

# The BackBulb

C A R M E L O R C H I D S O C I E T Y  
June 2026

June Meeting: **Saturday June 6th, 2PM at the Church**

## A Message from the June Speaker:

Dear Carmel Orchid Society,

One of my passions has always been plants. I began growing orchids as an offshoot from working at Longwood Gardens in Philadelphia just after college. From the very beginning it was all about Paphs, particularly awarded and select clones of historic importance, of which my collection numbers nearly 3000. I currently manage the paphs at Sunset Valley Orchids, and do hybridizing in a wide range of genera. I am an accredited judge with the American Orchid Society, and have served in various capacities with various orchid societies in California and on the East Coast. I love meeting other people who like orchids too, and doing so often finds me traveling to shows, vendors, and peoples' greenhouses to see the latest and greatest in new hybrids and to get the best orchid gossip. I like to be involved in plants as much as possible: in addition to Longwood, I've worked at the Smithsonian Institution tending to their orchids, and for years for the United States National Arboretum, collecting rare plants and documenting cultivated species and hybrids for their herbarium. In short, I really like plants.

For your meeting, I'll be sharing a presentation entitled "Amazing Soft-Leaved Orchids". These plants are easy to grow and flower, are vigorous, and have low cultural demands beyond the needs for heat and water. Genera in this group, including Pescatorea, Cochleanthes, Bollea, and Huntleya, are under-represented in collections of mixed genera; their beautiful (and often blue) flower colors argue favorably for their inclusion, as does their tendency to produce specimen plants quickly when grown well. By the end of this presentation, you will have a new appreciation of what goes into breeding trends for these types of plants, as well as an appreciation of their beautiful flowers and ease-of-growth. I hope this talk will encourage you to try one in your collection.

Sincerely  
Tim Culbertson

**1**  
June Speaker

**2**  
Upcoming Events  
Carmel Valley  
Garden Show

**3**  
All About RO H2O  
(part 1)

In order to provide a selection of treats at our meetings, we are asking members with last names that start with the letter **M thru R** to bring refreshments to the meeting.

## COS Officers

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## BackBulb Editor

John OConnell

## Membership

Peter Janick

## Show Chairman

Kathie Ritter

## Upcoming Events

### June

#### 6/6 COS June Meeting

## Carmel Valley Garden Show

The Carmel Valley Flower Show is always the first weekend in May and it is a whopper! There are flowers in the auditorium on stems, in pots, in arrangements, on tabletops, even in ceramic vases that look like people's faces. And there is a photo exhibit, a silent auction and plenty of vendors with any plant you can think of for your spring garden. Did I say tillandsias?



Our Society has had an info table there for the last 3 years answering the dreaded ice cube question and other related orchid growing theories. This year, five of us entered 12 potted orchids and showed some nice variety in orchid growing. Everyone won ribbons but Carolyn's Cattleya species mendelii bloomed biggest.

Our society member, Richard Demming won 4 blue ribbons for his potted cacti.

See you there next year!



## Irene



**Top:** The society's table

**Bottom left:** Carolyn's Cattleya

**Bottom right:** Interesting flower arranging

## All About RO H2O (part 1)

I wrote this article in 2009, not a lot has changed since then. Our water still comes from the Carmel River aquifer, the Cal-Am RO plant is still years in the future if it is built at all, the basics of RO systems have not changed much. What has changed is that I now have a greenhouse that I need to humidify. I chose to use a misting system to provide humidity to my greenhouse, misting with hard water produces calcium scale everywhere that the water evaporates from: leaves, roots, greenhouse walls... So I need to feed the mister low mineral water, RO is just too expensive for the 400+ gallons a year that it needs so I have been gathering rainwater from my roof for most of my water needs and using an RO filter when the rainwater runs out in the Fall.

### John

Don't drink tap water? But you still water your plants with it? Do you know what's in that glass? If not, maybe it's time to think about your water, better water could give you better orchids.

When I lived in Atlanta I was spoiled, Atlanta has great water, almost as good as rain water. Then I moved to Monterey, and almost went into shock, the water is hard! Rather than put my collection into shock, I started buying water from the reverse osmosis (RO) vending machines in front of Safeway. For my hundred plants I only need about 3 gallons a week, the cost was right, and it wasn't too much hassle. But once the collection started pushing 200, schlepping 6 gallons a week home

from the grocery was getting to be quite a hassle, it was time to take the plunge and buy a RO system, but what kind? and from who? There are so many choices, a number of different capacities, a multitude of configurations, and a wide variety of vendors. Explanations are few and far between, it took me several months of research to finally make a decision. I bought a 100 gal/day 3 stage, tank-less system from Jim's Orchid Supplies. That was four months ago and I have been filtering about 8-10 gallons a week since then. This is what I have learned about our water and RO.

### About the Water

Water chemistry and the reaction plants and animals have to it is a complex subject, one that I am no expert on, so I am going to try to keep this relatively simple centered on the Monterey area's water supply. If you get your water from a well or private water system your water may be better or worse, only testing it will tell. So with that disclaimer out of the way, lets dive in.

The Monterey area has hard water, "hard" is defined as high in dissolved calcium and magnesium. Ironically a water softener makes water "soft" by replacing the calcium and magnesium with sodium (and occasionally potassium) making the resulting soft water is deadly to plants. So hardness alone is not enough, we need to know about all the dissolved minerals: calcium, magnesium, sodium chloride, iron and others. The sum of all these dissolved minerals is called Total Dissolved Solids (TDS) usually

measured in Parts Per Million (PPM). Most of the local water supplies ranged from 300-500 PPM TDS, which puts them in the moderately hard to hard categories. Information on TDS and most everything else in your water can be found in the water quality report that your water utility is required to provide. The table in this document can be confusing, but all the acronyms are explained somewhere in the report. Look mainly for "Total Dissolved Solids" greater than one hundred ppm (Cal Am reports 401 PPM with a range of 130-680 PPM). The major constituents of the dissolved solids are reported as well, they include Chloride, Sodium, Calcium, Magnesium and possibly others. Almost everything on this report will be removed by a good RO system.

### So...

Monterey and environs have hard water, unfortunately many orchids are sensitive to dissolved minerals, and we don't make the situation any better by adding fertilizer to the water which is just more salts. Too many salts and dissolved minerals have a generally bad effect on your plants, root tips die, leaf tips brown, in extreme cases the plant will expire. Some orchids are impossible to grow without very pure water. So what can you do?

### Deal With It.

Start by not buying many high elevation cloud forest plants, they tend to be very sensitive. The plants you do buy will either live or die (a fairly common orchid culture philosophy). You can give the plants a better chance by

SECONDARY REGULATED SUBSTANCES - Collected at the Treatment Plant Effluent					
Substance (with units)	Year Sampled	Compliance Achieved	SMCL	Average Result	Range detected
Chloride (ppm)	2025	Yes	500	59.4	21.7 to 196.8
Aluminum (ppb)	2025	Yes	200	0.14	ND to 6
Iron (ppb) <sup>1</sup>	2025	Yes	300	23.8	ND to 1490
Manganese (ppb)	2025	Yes	50	2.1	ND to 24
Silver (ppb)	2025	Yes	100	0.16	ND to 1
Zinc (ppm)	2025	Yes	5	0.002	ND to 0.32
Color (Units)	2025	Yes	15	3.9	ND to 7
Odor (units)	2025	Yes	3	0.1	ND to 4
Foaming Agents (ppb)	2025	Yes	500	ND	ND to 0.02
Specific Conductance (umhos/cm)	2025	Yes	1600	378	157 to 1051
Sulfate (ppm)	2025	Yes	500	63	ND to 116
<b>Total Dissolved Solids (ppm)</b>	2025	Yes	1000	<b>332</b>	<b>68 to 610</b>
Turbidity (NTU)	2025	Yes	5	0.2	ND to 5.2

This is page 6 of the 2025 Cal-Am water quality report for Monterey. Other cities with water systems have a similar report. Note the Total Dissolved Solids line, 332 ppm average, 68-610 range. Monterey has hard water but it is not as bad as many other places. Other interesting lines include Chloride (salt), Calcium and Sodium (page 7).

watering copiously when you do water. Flooding water through the pots or soaking your mounted plants will dissolve any left over salts and flush them out. The same routine goes for misting. A little mist will lead to salt buildup on the leaves and the leaves can adsorb the salts.

### **Don't Deal With It.**

You could get rid of your orchids.... but there are better ways. The simplest is to buy reverse osmosis (RO) water

filter. Most of the supermarkets have RO water dispensers in front of them, check the price. If you need more than a couple of gallons a week it is probably worth taking the plunge and buying an RO filter. Forget the little pitcher or faucet filters, activated carbon will make the water more pleasing to drink but will do nothing for the dissolved minerals that your orchids don't like.

**John**



Round two of John's Encyclias

**Enc. Cynthia 'Black Arts' X Enc. randii 'Best'**

## **Important Dates for COS 2026**

June 6, Monthly meeting, CCMP  
July COS Field trip  
July 25-26, Orchids in the Park, SF County Fair Building  
August 1, Monthly meeting, CCMP  
August 22-23, West End Celebration, Sand City  
September 5, COS Annual Picnic, at the Patton's house  
October 8-10, COS Fall Market, CCMP  
November 7, Monthly meeting, CCMP  
December 5, COS Holiday Party, CCMP

## **Minutes of the COS BOD Meeting May 11, 2026**

The meeting was called to order at 3 pm at Kathie Ritter's home. Attending were Kathie, Cathy Walmsley, Irene, Carolyn, Janette, Anna, Albert and Peter. Sonya attended by Zoom.

The minutes were read and approved.

Carolyn gave the VP report: June's speaker will be Tim Culbertson who will talk to us about thin leafed orchids. We will meet him at the Church at 11:30 to have lunch at Woody's before the meeting. RSVP with Carolyn for lunch at Woody's. We then discussed speakers for future meetings including Bill Weaver for a pest control presentation.

Janette gave the treasurer's report with the checkbook balance and said a few checks were still outstanding. She said we gained one new member last month, Robert Mallory, who is already a good orchid grower.

We reviewed plans for the West End Celebration for August 22nd and 23rd.

The past weekend's Flower Show was well represented by our Society and we congratulated the members (everyone entered!) who received ribbons. Carolyn and Irene will send a wish list of orchid categories for the Garden Club to consider for the next show. Our table was well attended .

We talked about meeting in July at Point Lobos to look for wild orchids on the paths. Albert is in contact with the naturalist there and more will be discussed at a later time. Anna suggested if we were unable to go to Point Lobos we might have a repotting

session for members to bring orchids that needed it.

Peter said he would revise the membership form to include our new privacy policy and send a draft to the Board for review. He will update and distribute a new membership list and improve the welcome packet for new members to include a description of their growing preferences and interests. Peter also suggested a sign-up sheet to distribute responsibilities more evenly. Sonya agreed to help.

A potential speaking opportunity for our Society might be for the Succulent Society about growing orchids outside, at their request.

Kathy provided an update on vendors for the Fall Market and hopes to have a meeting of chairmen of committees after May 20th which is when Chris Thomas returns.

Cathy W. reminded us the fall picnic was on Labor Day weekend, September 5th at 1 pm.

Irene reminded members to send photos and articles to John soon since he would publish early.

The next Board meeting is June 16th, 6 pm by Zoom.

The meeting was adjourned soon after 4.

**Irene Patton Secretary**



Another of John's Encyclias, several more still to bloom.

**Encyclia Knoydart Spring (Enc. mooreana X Enc. Fowliei)**

**C A R M E L O R C H I D S O C I E T Y**  
**2026 Membership Application**

Please make checks payable to the Carmel Orchid Society and mail to: Carmel Orchid Society - Membership, P.O. Box 223462 Carmel CA 93922-3462  
 Please print

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

If you were referred by a current member, please provide his/her name \_\_\_\_\_

Renewal  New Member

Member of the American Orchid Society

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