 12, 2020  
Time: 2:00 p.m.  
Place: On your computer or phone  
Topic: Orchid Jeopardy & Mini-Auction

Do you remember the show *Jeopardy?* The recent passing of Alex Trebek, longtime host of the program, has inspired us to hold a game of Orchid Jeopardy at our December meeting.

Like the TV show, our game will feature “answers” in various categories, ranging from easy to hard, but all having to do with orchids. And like the TV show, contestants will have to phrase their answer as a question.

We’ll be asking for volunteers to play. That means you! Or you can just play along silently from home. Either way, it’ll be a fun time. Oh, one more thing. We won’t be playing for money. Just for the satisfaction of winning. (Sorry!)

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY	CELEBRITY RELATIVES	RELIGIOUS LEADERS	THE UNITED KINGDOM	FASHION	POT LOCK
\$100	\$100	\$100	\$100	\$100	\$100
\$200	\$200	\$200	\$200	\$200	\$200
\$300	\$300	\$300	\$300	\$300	\$300
\$400	\$400	\$400	\$400	\$400	\$400
\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500

In addition, we’re going to hold a mini-auction of some beautiful donated plants, and we’ll have a Zoom show-and-tell session, which we ran out of time for last month. If you have some orchids in bloom, please have them ready to show us. We love to see everyone’s orchids.

And remember, answer in the form of a question! See you on Zoom!

## CALENDAR OF ORCHID EVENTS

Dec. 12 2:00 pm Online HOS Meeting via Zoom

## President’s Message

Dear Hilo Orchid Society Ohana.

It was just one year ago at our lovely Holiday Party at Nani Mau Gardens that new board members and officers were sworn in. For us, it was such a joyous and hopeful time, all of us looking towards whatever the future might bring us: a year of interesting prominent speakers, fun events and field trips, and reveling in the glory of everyone’s spectacular orchid plants. Looking back on that day with 20-20 vision, whoever would have suspected where we find ourselves today.



It was always my desire to bring the many groups within the Big Island Orchid Scene together and build camaraderie and Aloha amongst us. Of course, it has been an impossibility for us to actually be together, but instead, we have found that in our isolation we are indeed all joined together in the effort to keep our beautiful friends and neighbors safe from the pandemic currently raging on the mainland.

While we miss seeing and talking to each other in person, snacking together, and seeing everyone’s orchids on the show table, we can be proud that we have been so responsible and caring for our Orchid Ohana. Once 2020 is behind us, and we are in control again, eventually, I think we will see a great resurgence of activity and joy in 2021 and 2022. Indeed, we will appreciate those good times so much more! Beyond this, your orchids will be even bigger and better!

Mele Kalikimaka & Hauoli Makahiki Hou!

Tom

## Photo Contest Winner



Lou Rhoades is the winner of our 2020 Photo Contest for his photo of *Dendrobium tangerinum* (above). Lou will receive a \$50 gift certificate good for

purchasing orchids from any Big Island orchid vendors. Congratulations, Lou, and mahalo to all our runner-ups and to all who participated in the contest.

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## Junko Nowaki

It is with sadness that we report the death of longtime HOS member Junko Ida Nowaki.

Junko was born in Hilo in 1939. Before her retirement, she was a Public Services Librarian at the University of Hawaii at Hilo and head of the library's Hawaiian Collection.

HOS members will remember her for her cheerful service to our Society, including volunteering at the Front Gate of our annual orchid shows for many years.

She is survived by three daughters, including Shelly Nowaki, who is one of our Trustees and our Scholarship Committee chair.

Junko Nowaki was 80 years old.



## Members' Photos

This year's photo contest is over, but we still love to share photos of our members' orchids, so please send them in. Here are some recent photos.



Tag missing, but it looks like *Oncidium* (formerly *Wilsonara*) Pacific Panache. Grown by Julie Goettich.



*Rlc.* Fire Desire, grown by Dana Culleney



*Cattleya* Bow Bells 'Purity' FCC/AOS, grown by Matthias Seelis

## Members' Photos



Rossioglossum, grown by Karl Mendonca. Photo by Dana Culleney.

## Orchid Stories

### Asymmetry



Left: Plumeria. Photo by Larry Kuekes.

Right: *Catasetum* Orchidglade, from faatura on flickr.com by Creative Commons license



*"Nothing is so stifling as symmetry.  
Symmetry is boredom."*

Victor Hugo, *Les Miserables*

Previously, I have written about symmetry in orchid flowers. To recap, in most flowers, all the petals are alike. For example, the plumeria flower above has

five identical petals. This gives the flower *rotational* symmetry – if you rotate it 1/5 of a circle (or 2/5 or 3/5/ or 4/5), the flower looks the same.

Orchids are different. One of the petals has been modified into a lip, which looks different from the others. This does away with rotational symmetry, but the flower still has *bilateral* symmetry. That means that if you draw a line down the middle, the left side



Left: *Dendrobium antennatum*. Grown and photographed by Larry Kuekes.

Right: Inflorescence of *Dendrochilum bicallosum*. Grown and photographed by Larry Kuekes.

is the mirror image of the right side. Human bodies (and most animals) have bilateral symmetry, too. The fact that an orchid is less symmetrical – more complicated – than a plumeria is, in my opinion, part of what makes orchids look captivating and exotic.

But there are orchids that, if you look closely, don't even have strict bilateral symmetry. The *Catasetum* flower (previous page), like all male *Catasetum* flowers, has two "triggers" attached to its column. The column is the white thing in the center of the flower, and the triggers are the little white spikes hanging down from the column. But observe: one trigger points down, and the other one is bent sideways. This is not a defect in this particular flower. This is the flower's normal shape. In other *Catasetums*, the triggers cross each other, with one in front and one behind. In either case, the left side of the flower is not a mirror image of the right side. It does not have bilateral symmetry, and of course it doesn't have rotational symmetry either. The flower is *asymmetric* – it has no symmetry.

Another example is *Dendrobium antennatum* (above left), one of the "antelope *Dendrobiums*," so called because their petals are twisted into miniature antelope horns.

Each *Den. antennatum* petal is a twisted like a

corkscrew. Technically, each edge of the petal is a helix, or 3-dimensional spiral. And there's nothing less symmetrical than a helix or corkscrew. It can be twisted in one of two ways, sometimes called left-handed and right-handed.

If one petal of the *Dendrobium* were a left-handed helix, and if the other one were right-handed, they would be mirror images of each other, and the flower would still have bilateral symmetry. But observe: they're both twisted the same way. They are not mirror-images. The flower is asymmetrical.

Other orchid structures can be asymmetrical, too. Consider the *Dendrochilum bicallosum* inflorescence (above right). It consists of a chain of tiny flowers. Each flower has perfect bilateral symmetry, like most orchid flowers. But the flowers are arranged on the inflorescence in two rows that twist around the stem to make a double helix – the shape made famous as the structure of the DNA molecule. And again, nothing is less symmetrical than a helix.

Are these orchids less beautiful because they lack symmetry? Decide for yourself. But, as Victor Hugo said, symmetry is boredom. In my opinion, these orchids are not only beautiful, they're even more fascinating.

Larry Kuekes

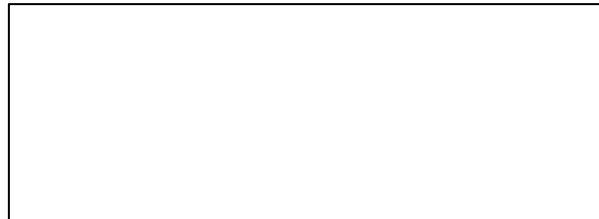
## Hilo Orchid Society Officers and Trustees

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