

Show Off Your Orchids

IN reflecting on the orchid shows I have attended or participated in, I have noted a shift in the type of exhibitors participating (other than societies, which have been fairly steady in their support) — a shift away from hobbyist growers and toward commercial growers. Many of the shows in the 1970s had a large number of hobbyist growers who set up their own displays. At this time, many hobbyists had greenhouses and larger collections, enabling them to do this. As the number of greenhouse hobbyists dwindled because of operating costs, there was a shift to smaller collections that could be grown on windowsills and under lights. With these smaller collections, staging large exhibits became difficult or even impossible.

When I chaired the Massachusetts Orchid Society show from 1998 to 2000, the question arose as to how to involve more individuals in staging exhibits to show off their plants. After all, we spend a great deal of time tending these plants we care so much about. Yes, we could exhibit in our society displays; however, there we do not get a chance to display our individual efforts and artistic expressions.

In an effort to spur more creativity and individual participation, I suggested we institute a new class of exhibits for the 1999 show. The new class was called the “2 × 2” class. Exhibits were to be 2 × 2 feet square (60 × 60 sq cm). The rules were to be simple, as listed here:

1. The exhibit is to contain one to no more than five flowering orchid plants or up to 10 miniature orchid plants. (Miniature plants are less than 8 inches [20 cm] tall, excluding the inflorescence; monopodial orchids with less than an 8-inch [20-cm] leafspan are considered miniature.)

2. No other flowering plants are allowed.

3. Imagination in design is encouraged.

4. Plants for consideration for ribbons or an AOS award will be entered as usual, according to the show schedule.

5. Ribbons for the exhibits will be awarded to third place, with voting done by the attendees of the Preview Party.

6. The exhibitor receiving the highest number of votes receives a special award (“The People’s Choice Award”).

7. The winners will be announced at the awards ceremony at the Preview Party.

The voting is done by using tickets given out at the door to the guests, who then drop them in containers in front of each exhibit. After the voting, the tickets are put in one box and used to raffle off some door prizes.

The first year we tried this we had 10 exhibitors. The winner of the competition,



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Laura Eschenrhoder, used one plant. It was a beautiful blue vanda that she displayed with a scarf that was the same color blue as her orchid. It was stunning. The next year, 2000, we had nearly 20 entries.

When I began chairing the North Jersey Orchid Show three years ago, we agreed to promote the 2 × 2 exhibits to our members. We have now done it for three years, and each year it gets better, with more and more participation. This includes one orchid society that has chosen to use this exhibit style.

The picture included with this article shows one of the interesting 2 × 2 individual displays that our exhibitors presented. The single plant displayed won the Leslie Stern Memorial Award for the best amateur phalaenopsis exhibited in the show.

Because the numbers of plants is small for each of the exhibitors, we do not require

[1] Orchids Are Fun, winner of The Leslie Stern Award for best amateur phalaenopsis at the 2009 North Jersey Orchid Society’s 44th Annual Show.
Grower: Jeannette Vreeland.

that the exhibits or the plants be preregistered. We provide enough 2 × 2-foot square boards to accommodate the preregistered and walk-in exhibitors. The 2 × 2 squares can be set on pedestals or on tabletops.

I would encourage all orchid societies staging shows to consider using this exhibit class as a way to involve more of hobbyists. We are proud of the plants we grow; we should be proud to exhibit them.
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