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# A Celebration of Orchids

## 60 Years of the Santa Barbara International Orchid Show

BY PARIS EVERETT MERRIAM



FOR SIX DECADES, THE CENTRAL California coastal town of Santa Barbara has hosted an annual international orchid show. Santa Barbara County could easily be called Cymbidium USA, based on the impact cymbidium orchids have had on the world by being hybridized, grown and exported from this region.

The first available reference to orchids in Santa Barbara was a cymbidium display presented by a Dr. Yates in 1882 at the Rose Fair. According to Albert C. Svoboda, MD, president of the Santa Barbara International Orchid Show Board, the first orchid show was held in Santa Barbara in 1945. This event was originally staged for orchid enthusiasts during that era to showcase their best plants. Known at that time as the Santa Barbara International Cymbidium Show, in 1960 the name was changed to the Santa Barbara International Orchid Show.

Enthusiasm for orchids took root in Santa Barbara County in the early 1900s. Several wealthy individuals filled their greenhouses and gardens with exotic orchids, becoming the first orchid growers of the modern era. The William Dickinson family purchased many of their orchid plants from England. Another well-to-do family during this era with English connections was the Edward Carpentiers, who began collecting orchids in 1935. Mrs. Carpentier went on to win Grand Champion at this show in 1948 and 1952 with her specimens of *Cymbidium* Makeda 'Copper Queen' (Baldur x Francesca) and *Cymbidium* Janette 'Mem. Mrs. A.A. McBean' (Alexanderi x Joy Sander), respectively. Landscape architects began incorporating cymbidiums into the gardens of the estates and homes in Santa Barbara. After World War II, the late philanthropist Samuel B. Mosher, helped Santa Barbara become an orchid landmark by assembling one of the world's finest breeding collections of orchids at his Dos Pueblos Orchid Company. In 1953,

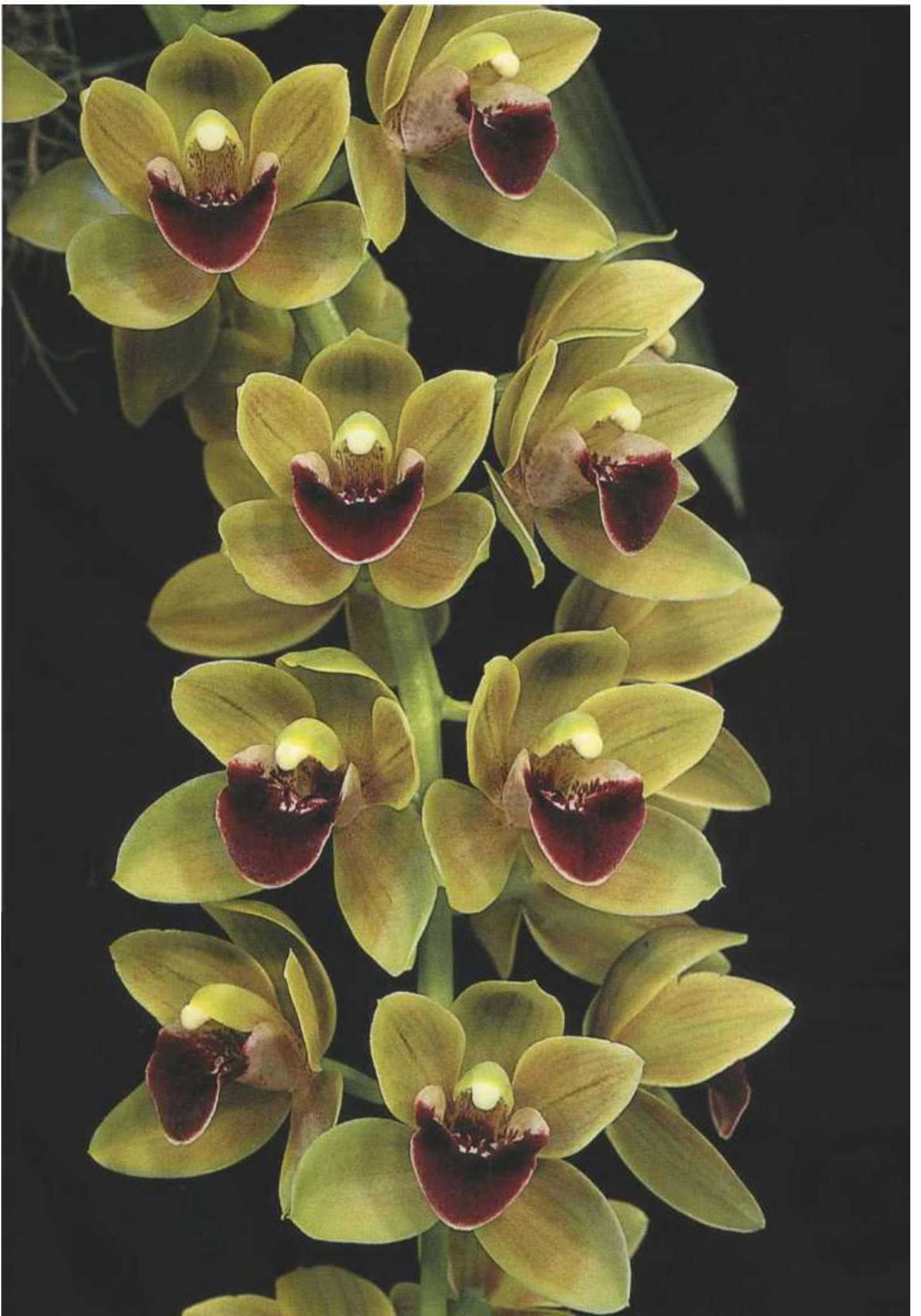


TOP Flowering cymbidiums fill a display by Gallup & Stribling.

ABOVE Historical photograph of the Santa Barbara Orchid Show. 1953.

OPPOSITE *Cymbidium* Fatal Beauty 'Amy Duran', B/CSA and HCC/AOS (Wild Colonial Boy x *devonianum*). Grower: Bill Robson.

MERYL WIEGER; OPPOSITE: CHARLES HOWDEN; COURTESY SANTA BARBARA INTERNATIONAL ORCHID SHOW





he spent \$1.5 million on orchids collected from all over the globe.

Orchid enthusiasts continue to find their way to this beautiful coastal town less than two hours north of Los Angeles. Surrounded by the majestic Santa Ynez Mountains and cooled by the nearby Pacific Ocean, the orchid show has been hosted in Santa Barbara for the past 60 years. Beneath the golden dome of the exhibition hall, this international show and sale comes alive with the colorful spectacle, magnificence and beauty that only an orchid show can offer. The Santa Barbara International Orchid Show is considered by many to be one of the largest and most prestigious orchid shows in the United States.

The theme for the 2005 show was "A Celebration of Orchids: Sixty Years of Excellence." It was hosted March 4—6, which appeared to be the peak

blooming season for many of the beautiful orchids on display. According to Svoboda, this year's show was a tribute to the early growers who made Santa Barbara County a legendary orchid destination as well as offering the public a spectacular display of orchids in full bloom. Besides top local and regional exhibitors, there were international exhibitors from around the world. There were also educational demonstrations about orchid care and culture. Overall, 61 exhibitors at this show and 41 vendors at the sale came from Australia, Central and South America, Southeast Asia and New Zealand, as well as across the United States.

The 2005 Best Orchid of Show this year was a well-grown bright orange *Laeliocattleya* Fiery Treat 'Match Point' (Trick or Treat x Fiery), entered by Eric Holenda from Nipomo, California. The Grand Champion

Cymbidium of Show for 2005 was awarded to Loren Batchman from Casa de las Orquideas of Solana Beach, California. It was named *Cymbidium* Helen Tangcay 'Charming', S/CSA and HCC/AOS (Dorothy Rowe x Hazel Tyers). The Best Cymbidium Specimen Blooming Plant, showing excellence of culture, went to Weegie Caughlan from Los Altos, California, for his entry of *Cymbidium* Kirby Lesh 'Cinnabar', AM/AOS (Pink Champagne x Red Beauty). The Best Advanced Arrangement went to Keith Mautino from Summerland, California, who took home the Adams Trophy. The Cymbidium Society of America's Gold Medal for the best cymbidium display was awarded to the Torrance Orchid Society, whose display was full of lovely pendulous cymbidiums as well as many other standard and miniature cymbidiums. The Cymbidium Society of America's Gold Medal for Best Paphiopedilum Display was given to Albert C. Svoboda Jr., MD, of Santa Barbara. George Vazquez of Zuma Canyon Orchids, Malibu, California, won the Design of Distinction award for his display of award-winning phalaenopsis. The Malibu Orchid Society won two trophies for its beautifully designed display. A total of 54 awards were presented.

#### LINKS

<http://www.sborchidshow.com/>

The Santa Barbara International Orchid Show has its own Web site, with links to information about the show, a listing of show events, press releases, maps and growers, an order form for group ticket purchases and more. [http://www.santabarbara.com/events/orchid\\_show/](http://www.santabarbara.com/events/orchid_show/)

John Dickson's Santa Barbara Events and Festivals Guide features a page devoted to the Santa Barbara International Orchid Show. The page has links not only to an 8-page photo album of the show, but offers eight movie clips of the event as well.



The centerpiece of the show was a display by David Murdock's Ventura Farms of Thousand Oaks, California. Atop a mound of a variety of beautiful orchids sat a grand piano played by a professional pianist, whose music was a delightful additional to the show.

One of my favorite stops at this year's event was a display of pictures for Best Orchid of Show that had been awarded from the past 60 years. This was an excellent historical and visual opportunity to see how orchids have progressed. Another interesting display was a tribute to the late Samuel B. Mosher, one of the founding orchid pioneers of Santa Barbara. This display showcased rare memorabilia, as well as some of his original orchids.

There were many fine exhibits, displays, arrangements and show winners to see at the 2005 Santa Barbara International Orchid Show. To review a complete list of the show winners or find other useful information from this show, access the organization's Web site ([www.sborchidshow.com](http://www.sborchidshow.com)) or e-mail [sborchidshow@earthlink.net](mailto:sborchidshow@earthlink.net).

To enjoy this international orchid event next year, make plans now to visit Santa Barbara, California, from March 24-26, 2006, and experience the thrill for yourself.

OPPOSITE LEFT Albert and Sandra Svoboda of Santa Barbara created this exhibit that won the Cymbidium Society of American Gold Medal for best paphiopedilum display. OPPOSITE TOP RIGHT Emmeline Carpentier won Grand Champion at the Santa Barbara Orchid Show in 1948 and 1952. Undated.

OPPOSITE RIGHT *Cymbidium* 'Melissa', B/CSA [(Betty Ford x President Van Buren) x Via Ambarino)]. Grower: Gallup & Stribling.

TOP LEFT Santa Barbara Orchid Estate's display of *Laelia anceps*. ABOVE LEFT *Cymbidium* Helen Tangcay 'Charming', S/CSA and HCC/AOS (Dorothy Rowe x Hazel Tyers), was judged Grand Champion Cymbidium of Show. Grower: Casa de las Orquideas (Loren Batchman).

ABOVE *Phragmipedium* Schroderae 'Bolin', B/CSA (*caudatum* x *Sedenii*). Grower: Lance Schroeder.

*Paris Everett Merriam last wrote about the Fascination of Orchids Show in the April 2005 Orchids. 260 Knollglen, Irvine, California 92614 (e-mail [parisminirose@yahoo.com](mailto:parisminirose@yahoo.com)).*

#### Commercial Growers

FOUR main orchid growers are located in Santa Barbara County. In Carpinteria, the southern region, there are two orchid nurseries. Orchids Royale (805-684-8066) is a commercial nursery that specializes in select cymbidiums, paphiopedilums, miltoniopsis, odontoglossums and lycastes. Gallup & Stribling Orchids (805-684-8066) is one of the largest wholesale orchid growers in the world. Founded in 1947 as Aleck's Orchids by Aleck Stribling, Gary Gallup joined forces in 1959 and the nursery became known as Gallup & Stribling Orchids. Today, the home farm sits on 45 acres (18 ha) with 1.5 million square feet (139,350 m<sup>2</sup>) of greenhouse space.

In the northern part of Santa Barbara, Cal Orchid, Inc. ([www.calorchid.com](http://www.calorchid.com)) offers new cymbidiums, along with other orchid species and hybrids. For *Epidendrum* enthusiasts, they feature a good selection from which to choose. Santa Barbara Orchid Estate ([www.sborchid.com](http://www.sborchid.com)), which specializes in outdoor orchids for California, has one of the largest selections of orchids on the west coast. — Paris Everett Merriam.

