ESSEX ORCHID SOCIETY

Growing together, sharing knowledge, inspiring passion

NOVEMBER NEWSLETTER 2026



Welcome To Our November Newsletter

November is here, and with winter approaching, it's time to make sure our orchids are ready for the colder months. With shorter days and less natural light, keeping an eye on temperatures, watering and air circulation becomes even more important.

Our October meeting was another enjoyable afternoon, with Zsuzsa Serer from Spicesotic sharing her knowledge of orchids in flower and their care. Members brought along some lovely blooms, and the plant sales proved popular once again.

In this edition, Alex Koper introduces us to the fascinating miniature world of Lepanthes, while our resident hardy orchid specialist, shares their tips for growing hardy orchids in late autumn. We also meet another Society member and consider whether holding occasional orchid events in different locations could help us reach a wider audience.

And yes, we know it's a little early, but we've included some Christmas gift ideas for orchid lovers! There's also our usual round-up of orchid news and discoveries. We hope you enjoy this edition and look forward to seeing you at our November meeting.

The Essex Orchid Society Committee

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NEXT MEETING

Saturday 14th November 2026

Orchid Pests And Diseases by Diana Petrokaite

Doors open 1:30pm
Meeting 2:00pm - 4:00pm

South Green Memorial Hall,
Billericay, CM11 2PR

Highlights From Our October Meeting

Our October meeting was another enjoyable afternoon for the Essex Orchid Society, with a good turnout of members and visitors coming together to share their enthusiasm for orchids.

We were delighted to welcome Zsuzsa Serer from Spicesotic, who gave an interesting and informative presentation on “Plants in Flower in the Nursery and Their Care.” Zsuzsa shared her knowledge and experience, offering useful insights into the care and cultivation of a wonderful variety of orchids.

There was certainly no shortage of beautiful blooms on display, with members bringing along some lovely orchids for everyone to admire. From delicate flowers to striking, colourful specimens, the displays provided plenty of interest and conversation throughout the afternoon. A selection of photographs from the meeting captures just some of these wonderful plants.

The plant sales were another highlight, with an excellent selection of orchids available to purchase. They certainly went down a treat, with members taking the opportunity to add a few more plants to their collections!

A big thank you to Zsuzsa, everyone who brought along their flowering orchids, and all those who attended and helped make the afternoon such a success. We look forward to seeing everyone again at our November meeting.



The show winner exhibited by Mary Ma



A selection of flowers on display









Genus Spotlight: Lepanthes







Lepanthes expansa is one of my absolute favourite species. It is a wonderful mini-miniature species from the Esmeraldas province in Ecuador. Found at elevations of 750 to 800m it's a warm growing epiphyte.

The flowers are small in absolute terms, perhaps only 4mm long, but relatively large compared to the leaves they sit upon. They have bright purple petals which are spread out wide, giving the plant its name "expansa", and contrast beautifully with the creamy white sepals. The flowers are so small that you can't see the majority of the detail with the naked eye. With some magnification you can see the blades of the lip are covered in tiny hairs!

While not the first plant of this species I've grown, I acquired this particular specimen from Tropiscape Orchids in Belgium in 2025, along with another plant, and, despite it being noted as a warm grower, I grow it cool-intermediate with maximum daytime temperatures of 24c and nighttime temperatures of 16c. It clearly appreciates the temperatures as it's grown well for me, with much taller growth and is almost constantly in flower. I grow it in Area 51 where it receives a daily morning fog bath along with constant high humidity, medium bright light and brisk air movement allows it to dry somewhat between waterings. This one flowers better than its sister, which grows well in a more shady place, but I think they must appreciate a decent amount of light to maximise flowering.

Feeding is the same as all my other plants - a weak kelp-based fertiliser every week at 20% of the recommended concentration with 1ml of Calmag per 5l of RO water once a month. I also water with TNC Mycorr Hydro beneficial bacteria solution once every couple of months.

By Alex Koper

Meet Our Member: Ramesh Rajah



How did your interest in orchids begin?
My interest in orchids came from my father, who grew them for over 40 years in Malaysia. I grew up surrounded by his collection, although I didn't start growing orchids seriously until much later. I began buying reduced orchids from supermarkets and garden centres, usually plants that had finished flowering. I enjoyed bringing them back to life and getting them to flower again. A few rescued plants gradually turned into a much bigger collection. I suppose I've followed in my father's footsteps, although on a smaller scale!

How many orchids do you currently grow?
Around 100, although that changes depending on how many I've bought or managed to lose! I grow Cattleyas, Dendrobiums, Oncidiums, Coelogynes and a few other genera, including both species and hybrids. I'm always tempted by something unusual.

Which orchid genus is your favourite?
Definitely Cattleya. I love their large, colourful and often fragrant flowers. It's always exciting when one blooms after months of waiting. I also enjoy Dendrobiums, particularly those with unusual flowers, but Cattleya will always be my favourite.



Dendrobium Ramesh Rajah

Is there one orchid in your collection with a special story?
It has to be Dendrobium Ramesh Rajah, a hybrid my father named after me. It's a cross between Dendrobium Thai Maree and Dendrobium Fire Coral. Having an orchid named after me by my father makes it particularly special.

Where do you grow your orchids?
Most are in my small 8 × 5 ft double-glazed greenhouse, heated to around 14°C in winter. I use fans, ventilation and a humidifier to manage the conditions.
Space is my biggest problem. With around 100 plants, I'm forever rearranging things to squeeze another one in! Summer is also challenging when temperatures rise above 30°C, particularly balancing light, shading and ventilation.







Meet Our Member: Ramesh Rajah

What has been your biggest success as an orchid grower?
There's no single achievement. I get the most satisfaction from seeing an orchid flower, especially one that's struggled or hasn't bloomed for years. Watching a rescued plant recover, produce new roots and eventually flower is particularly rewarding.

What has been your biggest challenge?
Keeping my father's orchid-growing legacy going. He created over 25 hybrids named after his children and grandchildren, and I'm trying to keep as many growing as possible.
It's not easy with the different growing conditions here compared with Malaysia, but these plants mean a lot to me, and I'd love future generations of our family to enjoy them.

What's the best orchid-growing advice you've received?
I've received lots of useful advice since joining the Essex Orchid Society. One thing that stuck with me was Mary Ma's advice about how much light orchids need. It made me realise some weren't getting enough, so I've been rethinking my shading and where I position them.

Is there an orchid you still dream of owning?
There's always another Cattleya on my wish list! I'd also love a Paphiopedilum rothschildianum, although I've never had much success growing Paphiopedilums







Is there one growing tip you'd share?
Good air movement, especially in a greenhouse. Having experienced fungal diseases in the past, I've learnt how important it is to keep air circulating around the plants.

Quick Fire Questions
Favourite orchid: Cattleya, especially fragrant, large-flowered varieties.
Most rewarding genus: Cattleya.
Most difficult genus: Zygopetalum.
Tea or coffee in the greenhouse: Coffee.
Early morning or evening watering: Early morning.
One orchid book you'd recommend: Orchids of Asia by Teoh Eng Soon



What keeps you passionate about orchids after all these years?
More than anything, keeping my father's legacy going. I'd love to preserve as many of his hybrids as possible for future generations. I'm also writing a book about his years growing orchids and the hybrids he created.
I still get excited when an orchid flowers, and there's always something new to learn. But it's the family connection that makes the hobby particularly special to me.

Growing Hardy Orchids - Practical Notes

It is always exciting in the greenhouse at this time of the year to see the Mediterranean orchids starting to appear. They spent the summer as dry tubers packed in a lunchbox and kept in a cupboard and were then potted up in late August in very gritty compost.

One of the first to appear is always Orchis italica, Naked Man Orchid with beautifully spotted leaves.



The clay pots are kept in a sand plunge with soil warming cables beneath set at 5°C just enough to stop the pots and sand freezing. I only water the sand between the pots and with the grit top dressing to keep their necks dry I hopefully avoid rotting of the tubers.



Summer species like Dactylorhiza and Epipactis are dying down now. If they are looking healthy and well arranged in their pot I don't repot but instead push leaves of bramble and comfrey down into the compost around the edges of the pot. An old butter knife is good for this. As the compost remains damp throughout the year the leaves decay and provide good, natural fertilizer.

If you have a patch of unimproved grassland that was mown short after the summer now is an ideal time to go looking for Bee Orchid, Ophrys apifera rosettes. The leaves are silvery and without veins, unlike Plantain which is also likely to be making rosettes in the short grass. You may want to put in a marker so that when the grass grows high again the spring you will hopefully see the orchid flower.



Our Resident Hardy Orchid Specialist

Location, Location, Location

Have you ever wondered how many people across Essex have never seen a beautiful orchid display or even know that our Society exists? With so many wonderful orchids being grown by our members, wouldn't it be great to share them with a wider audience? That's why we're exploring the idea of holding occasional orchid shows, displays and plant sales in different locations. Our regular monthly meetings at South Green Memorial Hall in Billericay would continue as usual. These would simply be additional events to help more people discover orchids and our Society.

So, does location really matter? Choosing a venue involves more than finding enough space. We need to consider parking, public transport, accessibility and whether it will attract visitors. Somewhere that works well for our members may not be ideal for a public event. A garden centre, town centre or community venue, for example, might attract people who wouldn't normally visit an orchid show.

One thing I really enjoy about our monthly meetings is seeing the amazing orchids members bring along. The variety and quality of the blooms never fail to impress, reflecting the care that goes into growing them. It would be lovely if more people could enjoy these beautiful plants, rather than just those attending our meetings. After all, what better way to spark an interest in orchids than seeing them in flower?

We also need to think about who we want to attract. Experienced growers will often travel some distance to a good show, especially if there are plants to buy. But someone new to orchids might prefer an event that's nearby and easy to reach. Holding occasional events across Essex could introduce the Society to people who may not even know we exist.



Of course, there are practical things to consider too. Venue hire costs, space for displays, publicity and having enough members willing to help are all important. We would also want visitors to have something to enjoy beyond looking at the flowers, perhaps some growing advice, demonstrations or plants for sale.

Ultimately, it's about getting more people interested in orchids and hopefully encouraging some of them to join us. We have a friendly Society with members who have a wealth of knowledge and experience to share. It would be good to introduce that to a wider audience while continuing to enjoy our regular meetings as we do now.

These are just ideas at this stage, and we'd really like to hear what members think. Do you know somewhere in Essex that might be suitable for an orchid event? Would you be interested in helping out? Please share your thoughts and suggestions. It would be great to see what we could do together.

The Editor

Christmas Gift Guide for the Orchid Addict



Something for every orchid lover, from little stockings fillers to something a bit special.

Christmas shopping can be difficult enough at the best of times. Trying to find something for someone who has a particular hobby can be even harder, especially when that hobby happens to be orchids!

What do you buy someone who already has shelves full of plants, cupboards full of growing supplies and still insists there's room for just one more orchid? Of course, the obvious answer is another orchid, but unless you know exactly what they're looking for, that can be a risky choice.

So, we've put together a few gift ideas to help. Whether you're looking for a present for an orchid-loving friend, dropping hints to the family or simply treating yourself, hopefully there's something here to tempt you.

A gift for every budget

All of these suggestions are available from UK suppliers and make great presents for orchid enthusiasts.

Stocking Fillers – Under £15

Little gifts with a big orchid appeal



Decorative Brass Plant Animals
£6.75
A quirky little addition to perch on leaves or pots. A fun stocking filler for any orchid lover.
Grow Urban



Kew Pocketbooks: Orchids
£9.99
A beautifully illustrated guide celebrating the variety and beauty of orchids.
Kew Shop



Orchid Calendar 2027
£6.99
Twelve months of beautiful orchids to enjoy all year round. A simple but thoughtful present.
Various UK suppliers



Botanical Notebook
£9.99
Perfect for recording flowering dates, repotting and growing notes.
Various UK suppliers

Thoughtful Gifts – £15 to £30

Practical and attractive gifts for everyday growing



Niwaki Garden Snips
£18.00
A quality pair of snips for trimming spent flower spikes and general plant maintenance. Built to last.
Grow Urban



Foldable Potting Mat
£16.99
Ideal for repotting orchids indoors without covering the kitchen table in bark and mess.
RHS Plants



Orchid Jigsaw Puzzle
£20.00
A 1,000-piece puzzle featuring a stunning selection of orchids. Perfect for quieter winter days.
Kew Shop



Indoor Watering Can
£22.99 – £28.50
A stylish and practical watering can, ideal for smaller orchid collections. A lovely gift for any orchid lover.
RHS Plants / Kew Shop

Christmas Gift Guide for the Orchid Addict



Useful gifts to support a thriving orchid collection, from growing accessories to beautiful gifts and experiences.

Gifts for the Keen Grower – £25 to £60

Practical gifts to support a thriving orchid collection



9. Haws Metal Plant Mister
£29.95 (approx)
A beautifully made traditional mister. A lovely accessory for any orchid collection.
Grow Urban



10. Digital Thermometer and Hygrometer
£15.99 – £34.99
Helps you keep an eye on temperature and humidity for healthier plants.
Amazon / RHS Plants



11. Illuminated Magnifying Loupe
£12.99 – £24.99
Perfect for examining tiny flowers or checking for unwelcome pests.
Amazon / C. Baker Tools



12. Telescopic LED Grow Lamp
£18.99 – £39.99
A useful addition for windowsill orchids, especially during the darker months.
RHS Plants / Amazon

For the Serious Orchid Addict – £30 and Above

Something a bit more special



13. Glass Terrarium
£29.99 – £79.99
A beautiful way to display miniature orchids, particularly those that enjoy higher humidity.
Not On The High Street / Etsy UK



14. Specialist Orchid Books
£24.99 – £60.00
There's always something new to learn. Choose from Cattleyas, Paphiopedilums, miniature orchids or orchid species.
NHBS / Crowood Press



15. Botanical Orchid Artwork
From £15.00
Beautiful orchid illustrations make a thoughtful gift and look lovely at home.
Etsy UK / Art UK Shop



16. Orchid-Themed Jewellery
From £25.00
A more personal gift for someone who loves orchids. Earrings, pendants and brooches are available from a range of UK suppliers.
Etsy UK / Not On The High Street



17. Orchid Nursery Gift Voucher
Choose your budget
Perhaps the safest choice of all! Let them choose the orchid they've had their eye on. Gift vouchers are available from a range of UK orchid nurseries.
Burnham Nurseries / Laurence Hobbs Orchids



18. Orchid Nursery Experience
From £50.00
Give an experience rather than another item. A behind-the-scenes nursery visit is a fantastic gift for any orchid lover.
Burnham Nurseries



And finally...

If you're buying for an orchid enthusiast, remember that it's not always about spending a lot of money. Sometimes a small, thoughtful gift can be just as welcome as something expensive. And if you're still struggling to find the perfect present, there's always one final option. Ask an orchid addict what they really want for Christmas. Chances are, the answer will be... *just one more orchid!*

Prices were correct at the time of research in October 2026 and may be subject to change. Products are suggestions only and are not endorsed by the Essex Orchid Society. Images are for illustrative purposes only and may differ from the actual products available.

The Monthly Triple Dose / What's Coming Up

Three Orchid News That You Need To Know

A New Orchid Species from Palau Named After a Wizard's Hat

Benjamin Crain, a biologist at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls, discovered Agrostophyllum lkou on Babeldaob Island in Palau. First spotted in 2018, the plant was mostly dead, but he rediscovered it in 2023 with flowers, fruit and seeds. Its identity was confirmed with help from an orchid expert at Kew. The name comes from the Palauan word for "hat", inspired by a cone-shaped flower structure resembling a wizard's hat. With fewer than 50 mature plants recorded, the species is critically endangered. Researchers are collecting seeds and associated fungi to support future reintroduction efforts.

Orchids Are Britain's Most Baffling Houseplant

Orchids have officially been named Britain's most baffling houseplant. According to a September 2026 analysis by Devon-based nursery Houseplant.co.uk, orchid care inquiries outnumbered other houseplant questions on Google by roughly 25 times. Of over half a million UK plant-related searches between September 2025 and September 2026, more than 285,000 were from people trying to keep an orchid alive.
The surge in searches is closely linked to "orchid gifting". Recipients often receive orchids as elegant presents but worry about killing an expensive-looking plant, leading to spikes in searches after major gifting occasions.
"How to look after orchids" dominates the searches, outperforming other houseplant care questions by 25 to 1.

Two New Lepanthes Species from Western Ecuador—One Already Critically Endangered

On 17 September, researchers from Ecuador's Instituto Nacional de Biodiversidad (INABIO) published two new miniature Lepanthes species in Phytotaxa.

- Lepanthes berthana was discovered near Cascadas de Manuel in El Oro province. Known from one population, it is Critically Endangered (CR), threatened by banana and cacao plantations and mining.
- Lepanthes mongei grows in scattered forests in the Intag Valley, Imbabura province. This tiny orchid (around 7 cm) has patterned young leaves, reddish-purple leaf undersides and red, yellow and magenta flowers. It is classified as Endangered (EN).

The paper also reports a new record for Lepanthes chrysokallos. These discoveries highlight western Ecuador's orchid diversity and the growing threat of habitat loss.

Next Presentation

Saturday 14th November 2026



Orchid Pests And Diseases

Diana Petrokaite

Diana will help us understand some of the common problems that affect our orchids and how best to deal with them. Whether you're new to orchid growing or have been growing for years, there's always something useful to learn, so do come along!

Orchid Events Calendar

Looking for orchid shows, talks, and events near and far? Check out Pumpkin Beth's Orchid Events page for an up-to-date list:

www.pumpkinbeth.com/events

Would You Join a Society WhatsApp Group?

We have now started an Essex Orchid Society WhatsApp group to help members keep in touch between meetings. It's an informal way to share orchid photos, growing tips, news and advice.
The group won't replace our emails or newsletter, and joining is entirely optional. If you'd like to join, please let your Promotion Officer know.

What's Coming Up?

In Our Winter Special, we'll be looking at:

- Confessions of an Orchid Addict: Just One More Plant!
- Are We Losing the Old Orchids?
- The Great Winter Watering Argument
- and more.....

Looking Ahead to 2027/28

We're starting to plan our speaker programme for 2027/28 and would welcome your ideas. Is there a topic you'd like to learn more about or a speaker you'd like us to invite? Please share your suggestions with the Committee to help us put together an interesting and varied programme.