

Greater Whorled Pogonia

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The Newsletter of the AMHERST ORCHID SOCIETY

An Affiliate of the American Orchid Society

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May Meeting Upstairs at Munson Memorial Library, Amherst

1046 South East St, Amherst, MA

Sunday, May 17 at 2:00

Members with the last name I, J, K, and L please bring a snack to share

Save the date for summer cookouts!

June 7th at the Grays' in Williamsville, VT

July 12th at Joe and Marge Maciaszek in Easthampton, MA

President's Message: May 2026

Dear Members,

I hope everyone truly enjoyed Steve Steiner's presentation on Pleurothallid orchids last month. It is always a treat to dive deep into such a diverse group of plants, and I am personally very excited to see everyone's future success with this alliance!

We have a wonderful lineup of meetings and social gatherings as we move into the warmer months. Please mark your calendars for the following:

- **May Meeting (May 17th):** We are thrilled to welcome **Christian Lasage** from Connecticut. Christian will be joining us to discuss the vital topic of **orchid viruses**—an essential subject for any serious grower looking to maintain a healthy collection.
- **June Picnic:** Our annual June picnic will be held at the **Grays' house in Vermont** at **1:00 PM**. Please bring along a favorite side dish or dessert to share with the group.
- **July Picnic:** We will gather at **Joe's house in Easthampton** any time after **12:00 PM**. Please bring a dish to share and a folding chair for seating.

As always, don't forget to bring your blooming orchids for the **show table**! It is one of the highlights of our meetings to see what is currently in flower across our members' collections.

May Care Tips: Preparing for the Transition

As the days lengthen and temperatures rise, May is a pivotal month for orchid care in our region.

In the Home:

With the sun sitting higher in the sky, be mindful of increased light intensity through south and west-facing windows. You may need to move plants back a few inches or add a sheer curtain to prevent leaf scorch. As home temperatures rise, check your plants more frequently for watering needs, as they will likely begin drying out faster than they did in April.

In the Greenhouse:

This is the time to ensure your cooling and ventilation systems are in top shape. If you use shade cloth, ensure it is properly deployed to manage the midday heat. For those planning to move orchids outdoors for the summer, wait until night temperatures consistently stay above **10°C (50°F)**. Before they go out, take the opportunity to repot any plants that have finished blooming and are showing new root growth.

I look forward to seeing you all on the 17th!

Stacy Soldato

President Amherst Orchid Society

Repotting Your Orchids: Do You Have a (Disaster) Plan?

Article and photos by Steven Kirincich (skirincich4@gmail.com)

Sometimes I think growing orchids is like a wild seesaw ride with strong emotional ups and downs meant to test one's mental fortitude. Back in the summer of 2025, I was growing my orchids in the backyard, and they appeared to be thriving. Summer does not generally reward us with a bounty of flowers, but there is satisfaction from the emergence of new growths, the development of sheaths, and perhaps additional signs of health and vigor. I was particularly excited to see that my *Cattleya Chamberlainiana* (1881) would likely produce flowers sometime in the fall. My record of growing bare root orchids is somewhat "suspect," and the prospect of flowers was quite exciting. Fast forward a few months and amazing, fragrant flowers had emerged (see photo). I had clearly done everything right and my reward was undeniable. The timing was perfect since I could proudly show this at the next monthly meeting and perhaps at the fall MOS Show. I confess to seeing signs of scale but gave little thought about the health of the plant. A month or two later, several leaves started to turn yellow. I eventually pulled it out of the pot to learn that the only healthy roots were the ones growing outside the pot. Was I blinded by the prospect of flowers?



I am not a crazy compulsive waterer prone to "killing with kindness," but it is fair to say that my cultural practices and choices are erratic. I have had reasonable success growing catasetinae by accepting the months of near total dryness, but I am clearly naive about the needs of some of my *Cattleyas* – particularly the ones in larger pots. I attribute my challenges (failures) described above to blindly thinking that all plants can handle more water when growing outside, and to putting them on the same watering schedule regardless of pot size and media choice. My second or third failure was not reacting quickly to a plant that should not be dropping leaves in a manner consistent with a plant moving towards dormancy.

A poor cultural decision demands a measured, dramatic change that should be a clear break from the past. If you can formulate a theory to explain your current predicament, you can chart a new course that will set up your plant for success. Without a theory or at least a hunch, your choice moving forward may be random and perhaps impulsive. Some decisions will be better than others, but plants rarely rebound from inaction.

In the process of repotting some of my orchids, sobering hindsight often helps distinguish the good choices from the real stinkers. Several years ago, I purchased several *Dendrobium* species that were mounted. These plants clearly did well in the care of the professional grower, but for me, they showed no signs of growth over the next 18 months. Should I stay the course or do something dramatic? *Dendrobium* culture orthodoxy suggests this genus does not appreciate root disturbance, but my plants were undeniably inching closer to failure to thrive status. One-by-one, I soaked my mounted plants, peeled them from their mounts, and moved them to pots. Only time would tell if I had deftly steered away from or directly towards the Bermuda Triangle of orchid culture. Within 12 to 18 months, all the plants had survived and produced new roots. The photo above of *Dendrobium tapiniense* is a source of pride because it has rebounded from my demounting procedure. When I made this decision, I was also acutely aware that this species is rarely available in the US, and the pain of failure would not be relieved by a replacement.



In my second example of cultural decisions, I repotted several Cattleyas using a medium course grade of bark with no added charcoal or perlite. Change was necessary, but time would prove that my media choice was not prudent. The media structure was not sufficiently open (coarse), remained wet for an extended period, and the roots struggled. Did I forget to mention that some pots were probably too large? Note to self: do not panic when one leaf turns yellow but do act or ask questions if multiple leaves turn yellow. On a basic level, I think this cultural decision was well-intentioned, but the execution was a total failure. I freely admit that my cultural choices are somewhat improvisational and do succeed at times, but there is a random quality to my choices.

Back in November of 2025, I attended the Orchid Digest Symposium in California. This event prompted me to write about Arthur Chadwick's use of sphagnum moss to grow Cattleyas. Fred Clarke (Sunset Valley Orchids) gave a talk which included many dazzling photos of his newest hybrids. He also spoke about Cattleya culture. I was familiar with many of his cultural talking points, but one slide from Fred's presentation has been stuck in my head because of its simplicity and clarity. As shown below, Fred suggests using a 3:1 ratio of bark to perlite, with the choice of media size being dictated by pot size. The larger the pot, the slower the media dries, and therefore, the larger pots are best matched with the coarser grades of media. Orchids need both air and water, and these recommendations are an attempt to mimic the experiences of epiphytes in nature. I am a strong believer that orchid roots can better cope with persistent moisture if the media is sufficiently coarse enough to allow the roots access to air. These media choices may make it easier for growers to water plants in all sizes of pots on the same schedule. I will be adhering to these guidelines for the foreseeable future.

Is this the final word on choosing potting media? Probably not, but I do feel this information may help eliminate the random/improvisational aspect to some of my potting choices. Will these exact recommendations work for every plant?

Potting mixes

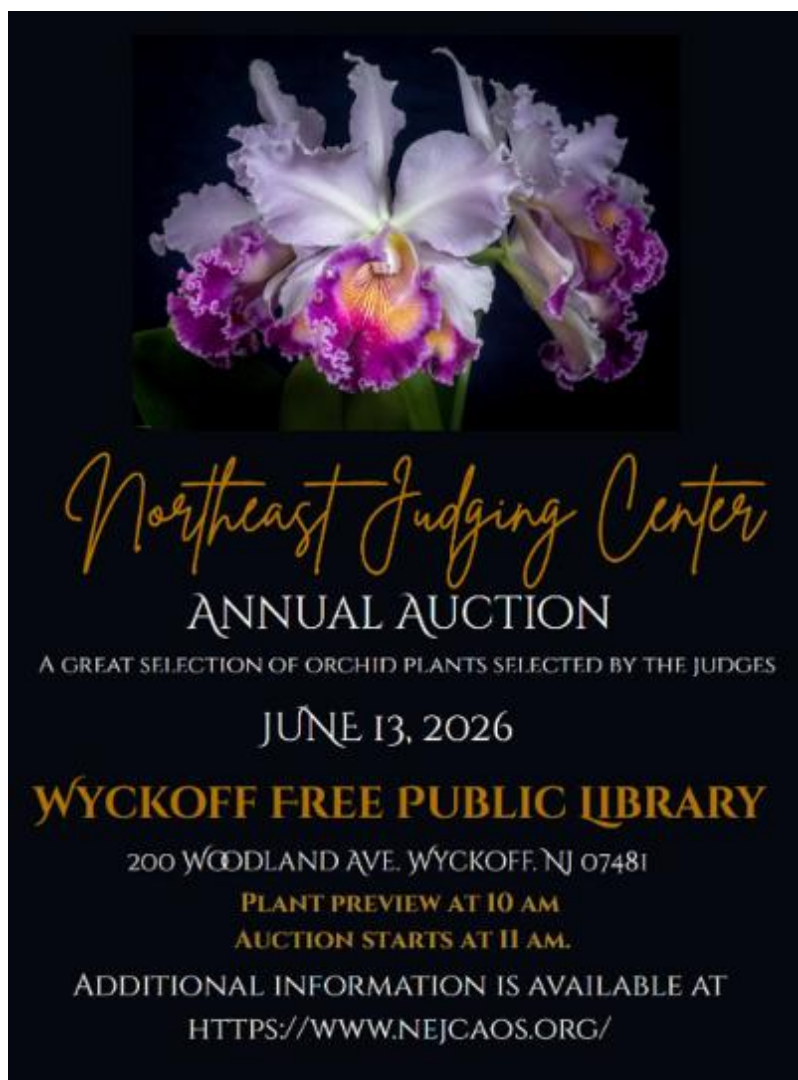
3 parts bark (xxx) and 1 part perlite (x)

Pot size	Bark			Perlite		
	fine	medium	large	#2	#3	#4
◆ 2"- 3"	xxx			x		
◆ 4"		xxx			x	
◆ 5"-8"			xxx			x

These potting mix proportions maintain a uniform % of air space around the roots regardless of the varying container sizes

Maybe not, but this guidance will help growers avoid the perils of slow-drying media – particularly in the case of large, specimen plants. Perhaps you can dodge or minimize the painful lessons that are the result of a watering schedule that is conflict with the potting media composition. As a large-scale grower, Fred indicated that he has time limits that make it impossible to have different watering schedules, and his media choices have been designed so that large pots will dry as quickly as smaller pots.

If your supply of potting media is running short, consider placing orders with a vendor at the 2026 New Hampshire Orchid Society Show or other regional shows. From my experience organizing a bulk media order this summer, I can attest to the fact that the cost of shipping media can be significant. I am currently selling #3 and #4 perlite at a price set to cover travel expenses. Feel free to contact me with questions or comments.



A glimpse of the 78(!) plants our talented members brought in for the April meeting. Photo: Zoe

Show Table April 2026

Anne Grygorcewicz Guarechea Black Comet Josh Gutierrez Schoenorchis gemmate Chiloschista sp. Cleisostoma discolor Betsy Higgins Coelogyne flaccida Den. Oriental Smile 'Butterfly' C. Aliza Reder (Orpetii x Minipet) Rth Love Passion 'Island Romance' Clity Ethel's Paradise Sarco. Hot Santa x Burgundy on Ice Epi. Pacific Charisma (Pacific Challenge x Fairyland) Maxillaria tenuifolia Paph QF Spacewalk Ann Jordan Paph Kohala (Spring Citron x Hualalei) Phal Tydares Cute Beauty (Tydares Elegance x Yu Pin White Swan) Maryanne Laukaitis Laelia Santa Barbara Sunset Laelia Canariensis Den. linguiforme Paph Corro Beauty C. Land of Enchantment Paph esquirolei album 'Bear-3' Paph villosum Diane Leonard Potinara Cosmo Sound	Zoe Loughman Phal Bronze Maiden Fdk. Painted Leopard #1 Fdk. Painted Leopard #2 Barkeria whartoniana Laelia lundii Blc Laughing Boy Renanthera monachica Joe Maciaszek Paph Magically Fred Phal Taisudo Anna Phal NoID Phal NoID Den. Memoria Sue Golan (Roy Tokunaga x aberrans0 Epi. Islander's Delight Paph QF Elizabeth Den. pierardii C. Aliza Reder Phal Sogo Lawrence Dave Marinelli Blc Mary Vaux Walcott Rth What About Love Maxillaria arbuscula Maxillaria praestans Maxillaria variabilis Maxillaria eliator Rchg. M & D Fliss Blc Burdekin Wonder 'Lakeland White' C. Louise Odom Liz Marinelli Den. petiolatum 'Laura Hansen' Pleione Tongariro Masd. Ziegler's Love 'Pink Glow' Tolumnia Jairak Firm 'Pink Lady' Blc. Fritz Nickolaus 'Spring Dance'	Carol Mentos Sedirea japonica Den. loddigesii Den. pierardii x loddigesii Phal Tying Shin Smart Den. Love Charm 'Famous' Holly Rainaud-Loss Cym. misericors x Golden Elf Lynn Reynolds Jumellea sp. Stacy Soldato Maxillaria tenuifolia Pot. Lisa Taylor Gallis C. Blue-eyed Spotted Leopard (C. Leolodiglossa x C. Little Leopard) Steve Steiner Restrepia tsubotae Encyclia vitellina Specklinia picta 'Gigi' Lyc. Campbellii Pleur. viduata 'Selby' Masd. Orange Glow Lyc. angelae (brevispatha) Paph delenatii Pleur. brighamii Scaphosepalum gibberosum Jeanne Usereau Lc Rogo Lc Angel Love 'Pinky' Arpophyllum giganteum 'Penn Valley' Mike Walunas Cym. Anne Miller 'Rejoice'
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Arpophyllum giganteum 'Penn Valley', Jeanne;
photo by Liz



Jumellea sp., Lynn; photo by Liz



Pot. Lisa Taylor Gallis, Stacy; photo by Liz



Chiloschista sp., Josh; photo by Liz



Renanthera monachica, Zoe; photo by Liz



C. Land of Enchantment, Maryanne; photo by Liz



Den. Pierardii, Joe; photo by Liz



Den. petiolatum 'Laura Hansen', Liz; photo by Liz



Lc Angel Love 'Pinky', Jeanne; photo by Liz



Potinara Cosmo Sound, Diane; photo by Liz



Masd. Ziegler's Love 'Pink Glow', Liz; photo by Liz



Epi. Pacific Charisma (Pacific Challenge x Fairyland), Betsy; photo by Liz