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 Emalyl Israel and Argeo ‘Ralph’ Hernandez for furnishing the refreshment table. Emalyl 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 *Phalaenopsis* 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.

(Review continued on page 2)
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

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 fliescreen, 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

(Review continued from page 1)
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
May 26.............................................................................Peter and Clara Kouchalakos
.........................................................................................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