

Discovering the Orchids of Ecuador

Niles Dusdieker, a member of the Eastern Iowa Society and an AOS judge, presented a travelogue titled Discovering the Orchids of Ecuador. This was a tour organized by Ecugenera following the World Orchid Congress in Gyayaquil, Ecuador last fall. Ecuador has more orchids than any other country, any many which have not yet been discovered and described. The tour traversed the three main habitats of Ecuador, dry eastern lowlands, the Andes, and the Amazon rainforest. The hiking was often steep and precarious.

The presentation wowed us with many photos of local orchids. A highlight of the trip was finding the Red Phrag besseae growing on wet, rocky streambeds by some waterfalls. The car was moving along when the guide shouted "Stop!", and everyone got out to look at a little patch of red the guide spotted. Niles exclaimed, "This is what we came to see!"

Niles emphasized many Ecuadorean orchids are endemic to very specific locations, even to one specific valley. He had a picture of at least one that apparently had not yet been described.

Niles credited his wife Lois with having a sharper eye than he for finding orchids. No falls or injuries were reported, but they certainly



Photograph by Lorraine Snyder
Nile Dusdieker discussing attributes of orchids
submitted for ribbon judging

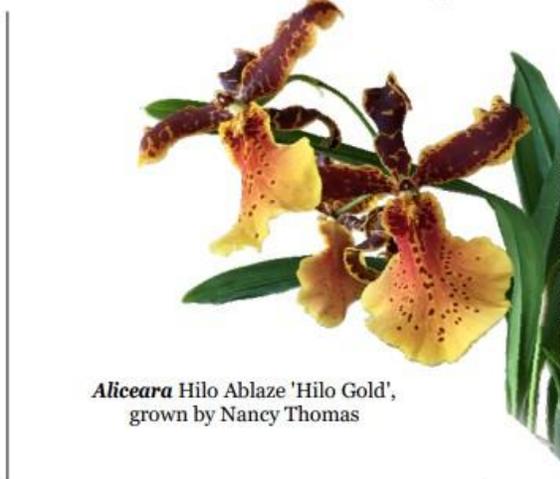
looked possible. Other times the vehicle simply stopped on the road and everyone walked along the road looking for orchids.

Much of the land in Ecuador has been disrupted. Orchids often grow well in disturbed areas like road sides because there is less competition from other plants and orchids can more easily get established. Some roadside areas were covered with blooming orchids.

An interesting observation was the number of Pleurothallis orchids that were blooming in the full sun in areas that looked quite dry. This is certainly not how most people try and grow them. Niles said these areas were covered in fog early every day and that is how the Pleurothallis orchids get their moisture.

A highlight of the trip was a stop at Ecugenera where Niles and Lois were accompanied by a personal salesperson who helped them select the best individuals of specific species Niles felt a need to adopt. The trip sounds like a wonderful event for any orchid enthusiast. –

Keith Nelson



Aliceara Hilo Ablaze 'Hilo Gold',
grown by Nancy Thomas