

Phalaenopsis Orchids: *Exotic and Easy*

Orchids, one of the most treasured flowers in the world, have always been surrounded by an air of mystery. Perhaps this is because they were first introduced to the western world by eighteenth century explorers returning from expeditions to exotic lands. Most people still seem to perceive orchids as finicky tropical plants growing high in the canopy of thick steaming jungles. This view may sound romantic, but it's only partly true. In fact, orchids are native to a wide variety of climates and growing conditions.

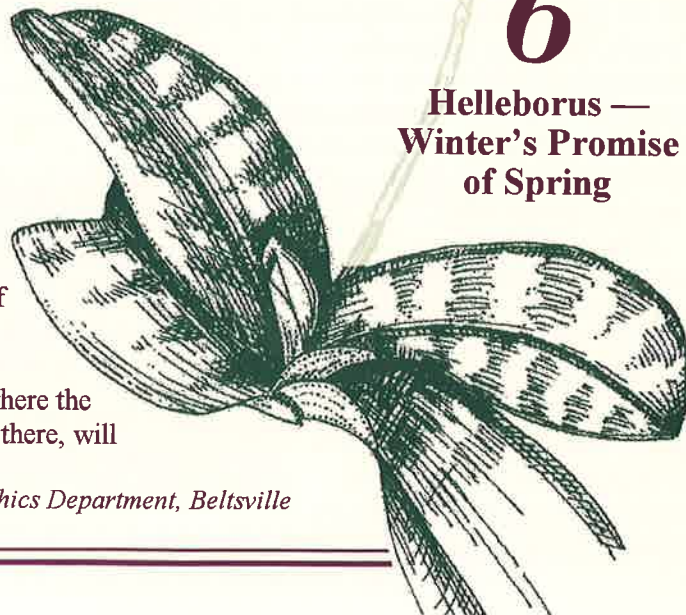
One orchid, the Phalaenopsis, is native to an environment not unlike the conditions of the average home. This orchid, pronounced *fail-en-op-sis*, gets its name from the Greek meaning, "moth-like." The long sprays of flowers resemble a glorious band of butterflies hovering in midair. Phalaenopsis is one of the most beautiful orchids and also one of the easiest to grow. It is fast becoming one of America's favorite houseplants.

If you can grow African violets, you are just about guaranteed success with the Phalaenopsis orchid. The two plants grow happily under the same conditions: An east- or shaded-south-facing window, warm daytime temperatures (about 70° to 85°F), slightly cooler nights, and increased humidity. Phalaenopsis orchids grow well under lights, providing they are moved into natural light as their long, flowering spikes, known as inflorescences, begin to develop.

The elegant simplicity of the graceful, arching spray of orchid blossoms is as lovely as any flower arrangement and much longer lasting. A mature specimen can bloom 8 to 10 months a year, producing two or more complete spikes which can carry thirty or more blooms, each lasting 2 to 3 months. The delicate flowers are simple, uncluttered, and possess a purity which causes them to project an ephemeral quality that belies their longevity.

Visit Behnke's houseplant greenhouse soon to see our impressive collection of Phalaenopsis orchids. They're sure to banish the winter doldrums — you'll find them available in many colors, including white, cream and the rich sunset hues of pink, yellow and purple. We'll provide an easy-to-follow care sheet with each purchase. A blooming orchid will do much to brighten the cold winter days ahead, reminding you that somewhere the days are long and warm, and the sun, which is shining brightly there, will soon return to our corner of the world. ☸

— by Lori Hicks, Graphics Department, Beltsville



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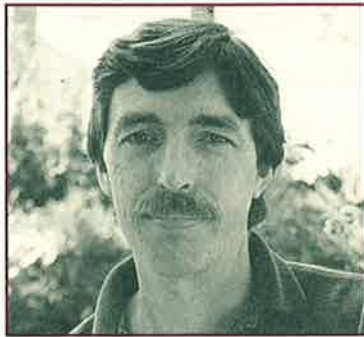
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Meet Mike Bader



Mike, the Manager of our Houseplant Department, is a native Washingtonian. He grew up in Oxon Hill and graduated from the University of Maryland with a degree in Business Management. Legend has it that he showed up at Behnke's with his degree in hand and was sent to Helmut Jaehnigen, the Director of Woody Plants, for an interview. According to Mike, Helmut asked him two questions: "Can you sell plants, and can you start work tomorrow?" Mike answered "yes" to both questions and has been an important part of Behnke Nurseries ever since. He worked in various departments and then became Manager of Houseplants.

Under his guidance the Houseplant Department has grown to become one of the biggest and best in the area. His skill for creating effective displays of ponds, fountains and garden vignettes has earned him much acclaim. Each year his department is listed as a "Beautiful Place to Visit During Winter's Doldrums" in various newspapers.

Mike's wife of twenty years, Beth, is a Maryland State Forest Ranger. They have a 12-year-old son and a 7-year-old daughter. All are active in sports and love animals. Their extended family includes an enthusiastic menagerie of 2 dogs, 2 cats, 2 tropical fish tanks, an iguana and a hamster. ☺

A Gardener's Gloves

— by Susan O'Hara, Graphics Department, Beltsville

Let me share one word of gardening advice with you....GLOVES. I've come to rely on my gloves, even more so than my tools. Over the years, I've watched my hands go from soft and supple to dry and chapped. Why? Because I didn't always take the time to reach for my gloves. Now, I have a little battalion of gloves, all with their own practical applications. For instance, I use plastic chemical gloves to mix and spray even the weakest of chemicals (I don't want the chemicals to soak into my leather gloves and eventually into my hands). My goatskin gloves allow me the greatest dexterity when I plant annuals and perennials, but my heavy weight leather gloves are my best friends. They save my hands from heavy duty planting or digging. My gloves won't do the work for me, but they certainly make working in the garden or around the house a great deal nicer.

Many different kinds of gloves are available to gardeners. Finding the right ones may seem a little confusing. Some gloves are excellent for one job but not for another. Luckily, I know a professional "gloveologist," my good ol' friend Kevin Flynn who works in the Behnke's Garden Shop. He gladly agreed to take me through the vast array of gloves and explain their uses:

- **Cotton gloves** - Lightweight and inexpensive; they are good for light gardening duties such as potting, weeding, and planting annuals. The ones with reinforced fingertips hold up the longest.
- **Goatskin gloves** - Just like a second skin; the natural lanolin in the leather of these gloves adds to their comfort and flexibility. These are great for light to medium gardening duties where you need to "feel" what you are doing.
- **Cowhide or Pigskin gloves** - These are good for rough gardening duties such as digging or planting large trees and shrubs.
- **Long (Gauntlet) gloves** - These cover the forearms making them good for working around roses, thorny shrubs, or poison ivy. All gauntlet-type gloves perform the same tasks, but the heavy weight leather ones will be the most durable.
- **Insulated gloves** - These are good for cold weather work such as hauling firewood or snow shoveling.
- **Chemical Resistant gloves** - Use these for preparing and spraying chemicals. They will keep your hands safe and dry.
- **Grip Rite® gloves** - These gloves have a special coating for working with tools, chainsaws or when you just need that tight grip. ☺

Great Gardening Gloves to Have On Hand

Kevin Flynn's picks for the "serious gardener"

- **cotton gloves with reinforced fingertips**
- **goatskin gloves**
- **heavyweight pigskin or cowhide gloves**

Kevin is a member of our Garden Shop staff. He last wrote for our Tomato Taste-Off recipe booklet - ask for his recipe for his famous BLT, and watch for our 2nd Annual Tomato Taste-Off in August of 1997!



1997 Gardening Seminars

by Behnke Nurseries

February 8th through March 23, 1997, at our Beltsville Nursery.
Space is limited, please call (301) 937-1100 to reserve a seat.

1. This Place is Crawling with Bugs!

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 10:00 AM **FREE**
Nathan Erwin, Insect Zoo, Smithsonian Institution
The world of insects comes alive in this close-up and hands-on look at beneficial insect helpers from the garden. A program for people of all ages.

2. Made in the Shade

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 1:00 PM **FREE**
Peter Loewer, Author and Horticulturist
An enlightening and amusing look at the shade garden through the eyes of one of America's foremost garden writers.

3. A Shade Garden of Glorious Perennials

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 1:00 PM **FREE**
Elaine Flaxer, Astolat Garden Perennials
Meet the challenge of the shady garden with a surprising number of perennial varieties for attractive plantings in dappled to dense shade.

4. Small Fruit in the Garden and on the Table

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 1:00 PM **FREE**
Jane Warner, Virginia Berry Farm
Choose the right berries and small fruits and have a fruitful harvest from May to October. Learn which varieties perform best in our region for many months of homegrown garden treats.

5. Herb Gardens by Design

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 10:00 AM **FREE**
*Janet Walker, U.S. National Arboretum
Head of Education and Visitor Services*
Learn how to see the structure behind great herb garden designs, and how to choose the right plants for the effect you want. Not sure where to begin? Learn the important "Do's and Don'ts" from the former Herb Garden Curator and start with a good design foundation.

6. Rejuvenating Old Landscapes

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 1:00 PM **FREE**
John Hartmann, Mont. Co. Master Gardener
Rhododendrons over the roof? Azaleas blocking the windows? Let an expert who deals with these and other tricky landscape challenges advise you and answer your pruning questions.

7. Houseplant Workshop

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 1:00 PM **\$25**
*Debbie Baca and Judy Purke, Behnke Nurseries
Houseplant Department Staff*
Create your own dish garden for the home in this hands-on workshop. Learn step-by-step procedures for planting your own mini-garden.
Pre-registration required

8. Herbal Soaps Workshop

SATURDAY, MARCH 1, 10 TO 12:00 AM **\$25**
Leslie Plant, Leslie's Garden Hand-Crafted Soap
Discover the pleasure of making old-fashioned, handcrafted soaps from herbs, essential oils and lye. You'll create and take home your own herbal soap from the ingredients supplied.
Pre-registration required

9. Herbal Soaps Workshop

SATURDAY, MARCH 1, 1 TO 3:00 PM **\$25**
Leslie Plant, Leslie's Garden Hand-Crafted Soap
A repeat of the 10am workshop. See details above.
Pre-registration required

10. The Thoughtfully Furnished Garden

SUNDAY, MARCH 2, 1:00 PM **FREE**
Jay Graham, Graham Landscape Architecture
Decorative objects and their placement are important elements in garden design and tell much about the gardener personally and us as a culture. Join us as we explore this often overlooked aspect of the garden environment.

(Continued on other side)

11. Plants from the Prairie

SATURDAY, MARCH 8, 10:00 AM **FREE**

Joan Feely, U.S. National Arboretum

Hot, dry summers are often the undoing of cool-weather plants. Native perennial plants from the mid-western prairies can take the heat and make perfect additions to our eastern gardens.

12. Favorite Flavors from Garden to Kitchen

SATURDAY, MARCH 8, 1:00 PM **FREE**

Susan Belsinger, Food Writer

From garden plot or window box, it's a short trip to our dinner plates. An avid gardener and cook will introduce us to a cornucopia of wonderful flavors. Traditional and new ideas for great gardens and great food. Plus, a special taste treat for all!

13. Pruning Flowering Shrubs

SUNDAY, MARCH 9, 1:00 PM **FREE**

Gene Sumi, Behnke Customer Service

A primer of pruning. Join us to learn the how, when and where of keeping roses and other flowering shrubs in healthy condition. Gene will also discuss proper tools for the job and how to keep them in peak condition. Bring your own pruning queries for the Question & Answer period which will follow his lecture and demonstration.

14. Potted Pleasures and Sensual Delights

SATURDAY, MARCH 15, 10:00 AM **FREE**

Pauline Innis, Gardener and Author

After many years of gardening on a balcony at the Watergate, Pauline Innis has created her own personal paradise with a variety of container gardens and plants. She will share her gardening experiences and describe those of her high-profile neighbors.

15. Ornamental Grasses — Bold Statements

SATURDAY, MARCH 15, 1:00 PM **FREE**

Carole Ottesen, Author and Horticulturist

The structure, flowing lines and motion of ornamental grasses in the garden are unequalled by other plants. The right variety can enhance your landscape by screening, softening or making a bold statement.

16. Designing with Perennials

SUNDAY, MARCH 16, 1:00 PM **FREE**

André Viette, André Viette Farm and Nursery

André leads us on an informative and entertaining foray into the wonderful world of perennials. Join André as he advises us on how to create unbeatable gardens.

17. Florist Workshop

SATURDAY, MARCH 22, 10:00 AM **\$30**

Behnke Nurseries Floral Design Staff

Take home a breath of spring! You'll learn the tricks of designing with fresh flowers, then make a spring bouquet to take home. Tuition includes all materials to complete one vase arrangement. *Pre-registration required*

18. Florist Workshop

SATURDAY, MARCH 22, 1:00 PM **\$30**

Behnke Nurseries Floral Design Staff

A repeat of the 10am workshop. See details above. *Pre-registration required*

19. Splendor in the Leaves

SUNDAY, MARCH 23, 1:00 PM **FREE**

Anne Brooks, Floral Designer and Gardener

With not a flower in sight, a garden can vibrate with color, texture and interest when leaf size and shape, shade and form are employed to best effect. Join us as we delve into the diverse world of foliage.



Please phone us to reserve your seat(s):
(301) 937-1100

Seminars and Workshops are held at our Beltsville Location: 11300 Baltimore Ave. (U.S. 1), 2 miles North of Exit 25, Capital Beltway. All hands-on workshops are limited to 20 participants and require pre-registration. Please phone to reserve your place.

Seminars will be held in our Assembly Room, which is on the second floor of the Florist Building. We regret that this room is not yet accessible to handicapped persons. We will, however, make special accommodations for anyone who may be inconvenienced.

The Rewards of Filling Feathered Bellies

— by Ellen B. Schaffer, Perennial Specialist, Largo

A bright red cardinal appears at first light, a woodpecker dangles precariously from a suet feeder, mockingbirds proudly defend their domain, and a pair of chickadees chats endlessly on a gloomy, gray winter morning. What a joy to see and hear the sights, sounds, and color offered by our feathered friends.

Attracting birds to your backyard can be achieved naturally, by landscaping with plants that attract them, or by providing them with bird food and comfortable feeders. The best of all possible worlds, however, is a combination of both.

A yard landscaped with deciduous and evergreen shrubs, hedges, and trees of various shapes and heights (both fruit- and nonfruit-bearing), annual and perennial flowers and grasses, and a water source provides everything needed for survival — food, safety and security, nesting places, and protection from cold and wind. Birds favor landscaped yards more than those which offer only large expanses of lawn. Adding variety to your yard will increase the number of bird habitats and hopefully attract a greater number of species.

If your yard is landscaped for wildlife, natural food sources (fruits, berries, nuts, pine cones, acorns, seeds) should be available through the fall for resident bird populations as well as hungry migrants passing through on their way to wintering grounds. As fall turns to winter, however, natural food sources become exhausted and, as days become shorter, so does feeding time. Snow cover for an extended period further complicates the picture. Together, all of these factors threaten survival.

The addition of supplementary food can alleviate this stress. Feeding birds during the winter months and even through the spring and early summer until natural food sources become renewed is rewarding and pleasurable, as well as ecologically sound. We carry a wide variety of bird feeders and bird food — something for every taste! Ask the experts in our Beltsville Garden Shop for advice on attracting a certain variety of bird to your feeders.

Providing a water source is also an essential element of attracting birds to your backyard. A shallow birdbath, 2 inches deep, placed near cover and far enough away from feeders so that seeds, shells and bird droppings won't contaminate the water will provide birds with water for drinking as well as bathing. It is important to keep the water clean and to keep it from freezing. We have immersible de-icers that are thermostatically controlled; they warm the water to above freezing and then shut off.

Take care of our feathered friends this winter. Your efforts may encourage birds to remain year round, and they will thank you by filling their beaks and bellies, and those of their young, with pesky insects, grubs, and weed seeds. ☺



Have you forgotten to fill someone's feeder?

Our Professional Staff is Growing!

We have to brag about the recent accomplishments of the wonderful staff we have at Behnke Nurseries. Five staff members from our Largo location took the Maryland Certified Professional Horticulturist Exam in November, and **all five passed** with flying colors.

This may not seem like a big achievement, but when you consider that only 56% of those taking the exam at that time actually passed and 100% percent of the staff from Behnke's who took the test went on to become Maryland Certified Professional Horticulturists (CPH), you'll see why we feel they deserve mention.

Special recognition also goes to Mr. Tom Jarvis, Master Gardener and CPH, of our Largo location. He developed a training program and coached the staff so that they would be well prepared for the examination — and they obviously were.

Our Nursery founder, Albert Behnke, felt strongly that his staff should become CPH's. He made certain that anyone who was interested would have the time to study for and take the exam, at Behnke Nurseries' expense. We proudly carry on the tradition.

When you next shop at Largo, keep an eye out for these fine new horticulturists — Gary Aiken, Lori Bristow, Alex Dencker, Daniel Green, and Jason Rillon, *and* their mentor, Tom Jarvis. They join the other CPH's at Largo: Linda Allen, Charles Breitschwerdt, Ace Czekanski, Larry Hurley, Kelly Keys, Sissy McKenzie, and Marian Parsley. Give them your congratulations — and ask for their help on your gardening questions — they are eager to share their knowledge with you. ☺

Helleborus — Winter's Promise of Spring

— by Larry Hurley, Horticultural Technical Advisor, Largo

Twenty years ago I left Wisconsin, a beautiful but cold state. Gardeners there have 400 words for "Juniper." Imagine a landscape without dogwoods, flowering cherries, azaleas, rhododendrons (until recently) or helleborus.

I then went to Dallas for five years (out of the freezer, into the fire). A place where one of the best things you can say about a plant is: "It can live through the summer." I don't recall seeing any helleborus plants there, either.

Finally, I heard the siren song of Maryland where I washed up in the perennial department at Behnke Nurseries (we have 400 words for "Hosta"). Among the hundreds of new plants I quickly became familiar with was helleborus — one of the late Mr. Albert Behnke's favorite plants. After seeing the large patches of *Helleborus orientalis* at his garden in Burtonsville and at Brookside Gardens in Wheaton, I knew this was a plant for me.

Hellebores originally hail from southern and central Europe and western Asia. As garden subjects, these evergreens grow best in the shade garden, in well drained soils with a lot of compost worked in. The most popular species is *H. orientalis*, the Lenten Rose, with the fussier *H. niger*, the Christmas Rose, a close runner up.

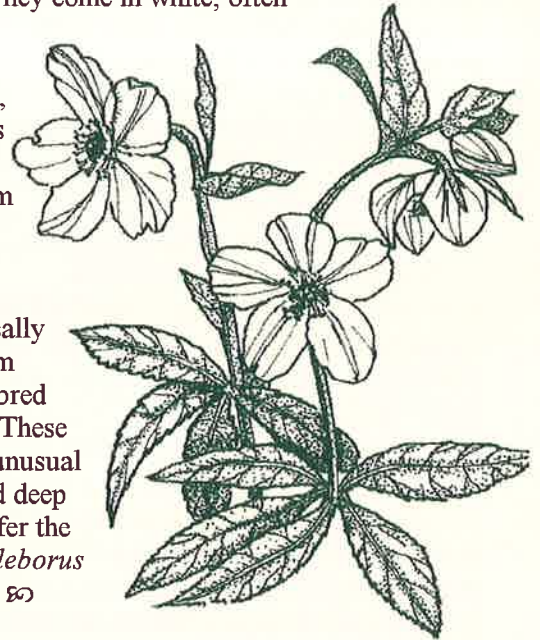
In the wild, Lenten Roses grow in soils with a lot of lime. But, as one of the lazier gardeners at the nursery, I will assure you that adding lime is not necessary for success. Once planted in decent soil, my plants are pretty much on their own — care consists of running the sprinkler during dry spells and random handfuls of fertilizer scattered around in the late fall.

The Lenten Rose gets about 24 inches tall and has underground stems that spread slowly to make a patch a

couple of feet across. In a few years, you will find seedlings coming up, which will add different colored flowers to the patch. *H. orientalis* begins to bloom here in early March on new leaves that push up through the old foliage. Normal winter weather doesn't bother them, although heavy snow or deep cold may nip some of the early growth. My patches of *H. orientalis* have been thriving for twelve years, flowering every year. They bloom for about 3 months.

H. niger, Christmas Rose, begins to bloom slightly earlier than Lenten Rose, but not at Christmas in our climate. They are shorter and slower growing than Lenten Rose. The flowers are larger and very thick, almost appearing to be carved from wax. They come in white, often fading to pink and eventually green.

For spring 1997, Behnke Nurseries is growing a special group of plants from plantsman Barry Glick. Barry assembled a large number of dramatically flowered plants from England and cross-bred them for seedlings. These parent flowers are unusual spotted bicolors and deep purples. We will offer the new hybrids as *Helleborus orientalis* "Select." ☺



What's got his dander up? See pg. 3



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