



Southern California Orchid Species Society

www.socalorchidspecies.com

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Newsletter deadline is the 25th of
the month prior to the month of
issue.

Meeting is 2nd Sunday of each month, at 2 PM

Volume 34, Issue 8

Placentia Library
411 E. Chapman Ave, Placentia

August 2011

August 14, 2011

Growing Masevallias

Betty P. Kelepecz

Betty P. Kelepecz has been an orchid hobbyist in Southern California for over almost 30 years. She has grown orchids in Long Beach and Huntington Beach and since 2003 has been growing orchids in the Point Loma area of San Diego. Betty started raising orchids in the early 1980's when her husband Steve and co-orchid grower brought home a discarded cutting/keiki of a red Epidendrum he found in a trash bin in the alley beside their home in Long Beach. He planted the unimpressive and bloomless cutting on a moss-covered rock he had been growing for over 10 years and confidently predicted that it would bloom beautifully in no time. When the epidendrum actually bloomed and then, never stopped blooming, the disbelieving Betty became an orchid enthusiast and Steve's and her collection of orchids has continued to grow with the unwavering passion so often accompanying that first orchid discovery.



Masdevallia veitchiana



Masdevallia decumana

Among their 800 + orchids which grow outside, in a small greenhouse and a recently constructed shade structure in San Diego; Betty and Steve grow a large selection of species orchids. Betty enjoys the challenge of replicating the oft-challenging environments required by species orchids and particularly enjoys the challenge of growing pleurothallids. Since 2005 she has become a successful Masdevallia and Dracula grower.

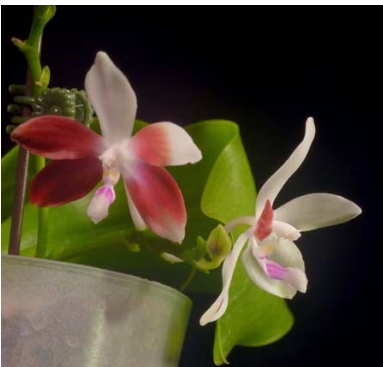
See: **Betty Kelepecz**, Page 3

Speaker's Choice

July speaker Paul Tuskes selected two plants as his "Speaker's Choice", both grown by Roberta Fox. He selected *Dichaea glauca* as the one that he would most like to take home, and selected *Phalaenopsis tetraspis* for being particularly unusual.



This *Phal. tetraspis* has large red splotches on the flower segments, which are highly variable, even on the same inflorescence. Usually, this species is mostly white, with just small flecks of red on the petals and/or sepals. Dr. Tuskes thought that possibly, this plant had *Phalaenopsis speciosa* in its ancestry. He had worked with the late Eric Christenson on a botanical description of *Phal. speciosa*, based upon herbarium specimens and a few published drawings, since the species is probably extinct in its native habitat of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and no cultivated specimens could be located. He felt that the color of the spots, and lip shape were reminiscent



Phalaenopsis tetraspis

of *Phal. speciosa*, and the possibility that there might be one of these plants in existence is quite exciting. Roberta obtained this plant from Norman's Orchids, and recalls that it was a selfing of a plant with a particularly dark red flower. Orchidwiz indicates that there is a *Phal. tetraspis* var. *speciosa* (a synonym for *Phal. tetraspis*) and *Phal. speciosa* var. *tetraspis* (a synonym for *Phal. speciosa*). So the two species are clearly closely related. *Phal. tet-*

raspis is also native to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, as well as Sumatra. According to Charles Baker (in Orchidwiz) it grows on mangrove and other trees in muddy swamps. Plants are found hanging from branches a few feet above the water, where humidity is always high. Roberta grows her plant in an intermediate greenhouse, with the other *Phalaenopsis* species.

Dichaea glauca grows over a very large area from Mexico through central America and Caribbean islands, at a wide range of altitudes. The flowers are very fragrant.



Dichaea glauca

continue to grow and bloom in the subsequent year, so should not be cut until it is very dry. According to Charles Baker, the temperature extremes in its native habitat are 88 deg. F down to 31 deg. F, so this is a very temperature-tolerant species.

Roberta grows this plant outside, in filtered sun. It grows vigorously, putting out several new growths each year. The lower leaves on an older growth may start to look dead, but it may



From the Member's Corner

Let's welcome Dana Seelig, who came as a guest on a couple of Sundays and just joined our family and Lisa Humphreys from Encinitas has also joined our group. Please remember the auction in October when you're going through your collection; if you have something that you think may do well for someone else consider donating it. Someone will end up with several of my divisions and some plants that would do better in another environment. Let's all contribute something to make this a success.

Edie Gulrich, Membership Secretary

President's Message

Hi orchid fanatics!

This has been an interesting summer, not a big difference between our spring with the drizzle the other day...that marine layer was rather deep! Bill the pipe man was here to set up the new shade cloth area just before it did get real wet. That was an exciting day, 4 people from 7:30 in the morning to around 4:00 in the afternoon. What a change in the orchid area, the size has increased a lot and it is brighter out there but cooler. That shade cloth is miraculous. The space will be fun to work with and changes will take place. Enough of the shade cloth except that it floats with the air movements and is truly remarkable.

Please don't forget the auction is coming up in Oct. we want this to be a big success so invite friends and relatives, also when repotting or dividing your orchids save the division for the auction, you never know what great plants you have to share and people want.

Our speaker was very interesting and knowledgeable about orchids and he answered many questions on Encyclias plus great pictures of the flowers.

Our show and tell time is always a favorite so many interesting and different species, it is truly a love affair with these incredible flowers. Thanks to all who bring in flowers each month, you are all really appreciated. Thank you actually even if you only

bring in one plant we love to see it. We will be introducing a handbook that can answer many questions on growing orchids for newcomers and old comers; it is an informational booklet that is loaded. This is a sneak preview a little early to whet your appetite for something some of us can use. Looking forward to getting one.

By the way, we all like to eat and especially at break time. How about helping Joy by bringing in goodies, it doesn't have to be a lot but if more bring in something we will have enough for everyone. We'll see you at the next meeting with goodies in hand and plants in the other, see you there and bring a friend.

Barbara Olson, President

Betty Kelepecz, From Page 1

Betty began growing pleurothallids after she joined the San Diego County Orchid Society in 2005 and was informed by several members that her home in Point Loma was a good environment for growing her favorite but not yet successfully grown orchid, *Masdevallia veitchiana*. She was also encouraged to join the Society's Species Group.

As a result, Betty began growing *Masdevallias* outside in her side yard, under a small overhang which partially shaded the side patio area of the house. That particular location has become a perfect micro-climate for shade-loving, cool-growing orchids and Betty's *Masdevallia* collection has since grown to 150 almost exclusively species *Masdevallias*. She also grows over 30 species of *Draculas* and several of her *Masdevallis* and *Draculas* have been awarded American Orchid Society awards. Betty has also established a small but, quite functional orchid flasking lab in her home where she has been hobby flasking and growing predominantly species orchids for about three years.

Betty's talk will be on growing *Masdevallias* and will include a discussion and show and tell of the subgenera of the genus *Masdevallia*. She will discuss the transi-

tion from being a beginner *Masdevallia* grower (since we all have been a beginner grower of one species or another) to a more seasoned *Masdevallia* grower and the lessons she has learned along the way, as well as how to extend that success to the growing of predominantly cool-growing species including *Draculas*.



Dracula polyphemus

Editor's Potting Bench

Of course I love to see my orchids bloom. When asked "What is my favorite orchid?" the answer is "Whatever is in bloom at the moment". But the anticipation of incipient blooms is almost as thrilling. I love to go out among my plants in the cool of the morning, cup of coffee in hand, and search for new sheaths and spikes and buds that might have just emerged enough for me to see them. Then I can start counting down to when they pop. But, especially at this time of year, I am also thrilled to see the emergence of new roots, especially on plants that I potted a few months ago. Maybe it's just being maternal, but all those beautiful green or pink root tips signal, more than anything, that I have done something right (or maybe just avoided doing something wrong), and that over the next few months (or years) my efforts will be rewarded. It's a bit like the aroma of brewing coffee, or a whiff of barbecue. The anticipation provides a reward that is related to, but independent of, the conclusion.

One secret to always having something in bloom is to have a lot of plants. Another is to acquire them at different times of the year. They will most likely re-



Dracula erythrochaete



Dracula erythrochaete close up

bloom at about the same time in subsequent years. Of course, sequential bloomers, or plants with very long-lasting flowers help too. I have had some modest success with some *Dracula* species, which produce new inflorescences, or rebloom on old ones, over several months. One is *Dracula polyphemus*. (Photo on Page 3) The large, dramatic flower doesn't last very long for me, but a few weeks later, I have another. Also, the flower tends to close in the heat of the day, but for several days running, I am delighted when I see it fully open again in the morning. The first *Dracula* with which I had success, and which has been blooming reliably for me over the five years that I have owned it, is *Dracula erythrochaete*. The flowers aren't large or bright, but the close-up camera shows that they are delightfully fuzzy. Like *Masdevallias*, the *Draculas* would probably like to be a bit cooler than what they experience in my yard, but with shade, and heavy misting in the middle of the day, there are some that are forgiving of less than perfection. A technique that seems to be really helping my *Masdevallias* is to use clay pots, which help to provide evaporative cooling to the roots when it is hot. Among the showy *Masdevallias*, I have had the best luck with several plants of *Masdevallia coccinea*. They are reliable bloomers for me. *Masdevallia veitchiana* grows reasonably well, but doesn't bloom every year. Another really successful one has been *Masdevallia mendozae*. Not only is it reliable, it produces lots of flowers, and they are very long-lasting. I look forward to learning a lot more about growing these beautiful orchids. My *Masdevallias* aren't doing much right now, but there are spikes on the *Dracs*. And I hope that at least a few of those spikes that I'm seeing right now, choose to bloom in time for the meeting.

Roberta Fox, Editor

Calendar of Events

* See flyer at www.socalorchidspecies.com, select the [Events](#) link

- South Bay Orchid Society Show and Sale***
 September 17-18, 9 AM to 5 PM
 South Bay Botanic Gardens, 26300 Crenshaw Blvd, Palos Verdes
 Adults \$8, Seniors \$6 (includes admission to the gardens), Free Parking
www.southbayorchidsociety.com
- Fascination of Orchids Show and Sale***
 September 24-25, 10 AM to 5 PM
 South Coast Plaza Village, NE corner of Bear and Sunflower (where Costa Mesa meets Santa Ana)
 Information: www.ocorchidshow.com or (949) 735-2930
- Southland Orchid Show***
 October 14-16
 Huntington Library and Botanic Gardens, San Marino
- San Diego County Orchid Society Show and Plant Sale***
 October 22-23, Sat. 12 PM to 5 PM, Sun 10 AM to 4 PM
 Casa del Prado Building, Rm. 101, Balboa Park, San Diego
 Parking and admission FREE
www.sdorchids.com/shows.htm

Masdevallia mendozae





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