



Evergreen Garden Club

# WILD IRIS



MARCH 2019



NEXT MEETING  
TUESDAY  
March 12, 2019

BERGEN PARK FIRE  
HOUSE  
9:00 a.m. Social  
9:30 a.m. Meeting

## THE MARCH PROGRAM

*Waking up your  
Soil for Spring*

By  
Pete Biggam,  
Soil Scientist



## **Evergreen Garden Club Minutes February 12, 2019**

The meeting was called to order at 9:38 a.m. by President Carol Herczeg. Board members present were Mary Twombly, Cherie Luke, Kris Waggoner, Cindy Gibson and Susan Garcia. Forty-eight members were in attendance.

### **Welcoming Committee:**

Louise Sprout welcomed new members Nancy Woodson, Marlo Griesser and Jessica Pickard to the meeting.

### **President's Report**

Carol reviewed the Club's Mission Statement for new members, stating that we serve the community by maintaining eight public gardens and providing educational speakers at each meeting.

The club sang "Happy Birthday" to our members born in February.

The Charitable Giving Committee will meet after the meeting today to review one application. Members are needed to volunteer for board positions that are to be filled in June. The 1st Vice-President, 2nd Vice-President, Secretary and Technology Officer positions will be open.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Kris Waggoner reported the club's finances. There is currently \$2,853.00 in the checking account and \$22,854.00 in the savings account.

The club has received dues from 71 members and 14 business members.

A thank you note from EChO was received in acknowledgement of our December donation of 274 pounds of hearty soups and cornbread mixes. Dee Sacks was thanked for taking the donations to the EChO food bank.

Based on Article 4 of the Club's ByLaws, the board has decided to change the date of the next garden tour from 2020 to 2021. Reasons behind this decision include the difficulty in finding gardens and the ample amount of funds in our bank accounts. The engraved stones that were purchased do not have the year inscribed so they could be used in 2021.

The board has decided not to participate in the Evergreen Rodeo Parade this year.

### **Second Vice President's Report**

Mary Twombly encouraged members to contact her if there are any questions regarding membership.

### **Secretary's Report**

Cindy Gibson asked for approval of the January minutes as printed in the Wild Iris. The minutes were approved without additions or corrections.

A note from Sylvia Brockner was read, thanking the club for continuing to send her cards and letters.

### **First Vice President's Report**

Cherie Luke requested that members contact her if they wish to work on a different garden. Garden leaders should contact her if they need additional people on their team.

The speaker that was planned for January, Pete Biggam will be speaking in March about "Waking Up Your Soil for Spring. Kathryn Boylston will be speaking in September on "These are a Few of My Favorite Things."

**Evergreen Garden Club Minutes (Continued)**  
**February 12, 2019**

Cherie reminded the club about the plant sale at our June meeting. Club members will bring in cuttings, plants, etc. Members will donate an appropriate amount in exchange for a plant. 100% of the proceeds will be donated to EChO for managing two community garden plots that provide vegetables for the food bank.

When club members host a "Share Your Garden", please respect the hosts by not giving out addresses to friends. Friends or family members may accompany garden club members during the specified hours. It can be unnerving for hosts to have a stranger come knocking at the door wishing to see their garden.

There will be not an Earth Day Event at the Evergreen Lake House because it is Easter weekend as well as the beginning of Passover.

**Hospitality Committee**

Annell Hoy passed around a sign-up sheet for treats for our March meeting and thanked everyone who provided food today.

Susan Blake brought in reference materials for the club's use. One is about Xeriscape, which includes information about climate change and the other is the New Mexico Master Gardener's textbook.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:56 a.m.

Cherie introduced member Louise Heern, Master Gardener and Garden Tour Host who gave us another look at her beautiful gardens and spoke on "High Powered Perennials for High Altitude Gardens", giving us over two dozen examples of perennials that work in her garden. Her presentation will be available on the Evergreen Garden Club website.

Respectfully submitted,  
Cindy Gibson, Secretary  
Evergreen Garden Club

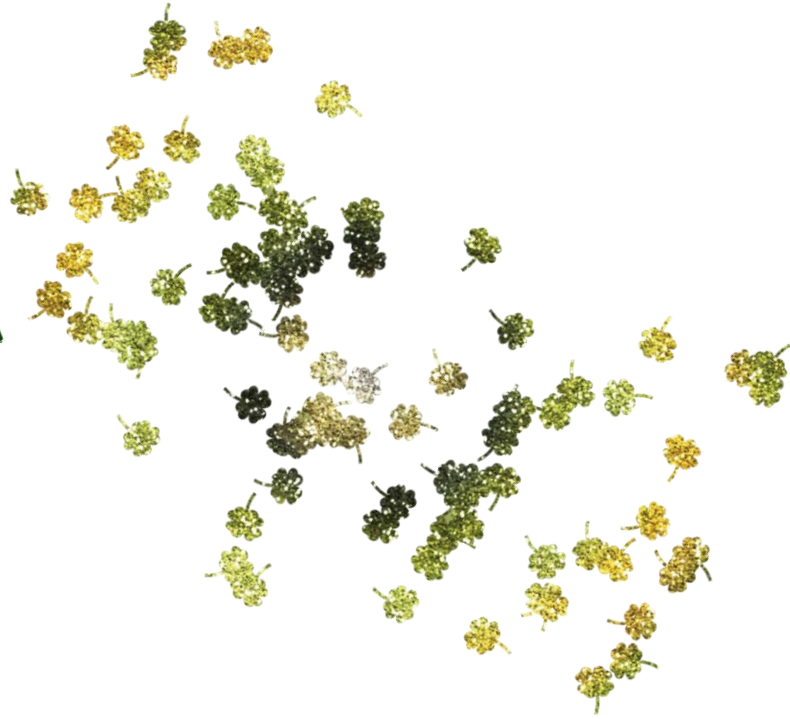
*My favorite doodle by Andre Jordan;  
especially fitting this time of year!*

The garden gnome lies in  
the shed, benefitting, as all  
gardeners do, from this  
period of dormancy...

"I am bored shitless"



Best Wishes to all of  
our EGC March  
Birthday Girls!



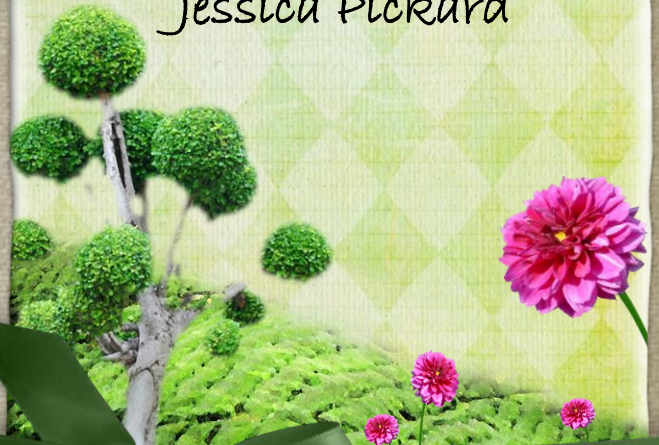
Welcome New Members

Nancy Woodson

Marlo Griesser

Meriel Meehan

Jessica Pickard



Please send any corrections, additions, or submissions  
for the Wild Iris to [louiseheern@gmail.com](mailto:louiseheern@gmail.com)



# *7 Types of Fruit Trees You Can Grow in Your Living Room*

by Amanda Simms Re-printed from 'Food52'

There are decorative house plants and then there are edible plants that you tend to in a tiny kitchen garden. But what about in between?

If you're looking for an indoor plant that's both decorative *and* edible, look to the world of fruit trees! **While many grow to be enormous in the wild and are native to perpetually sunny conditions, there are a number of dwarf plants that will do just fine—and even fruit! —in a big pot in your living room.** Proper care and conditions (and a reliable nursery for sourcing them!) are extra important if you want an indoor fruit tree to prosper, but with freshly grown produce is the goal (and no garden required), we have confidence in your drive. **Here's a primer on fruit trees that you can grow indoors.**

## 1. Figs



# Figs



## FRUIT?

If you want a fig tree that fruits, steer clear of the ever-popular decorative fiddleleaf—which won't even consider it. Instead choose a small cultivar like *Brown Turkey* (also known as *Negro Largo* or *Aubique Noire*), which tolerates heavy pruning, is self-pollinating, and can thrive indoors. They'll sprout pretty oblong leaves.

## PLANTING & CARE

The size of the pot you choose will factor into how large and productive your tree becomes (opt for a larger planter for more fruit, smaller if you need the fig tree to stay small). Water it about once a week, until it comes out of the drainage holes, and prune when it reaches the size you want.

## HABITAT

While inedible fig trees do fine in indirect sunlight, edible cultivars will need to be positioned in bright light—right in line with a northern exposure would be ideal. They don't like the cold at all, so keep away from drafty doors and windows.

## 2. Lemons & 3. Limes



## FRUIT?

If you want to grow lemons and limes inside, opt for a dwarf cultivar that self-pollinates—like *Meyer Lemon* (which doesn't require as much heat to ripen the fruit) or *Kaffir Lime*; they'll yield the quickest crop and the plant will stay a manageable size.

## PLANTING & CARE

The best soil for growing healthy citrus trees is slightly acidic and loam-based (meaning 2:2:1 sand to silt to clay). They also like lots of moisture in the air—up to 50% humidity, ideally! —but you can simulate that environment by spritzing them regularly with water from a spray bottle. Let the soil fully dry out before watering.

## HABITAT

No surprise here: Citrus plants need a whole lot of sunlight—8 to 12 hours of it every day. Place your tree in the sunniest spot you have—better yet if it's a room with double exposure (southern and eastern, say). And if you have any outdoor space, they'd appreciate a few months in the fresh air if you have a balmy summer.

## 4. Olives



### ***FRUIT?***

Self-pollinating and prolific (a single tree can produce as many as 20 pounds of fruit a year), olive trees do not require much care compared to other fruit trees. **When shopping for an indoor olive tree, keep in mind that many cultivars are purely ornamental, meaning they won't fruit, but there are great indoor varieties that will:** Consider an *Arbequina*—which is slow-growing and will drip water through the leaves (called "weeping")—or a *Picholine*, which is more upright.

### ***PLANTING & CARE***

Indoor olive trees need only be watered when the top inch of soil has dried out, and less in fall and winter when they take a natural rest.

### ***HABITAT***

An olive tree needs at least 6 hours of solid sunlight each day. Place it near a sunny, south-facing window (but not too close or the leaves will frizzle).



## 5. Avocados



### ***FRUIT?***

To be clear, it's very very tough to get an indoor avocado tree to fruit but it isn't impossible. Instead of growing one from a seed (that is, the pit—see above left), seek out a *grafted* starter plant that has some tissue from a tree that does produce good-tasting fruit. Naturally small trees—like *Wurtz*, *Gwen*, and *Whitsell*—are your best bet, and they don't have to be cross-pollinated to fruit.

### ***PLANTING & CARE***

Add some sand to the bottom of a pot and fill in with regular potting mix so your tree doesn't get wet feet, and water it regularly without letting the soil get sopping wet. Ripe fruit can be left hanging on the tree for a few weeks.

### ***HABITAT***

Warm-season plants, avocados like lots of bright light. Right in line with a south-facing window is your best shot at finding it a happy place!



## 6. Bananas



### ***FRUIT?***

Some banana trees produce edible fruit while others produce fruit you can't eat—and again you'll want to get a dwarf plant—such as *Super Dwarf Cavendish* or *Dwarf Red*—so that it doesn't grow too huge. They're self-fruitful, meaning they don't require a pollinator.

### ***PLANTING & CARE***

Your banana tree's soil should be light and peat-y; fertilize it monthly to keep it growing strong. They like lots of water due to their enormous leaves, but you'll want to let the soil dry out fully between waterings. The leaves can be misted to simulate a humid climate.

### ***HABITAT***

Lots of bright indirect sunlight is best, so set it up near a southern-facing exposure if possible. Rotate the plant periodically so that all sides get light.



## 7. Mulberries

### *FRUIT?*

Yet again, you'll want to opt for a dwarf mulberry tree such as *Dwarf Everbearing* if you're growing it indoors. The fruit of a mulberry tree, which will look something like a blackberry but smaller, should be picked as soon as it's ripe—and the tree's fruit supply will ripen over time rather than all at once.

### *PLANTING & CARE*

Regular potting soil works fine, as will regular watering! Mulberry trees are slow-growing and like roomy pots.

### *HABITAT*

A warm, bright, sunny space is best for your mulberry tree; move it to a spot with full exposure from spring through fall, if possible.



# CALL FOR ARTISTS AND SPONSORS

for the 12th Annual  
"The Art of the Egg"  
Evergreen's Egg-cellent Egg Design Contest

**Awards Given in Every Category!**

## AMATEUR ARTISTS

**Paint your egg at Go Paint! March 1 - April 3**

4602 Plettner Lane, Evergreen | GoPaintFun.com | 303.679.3089

Little Ones Ages 0-7, \$15 to enter Tweens Ages 8-13, \$15 to enter Adults 14+, \$25 to enter

## PROFESSIONAL ARTISTS

**Now through March 30**

Create a unique egg-straordinary egg using  
the medium of your choice. Juried show.

**Local sponsor covers \$50 entry fee.**

Contact Go Paint! to apply: 303.679.3089 or GoPaintPottery@live.com

**New Level This Year! HIGH SCHOOL PRO**

**Now through March 30**

Same criteria as professional artists, with juried show.

**Entry fee \$35 (you can recruit a sponsor if you wish)**

Contact Go Paint! to apply: 303.679.3089 or GoPaintPottery@live.com

**FINISHED EGGS** will be displayed at

**Evergreen National Bank April 8-12**

and at **Go Paint! April 13-30**

for community vote and silent auction bidding.

**FINALE PARTY: Wednesday, May 1, Go Paint!**

4-6 p.m. for children and families; 6-7:30 p.m. for adults

## Egg Sponsors Needed!

**Sponsor a Professional Artist egg for only \$50.**

Your name/business will be included on  
promotional materials and on display with your egg.

Register at [www.GoPaintFun.com](http://www.GoPaintFun.com) or contact Go Paint!  
at 303.679.7089 or GoPaintPottery@live.com



# THE PERFECT 'COLORADO' COMBINATION TAKEN FROM

## 'DESIGNER PLANT COMBINATIONS'

By SCOTT CALHOUN



### PRICKLY PEARS AND FIREWHEELS

Coupling cactus and perennials takes a little planning. The main considerations are providing good drainage and selecting perennial species that will tolerate an infrequent watering regime in order not to drown the cactus. Here, I've used a substantial member of the prickly pear family in the middle of the planting, where it can stick its Mickey Mouse ears above flowering plants. To contrast with the blue-gray pads of the prickly pear, the bold red-and-yellow tipped daisies of firewheel are well suited to the purpose.





*Submitted by Cherie Luke*

**Every gardener has a long list of plants that were once in their garden but are now no longer in their garden.**

**Some of us keep the tags from these plants. Then when we want to feel bad about ourselves as gardeners, we sit down and sift through all the labels and lament all the plants we killed.**

**And those plants that just up and died on us.**

**And those plants that just one day went missing.**

**And when we are done looking at all those labels, it sure seems like a lot of plants have come and gone from our gardens.**

**Because a lot of plants have come and gone from our gardens.**

**Then we can go through all the tags of the plants that are still in our gardens, still growing, still giving us joy. And we should. Because a lot of plants are still in our gardens, thank goodness.**

**We could throw out all those tags for plants we killed or that died or just want missing to make ourselves feel better as gardeners. But then we wouldn't be able to calculate our Plant Kill Rate (PKR). Or our Plant Died Rate (PDR). Or our Plant Missing Rate (PMR).**

**Now you are asking, "Carol, why would I want to calculate rates like those? Won't those numbers just make me feel bad about myself as a gardener?"**

**Excellent question.**

**You should calculate those rates and tell other gardeners about them, especially newer gardeners, so they understand that not every plant we acquire and put in our gardens or in the case of houseplants, in our houses, is going to live.**

**And I'm not talking about annual flowers, which we expect to die at the end of the growing season.**

**I'm talking about expensive plants. I'm talking about rare plants. I'm talking about trees and shrubs that we thought defined a whole area of the garden. I'm talking about perennials.**

I'm talking about our beloved plants.

Sometimes they just die. Or we kill them. Or they go missing. It is a fact of gardening!

Will knowing those rates make it less of a fact?

Indeed not. It will just make us aware that not every plant will live, even with our best care. And it might help newer gardeners understand that they, too, will one day have their own stack of labels for dead, killed, or missing plants. And there is no shame in having such mementos. It is a fact of gardening, a fact of life.

I'll confess my rates to get the ball rolling here...

My PMR... not too high. I don't have many missing plants. I know where most of them are, even if they are in the compost pile. I'll say 1% because it probably isn't zero.

My PKR... oh, I never blame myself for the death of a plant so this is almost certainly zero.

My PDR... higher than I'd like but that's because I am willing to try to grow a lot of different plants. Let's go with 10%. For every 10 plants I buy, one dies. As it turns out, some of those plants are not all that suitable for my climate or aren't able to live without water for months on end. (See above for *Ludisia discolor*, an orchid I had several years ago. It isn't really missing, it's dead, but that's a nice graphic I made so let's not split root hairs over it.)

Of course, why didn't I think of it. I should flip this whole thing upside down and think only of my PSR, Plant Survival Rate. That's a much better number.

90%! I'll take it!



## The Basics of Orchids Culture - Part 2

Ned Nash

This is the second installment of a five-part series that first appeared in the *American Orchid Society BULLETIN* Vol. 52, 1983. This five-part series, while over 25 years old, still remains an extremely valuable resource for orchid growers. This article has been edited to conform to modern taxonomic nomenclature and the availability of pesticides/insecticides and growing media.



THE SECOND most common problem that people experience with Cattleya culture, after insufficient light, is improper watering. An understanding of the most common habits of Cattleya and related species greatly helps in understanding their watering needs. As discussed earlier, most horticulturally important Cattleya-types live as epiphytes in the middle elevations (2000-5000-feet) of the sub-tropics.

## WATERING AND HUMIDITY

There are important lessons to be learned here. The roots of a cattleya, because they are by nature largely exposed and dry quite rapidly, simply will not tolerate extended periods of wetness in culture. Unless the roots are allowed at least to practically dry between wettings, they will rot. The absorptive layer of the roots, the velamen, absorbs water like a sponge. When it is fully charged with moisture, no gas exchange with the atmosphere occurs, and this leads to rot. Although cattleyas are generally grown in pots for convenience and ease of handling, their need for cyclic drying and wetting still remains. We will be discussing potting media and potting later in this series but suffice it to say that a relatively coarse and free-draining medium is necessary for cattleyas.

## WATERING AND HUMIDITY (Continued)

A coarse potting medium and resulting free drainage help to duplicate the cyclic, wet-dry nature of the plants' native habitat. They also provide the liberal air circulation about the roots that the plants enjoy. Yet the coarsest mix and the best draining pot simply will not help if one is too liberal with watering. Many growers tend to "fuss" over the plants too much. Because of their exotic reputation many people are basically scared by cattleyas. Unfortunately, people seem to be more afraid of under-, than over-watering their cattleyas. Many more plants have succumbed to over-watering than vice-versa, although under-watering does have its attendant problems. One has to remember that cattleyas have evolved to be drought-tolerant and will not tolerate too much water at the roots. Don't go overboard on this advice, either! Practice moderation. Allowing plants to dry between waterings does not mean creating a desert for days on end. If a plant is dry, by all means water it!



"Well", you may be asking yourself, "how does one know for sure when a cattleya needs water?" Good question. There are many diagnostic tests one can perform to determine the water content of a pot. First of all, the differential drying rate of plastic and clay pots must be considered. Because clay is porous, it "breathes," hastening the drying of the potting medium it contains. This sweating of moisture from clay pots can give a hint as to whether the plant needs water. Lift the pot. If there is a ring of moisture on the bench under the pot, there is plenty of water in that pot. A trick that works well with both clay and plastic is to insert a freshly sharpened lead pencil about halfway into the medium. If the wood is dark with moisture when the pencil is withdrawn, the plant does not need watering. Today's lightweight potting media in combination with the lightness of plastic pots can give valuable information as to the amount of moisture in the pot. Lift a plant in a plastic pot immediately after you have watered it. It will be relatively heavy. Lift that same pot immediately before you plan to water. If the plant really needs to be watered, it will be quite light. With a little practice, the weight and balance of a plant in a plastic pot can tell you just how much water is left in the pot and will enable you to estimate when the plant will need water again.



## WATERING AND HUMIDITY (continued)

Obviously, very few of us have either the time or the inclination to go to each plant in our collection and test it individually. However, if the plants are set up in "size-place" (pots of the same size together), and one remembers the intervals between waterings for a given pot size, the initial learning period can be greatly reduced. It is a good idea to double-check your presumptions on watering intervals every so often so as not to become complacent.

Seasonal influences are the primary factors affecting watering intervals. Areas like Florida and Hawaii experience seasonal variations in day-length and the amount of cloud cover or rainfall, however slight. As one moves away from the equator, these factors become increasingly important. Plants generally require less water during the winter months, owing to shorter and cooler days which slow the plants' growth rate. (Although less pronounced today because of the complex nature of most hybrids grown, a very dry rest during winter was quite necessary to the health of *Cattleya* species grown years ago.) The extent to which watering frequency is reduced will depend on the severity of the winter in your area. Plants whose growth is slowed by a reduction of total insolation (short days and considerable cloud cover) require less water and will remain wet longer between waterings. Not only do the plants actually use much less water, but the normal evaporation from the pot is also slowed by the lower, average temperatures. This is one of the primary reasons that cold-climate greenhouses require better air circulation than warm-climate greenhouses. The increased air movement aids the evaporative process, thereby helping the pots to dry more quickly.

Conversely, warmer and longer days, with the increased sun they bring, will necessitate more frequent waterings. Not only are the plants in active growth with many new roots forming, but the increased admission of fresh air evaporates moisture from the pots more quickly as well. It is especially important to take advantage of this quickening of growth in northern or cooler areas. The growing season can be quite short in these areas, and it is important to utilize it efficiently. This means monitoring the plants' water needs closely so as to avoid slowing their growth by insufficient water. This is not the contradiction it may seem. As I stated earlier, "If a plant needs water, water it!" Only when the plants' water needs are met will they perform to their true potential.



## WATERING AND HUMIDITY (Continued)

Adequate humidity goes hand-in-hand with proper watering practices. In nature, cattleyas are of course subject to fluctuating humidity. This is moderated by the creation of a micro-climate in forested areas by the collective transpiration of the resident plants. At night, the forest's atmosphere may be saturated with moisture as the temperature drops. The species will experience relative humidities in the range of ca. 20% to 100%. More typically, the range would be 40-80%. This is the range they will prefer in your greenhouse.

A brief explanation of relative humidity will be relevant here to help understand its relationship to other environmental factors. A given volume of air will hold a fixed amount of water vapor at any given temperature. For example, a cubic liter of air will hold 10 ml of water vapor at 70F with a 100% relative humidity (RH). (These figures are for the sake of discussion only.) If there are only 5ml of water vapor in that liter of air at 70F, we say the RH is 50%, as the volume of air only contains one-half the moisture it potentially can. Cool air will hold less moisture than warm. If we take that same liter of air and warm it 10F to 80F, it can hold more water vapor than it could have at 70F. We will assume that it can hold twice as much, or 20 ml. Our test liter of air at 70F with 5 ml of water vapor and at 50% RH, if warmed to 80F, will be at 25% RH as it holds only one-fourth of the water vapor that it potentially could.

In a closed greenhouse, we are dealing with nearly fixed volumes of air and water vapor. It is easy to see the effect that temperature change will have on relative humidity. The effect can be neatly explained as an inverse relationship. That is, RH drops as temperature rises, and vice-versa. Conversely, a plant's humidity needs are in direct relation to temperature. With rising temperatures, more humidity is necessary to prevent the plant's transpiration rate from outstripping its water supply, causing subsequent stress. At night, or on cool, sunless days, the air may reach 100% RH as the cool air has less potential water capacity. This is a rather dangerous situation if left too long, as a saturated atmosphere is highly conducive to fungal and bacterial problems.

In real life, however, a truly "closed" greenhouse is seldom achieved. Whether or not it is even advantageous is open to debate. Vents, doors, uncaulked seams - all do their part in altering the RH in a greenhouse by allowing interchange with the outside atmosphere. We like to at least crack the vents on warm days, as this allows better air circulation. However, this also serves to lower the RH as moist air escapes through the open vents. Damping-down, the wetting of floors and benches, is a good solution. This adds to the potential amount of water vapor in the house. A good test for dryness is to observe whether the greenhouse floor is dark with moisture or light-colored and dry.

## WATERING AND HUMIDITY (Continued)

Young seedlings require more water and humidity as they do not have the well-developed, water-storage organs of larger plants. More frequent watering is called for. If you are fortunate enough to be home to tend your plants during the day, the seedlings may be lightly misted as necessary. For those of us who must have a job to support our orchid (and other) habits, here is a good trick. After the seedlings are deflasked and planted into community- or corn-pots, bend a wire loop approximately ten inches across and insert it into the pot(s). Place a clear plastic veggie bag over the loop and presto! - you have a "mini-greenhouse." The bag need only be removed for watering. I find about 10 weeks "in the bag" is enough to establish young seedlings and to partially adapt them to outside life.

## FERTILIZING

The substrates upon which cattleyas grow in nature, trees and rocks, provide few if any nutrients. Cattleyas do, however, enjoy a steady source of fertilizer from many external environmental sources. Birds and other animals leave their droppings behind, leaf detritus collects around the base of the plants, and nutrient solutions are washed over the plants from above by the frequent rains. We can draw important conclusions from this information that will apply not only to cattleyas but to other epiphytic orchids as well. Since the nutrients are supplied sparingly by outside factors, we can infer that cattleyas are moderate, not heavy feeders. Because the nutrients are being supplied relatively constantly, generally with precipitation, cattleyas will prefer more frequent, but lighter doses of fertilizer. Last, although the nutrients are being provided in a more unorthodox manner than with terrestrial plants, the nutrients are supplied in a more or less "balanced" feed solution.

How do these conclusions relate to successful Cattleya culture under artificial conditions? We have already discussed the preference of cattleyas for more frequent feedings of moderate strength because this more closely duplicates the conditions they are used to. We orchid growers eat two to three times a day in moderate amounts rather than gorging once a week (at least I think so). Here at our nursery we fertilize at every watering with one-half the recommended dosage of our custom-blend fertilizers. It is acceptable to feed full strength every two weeks — if one is lazy or pressed for time — but more frequent feedings definitely enhance both growth and flowering.



## FERTILIZING (Continued)

Organic media utilizing fir bark were experimented with in England many years ago, but they were considered unsatisfactory. Because growers were so used to osmunda and never fertilized, it was felt that orchids did not require additional feeding. Plants grown in fir bark and not fertilized do poorly indeed, as the bark requires nitrogen as well as the plant. Interest in fir bark media was renewed in the early 1950's in California because of a ready and cheap supply. A fertilizer suitable for use with these types of media was developed by O. A. Matkin. It was found that these types of media require a relatively high ratio of nitrogen, as the organisms present in the medium that break it down require nitrogen and will take it from the plant if sufficient is not provided. For this reason, organic mixes containing fir bark or tree fern are watered with a fertilizer balanced to a 3-1-1 or 3-1-2 ratio; the two "extra" parts of nitrogen are for the mix, leaving a truly "balanced" 1—1—1 feed solution. We use one-half strength 30-10-10 every watering, altering with a low nitrogen 10-30-30 fertilizer every fourth watering. The low nitrogen fertilizer helps to encourage root and flower production (phosphorus and potassium do this) and to harden the plant somewhat. A point should be made here in regard to commercially prepared, balanced fertilizers. A bit of study will show that most, if not all of these growth formulations prepared for fir bark growing have the basic 3-1-1 or 3-1-2 ratio (i.e., 30-10-10, 27-9-18, etc.). Since the nutrients are derived from the same salts no matter which company blends them, there is really very little difference between commercial preparations. Distinctive dyes are usually added to differentiate products, but the dye is really most important as an indicator that the fertilizer solution is coming through the hose [Editor's note: Since this article first appeared a number of studies related to fertilizer needs have been conducted. We now know that optimum fertilizer is directly related to water quality and that excess nitrogen is not as important as first thought since the excess nitrogen contributes to the decomposition of the potting medium. We also know now that urea nitrogen is not efficiently used by orchids and that urea-free fertilizers are a better choice.]

A situation similar to that of the 1940's and 1950's now exists. The supply of good quality fir bark (remember those halcyon days of kiln-dried Weyerhaeuser bark?) and tree fern is declining rapidly, much as osmunda fiber did thirty years ago. For this reason, many growers are now experimenting with inorganic media. Because inorganic media generally provide no nutrients, culture in them is essentially hydroponic. That is, the medium provides only support and water retention. A truly balanced fertilizer is required [urea-free fertilizers are especially important here]. There are many good commercially prepared products available. It is important that the fertilizer be designed specifically for this type of use, as one can run the risk of under- or over-fertilizing with resulting harm to your cattleyas.

Part 3 of this series on Cattleya culture will deal more specifically with potting and potting media.



# NATIVE PLANTS FOR WILDLIFE

by **Kenton J. Seth, AUDUBON ROCKIES**

Registration Link [https://act.audubon.org/onlineactions/yv\\_3fLfR5Ui7eip93ijFSQ2](https://act.audubon.org/onlineactions/yv_3fLfR5Ui7eip93ijFSQ2)

## Working with Natives in the Name of Wildlife

March 7, 2019 | 5:30-7:00pm



Photo: Evan Barrientos/Audubon Rockies

### Kenton J. Seth - Presenter

We'll be learning about the most important and forgotten ways native plants can be used to help critters, but focus on practical and realistic considerations for us normal human beings so that we can get the most from "low hanging fruit" when it comes to hosting nature in our home gardens. We're much more apt to do a good job if it's easy!



Ross-University Hills Library  
4310 E. Amherst Ave.  
Denver, CO 80222

#### PURCHASE TICKETS

\$35 - Non Members

\$25 - Members (*Audubon/Wild Ones*)