



Tropical Fern & Exotic Plant Society, Inc.

Newsletter

Volume 13, Issue 3

Editor: Reggie Whitehead March 2011

February in Review

Date—February 28 2011

Speaker- **Craig Morell**

Topic- **Advanced Propagation Techniques for the Professional Grower, Hobbyist and Collector**

Treasurer's report balance-
\$11,206.67

Vice president Marie Nock
called meeting to order at **7:40**

Hospitality-Emaly Israel, Martha Bogaard

Raffle provided by —**Tim Anderson (Palm Hammock Orchid Estate and Redland Nursery)**

Meeting ended at —**9:45**

In a curious twist, the Society secretary and the speaker were and are the same person, *yours truly*. This presents an interesting quandary on how to write the meeting notes without sounding especially self-serving. To the end result of trying to be objective, I'll try to leave out the "I" in most statements.

Marie Nock requested that I do another program, to which I agreed, but with the reservation that I've already done several programs for TFEPS before, and had spoken on many topics. Wishing to do something new, I queried her, and she suggested a new twist on plant propagation. There have been several notable plant propagation programs, notably Bruce McAlpin's

program, hard to beat (he's a veteran horticulture teacher).

This program would be about advanced topics, diving into some of the technical stuff.

One of the many topics covered was propagation theory, dealing with how many plants need to be produced, which would in turn drive the propagation technique used. If you only wish to make one or two copies of a plant, airlayering works just fine. If you need several hundred copies of a plant, then seed, spore, or grafting / budding techniques would be called for. Once you choose the technique, then one should look at the process of the technique, namely eliminating the variables of contamination and the possibilities of failure. To that end, the processes of sterilizing the soil, surface cleaning the seed or cuttings, using pre-plant fungicides on the cutting and in the post-plant mix, as well as sterility of the pots and growing area were also covered. One of the more strenuous

points covered, in the speaker's trademark ministerial oratory style, was that if someone used sterile soil and pots and clean seed and made all the right decisions---the whole process could be nulled by setting the pot on the bare ground. Nematodes and fungi can easily infect sterilized soil after just moments of sitting on the ground.

On the topic of rooting hormones, a distinction was made regarding liquid versus dry formulations, as well as the active ingredients IBA versus NAA, each of which works differently on soft or hardwood, respectively. The commercial product Dip 'N Grow contains both products and is effective on most propagation material likely found in these areas. *Rootone*, *Hormodin* and *Hormex* were also discussed briefly. Once the hormone has been chosen, potting / rooting mix is the next choice, and several media were discussed. The 3 media brought in were the old standby peat / perlite mix, a commercial mix called Pro-Mix (peat, perlite, vermiculite), and a relatively new material that is fired calcined clay, available under a number of different names e.g. Profile, Turface, and Quick Dry. The latter material is inert, but has a lot of cation exchange capacity as well as an interesting ability to provide iron to plants which so desperately need it. (Personal note: I have rooted many dozens of species in various grades of Turface as well as sowed seeds. Excellent results, no compaction, excellent drainage, and the bonsai growers have been using it for many

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Next Meeting Monday, March 28

The Tropical Fern & Exotic Plant Society presents **Philip Iloo** who will speak on **Growing and Blooming Healthy Orchids**. This includes buying them and keeping them blooming.

Philip will bring plants for sale. This month's raffle table will be supplied by Phil Iloo and Ree Gardens; and refreshments will be served. *See you there, at 7:30.*

The Tropical Fern & Exotic Plant Society, Inc.

Officers for 2011

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Mike Twyford	(305) 444-6332
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Marie Nock	(305) 232-2257
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Juan Espinosa-Almodovar	(305) 444-3103
Raffle Table	
Skye Palmer	(305) 595-9291
Webmaster	
Bob Benaim	(305) 793-9755

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
Reggie Whitehead	(305) 613-5944

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years as a long term inert potting material.)

Once the methods have been chosen for propagation, the hygiene protocols should be followed closely. Clean hands, cleaned fresh seed or cuttings, sterile mixes, sterile pots, and post-plant fungicide drenches are all effective tools for success. One eyebrow-raising point was to address seed-eating insects for long term seed pots, e.g. palms and cycads, where seed weevils can be a real success killer. Sevin insecticide works well as a long term insect repellent. (There was a high possibility of using a Birdsey-esque pun about the lesser of weevils, but the speaker wisely chose not to employ the joke.) Careful attention needs to be paid to damping-off fungi as the first signs of sprouting, wherein a gentle (to the plant) broad-spectrum fungicide such as *Captan* or *Manzate* or *Banrot* can be used effectively, as well as *Kocide* on non-bromeliad plants.

Dr. Jeff Block brought in several interesting plants, including a beautiful plant of *Medinilla greg-hambalii* with silver and burgundy foliage, a *Ludisia discolor* variant with almost black leaves, a psychedelically pink colored *Rex-group Begonia*, and a recalcitrant *Oxalis hedysaroides*. These plants grow well for Jeff, who uses reverse-osmosis water for his sensitive plants, many of which grow to sizeable dimensions on the calcium-free water. Kudos to him for his efforts. The program concluded with numerous questions, primarily about sources for the products, most of which are local horticulture-supply vendors in the Homestead area. A pitch was also made to join local plant societies as they are outstanding sources of information. It seems easier to use plant societies as brain trusts than it is to believe they are just social groups. The In-

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ternational Plant Propagator's Society (www. IPPS.org) membership information was also distributed for those who wished to pursue the very disciplined art of plant propagation based on global information. Some of the audience left bleary-eyed from data overload, some left inspired, some were just dazed.

My work was done.

Respectfully submitted,

*Craig Morell, CPA
Certified Plant Addict*

2011 Dues are due!

Membership dues for the Tropical Fern & Exotic Plant Society are currently being collected.

Dues are: \$15.00 - single

\$17.00 - for two members at the same address

Lifetime Memberships are available at: \$125 per individual, \$150 for two members at the same address. This one-time rate is valid for the life of the Society. Please make check payable to: **TFEPS**, and mail to:

Thomas G. Moore
c/o TFEPS
6880 S. W. 75 Terrace
South Miami, FL 33143

New Members

Leonard Goldstein

8101 S. W. 72nd Avenue, Apt. 313W
Miami, FL 33143-7615

Anne and John Lippincott

11942 Lost Tree Way
Palm Beach Gardens, FL 33408-2917
adL@3rivers.net

Raffle Tables for — 2011

*March 28, 2011..... Steve Nock/Philip Illo
April 25, 2011 David McLean/Craig Reid
May 23, 2011 John Lucas/Rebecca& Duane Tannenbaum*

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

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

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

Member's Name: _____

Name of additional member: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ **State:** _____ **Zip + 4:** _____ + _____

E-mail: _____

Phone: _____ **Amount enclosed: \$** _____

The Pollen Problem

by John Banta

The Month of February is remarkable here in southern Florida by the huge amounts of pollen from the pine trees. In March it is replaced by oak tree pollen. The mass of shed pollen often looks like someone has dusted flowers of sulphur over everything. We all know that pollen is necessary for seed production and some allergy problems. In the plant world pollen is the equivalent of animal sperm. But it does more than just fertilize an egg cell to produce a viable embryo. An additional nucleus combines with a daughter cell to generate the food source for the embryo; the endosperm. A good part of our diet consists of eating this endosperm tissue. The problem with pollen is that it isn't as robust as plant

breeders would like. Many attempts have been made to determine a storage method so that its original purpose is not compromised over time. Keeping it at sub-zero temperatures works some of the time. The major problem confronting plant breeders is knowing if the pollen they are using is still viable. Fortunately, there is a method to do this. A specific stain, called *Alexander's stain*, will show what percentage of the stored pollen is still viable. Knowing what method of pollen storage produced the best results would be a major advancement in the science of plant hybridization. This could be a science fair project that could make a remarkable difference in the history of horticulture. Is anybody out there listening?

Next Meeting, Philip Iloo, Growing and Maintaining Orchids, Monday, March 28, 7:30 p.m.

This Newsletter is also available through PDF and
our www.tfeps.org website.

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