

CAROL BEULE on Fūkiran [*Neofinetia*]

Our speaker Carol Beule, in addition to being an orchid grower and Associate AOS judge, is also an extremely talented artist. She has just started a new business venture: “Nichi Bachi (decorative pots) by Beule” to create *Neofinetia* (*Vanda*) and *Cymbidium* presentation pots. She showed us five examples of her handmade and hand painted pots. Some of her pots are from molds made from her original pots and then decorated to please her individual customers.

Carol recently traveled to Japan where she presented some of her unique pots. In Japan, the presentation of Fūkiran is extremely important. Although the plants may be grown in plastic or clay pots, when exhibited they are transferred to elegant handmade and hand painted clay pots. These traditionally have three feet, a large diameter drainage hole, and come in various sizes. These pots are made by artisans, and are often signed by the artist. Each pot can be expensive, sometimes more than the cost of the plant, and some may be antiques.

'Furan' or 'wind orchid', is the Japanese name for the native *Neofinetia falcata*. It has a long history of cultivation, originating in Japan's Edo era, about 400 years ago. Specimens were first collected from the wild by feudal lords and their servants to be gifted to the Shogun to gain political favor. Eventually



Examples of 'Nichi Bachi' created by Beule as presentation pots for Fūkiran

Neofinetia falcata began to be called 'Fūkiran', which means the orchid of the rich and noble people. These plants were often covered by a gold or silver net in order to protect them, and people had to cover their mouths with Kaishi (a thin paper usually used for calligraphy) in order not to breathe on the plants while they appreciated them. After the Meiji restoration in 1868, under the influence of Western culture, people became fascinated with more exotic orchids. Consequently, interest in Fūkiran declined until the early 1900's. It is one of the world's highest priced orchid (depending on the rarity of the vari-

(Continued from page 6)

ety), with a history of individual plants selling for \$100,000+.

Considered the 'perfect orchid' by the Japanese, *Neofinetia* is appreciated and enjoyed not only for its delicately shaped flowers and citrus-coconut fragrance but also for the foliage which can be variegated or shaped differently from the typical plant. Even the roots are considered worthy of enjoyment. Many of these cultivars are what amounts to mutants or 'sports' by current nomenclature, as they have small stunted growth, or unusual, often random, variegated foliage. *Neofinetias* are enjoyed in the same manner as bonsai, for the foliage and the overall presentation of the plant. In Japan, it is said that the key to growing them is to enjoy the plant everyday of the year, not just for the flowers.

When judging, the Japanese look at *Neofi-*



Grand Champion, Variegated Tamakongo. This plant is about 15 years old, in a pot from the Edo era [between 1603 and 1868]

netia falcata and break it down into individual characteristics to judge its merit. The orchid is judged and valued for the following: flowers, the flower color, the form of the flower, the foliage forms, the leaf shape, the connection between the leaf and the stem, the root tip color, and the pot that the orchid is potted in. For the particular event Carol attended, the plants were not blooming consequently they were judged on the foliage form and roots, the size and shape of the mound of long fibered sphagnum moss it is planted in, and the pot. Ideally the size and shape of each of these elements would complement the others to create a pleasing whole. She

showed us a photograph of the grand prize winner at the show she attended [see photo above].

No doubt there will be vendors at Orchid Quest selling *Neofinetia*.