Hilo Orchid Society Newsletter

May 2026

Date: Sat., May 9, 2026
Time: **1:30** Informal "talk story"
2:00 Meeting starts
Place: Kamana Senior Center,
127 Kamana St., Hilo
Speaker: Gary Meyer
Program: Dracuphilia: a Gothic Romance

Did you know that Dracula is a genus of orchids? Gary Meyer became addicted to Draculas when he was in high school. He has traveled to Colombia and Ecuador since 2005, and he lives two to three months a year in Medellin, Colombia to see Draculas growing in the wild and visit South American Dracula growers.

When he's not studying Draculas, Gary studies how U.S. cancer patients are treated with pharmaceuticals, and he also runs Colombian Orchid Imports, which imports Colombian species for sale in the United States.

His talk, "Dracuphilia, a Gothic Romance", will cover the history of the genus Dracula, distribution of species, concepts in taxonomy and biology, and Gary's orchid explorations in the wild. The talk will also delve into the conflicting effects of human interest on orchid conservation, and it will give a perspective on what orchid conservation looks like in situ.

If you'd like to hear about the Gothic romance of Dracuphilia, don't miss this meeting!

Joining Us at the Meeting

Alison Gallaway, president of the American Orchid Society, will be attending our May meeting. Let's all show her some Hawaiian aloha.

Ben Oliveros gets Award

Ben Oliveros has been given the American Orchid Society's Norito Hasegawa Award for 2026 for excellence in hybridizing. If you are an AOS member, you can read more about Ben's award in the May issue of Orchids magazine. Congratulations, Ben!

Please Pick Up Your Show Tickets

We're asking all HOS members to buy tickets for the orchid show for $3 each, and to sell or give them to friends and neighbors. Of course, you're not obligated to purchase tickets, but if you can, it's a great way to help your Society. The $3 price is a bargain compared with $6 at the door.

You can pick up your tickets at the meeting. It saves us the cost of mailing them to you.

You don't have to pay for the tickets when you pick them up. We trust you. You only need to pay for the tickets you use, and you can pay online at our website www.hiloorchidsociety.org, or you can mail your payment ($45 if you use 15 tickets) to

Hilo Orchid Society
P.O. Box 4294
Hilo, HI 96720

Thank you for helping to make the show a success!

Orchid Stories

Blowing in the Wind

They say the apple doesn't fall far from the tree. But if all the apple seedlings grew up underneath the parent, you'd end up with a thicket of apple trees in one spot, and no apple trees anywhere else in the world. In order to spread, the apple, like all plants, needs to disperse its seeds – to send them far away. How, since plants can't move?

Some plants, like apple trees, evolved edible fruits or berries that are tempting to animals. The animals carry the fruit away and discard or excrete the seeds. Some plants, like burrs, evolved seeds that stick to animals and get carried away. Some plants, like dandelions, evolved seeds with parachutes that are blown away by the wind.

Orchids evolved a different solution for wind-dispersal. Their seeds are tiny, like dust, so the wind can blow them a long distance. But in order to be so small, the seeds contain the bare minimum – a tiny plant embryo wrapped in a thin coat of cells. An orchid seed contains no food. This is unique in the plant kingdom. All other seeds contain food for the developing plant to grow its first roots and leaves. Then, using photosynthesis, the plant can make its own food.

So, without any food, how does the orchid seed grow its first leaves? The seed needs to land next to the right species of fungus (and different orchid species have different fungi). The fungus penetrates the orchid seed, trying to extract food, but there's no food there. Instead, with amazing chutzpah, the orchid steals nutrients from the fungus and uses them to grow its first roots and leaves. After that, the orchid no longer needs the fungus.

The chances are very small of an orchid seed landing (1) in a tree, and (2) next to the right fungus. So the orchid produces vast numbers of seeds. One seedpod of *Cycnoches chlorichilon* contained 3.7 million seeds! Will one of them land in the right spot? The answer, my friend, is blowing in the wind.

Larry Kuekes

Orchid Tours

Tom Mirenda will join Andres Ramos, an HOS conservation grant recipient who will be our speaker in September, on an orchid tour that Andres is leading this summer in Vera Cruz and Oaxaca, Mexico. For more info see
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1H7ckHHIqTYHGTRim2Nvwt1e4zlQQVHwc/view

And another conservationist who spoke to us last year, Challen Willemson, is leading a tour this August in Colombia for Orchids for Peace. For more info see
https://www.hiloorchidsociety.org/2026-orchids-for-peace-tour.html

Orchids on the April Show Table

Photos by Dana Culleney

Blc. Solar Flare ‘Paradise’

Rhynchostylis retusa

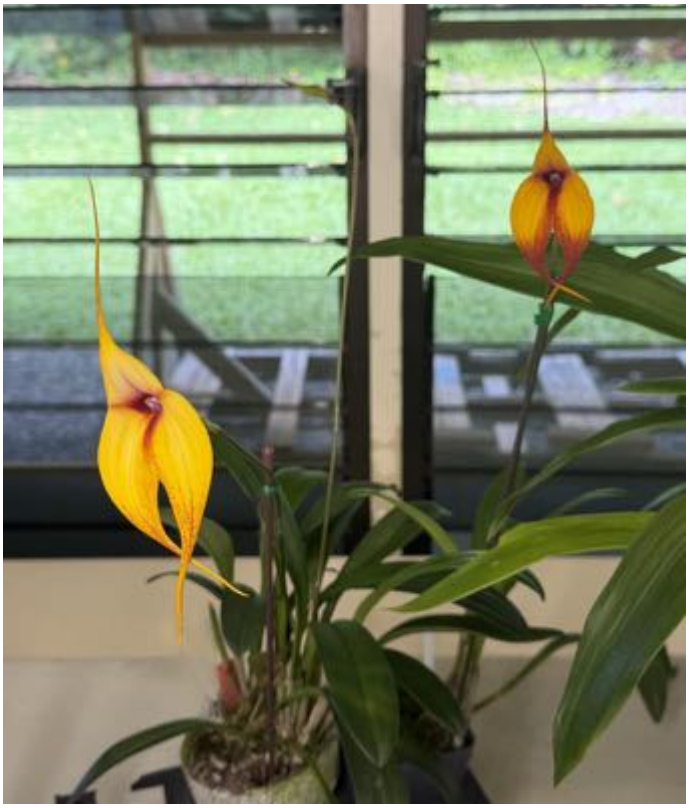
Rhynchostylis digbyana ‘Mrs. Chase’ AM/AOS

Cattleya intermedia h.f. *orlata*

Coelogyne xyrekes

Guaritonia Why Not ‘Roundabout’ x self

Lycaste Firebird ‘Okoka’ AM/AOS



Masdevallia

Maxillaria tenuifolia ‘Haupia’ (the coconut orchid)

Bulbophyllum falcata, grown by Jeff Fendentz

Zygopetalum Advance Australia ‘HOF’ AM/AOS

March and April AOS Awards

Photos by Glen Barfield

Left: *Dendrobium lowii* 'Malamalana O Ka La' HCC/AOS, grown by Matt Sylva
Right: Paph. Colossal Temptation 'Slipper Zone Crowning Glory' HCC/AOS, grown by Lehua Orchids

Left: Paph. Colossal Temptation 'Slipper Zone Green Rising' HCC/AOS, grown by Lehua Orchids
Right: Paph. Colossal Temptation 'Slipper Zone Joyful' JC/AOS, grown by Lehua Orchids

Left: Paph. Hilo Black Eagle 'Koa's Black Diamond' AM/AOS, grown by Shogun Hawaii
Right: Miltoniopsis Rubenesque 'Okika' AM/AOS, grown by Okika

Left: Rhynchostylis Chorchalood 'Shogun's Egyptian Queen' HCC/AOS, grown by Shogun Hawaii
Right: Miltoniopsis (Paradise Park x Ruth Ono) 'Okika' AM/AOS, grown by Okika

Left: Cattleya Harmill ‘Red Hots’ FCC/AOS, grown by Orchid Eros
Right: Paph. Rebecca Koopowitz ‘Shogun Hawaii’ HCC/AOS, grown by Shogun Hawaii

Left: Catasetum MariaMercado ‘It All Ends Here’ AM/AOS, grown by Shogun Hawaii
Right:Cattleya schilleriana ‘Too Many’ FCC/AOS, grown by Orchid Eros

April Orchid Mounting Workshop

In April, instead of a regular meeting, we held a workshop showing members how to mount an orchid on a tree, the way they grow in nature.

Each member was provided with a small orchid plant (an Oncidium hybrid type) and a stick to mount it on. A good time was had by all.

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