



Hilo Orchid Society Newsletter

January
2025

Next Meeting

Date: Saturday, January 11, 2024
Time: 1:30 Informal "talk story"
2:00 Meeting starts
Place: Kamana Senior Center,
127 Kamana St., Hilo
Speaker: Tim Culbertson
Topic: Holcoglossums: The Next
Great Thing in Vandas

Holcoglossum is a miniature genus related to Vanda. They make great compact plants for windowsills or growing outdoors. By combining Holcoglossum with other Vandaceous genera, hybridizers have come up with spectacular new combinations, some so new that they haven't been named yet! This month, Tim Culbertson will tell us all about it.

Tim Culbertson began growing orchids as an offshoot from working at Longwood Gardens in Philadelphia after college. He worked as an intern at the Smithsonian's orchid collection under Tom Miranda.



Tim comes to us from southern California where he hybridizes Paphs and grows almost 3000 of them. He also hybridizes other genera. "In short," he says, "I really like plants." He currently manages the Paphs at Sunset Valley Orchids. He is an AOS judge.

If you'd like to see the latest thing in Vanda breeding, be sure not to miss this meeting!

Karl Gets Orchid Digest Award

At the Holiday Party, Karl Mendonca was presented with the Orchid Digest Award of Excellence in

recognition of Karl's outstanding contributions to the orchid society (see photo below).



Dues Are Due

Your membership dues for 2025 are due. New members who joined at our Orchid Show at Edith Kanaka'ole Stadium in July and members who joined in September 2024 or later are considered paid through 2025 and do not have to pay.

For the rest of you, dues are still only \$20 for individual membership or \$25 for family membership. In return, you get a year of interesting speakers, newsletters, and activities, plus the chance to get together with folks who share your interest in these beautiful and fascinating plants.

There are three ways you can pay: (1) Go to our website www.hiloorchidsociety.org, click on Membership and pay online, (2) Pay us at the meeting, or (3) Fill out the form on page 5 and mail it in with your payment (address is on the form).

Mahalo!

Beginners Corner

Fertilizer



Above: Eric Guttormsen fertilizing orchids on a tree with a backpack sprayer at Hilo's Pana'ewa Zoo and Gardens. Eric says the fertilizer is courtesy of the donkeys at the zoo, suitably diluted. I wouldn't recommend it for home use.

Fertilizer is not plant food. Plants make their own food by photosynthesis, which is why they will survive for long periods without any fertilizer at all. Fertilizer is more like vitamins – essential in the long run, but in small doses. Most plants get what they need from the soil. Orchids growing in a pot can get enough from decomposing bark to stay alive, but for them to flourish, you should provide a little extra.

The most important rule about fertilizing orchids is: don't overfeed. Orchids are not heavy feeders. How much fertilizer does an orchid get in the wild, growing up in a tree? Practically none. Maybe an occasional bird dropping.

The classic rule for fertilizing orchids is "weakly weekly." You don't have to fertilize weekly (my orchids are lucky if they get fertilized monthly), but when you do fertilize, you should use a weak solution. I look at the manufacturer's directions and then mix it half-strength.

Don't get obsessed with fertilizing. If your orchid doesn't bloom, nine times out of ten, it needs more light, not more fertilizer. You can't make a weak plant bloom by fertilizing, any more than you can cure a starving person with vitamin pills. Fix the primary conditions (light, temperature) and just provide a little fertilizer as an aid to growth.

Fertilizers are classified by their N-P-K ratio (Nitrogen, Phosphorus, Potassium). Don't get hung

up on what N-P-K ratio to use (30-10-10, 18-18-18, etc.). The difference between "high nitrogen" 30-10-10, "balanced" 18-18-18, and "blossom booster" 10-30-20 is far less than the difference you make by diluting the stuff and by your frequency of applying it.

In theory, orchids grown in bark need a high-nitrogen fertilizer like 30-10-10 because the micro-organisms breaking down the bark use up the nitrogen, while orchids grown in tree fern or mounted on slabs need a "balanced" ratio like 18-18-18. Then, prior to blooming, a "blossom booster" ratio of 10-30-20 is supposed to encourage spikes and buds. The theory doesn't explain why the bark micro-organisms obligingly stop using up nitrogen during "blossom booster" season.

Most of my orchids are in bark, a few are mounted, and the blooming seasons of my plants varies widely. This would seem to dictate mixing up three different ratios every time I fertilize, to be doled out to the appropriate few plants. In practice this is far too much work. I just mix up one ratio and use it on all my plants. If the plants get enough light, they bloom; otherwise they don't. Food is more important than vitamins.

Some books recommend using fish emulsion. Have you ever smelled fish emulsion? Take my advice and use one of the powdered orchid fertilizers like Peters. Or you can use Miracle-Gro or Miracid. They're just as good, and they're available everywhere.

Larry Kuekes

Send Us Your Orchid Photos

A reminder: please send us your orchid photos for our Orchid Photo Contest. The only rules are: (1) the photo has to include a blooming orchid, and (2) you have to be the photographer. You don't have to be the grower. We want your photos, not some photo that you found on the Internet.

We accept photos all year up until next October. But please send us your photos now, because we like to post our members' photos on the HOS Facebook page, and we do this all year long.

You can email your orchid photos to Larry at lkuekes@gmail.com. Mahalo!

2025 Hilo Orchid Society Orchid Show and Sale

Aloha, I am Kathy Gollaher, the 2025 Orchid Show Chairperson. I will be assisted by Karl Mendonca, who has been our show chair for many years.

Our orchid show will be open to the public Friday, July 25 through Sunday, July 27, 2025. This year's theme is "Orchid Isle: Mauka to Makai."

Why? Jan Anderson inspired me to include a bit of education in our display for the show. The footprint of the display will be the map of Hawaii Island. The mountains will be placed in their actual locations on the map, but they will basically be a series of shelves displaying the orchids with the cooler growing orchids on top, intermediate growing in the middle and warmer growing orchids on the bottom. As Master Gardeners say, the "right plant in the right place."

Orchid Isle: Hawaii Island is the Orchid Isle and we have the Orchid Isle Project to promote people planting orchids in trees. Mauka to Makai will help people to know which orchids to plant where.

Mauka to Makai (from the mountain to the sea) is based on the ancient Hawaiian land divisions: Ahupua'a. They are pie-shaped with the point starting at the top of the mountain and gradually

widening towards the sea.

Our first Show Committee meeting will be in March, but please start thinking about how you can contribute to the show now.

Many thanks to the members who have already volunteered for the 2025 Orchid Show and Sale: Karl Mendonca as Show Chair Assistant, Dana Culleney as Front Gate Chair, Cassie Hernandez as T-Shirt Chair, Leslie Cullins as Demonstrations Chair and Ribbon Judging Chair, Debbi Cannoles as Entertainment Chair, Jan Anderson as Keiki Exhibit Chair, and Kathryn Duval as Membership Chair.

We still need Committee Chairpersons for the following Committees:

- Volunteer Co-Ordinator
- Pre-Show Tickets
- Food Trucks
- Silent Auction
- Sponsorship
- Advertising
- Exit Gate
- Mini-Displays
- Plant Hotel

Please contact Kathy Gollaher at kathygorchids@gmail.com if you would like to chair a committee. This is our show, let's make it a success!

2025 Hilo Orchid Show Artwork

Here is the artwork for the 2025 Hilo Orchid Show, combining orchids with the theme "Orchid Isle: Mauka to Makai." The artist is Karen Thrasher. She is a regular vendor at our orchid shows.



December AOS Awards

Photos by Glen Barfield



Left: *Cattleya trianae* 'Melpomene' AM/AOS, grown by Orchid Eros
Right: *Cattleya coccinea* 'Kai's Gift' AM/AOS, grown by Orchid Eros



Left: *Paph.* Petula's Shadow 'Slipper Zone Monster' AM/AOS, grown by Lehua Orchids
Right: *Cattleya quadricolor* 'Unbelievable' AM/AOS, grown by Orchid Eros



Left: *Phragmipedium* Acker's Angel 'Dixon's Cherubin' AM/AOS, grown by Sandra Dixon
Right: *Paph.* Jeweled Wonder 'Slipper Zone Syn' AM/AOS, grown by Lehua Orchids

HILO ORCHID SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FORM

Please print this form, fill it out, and mail with your dues payment to:

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

Dues are \$20 for individual membership, \$25 for family membership.

Please print clearly:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email for receiving newsletter: _____

Check one:

- Individual membership (\$20)
- Family membership (\$25)

Check one:

- I grant permission to publish this information in the Hilo Orchid Society Directory.
- I do not grant permission to publish this information in the Hilo Orchid Society Directory.

Signature: _____

Optional:

Are you interested in volunteering to help with any of the following activities? Check as many as you like.

- Monthly meetings
- Annual Orchid Show
- Orchid Isle Project (mounting orchids on trees in public spaces)
- Orchids at the Zoo
- Serving as an officer

Hilo Orchid Society Officers and Trustees

President – Ellen Train pecetrain@gmail.com
Vice President – Tom Miranda biophilialk@gmail.com
President-Elect – Kathy Gollaher
Treasurer – Rick Kelley
Recording Secretary – Larry Kuekes
Corresponding Secretary – Dana Culleney

Past President – Karl Mendonca
Trustee 2025-2026 – Kathryn Duval
Trustee 2025-2026 – Lise Dowd lisedowd@aol.com
Trustee 2024-2025 – Sandra Dixon
Trustee 2024-2025 – Cyndi Helton

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



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www.hiloorchidsociety.org