

Hi to all orchid lovers!

To introduce myself — my name is Tomas Bajza and I am an orchid lover and addict. I originally came to the USA from the Czech Republic and settled down in hot tropical Miami.

I adored orchids during my teenage years, but at that time there were not many to see in my country. My orchid beginnings were funny and sad, all at the same time. I managed to obtain few orchid plants back in Czech, two Phalaenopsis plants, and one Cymbidium plant. I had neither knowledge nor options to do some research (the Internet was really not present), so I grew as I felt. That approach was of course totally wrong. My poor Phals were over-watered constantly and kept by the window right above the heating, so the humidity was at zero. They must have hated me all these years as they were suffering and barely surviving, but I got at least one spike once, before they both went to orchid heaven.

My Cymbidium was even “better”. That sucker did nothing except grow leaves for years. Then I went to college and moved out of the house, completely forgetting about the plant. Once I came back home in the fall, my mother called me outside to our courtyard, when I got there, she pulled out from behind the Oleander bush my forgotten Cymbidium with absolutely amazing long spike carrying some 40+ green waxy blooms. I was shocked, as I was not able to bloom this plant for many years. So, I asked her what did she do with it. She replied, “I just threw it outside behind the Oleander bushes early spring, watered it with the hose when watering oleanders, and fertilized it with chicken poop when fertilizing my oleanders, that’s it!”

I was laughing my a** off about my over-caring this plant for so many years with no success while my mother just threw it outside behind the bushes. That’s it, she gets the blooms!

Even though I am living in Florida surrounded by orchids, I got into serious orchid growing only over a decade ago, starting with the usual grocery store Phalaenopsis and Dendrobiums, slowly adding Cattleyas and Vandas since these were the orchids that everyone in Florida grew! All of these were large orchids and mostly hybrids. I was constantly searching different online orchid forums and saw post about Lepanthopsis astrophora — that was the very first time I had ever seen a miniature orchid. I had no clue that such a thing even existed! I fell totally in love and immediately ordered a few. When they came, they were even smaller than I ever imagined!

That was it, I’ve got bitten by a “huge” miniature orchid bug — and in the past years I was fortunate enough to collect hundreds of micro and miniature orchid species, many of them pretty rare. I am a very stubborn grower — I do not listen to anything, and I do not like the word “impossible”. I like all orchids, but I do love huge amount of cold or intermediate growing species. Many growers in Florida told me that I cannot grow these here, because it is too hot or they are too hard to grow. I do not believe any of this till I try things myself and either succeed or fail!

Through extended research, reading and being active on different orchid boards and in orchid groups, I’ve learned tremendously. I do not consider myself in any way orchid expert, but someone once told me that a beginner orchid grower is someone who killed less than 10 plants, advance orchid grower is someone who killed more than 100, and an orchid professional is

someone who killed over 1000 and doesn't count anymore. By this yardstick, I do belong to advance growers.

I've been very fortunate with meeting and becoming friends with many international orchid growers and nursery owners. At the beginning, I bought only plants sold by US nurseries. Nowadays, nearly all of my orchids come from abroad. Buying orchids from US growers is safe and the majority of the plants come nicely established. Unfortunately, there are no species I am looking for offered by the US vendors anymore. I was really pushed to search and start my own importing because I could not just find any of the plants I wanted to own.

There is another "hobby" I do have, love for photography. With a growing miniature orchid collection, there were endless opportunities for taking the pictures of these amazing, sometimes microscopical blooms. Posting my pictures online caused quite a "buzz" leading to first invitations from various orchid societies to provide speeches for their members about growing miniature orchids and cold growing species in hot environment.

Here we are today. What used to be a "hobby" slowly grew to a small business that is expanding. We found out there are hundreds of growers, like me, searching for these hard to find, unusual, uncommon and rare micro and miniature orchids. Thankfully we can share our babies with the rest of the orchid world via our website and educate people interested in growing miniature and small orchids through my speech engagements across the USA. Number of my articles about miniature orchids were published in orchid magazines across the globe as well.

Doing what you love is the most rewarding thing in life!