



# Hilo Orchid Society Newsletter

April  
2025

## Next Meeting

Date: Saturday, April 12, 2024  
Time: 1:30 Informal "talk story"  
2:00 Meeting starts  
Place: Kamana Senior Center,  
127 Kamana St., Hilo  
Speaker: Nicholas Rust  
Topic: Habenaria



In 2015, Nicholas Rust was given a Phalaenopsis, which pulled him into the world of orchids. He is especially interested in Habenaria and other terrestrial orchids. In 2018 he started a breeding program for Habenaria, and in 2019 he opened an orchid nursery, RustyExotics Orchids, in Athens, Georgia.

Habenaria orchids grow from a tuber that looks like a small potato. They have a reputation of being difficult to grow, but they are actually very easy if you understand that they have a yearly period when they lose their leaves and go dormant and have to be kept dry. Then when they start new growth they can be watered normally.

Want to learn more about these beautiful and unusual orchids that we seldom see? Don't miss this meeting!

## Kona Orchid Society Show and Sale

The annual Kona Orchid Society show and sale will be held on Saturday, May 3 from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the Old Kona Airport pavilion. Admission is \$2.

Usually the Kona show and sale is on Mother's Day weekend, but this year it is a week earlier.

Come, see, and shop from over 30 vendors of orchids, tropical plants, crafts, and food.



## Orchid Show Items for Sale

The theme of this year's Hilo Orchid Show is *Orchid Isle: Mauka to Makai*.

Orchid show T-shirts and tea towels will be available for sale at the April meeting. Check out the *Mauka to Makai* design!

## Please Pick Up Your Show Tickets

We're asking all HOS members to buy 15 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 \$5 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 can pay online at our website [www.hiloorchidsociety.org](http://www.hiloorchidsociety.org), or you can mail your payment (\$45 if you use all 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

## What is an Orchid? Part 3

Last month I talked about the technical definition of what makes an orchid an orchid: it's a monocot with a column. But there are several other characteristics of orchids, which, if not technically significant, are more interesting. This list is just a taste; I'll talk more about these in future columns:

- Almost all orchids have a lip that is modified to look different from the other petals. Often it is the lip that gives the orchid its exotic appearance, such as the ruffled tubular lip of the *Cattleya* or the slipper pouch of the *Paphiopedilum*.
- In other plants, pollen is dust-like, but in orchids, the pollen is stuck together in little waxy balls called pollinia. When an insect touches the column, the pollinia stick to the insect. When a second insect touches the column, any pollinia stuck to the insect will be deposited on the stigma, which is even stickier, thus pollinating the flower.
- Most orchid buds twist 180 degrees so that the lip, originally on top, ends up at the bottom of the flower. This twisting process is called resupination and is common in orchids but rare in other flowers.
- Unlike almost all other plants, most orchids do not grow in soil. In particular, most tropical orchids are epiphytes (clinging to trees) or lithophytes (clinging to rocks). Their roots like being exposed to the air. Even the terrestrial orchids, which grow on the forest floor, often spread their roots into the layer of leaf litter and not the underlying soil. This is why we grow orchids in loose stuff like chopped bark, not dirt.
- Orchid seeds are microscopic in size, like dust, and, unlike other plants, do not contain any food reserve to help the embryo grow its first leaf and roots. These seeds are produced in huge numbers (one seedpod can contain over a million



*Laelia anceps*

seeds) but very few survive. The windblown orchid seed has to land next to the right species of fungus, which provides a food supply until it can grow leaves.

- Although many orchids provide nectar to lure pollinators, other orchids do not provide their pollinators with any reward but instead trick the insects into pollinating the flower. This is rare in other plants but common in orchids. Some of the techniques employed by the orchids are almost beyond belief, such as the *Ophrys* orchids of Europe that resemble certain female bees in both appearance and scent, fooling the male bees into attempting to mate with one flower after another, which results in pollination.
  - The structure of many orchid flowers is designed to force the pollinator through a specific path that results in the flower being pollinated. This accounts for many of the unusual lip structures. For example, the pouch of the *Cypripedium* (lady's slipper) has a slit that is easy for a bee to crawl into, but not out again. To get out, the bee heads for the opening at the top of the pouch, which forces the bee up against the column.
- Even more amazing is *Coryanthes*, the "bucket orchid". It has a large lip like a bucket that fills with liquid secreted by a special gland. The bee, attracted by the orchid's fragrance, sometimes slips into the bucket, drenches its wings so it can't fly out, and cannot climb up the slippery sides. So far this sounds like a carnivorous plant. But the orchid's purpose is more subtle. There is one – and only one – way out of the bucket. At the back of the bucket is a little step that the bee climbs up, leading to the escape route. The bee has to squeeze past the column and thus pollinates the flower.

Larry Kuekes



## Orchids on the March Show Table

Photos by Dana Culleney



Left: *Paraphalaenopsis labukensis* 'Dorothea', grown by Jeff Fendenz  
Right: *Cattleya amethystoglossa*, grown by Glen Barfield



Left: *Acineta superba*, grown by Sherry Partlow  
Right: *Dendrobium Yellow Song* 'Canary Yellow', grown by Steve Meyer

## March AOS Awards

Photos by Glen Barfield



Left: *Brassocattleya* Richard Mueller 'Stars and Stripes' AM/AOS, grown by Orchid Eros  
Right: *Cattleya* Dupreana 'Big Pinky' HCC/AOS, grown by Island Sun Orchids



Left: *Cattleya amethystoglossa* h.f. *flammea* 'Lue's Fire' AM/AOS, grown by GLA Orchids  
Right: *Cattleya phisteri* (*pfisteri*) 'Orchid Eros' CHM/AOS, grown by Orchid Eros



Left: *Cattleya praestans* h.f. *rubra* 'Sebastian Ferrell' AM/AOS, grown by Orchid Eros  
Right: *Cattleya walkeriana* h.f. *flammea* 'Exibida' AM/AOS, grown by Orchid Eros





Left: *Dendrobium* Lim Tee Hooi 'Matty' AM/AOS, grown by Island Sun Orchids  
Center: *Dendrobium* Lim Tee Hooi 'Tangerine Dream' AM/AOS, grown by Island Sun Orchids  
Right: *Gongora catilligera* 'Descent of Dragons' AM/AOS, grown by Tim Brown



Left: *Dendrobium* Lim Tee Hooi 'Dale' AM/AOS, grown by Island Sun Orchids  
Right: *Guaritonia* Why Not 'Not named yet' AM/AOS, grown by GLA Orchids



Left: *Paphiopedilum* Oriental Legacy 'Slipper Zone Co-opted' HCC/AOS, grown by Lehua Orchids  
Right: *Paphiopedilum tigrinum* 'It's Gr-r-eat' HCC/AOS, grown by Jungle Mist Orchids

## Hilo Orchid Society Officers and Trustees

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