



**Next Meeting Feb 15- 2pm-4pm -features:**

## **The Vanilla Plant with Speaker Jason Fisher**

Jason will be telling us about *Vanilla planifolia*, which is native to Mexico, Central and South America. With the species' population and their habitats declining, the Vanilla orchid is listed as endangered on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. If there were no Vanilla, how many of your beloved foods, scents, and more would be affected? This lecture will cover various species and cultivars of Vanilla, how to grow them indoors vs outdoors, how to create the seedpod, and how to harvest and create your own Vanilla extract!

Jason Fischer's life-long passion for orchids started at age 5 when he began working in his father's business, Orchids Limited, in Plymouth, MN (near Minneapolis). He began breeding at age 14, first with Phals and later other orchids. He is now co-owner and general manager of the business and is heavily involved in breeding and marketing. They have 15,000 sq. ft. of growing space and a laboratory. His interests include in East Asian species, slipper orchids, hybridizing and orchid aesthetics.

Jason has been a guest speaker for over 50 orchid societies across the US, Japan, Canada, Singapore, Australia, and New Zealand. He is a content creator and educator, hosting both digital classes and on-site seminars. He is the namesake of the world-famous "Phrag. Jason Fischer," which still holds the most FCCs of any orchid hybrid.

Orchids Limited <https://www.orchidweb.com/> is offering STOS members a 15% discount (use code STOS15) on everything on their web site. There will also be some specials available in a few weeks that are not on the site but will be at 50% discount prices. We will arrange to have the plants all shipped to one location, but they won't arrive before the meeting. More details in the future, but have a look! Make an account to save choices.

We will meet in person, but Jason will be on Zoom from Minnesota



## **A Sweet Note from Your President:**

I hope this finds you all safe and warm. The recent severe snowstorms and frigid weather have certainly been a challenge, and I know many of you have been working hard to protect both your homes and your orchid collections. To provide a little warmth after the storm, we are leaning into the "sweet" side of things for our next meeting on Sunday, February 15th.

Our focus this month is on the world's most flavorful orchid: **Vanilla** (*Vanilla planifolia*). We are thrilled to welcome our guest speaker, **Jason Fischer of Orchids Limited**, who will lead us through the latest insights on this legendary plant via Zoom. He will also be highlighting the importance of conservation. Supporting conservation is a core mission of our society, and this talk is the perfect segue to our May show, which will also be promoting orchid conservation.

### **A "Scoop" of Appreciation**

To round out the afternoon, STOS is hosting a **Vanilla Ice Cream Social** during the meeting! We invite you to grab a scoop (or two) of vanilla bean ice cream to enjoy during the presentation. It's a small way for us to celebrate you—our members—and foster that sense of community that makes our society so special.

**Where:** Johnson City Senior Center (for ice cream and community!)

- We will also have our usual **Raffle** (tickets \$1) and **Show and Tell**.

**Virtual Option:** A Zoom invite will be sent to those who cannot attend in person.

We will send out more information and the Zoom invite soon. Whether you've been with us for decades or are just starting out, your dedication is what keeps us blooming, even after a storm.

**Linda Mittel**  
President, Southern Tier Orchid Society

*Aerangis luteoalba var. rhodosticta x self*  
– Linda Mittel



# January Meeting

## Orchid Recreational Bingo

We played Recreational Bingo at our January meeting and everyone had a good time. There were orchids for prizes, which made it even more fun.  
Should we do it again, maybe this summer?



Jean Mint and her husband Ray



Gail Gunsalus, one of our winners, checks out the prizes



If you don't hear the call, just look up

List of Winners		
#1	Strait - "O"	"BINGO" 1/18/26
	Paula Matienzo	Judy Simpson
	Paula Matienzo	Paula Matienzo
#2	Strait - "O"	Derek Agutter
	Full Bloom -	Gail Gunsalus
		Sonnie Higgins
#3	Strait - "O"	Laurel Shafer
	Full Bloom -	Mari Stover-Ling & Mark Levenite
#4	Strait - "O"	Mark Levenite
	Full Bloom -	Sue Seamens
		Alexandrin Mint
#5	Strait - "O"	Karen Dillittle
	Full Bloom -	Polly Dillon & Laurel Shafer
		Alexandrin Mint
#6	Strait - "O"	Ruth Allen
	Full Bloom -	Emile Sacco
#7	Strait - "O"	Polly Dillon
	Full Bloom -	Karen Dillittle
#8	Strait - "O"	Derek Agutter
	Full Bloom -	Ruth Allen
		James Dravac



Various members

## Our Orchid Family Tree: A Beautiful Discovery

At our meeting on January 18th, we had the wonderful opportunity to honor **Luis Matienzo** and celebrate the 40th anniversary of our society's reorganization. It was a beautiful moment to recognize the dedication that has kept the Southern Tier Orchid Society (STOS) thriving for so many years.

Inspired by that celebration, I spent time researching our deeper roots. As the saying goes, **"We study history not to know the future, but to broaden our horizons."** I am excited to share a discovery from the American Orchid Society archives that actually makes our celebration even more significant.

While 1986 marks the year the club was reinvigorated, I discovered that the "seeds" of STOS were actually planted much earlier. Our society was originally **founded in 1963** and officially recognized as an AOS affiliate in **1964**. This means that while we rightfully celebrate 40 years of our current organization, we are also standing on a legacy that is **63 years old**.

Organizations, like orchids, have seasons. After our early founders—**Howard LeMasurier** and our first president, **Mrs. William Burke**—passed away, the club faced a period where it could have disappeared forever.

This is why the work done in 1986 is so vital. When the society was reinstated, those members didn't just restart a club—they **saved a legacy**. Without the steady stewardship of Luis and the help of his wife, **Paula Matienzo**, the story of our 1963 founding would have been lost to time. They are the heroes who preserved our "historical integrity" and gave us the organization we love today.

Finding these older roots doesn't change our 40th-anniversary milestone; it enhances it. It shows that our club has resilience spanning over six decades. It is a privilege to belong to a club with such deep roots and such dedicated leadership. We have much to be proud of—both the 63 years of our history and the 40 years of hard work that have kept it alive.

Linda



Luis and Paula Matienzo

# Member Info

## EXECUTIVE BOARD

**President**

Linda Mittel

**Vice President**

LuAnn Meyers

**Treasurer**

Mari Stover-Ling

**Secretary**

Melissa Bennett

**AOS Representative**

Polly Dillon

**Members-At-Large**

Jeff Hackett

Gail Gunsalus

Jean Mint

**Auction Committee** Jean Mint, Jeff Hackett

**IT Specialist** Melissa Bennett

**Librarian** Laurel Shaefer

**Marketing** TBD

**Membership** Melissa Bennett, Anitra Murphy

**Newsletter Editor** Carol Bayles

**Program Coordinator** Jean Mint

**Social Event** Ruth Allen, Jane Trey

**Social Media** Jean Mint, vacancy

**Show Chair** Sam Hance, Jeff Hackett

**Web Master** Carol Bayles

**Web Site:**

<http://www.southerntierorchids.org>

**Email addresses:**

[STOSorchids@gmail.com](mailto:STOSorchids@gmail.com)

[STOSorchids.auction@gmail.com](mailto:STOSorchids.auction@gmail.com)

[STOSorchids.marketing@gmail.com](mailto:STOSorchids.marketing@gmail.com)

[STOSorchids.membership@gmail.com](mailto:STOSorchids.membership@gmail.com)

[STOSorchids.newsletter@gmail.com](mailto:STOSorchids.newsletter@gmail.com)

[STOSorchids.shows@gmail.com](mailto:STOSorchids.shows@gmail.com)

**Facebook:**

<https://www.facebook.com/SouthernTierOrchidSocietyNY>

**Instagram:**

<https://www.instagram.com/SouthernTierOrchidSociety/>

## STOS Calendar 2026

**Meetings are 2-4 pm (1:30-2 is 'social time')**  
**at the Johnson City Senior Center,**  
**30 Brocton St, Johnson City, NY 13790.**

**Jan 18** General Meeting. Orchid Games

**Feb 15** General Meeting, in Person - Speaker Jason Fisher will present via Zoom on Vanilla orchids.

**Mar 15** General Meeting, Spring Auction

**Apr 1** General Meeting, Show Prep

**May 1** STOS Orchid Show

Setup 2pm-7pm

**May 2** STOS Orchid Show

Judging 8am-11am, Public 11am-6pm

**May 3** STOS Orchid Show

Public 10am-4:30pm, Takedown 4:30p-6p

**May 17** General Meeting, Repotting Workshop

### Summer Picnic

## Neighboring Societies and 2026 Shows

DCOS -- Deep Cut Orchid Society (Holmdel, NJ)  
Show **Feb. 20-22**

[www.deepcutorchidscioety.org/show](http://www.deepcutorchidscioety.org/show)

NFOS – Niagara Frontier OS (Buffalo)  
Spring Orchid Fest **March 6-8**

[www.buffalogardens.com/events/orchid-fest/#events](http://www.buffalogardens.com/events/orchid-fest/#events)

SEPOS – Southern PA Orchid Society (Oaks, PA)  
Show **March 27-29** [www.sepos.org/show](http://www.sepos.org/show)

GROS – Genesee Region OS (Rochester)  
Show **April 16-19**

[www.geneseeorchid.org/annual-orchid-show/](http://www.geneseeorchid.org/annual-orchid-show/)

STOS – Show **May 1-3**

CNYOS – Central NY Orchid Society (Syracuse)

# Treasurer's Report

## Membership Dues Deadline!

If you have not already paid your dues for the 2026 calendar year, now is the time to do so! Lapsed memberships will be removed from our email list after the meeting in February. If you wish to renew your membership, you may mail a check to PO Box 607 Endicott, NY 13761 or pay with card online using the link: <https://forms.gle/uy5fakhJ3WYVngGN9>. If you would prefer a direct invoice to pay online through Square or to pay in person the next meeting, please email [stosorchids.treasurer@gmail.com](mailto:stosorchids.treasurer@gmail.com).

## Income Statement

### Revenues

Membership Revenue- \$150

Early Show Vendor payment - \$180

### Expenses

Plants (Member Appreciation) - \$300

AOS Conservation Annual Donation - \$200

AOS Membership Renewal - \$56

Insurance - \$172.13

Operating (Zoom, Newsletter,

Postage, JCSC Room Rental)- \$100

Approximate Bank Balance: \$10,250.70

Regards,

Mari Stover-Ling

STOS Treasurer



Cymbidium – Angelina Caoile

# Don't Just Grow It, Show It!

We encourage every member—from our veterans to our newest faces—to bring your blooming orchids to our show this May.

## Ways to Win

**Ribbon Judging:** Individual orchids are judged against plants in their category at the show. Anyone can win a Blue, Red, or White ribbon or even a “best in show” rosette

**Exhibit Award:** Each exhibit/display is considered for an award. They are judged by the arrangement and presentation of the orchids.

**AOS Award:** This is a prestigious and highly coveted award that is bestowed on an orchid for its unique or high-quality blooms, or for one of several other characteristics. This internationally recognized designation stays with the plant's record forever.

## Through the Judge's Lens: Keys to a Ribbon

**Flower Presentation:** Judges want the flowers "looking them in the eye."

**Cultural Excellence:** A healthy plant with firm, green leaves will often beat a stressed plant with more flowers.



## Flower Presentation needs to begin early

We all have seen beautiful, arching flower spikes in photos. These don't get that way by themselves, but require specific input as they develop. Flower spikes, or for that matter, pseudobulbs, can start out growing horizontally, and you need to train them to go where you want them. Phalaenopsis flower spikes are the most obvious candidates for staking, but many orchids can benefit from a bit of staking.

When staking, be careful not to squeeze or damage the flower spike and always give it room to grow thicker. Some clips have little nubs that clip to the stake, leaving a larger space for the spike. The stake should blend seamlessly with the spike and not distract from the flower unless you plan to remove it for the show.

## Don't Just Grow It, Show It!



Ideally you want to start the training soon after the spike appears, when it is still quite flexible. Sometimes you just can't get the stake in the right place until the spike is a bit longer and stiffer. Now what? Start by lifting the spike as far as you dare (be careful!), fasten it securely, and wait a few days/weeks, then move it a little bit more, fasten again, etc. until you have it where you want it. You can also do this with pseudobulbs and bent leaves. This may take more than one stake, some ingenuity, and patience; you may have to wait months until you can release the pseudobulb.

With orchids that don't make a spike per se, like Cattleyas, getting the flowers to show between the leaves can be a challenge. Sometimes you have to hold a leaf or pseudobulb out of the way with a stake. Cotton balls can hold flowers apart for better presentation. Start when they are in bud, and hopefully you can remove the cotton before the show. An errant leaf can even be cut off, but wait until close to show time. You want all the flowers to be visible, if possible.

One other issue is getting the individual flowers on a spike to face in the same direction. Once the spike starts to grow, do not rotate or change the position of the plants, as it will cause the spike and flowers to follow the light and become twisted, which is not desirable.

Try to attend one of the other shows in our area this spring and note the positions of the flowers, especially the ones with ribbons. Reach out to our more experienced members if you have questions. You may think your orchid isn't good enough for a ribbon, but it is judged against others of its type, so it depends on what is at the show. And remember, it will still contribute to one of the STOS displays, so plan to bring it.

*All photos C. Bayles from Deep Cut 2023*

# Orchid Show Update

Excitement is building for our Annual Orchid Show on May 2nd & May 3rd, and I'm happy to share some wonderful updates!

Our first vendor has officially registered and another has given me a verbal yes, which is always an encouraging milestone. A photo has been included as provided by the vendor for a fun sneak peek! Even more exciting, this issue also includes the reveal of our 2026 show poster, many thanks to our designer, Emille Sacco..



To ensure the success of this year's show, I am seeking at least three volunteers to assist with longer-term planning. These roles are critical and will be working closely alongside me from now through the show weekend.

## **Marketing Volunteer**

Helps reach out to newspapers, community calendars, local websites, journalists, garden clubs, and similar outlets to promote the show. No interviews are required—this role focuses on initial outreach and coordination. This is a longer-term position working from now through the show.

## **Plant Registrar**

Should be reasonably comfortable with Microsoft Excel. This volunteer will help generate judging sheets ahead of time. On setup day, they will assist with plant check-in, label creation, and organizing plants for display.

## **Event Floor Planner**

Assists with designing the show layout in advance. On setup day, this person will play a lead role in implementing the layout and coordinating with volunteers during setup.

If you are interested in any of these roles, please reach out. These positions are essential to making this year's show a success.

# Orchid Show Update

## Call for Member Displays

Members are also invited to create their own displays. Displays can be:

- As small as **five plants**
- Educational** (no plants required)
- Artistic** and orchid-themed

If you want to put together a display, please let me know **well in advance** so we can plan space and logistics. I am happy to provide guidance.

Please reach out to me during the meeting or via email

at [stosorchids.shows@gmail.com](mailto:stosorchids.shows@gmail.com) to volunteer or if you have any general comments, questions, or concerns with the show planning.

I look forward to another extremely successful show this year!

Regards,

Jeff Hackett

## Social Event Committee Needed

I will not be able to coordinate the meals for the Orchid Show May 1,2 & 3 as I will be attending my granddaughter's wedding in Florida. Our experienced Jane Trey will be able to assist anyone who steps forward to take the challenge.

The Coordinator will take charge of planning the menu, ordering and pick up, directing additional volunteers. We could use a few people to help with additional tasks as there is a need for monitoring the food and dining area, taking care of any remaining food at the end of the day and cleaning up the area. This is a significant part of the show, keeping everyone fed, so you will not be expected to assist with other aspects of the show. There will be time to enjoy it, of course.

You may reach at 607-765-9556 mobile or [ruthallen@frontier.com](mailto:ruthallen@frontier.com)

Thank you for your consideration

Ruth Allen

Social Event Committee



Brassolaeliocattleya (Blc.) Daffodil – Jean Mint



SOUTHERN  
TIER  
ORCHID  
SOCIETY

# Spring Orchid Show

Saturday, May 2  
Sunday, May 3

Admission \$5

Free for children 12 and under

Raffles  
Repotting Demo  
Door Prizes  
Orchid Vendors

Johnson City Senior Center  
30 Brocton street,  
Johnson City, NY



# **Meeting Minutes**

## **SOUTHERN TIER ORCHID SOCIETY (STOS) EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

Meeting: Re: Insurance Coverage

Date: **December 9, 2025** Time: Called to Order 7:10 PM

Location: Zoom

Presiding Officer: Linda Mittel, President

Recording Officer: Melissa Bennett, Interim Secretary

Also attending: Gail Gunsalus, Polly Dillon, Ruth Allen, Mari Stover-Ling, Jean Mint, Jeff Hackett

The meeting was called to order to make decisions about important administrative topics.

### **Secretary's Report**

The approvals of the agenda and the minutes of the last meeting were proposed by Gail Gunsalus and seconded by Ruth Allen. Then they were approved by the Board Members.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Treasurer Mari Stover-Ling had submitted her report at the General Meeting; she further explained it to the Board Members. She asked for submissions of proposed budget items. She reported converting to and henceforth using ZipBooks. She also elaborated on the change in the bank we use. The report was accepted as presented.

### **Critical Compliance with NYS law**

Linda Mittel reviewed the information regarding the requirements for non-profit organizations to remain in compliance with New York State laws. The Board unanimously agreed to comply with the requirements mandated by state law.

### **Legal Counsel**

Linda Mittel reviewed the information regarding the various issues for which legal counsel would be helpful in making sound, lawful decisions. The Board unanimously approved the President's recommendation to engage an attorney to serve as a legal consultant.

### **Audit**

Linda Mittel reported on the progress on the required audit, and the change to a new bank to house our accounts was discussed.

### **D&O Insurance**

Linda Mittel reviewed the information regarding the brokers, types of coverage and quoted costs for purchasing D&O insurance. Melissa Bennett made the motion to approve the proposal to purchase coverage for \$650. Gail Gunsalus seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the President's recommendation.

### **Next Board Meeting**

The President proposed Wednesday, January 14 for the next Board meeting. She will send an email out to the Board members to determine and confirm availability.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Melissa Bennett, Secretary (Interim)

Linda Mittel, President.

# **Meeting Minutes**

## **SOUTHERN TIER ORCHID SOCIETY (STOS) EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

Meeting: Quarterly Board Meeting

**Date: January 16, 2025**

Time: Called to Order 7:05 PM

Location: Zoom

Presiding Officer: Linda Mittel, President

Recording Officer: Melissa Bennett, Secretary

Also attending: Gail Gunsalus, Carol Bayles, LuAnn Myers, Joe Sniezek, Polly Dillon, Ruth Allen, Mari Stover-Ling; Late: Jean Mint, Jeff Hackett

### **Secretary's Report**

The approvals of the agenda and the minutes of the last meeting were postponed until the following EB meeting because they weren't ready.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Treasurer Mari Stover-Ling presented her spreadsheet which describes the different membership tiers proposed and their pricing. The Youth Membership tier especially elicited robust discussion. She provided an update on the budget, and on the change in banks.

### **Old Business**

DNO Insurance

Linda is presently pursuing the best coverage available for the amount authorized. .

### **40th Anniversary**

Linda announced a presentation to be made to honor Luis and Paula Matienzo who have both been part of the club for so long!

### **Fiduciary Duty Acknowledgment**

Linda Mittel reviewed the information regarding the requirements for non-profit organizations to remain in compliance with New York State laws. The Board had unanimously agreed to comply with the requirements mandated by state law at the previous EB meeting. But when it came time to actually comply, several Board members objected. The issue was therefore tabled.

### **Legal Counsel and Financial Advisor**

The Board continued the discussion on seeking professional counsel who have legal or financial expertise to assist the Board in making the best decisions possible. It was agreed that this type of advice could prove useful, so Linda will continue to investigate possible professionals who might be able to serve in a consulting capacity.

# ***Meeting Minutes***

## **Quarterly Board Meeting, Jan 16, 2026, Continued**

### **New Business**

#### **Website Activity**

The latest statistics on activity on our website were discussed. The role of social media for driving traffic to the site was elaborated on. The Board unanimously approved the President's recommendation. Ideas for marketing to increase the number of new members were introduced

#### **Moving April GM Meeting Date**

Linda proposed moving the General Meeting in April from the 19th to the 12th to allow more time between the April meeting and the Show May 1-3. The Board unanimously agreed to make the scheduling change.

#### **Bingo This Sunday**

Jean Mint described in great detail how the Bingo for the General Meeting would be conducted. She described the variations of games to be played, and also the way in which prizes would be awarded to the winners.

#### **Texting Service**

Melissa Bennett presented information on the two types of texting services that are widely available, the monthly plan and the pay-as-you-go plan. She thought the Pay-as-you-go option would be best. She indicated that once the board decides which type of service to consider, she will research and recommend the best service to purchase.

#### **Next Board Meeting**

The President proposed several meeting dates for subsequent Executive Board meetings, all on Wednesdays. The date will be finalized via email.

#### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Melissa Bennett, Secretary  
Linda Mittel, President.

# **General Meeting Minutes**

## **SOUTHERN TIER ORCHID SOCIETY (STOS) GENERAL MEETING MINUTES**

Meeting: General Membership Meeting

**Date: January 18, 2026**

Location: Johnson City Senior Center

Presiding Officer: Linda Mittel, President

Recording Officer: Melissa Bennett, Secretary

The meeting was called to order @ 2:03PM. About 40 members and Zoom attendees attended the meeting.

### **Recognition of Luis and Paula Matienzo**

Luis and Paula Matienzo were celebrated at the opening of the meeting. This year marks Luis's 40th year as a member of STOS. His contributions include serving as President, auctioneer, and educator. He was also recognized as a mentor, for his willingness to help others solve orchid-growing problems and his commitment to the spirit of sharing and working together. Paula Matienzo has always been by his side, and has been a wonderful volunteer, at times serving as Show Chair or heading the Nomination Committee.

### **Secretary's Report**

Notes from the last general meeting were posted to the January newsletter and were distributed to the membership. The minutes stood approved as distributed, except for one minor edit.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Treasurer Mari Stover-Ling reminded the membership that those with unpaid dues would be purged from the email list in February, and that she was, meanwhile, still accepting renewals.

### **Show Committee Announcement**

Jeff Hackett reminded members that plants beginning to spike now would be blooming at the time of the Show.

### **Adjournment**

The business portion of the meeting was adjourned at 2:18, to be followed by the Show-and-Tell Table and Orchid Bingo!

Respectfully Submitted,  
Melissa Bennett, Secretary

Linda Mittel, President.

*Note: These minutes are for review by the members and other interested parties and have not yet been approved by the General Membership.*

# Show Table – Bernice Magee



Brassolaeliocattleya (Blc.) Daffodil



Vuylstekeara (Vuyl.) Celtic Sun 'Maya' from the fall 2025 speaker, Beth Davis.

Vuylstekeara is an intergeneric hybrid of: Oncidium, x Miltonia x Odontoglossum



Den. Love Memory 'Fizz' (Taida Orchids)



NOID Tolumnia from 2025 Christmas Party

# Show Table – Julia Gillis



Zygoptalum (Zygo.) Advance Australia



Paph Iona.



Monnierara (Monn.) Millennium Magic 'Witchcraft' Monnierara is in intergeneric hybrid between Catasetum x Cycnoches x Mormodes



# Show Table



Paph. Stone Crazy 'Clean Yellow' x Paph. Lippowunder 'Chocolate Splash'. Holiday plant 2024 - Jane Trey



Paph. Hawaiian Illusion – Jane Trey



Paphiopedilum wardii – Julia Gillis



Paph. Angela – Linda Mittel

# Show Table – Luis Matienzo



*Paphiopedilum nitens*

Note: except for  
Fritz Schomberg,  
these are all  
species



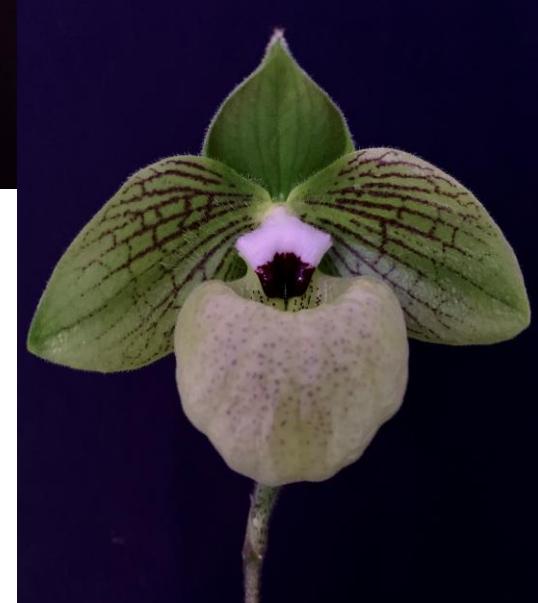
*Phragmipedium  
beauvalande flavum*



*Paph venustum forma measuresianum*



*Phrag. Fritz  
Schomberg*



*Paph malipoense*

# Show Table



Dendrobium Chocolate Chip is loaded with blooms – Ruth Allen



Phal. Join Spirit from Luis – Ruth Allen



Planaenopsis Nold – Linda Mittel

## Show Table – Jean Mint



Cattleya intermediate bar. alba 'Penn Valley'  
AM/AOS species from Waldor/Beth Nov 2025



Bulbophyllum echinolabium - from a  
STOS speaker many years ago 😊



Dracula lotax - purchased at a reptile  
expo in 2022



Porroglossum  
dalstroemii  
- bag baby from  
Ecuagenera at  
MOS show 2023



Kingidium deliciosum - purchased  
from Bergen Water Lily Garden 2024

# North NJ Show – Jane Trey



## Big Pink

*Johanna Higgins*

This is a photo of a painting our daughter, Kaili, did in her senior year of high school. She was seventeen at the time, the phalaenopsis about twenty-two. I'd purchased it at Wegman's in Johnson City, NY, soon after it opened there in 1990. Noticing a stunning orchid display while shopping, I'd paused, captivated by one particular orchid's tall arc of deep pink blooms. An Ithaca, NY grower had supplied it to the store. Its plastic identifying tab may still be tucked away in the farmhouse where my husband and I had been living. It was my first orchid, and I'd had no idea that knowing its name and pedigree were important.

Seasons and years spun by. The big orchid thrived in a south-facing sunroom we'd added to the back of the farmhouse. On frigid sunny days, the snowfields behind the house appeared aqua and lemon colored. In spring, poplar-scented breezes wafted through the room. Each autumn Big Pink—its new name—seemed to celebrate its existence by sending up a long spike that blossomed with vivid deep pink blooms.

Over the years, changes: two children adopted from China a few years apart, a move to a house in town, deaths in our extended family, a rare and serious illness striking my husband—he finally recovered—and later, the anxiety and isolation of the Pandemic years. Through it all there was Big Pink, faithful, forgiving, always a delight and even a solace in difficult times. By then several orchid-friends shared its south-facing window in town.

As a writer, I've always kept journals, though not for the plants, to my regret. So I don't know exactly when Big Pink went into decline—just a few years ago, it seems. By then it may have reached the age of twenty-seven or twenty-eight. Was its decline somehow my fault? Likely so. As if it knew it was faltering, it sent forth a keiki, now a "toddler." These days I'm being careful and vigilant and hoping to make amends by helping the little guy grow into its namesake—Big Pink.



# Art and Lit



Joanna Higgins is the mother of our past secretary, Chris Higgins, who has gone on to college in Utica.

Joanna is a National Endowment for the Arts recipient whose work has been included in The Best American Short Story series. Her first novel, *A Soldier's Tale*, was a Finalist for the Michael Shaara Award for Excellence in Civil War Fiction. She has written several novels since then as well as plays, short stories and essays.

<https://joannahigginsauthor.com/about/>



NOID Phals similar to Big Pink,  
but not as old – Bernice Magee