



CENTRAL ILLINOIS ORCHID SOCIETY

Spring Newsletter 2026

March-May 2026

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CIOS ONLINE:

- www.ciorchidsociety.org
- Facebook Group—[click here](#).
- ??s: info@ciorchidsociety.org

Central Illinois Orchid Society Newsletter is published each quarter and delivered by email. Subscription is included with membership in the Society. Send submissions to Lori Garrett at Lorikgarrett@gmail.com.

Annual membership in CIOS is \$30 person or \$50/couple each year. [Click here](#) or [visit our](#) for the Membership Form and mailing address.

2026 CIOS Executive Board:

- Joanne Miller, President
- Vanessa DeShambo, Vice President
- Linda Bailey, Show Chair
- John Foran, Sale Chair
- Janet Roadcap, Treasurer
- Lori Garrett, Editor, website and newsletter, AOS Representative
- Erin Hassan, Membership Chair



From the President's Pen . . .



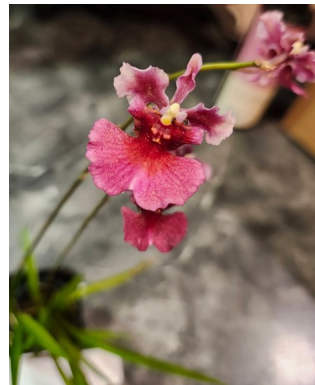
When I wrote this, it was a blustery and cold day while the temperature was only 2 degrees! Of course now the temperature has been all over the place, even reaching the 70's this coming week, but likely winter is not through with us yet. As I look at my orchids I'm thinking they each would rather be in their Homeland, whether it is 80 degrees or tropical, but I'm trying to keep them happy over here. No matter where they are, it is wise to supply the conditions that make the plant happy and healthy—humidity for the plants that love water, and dryer for the plants that like a dormant winter—and then to learn from our mistakes. So, continue to read as much information as your time allows for the particular genre you collect, and never quit learning!

I'm excited about our programs for this year. At our February meeting, we discussed incorporating orchids in terrariums. I hope I convinced some of you to try one. They have given me much pleasure in the past (my own little secret garden in a glass container!). Our March program will be about the water you use to grow your orchids, about pH and reverse osmosis water, etc. Did you know there were so many things to find out about your water? We will also learn about hardy and native orchids this year. Maybe the next time I go on a nature walk I can spot some with my new knowledge! For another program, we're going to learn all about Bulbophyllums, their care and culture and some of their idiosyncrasies. We hope to have Flask & Flora back to speak to us this year, and also New World Orchids. Plus we will have our annual Show and Sale, Summer Picnic, Silent Auction in the Fall, and our year-end Holiday Party.

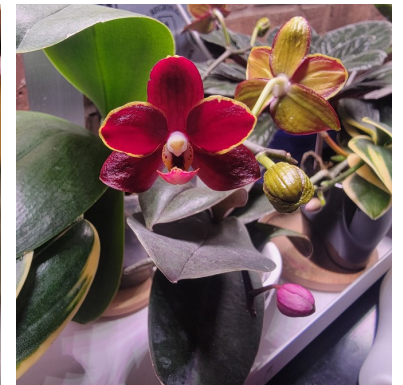
Hope to see you at most of our meetings! Our annual dues of \$30 will be due in April when we have our show and sale.

Happy Growing,

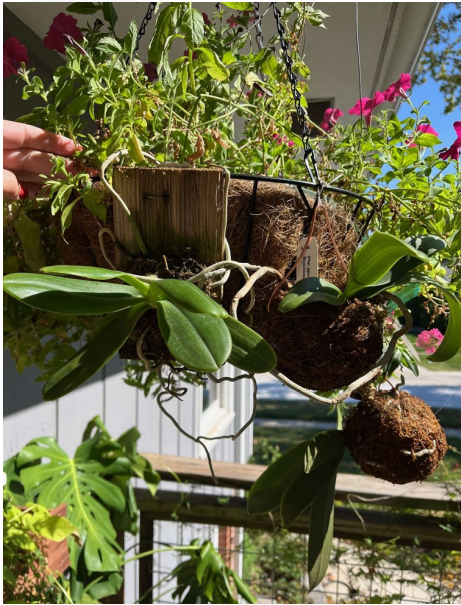
Joanne Miller
CIOS President



Tolumnia



Mini Phalaenopsis



Growing Phalaenopsis in Moss Balls By Vanessa DeShambo

I have been looking for a way to grow mounted plants in a way that isn't on a plank or plastic mount, as I don't care for the look. I have a *Gastrochilus retrocalla* that came to me growing on a branch which I love the look of, but this is only suitable for relatively small orchids.

I found these hollowed out moss balls at Prairie Gardens, and I recalled that Melissa did a demonstration about kokodama balls. They are made of moss and fishing line and could certainly be DIY'd. I decided to try it with a teacup Phalaenopsis and a hybrid Rhynchonopsis Dragon Charmy (*Sederia japonica* x *Rhynchostylis gigantea*).

I have grown them in these for about 6 months now, and had them outdoors through the summer. They can be soaked or sprayed down and retain moisture better than a plank. I still water them about every other day, and once every other week I soak them in a fertilizer solution. Both have loved the setup, and they have roots growing into and through the moss, becoming firmly attached. The tea cup had smaller roots to start and was much easier to establish compared to the Dragon Charmy which has long unruly roots. I love the look of the Phalaenopsis hanging in a natural way, and think for the next one I will try to achieve a weight balance that is somewhere in between the two I currently have. I may also try to move the *Sederia japonica* currently on a plank to one, gently wrapping the roots around the ball.

If you're looking for a way to mount your orchids, I think this is a really nice look and is best suited for smaller plants that can grow into the space. They can be suspended with wire or fishing line, or set on a little dish. I have mine hung with copper-colored craft wire and plan to try the dish method as well. I can't wait to see how the blooms display, and I'll certainly share a photo with our group.



Easy Orchid Virus Testing at Home with the Agdia Kit

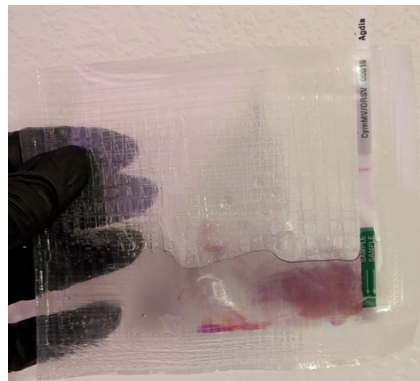
By Elena V. Romanova

Last year I posted about tissue chimeras in orchids, inspired by a handsome Phalaenopsis with uniquely patterned pink blooms that I found at Prairie Garden last year. Curious about the cause, I decided to rule out viral infection, and invested in an Agdia ImmunoStrip® for Cymbidium mosaic virus and Odontoglossum ringspot virus (CymMV & ORSV) test kit for screening plants for viral pathogens. These kits are popular among growers and hobbyists as an easily accessible, moderately priced, user-friendly, at-home testing option for plant virus screening without the need for complex lab equipment or expensive mail-order service.



My 5-strip Agdia kit included everything needed to perform a lateral flow immunoassay on a strip, similar to a COVID-19 test, using a small plant tissue sample. The kit came with instructions, tips on tissue sampling and grinding, extraction buffer, mesh grinding bags, and immunoassay strips. After grinding the plant pieces in the buffer, the liquid extract rests for a few minutes to settle the tissue debris, and is then applied to the strip. Within minutes, a set of colored lines appears, one as a reference marker and the other indicating a positive or negative result. The process is straightforward, fast, and does not require any lab equipment, at least in theory.

Wanting to maximize my return on investment, I tested tissues from the root, petal, flower stem, and leaf, using two strips total by pairing samples: one strip for petal and stem, the other for root and leaf. Initially, I followed the instructions: grind the sample in the bag, let the debris settle, and insert the strip into a special pocket within the mesh bag that is supposed to minimize contact with the tissue debris while fully exposing the strip to the tissue extract. However, the mesh bags are soft, and any motion, like inserting the strip, easily stirs the debris back up. My first test was inconclusive, and I suspect the tiny tissue particles interfered with flow through the strip membrane, possibly partially clogging the membrane. My second test provided the results I could trust.



Above: Petal and stem sample.



Right: Leaf and root sample.

As an experimental chemist, I quickly thought of an optimization to the original method. If were to do this again, I would transfer the crushed sample into a small lab tube, spin it down in a mini-centrifuge, and pipette the clarified supernatant back into the original Agdia bag to ensure that the strip was immersed entirely, as directed in the kit manual. The test strips are not designed to handle crude extracts packed with debris, and spinning down the extract would make a huge difference. Note that the test tubes and centrifuge are not included in the kit, but they can be purchased separately, along with pipettes, if you do not have them on hand. These extra supplies cost about the same as the kit for five strips and can be worthwhile if you want consistent test performance. Below are my recommendations and links to suitable products on Amazon. Alternatively, you can borrow from me 😊.

Thanks to this method, I was relieved to confirm that my eccentric Phalaenopsis tested negative for the viruses included in the Agdia screen (photo at right)! That means its unusual flower coloration likely is not disease-related. Whether the pattern is caused by a genetic chimera remains to be seen, but I'm excited to watch how it blooms next season. Overall, I find Agdia test kits a good starting point for hobbyists looking to keep an eye on plant health. I hope the tips I shared will help you get the most out of your testing experience, should you screen your orchids.



Recommended products and tips

[Agdia - Orchid Test Kits](#)

ONiLAB's Scientific Mini Centrifuge is around \$60 on Amazon; quiet and small to get the job done.

Remember to balance the tubes when spinning. For an odd number of samples, make a water-filled dummy. [ONiLAB's Scientific Mini Centrifuge 7000RPM, 2680 x g RCF, Lab Benchtop Centrifuge with 2 Rotors for 8 x 0.2/0.5/1.5/2.0ml and 0.2mLx32 PCR Strips, Low Noise≤45dB, 100-240V\(\(ONLY for MICROTUBES\): Amazon.com: Industrial & Scientific.](#)

Micro Centrifuge Tubes, 2 ml. Any brand found on Amazon works, but opt for 2 ml volume instead of popular 1.5ml varieties. Typical cost is \$7-10/100pcs. [BKMAMLAB 2ml Microcentrifuge Tubes 100pcs, EO Sterilized Plastic Small Vials with Caps for Sample Storage Without Leakage\(100\): Amazon.com: Industrial & Scientific.](#)

[Editor's Note: Because of health issues, there was a lapse in newsletter publication. Due to that, I am including some photos throughout this edition from past events.]

Scenes from our 2025 Annual Picnic, July 12th, 2025

Thanks, Linda Bailey, for hosting us in your gorgeous back yard and gardens!





The Orchid Show: Feelin' Groovy

Chicago Botanic Garden

1000 Lake Cook Road in Glencoe, Illinois.

February 7 – March 22, 2026

Daily, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Rewind to the '60s and '70s at the Orchid Show: Feelin' Groovy where 10,000 vibrant orchids are the hottest thing since bell bottoms. Floor-to-ceiling sunbeams made of cascading orchids light up the room in living color. Lose yourself in a 10-foot lava lamp aglow with colorful blooms, then hit the road as a flower-filled Volkswagen Beetle carries you through a Route 66 daydream. The experience is pure good vibes.

Let the sunshine in. [CLICK HERE](#) for more information.



ORCHID CONSERVATION ALLIANCE

www.orchidconservationalliance.org

**Discover our
Orchids in the Wild
Ecotours!**

2026 Tours

Tour	Dates
Rhodes	March 17-24
Gargano Peninsula	April 11-20
Rio Negro Full	May 22-June 2
Northern Yunnan	June 14-28
Colombia	July 22-August 6
Nepal-The Orchid Trail	November 9-17
Nepal-Chitwan National Park	November 21-24

CIOS Upcoming Programs *(Schedule is subject to change).*

Unless otherwise specified, all meetings are at 6:30 PM at Hessel Park Church, 700 West Kirby Ave., Champaign.

- March 9 - Water Chemistry - All about the water you use on your orchids
- April 11 - CIOS Annual Show and Sale, 10 AM to 2 PM
- May 11 - Hardy and Native Orchids
- June 8 - Flask & Flora Orchids
- July 11 - CIOS Member Picnic - Place to be determined
- August 10 - Everything you wanted to know about Bulbophyllums
- September 14 - Digital tour of an Orchid Grower's set-up





CIOS Annual Show and Sale—Saturday, April 11th, 10-2

Our biggest fundraiser of the year is coming up quickly! We need a lot of people to pull this together and make it a success. Sign up for a slot at our March meeting and watch your emails for opportunities to help.

We will need help in advance with pricing the plants. We will need help that morning with setting up tables and putting out orchids. We ask members who come to bring a dish to share so we can grab a quick bite for lunch. And we really need your blooming orchids to display in the show section.

We want to ensure that all attendees feel super welcome because we typically gain new members at or shortly after the show. Many people find orchids intimidating—we want to encourage them, share our knowledge, and share our passion. See you there!

Central Illinois Orchid Society
www.ciorchidsociety.org



SHOW &
SALE

APRIL 11, 2026

10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

FREE ADMISSION || LEARN ABOUT ORCHIDS || BUY BEAUTIFUL PLANTS

Attend Workshops

- *Choosing orchids for my growing conditions: 11:00 A.M.*
- *Please DON'T Just Add Ice—Basic orchid growing: Noon*
 - *Orchid Repotting Demo—1:00 P.M.*



Hessel Park Church 700 W. Kirby Champaign Payment: Cash, Check, or Venmo



Buyer Beware!

By Lori Garrett

Buying orchids online is risky business. Not only can shipping be pricey, but weather and handling conditions during shipping can ruin even healthy plants. There are MANY excellent online sources, and the American Orchid Society has some recommendations as well, but there is also a shady side to the online market. I have seen many reports of negative reviews not getting posted online. If you want to buy from an online source, sure—look at the reviews on their site, but also look for reviews outside of their site.

I have usually had very good luck with ordering online, although sometimes the “near blooming size” plants I have received are barely past the seeding stage when they arrive. But I want to highlight one specific order that went awry. A few years ago, I ordered two plants from a vendor on Etsy—near blooming size. The pots arrived with handwritten labels stuck in them. The plants were slow growing, but one of them finally bloomed for me in late fall.

During the time between purchase and bloom, I found a Facebook group that I now follow:

[USA Orchid Vendor Reviews, Rants & Complaints](https://www.facebook.com/groups/233470391737136)

(<https://www.facebook.com/groups/233470391737136>).

Much to my dismay, the vendor from which I made that purchase was slammed all over the postings for selling not only poor quality plants, but also for shipping wrong plants and then disappearing when customers sought replacement or refund. I'll not put the vendor name here because he keeps changing his business name. But now I know other names he uses so I can avoid him for future purchases, thanks to that Facebook group. What I really like is that people can post asking for feedback about a specific vendor, and if members have used that vendor they can share their actual experience. If you are on Facebook and you buy plants online, you might want to check them out.

As for the plants I bought, one remains an unbloomed mystery.

The one that bloomed?

Not at all what I had ordered, but it was loaded with nice flowers so I am OK with this learning experience.

What I ordered: Lunar Eclipse



What I received: I dunno!





Member Silent Auction
October 13th, 2025

Each October, we do what traditionally was a rather small members-only fundraiser. It used to be just a straight sale with most items priced under \$5.00 and we would raise maybe \$40 to \$50 total.



Well, for the last two years we have modified the event, and it is now a Silent Auction. The first year was a big success. This year, we opened the auction up with the addition of a variety of houseplants—not just orchids. (Thanks to all the donors who brought plants!) For the meeting, we allow time at the start for members to browse the selection and write their name and a price on the sheet next to any plants that catch their interest. Then we conduct our monthly business meeting and an educational program. For this one, Vanessa discussed pest control through beneficial insects. Then we allow everyone another chance to bid on plants, and the highest bidders get the plants. The bids don't get very high—I only paid \$10 each for good, healthy mature plants. Even though we only had about a dozen attendees, we had 4 tables of plants and raised \$235 from the sales that night. However, Vanessa posted the “leftovers” to her online plant group and sold them all, gaining us another \$220! So we made \$455 from our Members Auction. Well done!



Spring Orchid General Care Checklist

{For more details and information, visit <https://orchidbliss.com/spring-care-orchids/>}

Catesetum reminder (last year's project plant)—do NOT start watering until new roots are 3-5 inches!

Check the roots

- Bright green or magenta root tips = healthy roots
- Black root tips = excess fertilizer salts = time to re-pot
- Mushy limp roots = overwatered = time to re-pot

Check the leaves

- Bright green and upright = healthy leaves
- Yellow leaves = overwatered or nitrogen deficiency
- Dry leaf tips = too much fertilizer or too much light

Check the pseudobulbs, if applicable

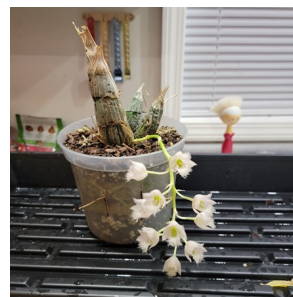
- The newest pseudobulb should be plump, firm, and larger than preceding pseudobulbs - until the orchid reaches maturity. Not all orchids have pseudobulbs (Phalaenopsis do not).

Check for NEW root tips

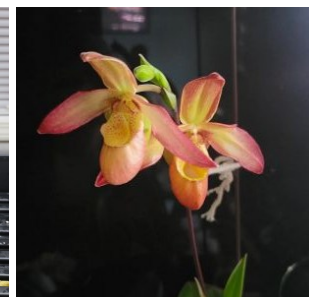
- **This is the BEST time to re-pot!** New root growth will help the orchid to transition into its new pot.

Feed your orchid

- New roots, leaves, pseudobulbs need the nutrients provided in fertilizer.
- Regularly flush fertilizer salts from potting media.



Clowesia

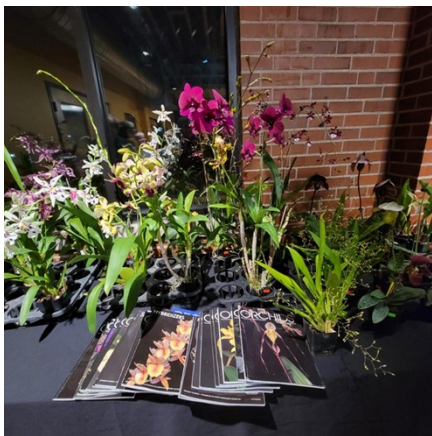


Phragmipedium



Member Holiday Dinner
November 8th, 2025 at Papa Dels

We had a great turnout for our Holiday dinner at our new venue, Papa Dels. The buffet was amazing with something for everyone—salads, appetizers, pastas, and of course both thick and thin pizzas. Service was great, food was great, and the orchids were stunning! Here are some photos from the evening.



SPECIAL THANKS TO
MARK WILLIAMS

FOR HIS MANY YEARS OF STELLAR SERVICE AS
CIOS TREASURER!

