



Hilo Orchid Society Newsletter

February
2026

Date: Sat., February 14, 2024
Time: **1:30** Informal “talk story”
2:00 Meeting starts
Place: Kamana Senior Center,
127 Kamana St., Hilo
Speaker: Larry Kuekes
Program: Orchid Hunting in the
Land of Oz

In 2024, Larry Kuekes and Tom Mirenda took a trip to Australia – the land of Oz – where they attended an orchid conference, but they also visited orchid growers and went orchid hunting to see native Australian orchids blooming in the wild.

Many of you know Larry. He has done many things for the Hilo Orchid Society, including being President, creating our yearly Orchid Isle Calendar, and producing this newsletter that you read every month.



Larry grew up in Connecticut, graduated from Yale University, and worked with computers in Hartford, Connecticut for most of his career. He got into orchids in Connecticut and was President of the Connecticut Orchid Society.

After visiting Hawaii many times, he knew he wanted to move here when he retired. But which island? He chose Hilo on the Big Island partly because it had a reputation for being rainy. When you grow orchids, that’s a good thing, because you can grow orchids outdoors here, and Mother Nature waters them.

Want to know why Australia is called Oz, and what Larry and Tom saw there? Don’t miss this meeting!

Dues Are Due

Just a friendly reminder that your membership dues for 2026 are due. New members who joined at our Orchid Show at Edith Kanaka’ole Stadium last July and members who joined in September 2025 or later are considered paid through 2026 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 (cash, check, or credit card).
- (3) Fill out the form on page 5 and mail it in with your payment (address is on the form).

Mahalo!

Bylaws Revision Committee

The Board has appointed Larry Kuekes chairman of a Bylaws Revision Committee to look into updating our Bylaws and our Policies document. Larry will be seeking other volunteers willing to serve on the committee.

Examples of things that prompted this committee include a restriction in the Bylaws that only officers are permitted to countersign HOS checks, which no longer makes sense, and a section in the Policies about a Trophy Account which was eliminated as a separate account over a year ago.

The committee will examine the Bylaws and Policies from beginning to end to identify any other things that may be outdated and need revision.

Proposed changes to the Bylaws must be approved by the Board, and then they must be approved by two-thirds of the members at a regular HOS meeting. You will be notified later this year when this happens.

Orchid Stories

Darwin's Orchid

After Charles Darwin published *The Origin of Species*, his groundbreaking book setting forth the theory of evolution, his next book was, of all things, a book on orchids, called *The Various Contrivances by Which Orchids Are Fertilised by Insects*. Was this the work of a dilettante, flitting from one subject to another? Not at all. In fact, this book presents supporting evidence for the theory of evolution. Darwin happened to pick orchids as the subject, perhaps because orchids were popular in Victorian England.

I have read this book, but I don't recommend it, because frankly, it's very dull – descriptions of minute flower structures of species after species, genus after genus, for 300 pages. But there is one passage that has become famous:

“The Angraecum sesquipedale, of which the large six-rayed flowers, like stars formed of snow-white wax, have excited the admiration of travellers in Madagascar, must not be passed over. A green, whip-like nectary of astonishing length hangs down beneath the labellum. In several flowers sent me by Mr. Bateman I found the nectaries eleven and a half inches long, with only the lower inch and a half filled with nectar. What can be the use, it may be asked, of a nectary of such disproportionate length?”

Darwin went on to explain that there must exist a moth with a tongue at least ten inches long that pollinates the flower. He found that if a moth merely inserted its thin proboscis into the nectary (the nectar tube), it would not remove the pollen; the moth needed to actually press its head up against the flower in order for the orchid to be pollinated. The orchid forces the moth to do that by keeping the nectar at the bottom of the tube, so the moth has to insert its tongue as far as it can.

Now comes the interesting evolutionary observation. Darwin knew that in all creatures, variation occurs that can be inherited, though he didn't know why (we now know it's due to genetic mutations). He reasoned that some of the moths that pollinate this orchid may have shorter tongues and some longer. The ones with longer tongues will be able to reach more food, so more of them will



Angraecum sesquipedale with its nearly foot-long long nectar tube. Photo by Larry Kuekes.

survive. And some plants of this orchid species may have shorter nectar tubes and some longer. Remember that if the moth doesn't stick its tongue all the way in, the orchid doesn't get pollinated. So only the orchids with the longer tubes will set seed. The result is a kind of “arms race”, where over time, both the moth's tongue and the orchid's tube keep getting longer and longer. This idea of two species evolving together is now called co-evolution. Separately, the orchid's long tube and the moth's long tongue just seem silly. Together, in the light of the theory of evolution, everything makes sense.

Some entomologists ridiculed Darwin for predicting a moth with a ten-inch tongue, but twenty years after Darwin's death, the moth was found. In 1992, 130 years after Darwin predicted it, the moth was finally observed pollinating *Angraecum sesquipedale*, now fittingly called Darwin's orchid.

Larry Kuekes

Orchids on the January Show Table

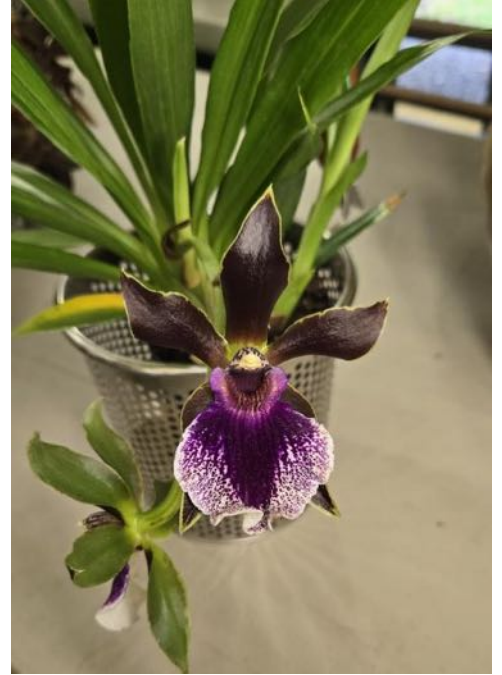
Photos by Dana Culleney



Dendrobium sanderai



Stenorhynchus speciosa,
grown by Tom Miranda



Zygopetalum Debbie DeMelo
'Honolulu Baby'



Left: *Ludisia discolor*, a.k.a. the jewel orchid

Right: Rlc. Gabrielle de Lioncourt, grown by Dana Culleney



Aerangis biloba



Angraecum sesquipedale,
grown by Tom Mirenda



Paphiopedilum Chiu Hua Dancer



Dendrochilum glumaceum



Rlc. (*digbyana* x Ports of Paradise)

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

Storage Question

Hilo Orchid Society is paying over \$400 per month to rent a 7'x10' storage unit. It mostly contains folding tables that we use in our annual orchid show, but it also contains a few boxes of other supplies.

We're wondering if one of our members would be able to provide storage for these items. If you don't have a shed or similar facility to house the items, HOS would be willing to buy a small outdoor storage unit that could be put up on your property.

Interested? Please talk to President Kathy Gollaher or Show Chair Karl Mendonca, or send us an email at hiloorchidsociety@gmail.com. Mahalo!

Zoo Volunteers Needed

Eric Guttormsen leads our efforts to place and maintain orchids in Hilo's Pana'ewa Rainforest Zoo and Gardens. He is looking for volunteers to help water the orchids. Watering is only needed during extended dry periods, once every three days or so. It should take 30 to 45 minutes each time.

Eric has been doing the watering, but he will be away for two to three months once or twice a year. Volunteers need to self-motivated.

Watering can be done with an electric-powered sprayer on wheels that is easily filled from taps near the orchids. No special skill or strength is required.

If you would like to help at the zoo, contact Eric at read4mulch@yahoo.com. Mahalo!

January AOS Awards



Left: *Zygonia* (Freestyle Meadows x Happy Bay) 'Shogun's Happy Face' HCC/AOS, grown by Shogun Hawaii



Right: *Clowesia* Grace Dunn 'Gargantuan' AM/AOS, grown by Matthew Sylva

Master Gardener Event



Above, Katherine Duval and Jennifer Pirie manned the Hilo Orchid Society table in the East Hawaii Master Gardener Plant Sale on January 25.

Patricia Dunn, Janice Hidano, Dorothea Fendetz, Charles Mans and Kathy Gollaher also helped out. They passed out information about the Hilo Orchid Society and answered questions. Mahalo to all the volunteers!

Photos by Glen Barfield



Rhyncattleanthe Golden Mist FCA 'Na Pua O Ka La' AM/AOS, grown by Matthew Sylva



Coelogyne (formerly *Dendrochilum*) *wenzellii* 'Shogun' CCM/AOS, grown by Shogun Hawaii

Hilo Orchid Society Officers and Trustees

President – Kathy Gollaher
Vice President – Tom Miranda
President-Elect – Steve Meyer
Treasurer – Lori Fuller
Recording Secretary – Larry Kuekes
Corresponding Secretary – Dana Culleney

Past President – Ellen Train
Trustee 2025-2026 – Kathryn Duval
Trustee 2025-2026 – Lise Dowd
Trustee 2026-2027 – Daniel Bark
Trustee 2026-2027 – Dorothea Fendentz

Hilo Orchid Society
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FIRST CLASS MAIL

Visit us on the web at
www.hiloorchidsociety.org

Contact us at
hiloorchidsociety@gmail.com