



# *Tropical Fern & Exotic Plant Society, Inc.*

## *Newsletter*

Volume 10, Issue 4

Editor: Reggie Whitehead April 2008

### **March in Review**

Minutes of March 24 meeting of the Tropical Fern and Exotic Plant Society.

The raffle table was provided by Richard Button. There were many interesting and unusual flowering trees on the table. Bob Benaim, our Treasurer, brought a ponytail palm and a frangipani. And David and Valerie Foster brought a water plant.

The meeting was called to order by Tom Moore at 7:45. Tom announced that Reggie would not be with us this evening because he is in New York for a costume fitting to fulfill a lifelong desire to play a role in the opera *Porgy and Bess* (which will tour in Eastern Europe this summer. He's playing the role of Sportin' Life).

Tom thanked Emaly Israel and Argeo 'Ralph' Hernandez for furnishing the refreshment table. Emaly tells me that Ralph brought all of the food. He made it all himself, including the cake. It was delicious. Tom asked that members assist by bringing one dish to supplement the table. The club will reimburse the expense. Turn your receipt in to the Treasurer for reimbursement.

The Treasurer reported that we have \$13,800 in the bank.

Peter Kouchalakos was our speaker this evening. His topic was **Landscaping with Orchids**

**with a Twist.** Peter also brought in some orchids for sale.

Peter services 50 orchid collections in the area. His approach to landscaping with orchids is a bit heretical. He advises to "think outside the box." In the landscape, marry a stand-alone plant (a large orchid, for example) with other epiphytes; ferns, orchids, bromeliads. Mount them together on a tree. Or use 3 or more of one type of plant, orchids with orchids, etc. Do not put just one plant on a tree, "load it up," he said. Groups of plants make a greater visual impact than just one plant of a species.

The first step when you go into your garden is to align your garden projects with the sun in mind. Be aware of the light levels when placing your plants, with an eastern sun exposure preferred, then north, south and west in order of preference. The second step is to get away from wanting

everything to balance in the landscape. Look toward a "wild" landscape since *Nature* is neither symmetrical nor organized. Peter's theory is organized chaos. Think disorderly, and get away from even numbers in neat groups.

Think of using plants that are not generally related, such as orchids and bromeliads or ferns and bromeliads. When doing this, symmetry is fine.

Bromeliads are Peter's first love. Bromeliads and orchids are his primary choices when pairing plants in the landscape.

Use color, form and pattern when combining plants to mount, to create visual interest. Combine plants that are compatible with the light, water, etc. available at the mounting site. Scale your groupings with proportion in mind. Small with small, large with large. Merchandise your plants, make your plantings eye-catching.

Use many different materials on which to mount your plants. You can use fences, chain link, tree fern plaques, and even oolitic limestone. Experiment with larger plants and orchids. Mount **Phaelenopsis** upside down with leaves pointed toward the ground, with lower light bromeliads and ferns below.

Mounting plants: Panty hose is a time-honored material for mounting plants on a tree or post or other material. Just make sure that the mounting strap does not become the primary focus when viewing

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### **Next Meeting Monday, April 28**

For this meeting we bring in our good friend David McLean, whose talk will be **Plants that Fight Back**. This talk is also called Plants for Masochists. It deals with plants that have thorns, stickers, irritating sap— you name it, somebody is growing it. David will also sponsor the raffle table for the evening as well. What a treat!!!!

See you at 7:30 p.m.

# *The Tropical Fern & Exotic Plant Society, Inc.*

## **Officers for 2008**

### **President**

Reggie Whitehead (305) 666-0219

### **Vice President**

Tom Moore (305) 666-0219

### **Secretary**

Karen Mashburn (305) 661-7488

### **Treasurer**

Bob Benaim (786) 243-0502

### **Hospitality**

Martha Bogaards (305) 661-2305

Emalyl Israel (305) 235-0886

### **Librarian**

Juan Espinosa-Almodovar (305) 444-3103

### **Raffle Table**

Sheila O'Dea (305) 253-4907

Michael O'Dea (305) 253-4907

Board of Directors will consist of the above officers and chairs; and the following individuals.

**Steve Forman** (305) 662-2368

**Debbie Lamb** (305) 251-8675

### **Trinity Churchside Garden**

Behind the Eleventh Street Annex Restaurant

*Landscape Design, Consulting;  
Medicinal, Weird, and Native Plants*

**DAVID MCLEAN**

14 S.W. 11 Street Open Sat and Sun and by appointment (954) 768-0423  
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33315 Just west of South Andrews Avenue

*The first Saturday of each month is a special day!*

### **Tropical Clumping Bamboo Plants and Bamboo Poles**

**Gary Rich — The Bamboo Man**  
(305) 378 9449 or (305) 978-0809

### **SHERRIN A. SMITH**

PLANT, PET, AND HOUSE SITTING; Personal Assistance

**\*Miami Native\***

305 448-2598 Phone 305 668-4622 Fax

E-mail: sas56chevy@bellsouth.net

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the mounted plant. Cable ties are ideal; they are quick, easy, and strong, too.

To landscape so that you always have something in bloom, practice "fiscal gardening." Think in terms of the quarters of the year. January-March, April-June, and so on. Pick your plants so that you have something in bloom at different intervals within each quarter. Break the longevity expectations. Some plants bloom for only short periods of time. Branch out, diversify and expand your choices. Also look at weather patterns to see how they affect your plants. Climate change can make flowers bloom late or early.

**Feeding:** Make "meatballs." Wrap a small bit of Nutricote into ball smaller than a golf ball using flyscreen, panty hose, etc. Tuck it into the plant.

**Terrestrial:** Combine large anthuriums and bromeliads for a grand effect. Use terrestrial orchids along with terrestrial Vandas, such as the 'Miss Joaquin' variety. Know what the conditions are for your plants, and group plants with similar needs. Watch the light levels and the reproductive patterns of the bromeliads. When combining the different plants, watch what you marry. Learn the requirements for each plant, and then combine them for a beautiful landscape with a twist!

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Mashburn

**2008 Show and Sale**

It's almost here, our 2008 Show and Sale, May 31 and June 1. Are your plants ready? Vendor contracts have gone out and members are talking about this year's show already. We are anxiously waiting to find out what you, our valued member, will be adding to our tropical plant display.

Because of the Tropical Nature of our show, all plants of every family are welcomed. This year, as always, we will feature a landscaped display. We are extremely fortunate to have Jason Lopez (a Fairchild Garden master horticulturist) design our show this year.

Even though the display is in a landscape setting, we still award ribbons to the beautiful specimens that will be brought in. Everyone's plant in our show is worthy of recognition. Please begin grooming your plants and preparing them for entering in this year's show.

**EXTRA EXTRA EXTRA**

**2008 Membership Rosters**

*Hot off the press*

*Rosters will be available at the April 28 Meeting*

**Tropical Fern & Exotic Plant Show and Sale**

**May 31 and June 1**

Now is the time to work on those beautiful plants for our Annual Show and Sale.

**Begonia Show and Sale**

Saturday & Sunday, April 26 & 27

This beautiful show and sale is held in conjunction with Fairchild's Annual Spring Sale — What a Weekend!

**Raffle Table for 2007-2008**

April 28.....	David McLean
.....	Peter and Clara Kouchalakos
May 26.....	Steve Nock
.....	Craig Reid

*Please make check payable to:*

**Tropical Fern & Exotic Plant Society  
17850 S.W. 280 Street  
Redland, FL 33031-3321**

\_\_\_ Individual Member \$15. \_\_\_ Household Membership \$17.

\_\_\_ Life Membership \$125. \_\_\_ Life Household Membership \$150.

**Members Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of additional member:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Street Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**City:** \_\_\_\_\_ **State:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Zip + 4:** \_\_\_\_\_ + \_\_\_\_\_

**E-mail:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Amount enclosed: \$** \_\_\_\_\_

## *A Bed of Peacocks*

by John Banta

Peacocks are synonymous with extravagant displays and it is for this reason that **Kaempferia** gingers are known as peacock gingers. Their bold patterns produce horticultural displays that remain locked in memories for years. These easily grown natives of Asia are still too uncommonly seen around Miami. One of the few growers of these wonderful gingers is Sid Gardino in Delray Beach and a member of this society. Some people find fault with these neat gingers because they go dormant from around Thanksgiving to Easter. Actually this is a real asset as they need no Winter cold protection and their beds can be treated for weeds with Roundup while they are dormant. They range in size from the big **K. 'Grande'**, almost 3 feet tall to the diminutive **K. 'Pygmaeus'** with a few 2 inch leaves appressed close to the ground. They appear to have filled the same ecological niche that the **Marantaceae** fill in the new world tropics. Like the **Marantaceae** they sport highly ornamental patterned leaves. There are about 50 species of **Kaempferias**. But it is rare to encounter more than a few

of the more common species such as **K. Pulchra**, **K. Galanga** and **K. Rotunda**. **K rotunda** is sometimes referred to as Indian Crocus because it flowers in the Spring before it sends any leaves up. The flowers are several inches across and resemble little orchid flowers that they are rather closely related to.

**Kaempferias** are the most undemanding plants. They do best with a very light application of fertilizer. They normally grow where rainfall is slight and unpredictable. They seem to favor rocky slopes and are perfectly at home in rock gardens as well as flat beds. Peacock gingers are plants that thrive in spite of our hapless efforts. Few other plants offer the visual rewards of "these peacocks of the plant world" and demand so little care. Virtually free from insect pests they require no chemical sprays and little water to make them thrive. The most amazing thing about **Kaempferia** gingers is that they are so seldom seen in our gardens. Plants as beautiful as these ought to be seen in many more gardens.

*Next Meeting, Plants that Fight Back; David McLean, April 28; 7:30 p.m.*

*Tropical Fern & Exotic Plant Society, Inc.  
6880 S. W. 75 Terrace  
South Miami, FL 33143*