

A Labor of Love: the 2013 Santa Barbara International Orchid Show

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For those who have never been involved in a large orchid show, the following is an inside look at the enormous process of staging the Santa Barbara Show, plus a little bit about the names and cymbidiums associated with the show, written by Show Manager Sandra Russell.

It is still dark. It is Monday morning as I make a mental note: Next year remember a flashlight. Inside I fumble with the light switches and all at once the cavernous room appears. Almost a year of planning has gone into this moment.

Right behind me, the self-named

“over-the-hill gang” trickles in, led by Bruce van Dyke, who at 80 has seen many of these mornings. After retiring in 1995 after managing the show for twenty-two years, he still starts off the setup with a team of volunteers who protect the walls of the building with construction paper and measure and tape the display areas. After a welcome and quick review of the exhibit hall map, they grab a cup of coffee and doughnut and head off with tape measures in hand. By eight AM, many will be starting their work day.

A short lull is broken by, “Where do you want it lady?” shouted from the cab of a roaring truck. The truck appears



Before exhibitors install their displays, show workers arrange cinderblocks and tons of sand using compact track loaders (“bobcats”), wheelbarrows, rakes and shovels.

even larger inside the building. This is just the first of a parade of trucks that will bring 250 tons of sand that create the base for a tradition that has been going on for 68 years.

So starts the set-up for the 68th Santa Barbara International Orchid show. The next two days will be a whirlwind of tents, banners, cement block, sand, lighting, as well as deliveries of sod, mulch, and foliage. The bobcats dance around the floor, moving sand into sculptural piles. Many of the workers have done the show year after year, so they know the drill. By noon, exhibitors with large displays have arrived with their visions of the 2013 show theme, "Orchids in Focus."

Wednesday, the

noise of the bobcats gives way to the parade of arrivals: Artists carrying their treasures; Las Flores members with their containers and props; exhibitors with the orchid plants they have tended for perhaps a decade and fussed over for the past months, watching and wondering if they will be at peak performance for the



The exhibit hall is large enough to permit trucks inside for unloading purposes. Here (top photo), several trucks prepare to unload plants and other exhibit supplies. A forklift transports pallets of lumber or plants (bottom photo) as exhibitors with larger displays install the backdrops for their orchids.

Show. Some slide in almost unnoticed; with others, greetings and hugs are abundant before they disappear into the cavern to create their own piece of paradise. Ha Bui arrives; he asked at the last minute to put in a display, explaining that he had a special plant he wanted to display, and since he was going to make the two-to-three hour drive, might there be room for him to do a small exhibit? Definitely! He joins exhibitors who range in age from Kaitlyn, who is 15, to—let's just say, those with many more years of experience under their belts. There are husband and wife teams, like Bryce and Nancy Augustine, who collaborate to create a display of paphiopedilums, and there are families, like the Schroeders, where several generations contribute to the display. All contribute their passion for orchids. Many will toil well into the night to create their vision.

It is Thursday morning, Judging Day. Some have arrived early to put the last touches on their displays. The large

cavernous building has been transformed into a wonderland. The team of display judges assembles; one of the notable landscape architects on the team, who designed the cactus garden at the internationally recognized Lotusland garden, is “blown away.” He is amazed at the sheer dedication that went into the Show. Orchids that were absolutely amazing—taking years to breed, and grow—appeared in display after display. Plant after plant. Tension and excitement fill the hushed room as teams of Cymbidium Society of America judges, American Orchid Society judges, display judges and ribbon judges, all volunteers, meander through the exhibit hall, trying to determine the winners for 2013.

Near the end of the day, trophies are placed in the displays with the help of Spenser, the 12-year-old son of the plant registrar. He probably doesn't remember a time without the Orchid Show. Three plants receive the Flower Quality Award of Silver from the CSA



Left to right: Michael Sinn of Canaima Orchids; SBIOS Board Member George Hatfield of Hatfield Orchids; James Rose of Cal-Orchid; Munekazu Ejiri of Suwada Orchids.

while five were awarded Bronzes. The Huntington Library, Art Collection and Botanical Gardens receives one of each of these, in addition to the coveted CSA Gold Medal Paphiopedilum Display. The paphiopedilums in the Huntington Collection came from the late Bob Weltz, who was a resident of Montecito (next door to Santa Barbara) and a long time exhibitor at the Show. Before moving to Montecito, Bob Weltz grew his award-winning orchids in a luxury apartment in New York City. Lance Birk, a long time Santa Barbara International

Orchid Show Board Member, now helps to oversee the Weltz Collection at the Huntington.

Now it is time to prepare for Opening Day. Identifying signs are revealed or installed in each displays. Wayne Ferrell, manager at the Santa Barbara Orchid Estate, fills in any gaps, sometimes with just one fantastic orchid specimen that has been in the Santa Barbara Orchid Estate collection, perhaps since the 1970s.

At the center of the hall sits the large and absolutely fabulous Ventura Farms



Ventura County
Orchid Society



Five Cities
Orchid Society

display. This centerpiece wonderland is a gift to attendees from Mr. David Murdock, owner of Ventura Farms, whose support for the Santa Barbara International Orchid Show helps make the show World Class. This garden paradise, with a bark-lined pathway flanked by waterfalls and swaths of orchids, was installed by his team led by Jamie Zamora. Before set-up, they spent days designing and building the waterfalls and weeks thinking about

the theme and layout. Orchids filled their greenhouses. “It’s about giving back to the community, seeing the smiles on the people, making them feel happy,” Jamie says to me. “Just look around. That is why I do it year after year,” he says. Late one the evening, when everyone was gone, I just sat on the bench near the waterfall and enjoyed the quiet paradise.

Ha Bui’s special plant (*Cymbidium*

Conejo Orchid Society



Orchid Society of Santa Barbara



Memoria Thuy-Hong Bui 'My Van') has won the Grand Champion Cymbidium trophy as well as Best Pendulous Cymbidium Potted Plant. Beaming in a humble way, Ha explains that he named the plant in memory of his mother, who passed away thirty years ago. Normally blooming in April, the winter weather was such that “she” was ready for our

March 7th Judging. He made time in his busy life to ensure “she” was shown. Two others in his display also are award winners: the Cymbidium Beauty Trophy went to *Cymbidium* Satsuma Beach 'Hideko' and Best Standard Cymbidium Potted Plant—Open was awarded to *Cymbidium* Kirby Lesh 'Cinnabar' S/ CSA. Well worth the drive!

In the Hatfield Orchids display, which won the CSA Gold Medal for Best Cymbidium Display, a set of seedlings named after the late Huell Howser boasts the trophy for Best Group of 1st Blooming Standard Cymbidium Seedlings. Huell Howser's TV show on California wonders, including “The Orchid Trail”



Top: Westerlay Orchids.
Bottom: Gallup & Stribling (left) and Cal-Orchid.

episode featuring the Santa Barbara International Orchid Show, was a regular on PBS until his untimely death in early 2013. The show can now be viewed in on the Chapman University's Huell Howser archives at <http://blogs.chapman.edu/huell-howser-archives> Search for The Orchid Trail episode.

Nearby hangs the Reserve Champion Cymbidium of Show, *Cymbidium* Judith Wooldridge 'Hatfield's'; Judith is an orchid lover and beloved customer at Hatfield Orchids. Around the corner is *Cymbidium* David Teuschler 'Brother Dave', which won Best 1st Blooming Pink or Rose Shades Cymbidium Seedling. Dave is a friend of George Hatfield and also an orchid lover who lives in the warm interior valley of California. Each year, he helps to put in the Hatfield display. This cymbidium was bred to grow in warm areas, so was named for Dave since he can grow it where he lives.

Another awarded plant, *Cymbidium* Johnny Cash 'Ring of Fire', was named after the famous singer. What is the connection? A good friend of George is Jim Sloniker, who was a schoolmate of Rosanne, Johnny Cash's daughter. George named the



Top: Norito Hasegawa of Paphanatics and Cymbidium Congress speaker Randall Robinson.
Middle: Don Brown arranging his tabletop display.
Bottom: SBIOS Board Member Lance Birk and Brandon Tam of the Huntington Gardens, with the Ventura Farms display in the background.

plant so Jim can bring a piece to Rosanne Cash at their next class reunion. And *Cymbidium* Heidi Kirkpatrick 'Spenser' showed off its delicate pink blooms;



this one is named for the plant registrar and her son is the 'Spenser' who helps distribute Show trophies.

The Loren Batchman trophy sits in the San Gabriel Valley CSA display, next to winner *Cymbidium* Quick Step 'Shocker'. This trophy, awarded for Best Boldly Spotted *Cymbidium* Flower, was named for Loren Batchman, who was a long time CSA judge, long time Santa Barbara International Orchid Show exhibitor, and past editor of the *CSA Journal*. His children now carry on his business and still exhibit at the show. In their Casa de las Orquideas display,



Top left: Assistant Show Manager Gregg DeChirico and Show Manager Sandra Russell. **Top right:** Exhibitor Ha Bui. **Bottom:** Vendors prepare sales booths in Warren Hall, the building adjacent to the Exhibit Hall.

Cymbidium (Speckles ‘Bold Vision’ × Dotz ‘Incredible’) ‘O Bother’ was awarded the William R. Dickinson trophy for Best 1st Blooming *Cymbidium* Seedling—Open.

Across the hall, Weegie Caughlin, an “amateur” exhibitor from northern California, displays her beautiful cymbidiums, including two Bronze quality awards and three trophies: Best Species *Cymbidium* Potted Plants—Open; Best Group 3 *Cymbidium* Plants each a different clone; Best Specimen *Cymbidium* Plant Showing Excellence of Culture. Her cut flower *Cymbidium* Lillian Fujimoto ‘Westport’ HCC/AOS, S/CSA won both Best Cut *Cymbidium* Spray and Best Cut Green *Cymbidium* Spray. With her superbly grown plants, Weegie is an amateur only in the sense that she doesn’t have a business selling orchids.

Later, we find out that the flower chosen for the Show’s 2013 flyer was named for Josh Davis’s grandmother.

Josh, a member of the local Orchid Society of Santa Barbara and known for his masdevallias and lycastes, told us his grandmother was so pleased to have “her orchid” beaming all around Santa Barbara, and beyond, as well as welcoming everyone to the show.

Ten thousand people visit the show in its three days. Students from the elementary school next door are some of the first to arrive; they learn about plant life cycles from volunteer docents and have a break from the classroom. Everyone from casual observers to orchid enthusiasts peruse the isles, taking pictures of their friends among the orchids, as well as the captivating orchids themselves.

By Monday afternoon, it is all gone. The plants disappeared last night, the treasures taken home and trophies packed away. This morning, the cement block was stacked and the sand was trucked away. The exhibit hall is again empty. It is as if nothing ever happened.



The Ventura Farms display invited visitors to meander along a bark path, rest on wooden benches and enjoy water features, all amidst a lavish display of orchids.

Except it did. Connections were made, hearts were changed, and memories were made. And the son's labor of love for his mother long-gone was not to be forgotten; the cymbidium named after her will go into the list of Grand Champion Cymbidiums at the Santa Barbara International Orchid Show.

Top left: The Best Standard Complex Paphiopedilum, *Paphiopedilum Boom Time* 'Saratoga Belle' (Teen Queen x Blockbuster), was shown by Orchids Royale.

Middle left: Monsoon Flora exhibited *Phragmipedium Jason Fischer* (besseae Memoria Dick Clements).

Bottom left: *Paphiopedilum Hilo Girl* (California Girl x Taisuco America's Plum) was shown by SBIOS director Jim Sloniker.



Sandra Russell is Show Manager of the Santa Barbara International Orchid Show. Before falling in love with orchids, she was a plant biologist for DuPont.

The Huntington Botanical Gardens exhibited the Bronze-winning *Paphiopedilum Alex Szabo* 'Huntington' (Pavarotti x Ruth Curran) (**top right**) and *Paphiopedilum Vera Pellechia* 'Huntington' (stonei x St. Swithin) (**bottom right**), which was awarded a Silver by the CSA judges.



Photo courtesy Arthur Pinkers



The Grand Champion Cymbidium Trophy was awarded to *Cymbidium Memoria Thuy-Hong Bui* 'My Van' (Bunyip x Fifi), owned by Ha Bui. The plant also was recognized with the Best Pendulous Cymbidium Trophy and a Bronze from the CSA.



Cymbidium Satsuma Beach 'Hideko' (Solana Beach x Paracel), owned by Ha Bui, was awarded the Cymbidium Beauty Trophy.



Ha Bui's plant of *Cymbidium Kirby Lesh* 'Cinnabar' AM/AOS, S/CSA received the Best Standard Cymbidium award.



The Best Group of 1st Blooming Cymbidium Seedlings was awarded to Hatfield Orchid's *Cymbidium* Huell Howser; six seedlings are pictured.

The Reserve Champion Cymbidium Trophy was awarded to *Cymbidium* Judith Wooldridge 'Hatfield's' (Forty Shades of Green x *devonianum*), owned by Hatfield Orchids. The plant also received a Silver from the CSA.



Photo courtesy Arthur Pinkers



Photo courtesy Arthur Pinkers

Clockwise from above:
Cymbidium Heidi Kirkpatrick 'Spenser'
 in the Hatfield Orchids display;
 Best Novelty *Cymbidium* *Cymbidium* Johnny
 Cash 'Ring of Fire'—owned by Hatfield Orchids;
Cymbidium Simply Irresistible 'Hatfield's' in the
 Hatfields Orchids display;
 Best 1st Blooming Seedling *Cymbidium* (Speckles x
 Dotz) 'O Bother', owned by Casa de las Orquideas;
 Best Boldly Spotted *Cymbidium* *Cymbidium* Quick
 Step 'Shocker' in the San Gabriel
 Valley Branch CSA display.





Top left: *Cymbidium* Dorothy Stevenson 'Whoo Hoo' (Via Rincon Vista x Icho Tower), owned by Weegie Caughlan, received a Bronze.

Top right: Best Species Cymbidium was awarded to Weegie Caughlan's *Cymbidium grandiflorum* 'Cinnabar' AM/AOS, B/CSA.

Middle left: Weegie Caughlan's *Cymbidium* Tower of Fire 'Sunset Flame' (Electric Ladyland x Icho Tower) was awarded a Bronze by the CSA.



Middle right: *Paphiopedilum* Copper Eagle 'Kay' from Monsoon Flora.

Bottom left: *Cymbidium* (Via Fair Vista x Solana Beach) 'Patricia', from San Gabriel Valley Branch CSA.

Bottom right: Sorella Orchids' *Paphiopedilum* Fairre Helen, from a group of Best Blooming Seedlings.



Photo courtesy Meryl Wieder



Photo courtesy Meryl Wieder



Photo courtesy Arthur Pinkers

Top:
Gold Medal
Paphiopedilum Display
Orchids Royale.
Middle:
Gold Medal Cymbidium
Display Hatfield Orchids.
Bottom:
Gold Medal
Paphiopedilum Display
Tokyo Orchid Nursery.