

# Orchid Culture Meeting I:

Preparation for the 2020 Growing Season  
with Emphasis on Cymbidiums

# Outline of Talk

- General Preparations (Supplies and Plants) - Alex
- Repotting Basics – Alex
- Cymbidium Culture Basics – Alex
- Cymbidium Culture Experiences –Jerry
- Cymbidium Repotting and Dividing Demo - Jerry

# General Preparations

- The main orchid growing/repotting season begins around mid February and goes thru much of the summer depending on what types of orchid you grow.
- Now is the best time to stock up on supplies before the fun begins
  - Plastic Pots and Baskets – buy new and/or clean pots with soap, then bleach to prevent virus contamination
  - Clay Pots – clean with soap then heat in oven to 450°F for 2 hrs.
  - Media – bark, perlite, coconut husk chips (need 3 washing prior to use to remove salts), sphagnum moss (New Zealand preferred)
  - Fertilizer, Disposable Gloves, Plant Tags, Newspaper, Single Edge Razor Blades or Shears, Disinfectants (tri-sodium phosphate bleach, Phytosan 20), etc.
- Repair/clean repotting benches and benches or areas for maintaining your plants, remove all debris and weeds from growing areas, make repairs on greenhouses, etc.
- Plants – Inspect for fungal and bacterial infections and remove infected growths before it spreads. Look for scale, slug and snail damage and treat with pesticides or bait as appropriate. Identify and tag overgrown plants in need of repotting or others that have broken down medium. Consider discarding plants that have done poorly or struggled over the last years growing season.

# Repotting Basics

- A strong, healthy root system is of prime importance for successful growing, maintaining and blooming of your orchids.
- The best time to repot and divide a plant is during active periods of root growth which is usually at the beginning of the growing season when the plants start to put out roots with green or reddish tips.
- Reasons to repot
  - Orchid has outgrown its pot
  - Medium has broken down
  - Want to change medium to suit your growing conditions
  - Plants are not growing well in existing medium
  - Want to multiply (divide) plant for our auction or to share or swap with friends

# Repotting Basics

- Repotting Tips
  - Use gloves, sterile tools and clean surfaces to avoid transmitting disease and viruses
  - Remove plant from pot, discard broken down medium and dead roots, bulbs and leaves.
  - Check for diseases and treat accordingly. Do not damage new roots and growth.
  - Select pot to allow at least two years of growth, but don't overpot, i.e., use too big a pot for the orchid, which does not allow plant to dry properly between waterings.
  - Type and size of media should be proportional to size of pot and select media that is appropriate for the type of orchid. Do not reuse old media.
- Many resources available online of articles and videos for repotting your orchids as well as for pests and other good orchid info
  - POS and AOS websites ([www.palomarorchid.org](http://www.palomarorchid.org), [www.aos.org](http://www.aos.org))
  - St. Augustine Orchid Society website (<https://staugorchidsociety.org>) has numerous articles by Sue Bottom on many aspects of orchid growing (See Alex's handout on repotting for more details and sites)

# Cymbidium Culture Basics

- Cymbidiums are very well-suited for our Southern CA climate and are easily grown outside on the coast and in inland areas. They bloom for long periods (weeks to months) and do so from fall thru winter to early to mid summer for some hybrids and species.
- Light Requirements
  - Cymbidiums want good light all year long
  - 3000-5000 foot-candles or 70-50% shade cloth
  - Can be adapted to full sun gradually but best to protect from full afternoon sun
- Temperature Requirements
  - Ideal range is around 45 °F to 85 °F , but can take freezing or over 100 °F for short periods
  - Desirable to cool plants by misting when temps go above 85 °F for extended periods and during Santa Anna's to increase humidity around plants

# Cymbidium Culture Basics

- Watering and Fertilizing
  - Cymbidiums like more water and fertilizer than some other orchids (Catts, Dends, Oncids) but don't like their media to become waterlogged.
  - Water before plants become dry. Generally every 7-10 days over most of growing season. During hot periods in summer, water every 3-5 days depending on how hot it gets, less frequently in winter and when it rains.
  - Mist when temps go above 85 °F and during Santa Anna conditions when humidity is low. Keep on drier side in winter when temps go low (below 40 °F)
  - Fertilize every time you water and, if you use tap water, water well without fertilizer once a month to leach out excess fertilizer and salts.
  - Fertilize in winter and early spring (Jan-April) with low nitrogen/high phosphorus/high potassium fertilizer (6-30-30, @~1/2 tsp/gal), during summer growing season (May-July) with high nitrogen fertilizer to stimulate new growths (30-10-10,@ ~1/2 tsp/gal) and thru fall (Aug-Dec) with a balanced fertilizer (20-20-20 or 20-10-20 @ ~1/3 tsp/gal).
  - Alternatively, slow release, balanced fertilizer such as Nutracote, Osmocote or Dynamite (14-14-14 or similar) can be used to weakly fertilize every time you water. Follow directions on label for amounts to use and frequency.

# Cymbidium Culture Basics

- Pests
  - Cymbidiums are subjected to same pests and diseases as other orchids
  - Look out for scale, mealybugs, bulb rot and snail/slug damage. Treat and remove using appropriate measures.
  - Cymbidiums can get viruses that don't usually show in flowers. Sometimes leaves can show breaks in veining or use test kits look for presence of CMV or ORSV.
  - Considerable info on pests and diseases on AOS website and St. Augustine Orchid Society websites (see repotting handout)



# Cymbidium Culture Basics

- Repotting/Dividing
  - The best time to repot and divide Cymbidiums is in the late winter or spring after the completion of blooming.
  - They also can be repotted anytime if media has broken down or if overgrown the pot. Repotting later in the season may delay blooming for the next blooming period.
  - Media usually consist of bark, bark/perlite mix (3:1) or coconut husk mix, size depending on the number of bulbs and pot size (allow for at least 2 years growth).
  - Remove decomposing or leafless bulbs and repot plant in center of larger pot.
  - Usually keep in the same type of medium if plant is doing well but change if not performing well in existing medium
  - Divide with at least 3 pseudobulbs plus a back bulb per division and do not overpot, i.e., place in too big a pot. Allow for ~2 yrs growth.
  - Use sterile tools and new or cleaned pots, remove old dead roots and place plant in center of pot.

# My Cymbidium Growing Area

## Under ~50% Shade Cloth





# Other Cymbidium Growing Area

Northern Exposure Without Shade Cloth but in Full Sun  
in Late Afternoon.





## Other Cymbidium Growing Area

Northern Exposure Under a Huge Ficus Tree with Some Full Sun in Late Afternoon.



# Cymbidium Growing Experiences and Repotting/Dividing Demo

Jerry Spencer