



# NORTHWEST ORCHID NEWS

Current Newsletter

**April 2016**

Volume 69, Issue 9

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Want something printed in the newsletter? E-mail it to [nwos\\_news@nwos.org](mailto:nwos_news@nwos.org) no later than the 25th of the month.

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## About the April Meeting

**April 11, 2016**

7:00 p.m.

University of Washington Center for Urban Horticulture  
3501 NE 41st Street  
Seattle, WA 98105



## Speaker: Alan Koch - Species Habitat and Hybrid Culture

**Alan Koch, Gold  
Country Orchids**

This program teaches novice and advanced growers to link how a species grows in the wild, as how to grow it and the hybrids from it in your collection. The program is strong on orchid culture and helps everyone to be a better orchid grower. Bring a notepad so you can remember all his great information.

Alan Koch owns and operates Gold Country Orchids where he specializes in miniature and compact Cattleya's. Alan started growing orchids in 1969 with 3 Cymbidiums given to him by an aunt. While in college, he became interested in other orchids and discovered many would grow outdoors in Southern California. He has moved five times as his orchid obsession has led to the need for more growing space. With the last move, he purchased 10 acres of land in Lincoln, California for his 300,000 orchids. He is recognized as an expert in the Brazilian Cattleya alliance and a trend setter in miniature Cattleya breeding. Alan has been published in the Orchid Digest, and the American Orchid Society magazines. He has also been published in the proceedings of the World Orchid Conference. He is an internationally known speaker. He is a past member of the AOS Judging Committee, and the Research Committee, as well as an Accredited Judge and is Vice-chair and Training Coordinator for the California Sierra Nevada Judging Center. Alan also served two terms on the Orchid Digest Executive Committee and Board of Directors, and is one of the current directors, as well as a Trustee for the AOS.

Alan is taking Pre-Orders for plants he will bring to our meeting. Click on the file names below for the discount information along with two additional lists of plants. It is best for members to email or call in their orders because several things on the limited list are very limited. His contact information is on the Discount Information sheet. By pre-ordering, NWOS members will receive free freight and 20% off. Alan will also have plants for sale at the meeting, but without the discount.

[Gold Country Orchids Discount Information](#)

[Gold Country Orchids Limited Availability](#)  
[Gold Country Orchids Two Inch Availability](#)

**Display Table:**

Bring your blooming Orchids so everyone can enjoy them.

**Sales Table:**

Members may bring up to 10 plants to sell. Include an extra tag with your name and the price in the plant.

**Raffle:**

The raffle will be held as usual. Win a new orchid for your collection while supporting the Scholarship Fund.

**NWOS Library:**

If you'd like to check out a book or tape from our Library, please contact our Librarian [Caroline Mann](#) a minimum of 2 weeks before the next meeting. For a list of library items Click [HERE](#) or click on the link at the top of this page.

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**The Legion of Bloom - Quarterly Gathering**

It's time for our quarterly check-in so we can compare notes and growing techniques. Bring your plants (Den. abberans and Oda. Pacific Pagan 'Kilauea') that we received in September. Make sure to put your name on your plants. We'll set up on a side table and Joe will lead a discussion for 10-15 minutes after our business meeting and before the break. It should be really interesting to see how we've all done and how we did it.

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**Proposed Slate of Officers and Board Members**

**Here are the Nominations for NWOS Officers to serve July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017:**

President: Abigail Chang  
First VP: Jake Burroughs  
Second VP: George Grantham  
Secretary: Michael Cory  
Treasurer: Mary Margaret Cromarty  
Past President: Mike Foster

**Trustees (2 years) 2016-2018:**

Diane Drisch  
Joe Grienauer  
Jeanne McKinnie  
Mike Pearson  
Christiane Ulness

**The following Trustees have one year remaining on their 2 year Tenure (2015-2017):**

Chloe Angus-Tibbetts  
Harvey Brenneise  
Ellen Macomber  
Peter Maunsell  
Joff Morgan

The election will be held at our May meeting with installation at the June meeting.

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**Nominations for the Gary Baker Service Award**

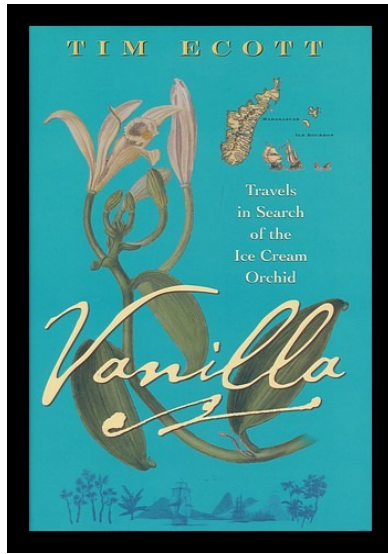
Now is the time to make your nominations for the **Gary Baker Service Award**. This award is given annually at the June Potluck to the person who has contributed the most to the overall goals of the society in the prior year. The recipient is selected by the board from nominations made by the general membership so they need to hear from you now. Please send your nominations to George Grantham ([georgegrantham@hotmail.com](mailto:georgegrantham@hotmail.com)).

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## "Vanilla: Travels in Search of the Ice Cream Orchid" by Tim Ecott

a Review by Jake Burroughs

Fooling man like she has fooled so many of her pollinators, orchids have completely captivated humans worldwide, spanning cultures and continents alike. While that is not so amazing, what is fascinating is that we garner nothing from our captive orchids save their beauty. One species stands as the sole exception to this steadfast rule: vanilla. The seed pods of *Vanilla planifolia* are harvested and cured to eventually form what we know as the spice vanilla at the market. Irishman Tim Ecott's "Vanilla" offers a history of the beloved and much coveted vanilla bean and its love – hate relationship with humankind.



I do not get to travel as much, nor as remote, as I would like. That is in one part why I like reading non-fiction books such as "Vanilla": because it allows me an opportunity to pseudo-experience another place/culture/situation/emotional plane, etc., and offers me insight. I must admit after reading Ecott's treatise on the ethnobotany of *Vanilla planifolia*, I will never look at my favorite flavor of ice cream in the same way again! A newfound respect has been found when I step into my car, drive to the super market, go shopping with a dizzying array of food options, only to find myself complaining at prices of the spices. Ecott describes one of the camps in Madagascar where women were paid \$4 a day (nearly twice what the local average wage was) to sort and bundle vanilla pods for sale. Each time they left the compound or went to the restroom they were frisked by male security guards who frequently touched them in inappropriate ways and in inappropriate places. This was purported to be one of the top companies in the country renowned for its vanilla. Perspective.

A fascinating history surrounds the discovery of vanilla and how it evolved to be the cash crop of countries as diverse as Tahiti, Mexico, and Madagascar. Ecott starts the book out a bit slow but gets a shot of espresso about a quarter of the way in as we are whisked around the world from farmers to ice cream plants in Pennsylvania. The industry of vanilla can be summed up in one word ... INSANE! Every aspect of the trade is volatile and people the world throughout have died from dealings in the vanilla trade. Shipments and storage containing vanilla in Madagascar need to be secured with armed guards 24-7! The economics and logistics of the bean need to be read to be believed.

Ecott also offers the reader a great glimpse of the life and lessons of Edmond Albius, the slave child who by watching his master in the garden learned how to self-pollinate vanilla and thus started a revolution with a plant thought to be impossible to cultivate. A fascinating and heartbreaking story that is such a crucial aspect of culinary, economic, and agricultural history. The details of the gardens and Albius' thorough understanding of the fundamentals of plant physiology and pollination ecology is phenomenal, considering he never even had a formal education nor a botany class, and the feat is purely amazing.

Vanilla holds each and every one of us captive whether we are aware of it or not. So much so that vanilla orchid plants are actually one of the top sellers at a local Seattle orchid nursery! Even though the owner tells people they will be lucky if it blooms even in a greenhouse up here, they buy it and take it home in hopes of following in the footsteps of Albius and being able to procure their very own home grown vanilla. An easy read that can be found in the Seattle Public Library system, Tim Ecott's "Vanilla" has something for everyone be it an economist, a botanist, a historian, a cook, or just a lover of that enchanting scent and taste of vanilla. This was the perfect book just prior to my trip to the sole vanilla plantation in the US, on the Big Island of Hawaii. Check back with me about the experience.

*Jake Burroughs*

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## Vanilla is in the News

Jake's review above comes just as Vanilla becomes newsworthy. It is the #1 orchid grown for commercial purposes. In a recent article regarding vanilla by Zoe Wood of *The Guardian*, the price of Madagascan beans is up nearly 150% due to a poor crop. We could see increases in the price of ice cream and other foods.



*Vanilla planifolia* in Köhler's Medicinal Plants

According to the article, Vanilla is the second most expensive spice in the world (after saffron), a result of its long and labor-intensive cultivation. Part of the orchid family, vanilla beans are hand-pollinated on family farms. Each flower opens for only one part of one day during the season – if it is not pollinated on that day, no pod is produced. Once picked, the curing process, which involves drying the beans in the sun by day and allowing them to sweat in a box at night, takes three to six months.

When prices are high, market experts say, farmers are tempted to pick beans early. That leads to a less intense flavor, compounding problems in the market. The high-value crop is also a target for criminals. "There are reports that vanilla farmers in Madagascar harvested their 2015 crop prematurely, in fear of losing their production to thieves," said Zicha. "This, coupled with inadequate drying in order to increase profits from their crop has led to lower quality vanilla."

To learn more or read the whole article, click [HERE](#).

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## Report from the March Meeting

Abigail Chang opened the meeting with a report on the NWF&G show followed by more from Joff Morgan. George Grantham spoke about the Mt. Baker show that was held in late February. He gave a special thank-you to Cylvia for her fine work in putting together a display which garnered the coveted AOS Award. Chris Peterson gave details about a special event which will be held at the Conservatory on April 2. Abby then asked us to bring in our Legion of Bloom plants to the next meeting in April. We will have a get-together to compare notes and growing techniques. The speaker for April will be Alan Koch who is taking pre-orders for his plant sales. In May we will have Helen Hirsch. Abby then introduced Joe Griener as chair of the nominating committee. He will need at least one person to assist him. Anyone willing to serve should contact Joe. We will publish the slate of officers in April, vote in May and install the new Board in June. George Grantham asked for nominations for the Gary Baker Service Award, to be presented in June.



Hosts Peter and Kelly Maunsell

Other announcements included the upcoming the AOS Judging Center meeting and the NWOS Potting Clinic to be held on Monday 3/21.

Photos courtesy Diane Drisch.





In addition to wine and cheese on the table, we have photo greetings from Minh Au who went to the Taiwan International Orchid Show



The wine and cheese party: we all look forward to and enjoy what's become a fun part of our annual auction



checking plants on the internet



Hmmm, which ones do I want?



Munchies, drinks and good company



A lovely selection of wines



It's good to have time to socialize



2 guys talking about the finer points of Orchid growing





Joe Griener starts the Auction



Joe auctions while Mike shows off the big Vanda



When bidding, hold your number high



Mike auctions some pleurothallids



SOLD to number 25



More wine helps the bidding go smoothly



Important duties: Mike Cory, Greg Sliman and Pat Gossler record the bids. Chris Peterson helped process credit card payments.



Auctioneers Mike & Joe, runners Mary Margaret Cromarty & Ellen Macomber and plant helpers Mike Foster & Donna Pierce



Mike with pretties



Mary Margaret shows off the book during bidding

## Report from the Potting Clinic

The annual potting clinic was held on 3/21/16 in the Douglas classroom. Abigail Chang opened the session with a hands-on demonstration of how to repot a phalaenopsis, a monopodial orchid. First she removed it from the old pot, cleaned off the old media, groomed the plant, removed dead roots, found the right sized pot, set it in place and added the correct grade of new potting media. It looked a 1000 times better. Mike Pearson then demonstrated a cymbidium, a sympodial orchid. In addition to Abby & Mike, other experienced NWOS members (Mike Cory, Pat Gossler and Chris Peterson) helped the enthusiastic crowd repot their plants. Everyone explained not only what they were doing, but why. They were also very helpful answering the myriad of questions that people fired their way. In the end a lot of orchids got a new lease on life and many people learned how to become better orchid growers. Well Done!



Abby starts by removing the old broken down media

Photos courtesy Diane Drisch



Grooming and trimming



Placing it in a new pot and media





Abby then tackles a little one



Pat Gossler helps divide a large cymbidium



A totally engaged and interested group



Mike Pearson removes old dead pseudobulbs, roots and decomposed media



Mike continues grooming the plant down to it's healthy parts while Mike Cory and Abby help others in the background





Finally Mike has it ready to go into a new pot



Mike Cory selecting the best pot for this plant



Mike C demonstrates how to add new potting media and firmly secure the roots in it while others work diligently on other plants

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## Schedule of Upcoming Events

**April 11, 2016** - [NWOS meeting](#) - Speaker: Alan Koch - Species Habitat and Hybrid Culture

**April 16, 2016** - AOS Judging Center, monthly judging, 12:30 pm

**May 9, 2016** - [NWOS meeting](#) - Speaker: Helen Hirsch - Paphiopedilums & Phragmepediums

**May 21, 2016** - AOS Judging Center, monthly judging, 12:30 pm

**June 13, 2016** - [NWOS meeting](#), Pot Luck Dinner and Gary Baker Service Award

**June 18, 2016** - AOS Judging Center, monthly judging, 12:30 pm

**July 16, 2016** - AOS Judging Center, monthly judging, 12:30 pm

**August 20, 2016** - AOS Judging Center, monthly judging, 12:30 pm

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## Reminder for Officers & Board Members

The schedule of Board Meetings for this fiscal year is: 3/8/16, 5/3/16. Meet at 7 p.m. at Mike Cory's house unless notified that it's been moved elsewhere.

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## Shopping on Amazon? Use this link to Earn \$\$ for NWOS

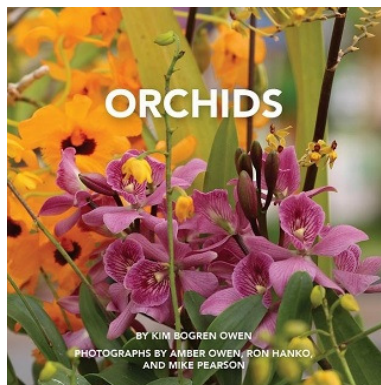
If you go to <http://smile.amazon.com> and sign in to your account, you'll be given information about supporting various non-profits. You can type in "Northwest Orchid Society" and it will then send .5% of your purchase price to the organization.

It's really easy, but you have to remember to go in through the 'smile' subdomain when you place the order, otherwise it will go through as a regular order.

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## Special Announcements

### Orchids, by Kim Bogren Owen



Last year at this time, Kim Bogren Owen spoke to us about at children's book that she was writing about Orchids. She is proud to announce that her picture book, *Orchids*, is now available for pre-order and will be officially released on May 13th. This book is the ideal gift for a young orchid lover or to spark a love of orchids in a child. To learn more about *Orchids* and the pre-order specials, click [HERE](#) or check it out on [Amazon](#).

*Orchids* features beautiful photographs that bring the beauty and appeal of orchids to life. In addition to introducing children to the diversity of orchids, this book introduces simple science concepts. Developed for children between the ages of 2 and 6, the concepts in this books include opposites, diversity, pollination, and symmetry. This book includes ideas for activities that expand on the concepts introduced in *Orchids*. These activities include simple art projects, as well as conversation starters to make the concepts meaningful to young children.

### Wardian Case ---- Free to a good home!!!

"I would love to see a NWOS member use it."



I had this case custom built for growing orchids under lights. The solid birch case is a beautiful piece of furniture by itself. It is two separate solid pieces. The top case is 53"W x 44"H x 24"D and the book shelf below is 55"W x 30"H x 26"D. The center light fixture is a 250 watt Hydrofarm Metal Halide light and the two smaller lights are 70 watt high pressure sodium lights. There are ventilation slats and spaces for internal fans. This case can be used for many things including growing orchids, exotic houseplants, or housing reptiles. I've had it moved to the street level of my house so all you need is a truck and 2 strong bodies.