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WEEKEND BREAK



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HONORING THE ORCHID

A SPOT OF COLOR AMONG THE GRAY



The Sunset
Empire Orchid
Society meets
in Astoria
every month.

By PATTY HARDIN

Orchids. Sometimes just hearing the word is enough to strike panic.

This doesn't have to be the case, however. There are several orchids that are easy to grow. Sure, orchids have different care requirements than most plants, but this difference is not a reason to panic.

I was among those people afraid to try growing orchids. I've had two orchids in the past, and neither one survived. Why?

My intentions were good, but I didn't know what I was doing.

Fortunately, I discovered the Sunset Empire Orchid Society. The group meets the second Sunday of every month at the First Lutheran Church in Astoria from 2 to 4 p.m. Several people there were more than willing to answer my questions about watering, lighting requirements and placement of orchids in my home.

A flood of mistakes

Since I am definitely a beginning orchid grower, I wanted to know what the most common mistake beginners make with their orchids.

"Like with so many plants, people think an orchid is tropical and needs to be watered a lot," said Phyllis Taylor, co-secretary of the orchid society said. "We overwater orchids in pots so they sit in constant puddles and rot."

Kristofer Heckenberg, the orchid society's president, echoed Taylor without hesitation when asked what the biggest mistake new orchid growers make.

"Overwatering," he said. "Pick the pot up. If the pot is heavy, the orchid doesn't need water. If the pot is light, it does."

Lori Durheim, a long-time orchid society member, started growing orchids in 1986.

"Watering in the morning is good," she said. "Especially in the winter-time, you don't want the orchids wet overnight. Some orchids don't want to be heavily watered in the winter-time."

Avoid the hot seat

When you bring an orchid home, you need to find a place for it. You might think a sunny window is best. All plants love sun, right?

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An orchid from Lori Durheim's collection.