



June 2009

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Next Meeting: Thursday 11th June 7:30pm

"Sexual Deception Among the Orchids" by Steve Beckendorf

Sexual deception in orchids - by mimicking female insects, several groups of orchids lure male insects to mate with their flowers, accomplishing the orchid's reproductive goals while frustrating the insect's.

Steve began growing orchids 27 years ago. He quickly became fascinated by Odontoglossums and their close relatives because of their beauty and variety. They had a glamorous past as the most sought after plants in the orchid frenzy that gripped Europe in the 19th century. In addition, excellent plants were available from growers and hybridizers on the West Coast.

He soon realized that few of the species in this group were readily available and began collecting them for propagation and use in hybridizing. His attempt to find unusual or lost species has led to several trips to the cloud forests of Mexico & South America. He currently grows about 50 Odontoglossum species and another 30-40 relatives, with lots of odont hybrids and a smattering of other cool growing genera.

Because of his background as a geneticist, he has long been interested in the wonderful and elaborate mechanisms that orchids have developed to induce their pollinators to visit. Although some orchids reward their pollinators, many deceive them by appearing to offer food, exotic fragrances or even sex that is not really there. In this month's talk he will focus on two groups of orchids that sexually deceive their pollinators, manipulating them for the procreation of the orchids rather than the insects.

Speaker's Dinner will be at Sichuan Fortune House, 41 Woodsworth Ln (off Gregory at Contra Costa Blvd.) at 5:30 PM. Everyone is welcome to attend and meet our speaker. If you plan to attend, please notify Liz Charlton at (925) 280-1671 or email dvosnews@gmail.com

Plant table will be provided by Steve Beckendorf.