

Key West Orchid Society

Newsletter

Jay Pfahl, President

Liza Bray, Editor

Sunday, 19th April 2026

**1:00
West Martello**

KWOS Meetings - 2026

19 April
15 November
13 December

KW Garden Club

Meets Mondays from 9:00 to noon for potting, rooting, weeding, etc., and general clean up. Stop in to help anytime you have a free Monday morning.

KW Tropical Forest / Garden

Volunteers meet at the nursery every Wednesday and Saturday from 9 to 12 for propagation and to clean up the Garden. Come in and help anytime you can.

Rare Plant Festival

1 - 3 May 2026
Miami Dade County Fair Expo Center
10901 SW 24th Street
Miami, Florida. 33165

The April meeting will present Claude Hamilton, who is a 1968 graduate of the Jamaica School of Agriculture, and has been growing orchids since 1963. He is a former President of the Jamaica Orchid Society and a life member of the Jamaica Horticultural Society. He is also a Life Member of the Doberman Pinscher Club of Jamaica and a former Secretary of the Jamaica Kennel Club.

Claude has been an Accredited Judge of the Jamaica Orchid Society since 1986 and of the American Orchid Society since 1994 and is affiliated with the Florida Caribbean Judging Center of the American Orchid Society in Miami. He has lectured and judged orchids in over 34 countries. At age 14, he was one of the founders of the St. James Horticultural Society in Montego Bay, Jamaica as well as a Founding Member of the Montego Bay Orchid Club.

He is well known as a hybridiser of orchids and lectures on orchids, orchid culture, and orchid judging, and is best known as a breeder of the *Broughtonia*, *Brassavola*, *Encyclia*, *Myrmecophila*, and *Laelia* species, as well as their hybrids.



Marlene Thorn with her C skinnerii, which was the members' choice as well as best species

His hybrids have won hundreds of awards at orchid events in several countries. He has reproduced many rare orchid species from seed to aid in their conservation.

Claude and his wife, Elizabeth (Betty), founded Hamlyn Orchids Ltd in Jamaica in 1983. They have three adult children. Most of the orchids grown at Hamlyn Orchids were propagated from seed in their own facilities in Kingston. They have exported orchids mainly to the USA, as well as to several other countries, including Africa, Australia, Asia, Europe, Central and South America, and many Caribbean islands. In 1993, Claude was presented with a special award by the Jamaica Horticultural Society for his contributions to horticulture in Jamaica and was made an Honorary Life Member.

In May 2017, Claude was presented with an award for excellence in hybridizing by the American Orchid Society. He is a Member of the Orchid Hybrid Registration Committee (OHRAG) of the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) in the UK. His hybrids have been recognised with over 400 awards from the American Orchid Society, including 269 for plants he has personally exhibited.

There will be plants for sale and a raffle.

March Meeting



*Kitty Somerville's Pcv Lime Stars x Plc Toshie Aoki
'Pizazz' which was chosen as best hybrid*

Jim Roberts of SunCoast Orchids gave a highly informative and entertaining presentation on the orchids to grow in our area. As long-term growers in the Keys, we know better than most how much our conditions vary from the mainland, and how we deal with the conditions of island growing. An interesting segment was on "orchids we might want to avoid growing in the Keys". One of his "don't grow" examples was a zygopetalum, with which Leigh and Cheryl won People's Choice in 2024.

Robert's presentation was very interesting and formalised many things we know as orchid carers, growers, nurturers, and serial murderers in the Keys. He is a good speaker, and two of his plants that I bought have already bloomed, which is a win.

KWOS Orchid Fair

The orchid fair this year was our most successful in years. There were more visitors, more vendors, more orchids sold, and some vendors even ran out of stock. Some of our vendors said that ours was becoming one of the premier shows on the East Coast. A new vendor has already stated that he will definitely be here next year.

Pam Van Soest's online social media activity directly resulted in the increased attendance, and was shared online by other Florida orchid societies. The spectacular inside front page ad in the AOS March magazine, engineered by Sharon Douglas, also contributed to a



Jay Pfahl presenting Kitty Somerville with the Best in Show award for her Blc Hsinying Willette #9

much wider awareness of our show. The distinctive green bags were even seen on the Marco Island ferry returning to the mainland.



Liz Tamiso with her two-tone yellow vanda



Sweet Fragrance 'Princess' which perfumed the Birdcage on its own



Den Blue Seas (Blue Twinkle x antennatum)

Another photo of the Best in Show



Some of the many phals in the show



Sharon Douglas with her broughtonia

Key West Orchid Society
It is located at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1505314023598455> You can request to join and will be admitted by the moderator (Leigh)
Website: www.keywestorchidsociety.org and Facebook



Pam Van Soest with her best in show Phal



Nell Smets with her aerides winner



Hunter Boxall with all his entries