

# The **Brooksider**

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## **PRESIDENT'S LETTER**

Dear Friends,

On a recent weekend, I took a stroll through Brookside Gardens and admired the snowdrops, aconites, flowering apricot, winter jasmine, and daffodils. Wait a minute!! That was the last weekend in January! I was joined by many visitors who were also enjoying the gardens and the signs of a surprisingly early spring. Another sign of spring is the FOBG Orchid Show & Sale, which will be held March 17 and 18 in the Visitors Center. I do hope you will plan on attending and seeing these magnificent plants. Perhaps you'll buy an orchid to begin or add to your collection. Remember that each purchase contributes to our support of Brookside. Further details can be found in the article in this issue.



Another way to help us support Brookside is with Brent and Becky's Bulbs through their "Bloomin' Bucks" program. Please send for their catalog – you'll really enjoy planning your garden update as you look at their spring, summer, and fall bulbs. When you fill out your form, please remember the following: If you use Brent and Becky's order form, you need to write on your form "Bloomin' Bucks Program" and credit "Friends of Brookside Gardens." For those who phone in an order, you need to state that you are participating in the "Bloomin' Bucks Program" and credit "Friends of Brookside Gardens" as well. For those who order electronically, you will go through [www.bloominbucks.com](http://www.bloominbucks.com) first and then credit "Friends of Brookside Gardens." We receive a percentage on every order, and all the money goes to underwrite programs for Brookside.

I hope to see many of you at the Orchid Show & Sale. I will be working at the checkout table. Please come by and say hello! I'd really like to hear how you envision FOBG in the future and learn your ideas on ways you can help us grow.

*Barbara*

# Spring Floral Display in the Conservatories



*DON'T MISS THE*  
***FOBG ANNUAL ORCHID SHOW & SALE***

*Two Days Only!!*

*Saturday, March 17, 10AM to 4PM*

*Sunday, March 18, 10AM to 3PM*

*Brookside Visitors Center Auditorium*

**ORCHID CELEBRATION FOR ENTHUSIASTS & NOVICES**

This spring, our incredibly popular Orchid Show & Sale will feature exhibits of breath-taking flowers. You'll also see a broad array of familiar and not so familiar orchids to buy for your own collection – or to get a new collection off to a strong start. In addition, orchid experts will be on hand to give advice and answer questions. At the close of the show, take your chances on a raffle / drawing for one of these gorgeous plants.

Have you ever tried growing an orchid? In spite of their exotic beauty and popularity with serious enthusiasts, many orchids can indeed be grown in your home under average conditions of temperature, humidity, and light. This includes *phalaenopsis* and *cattleya*. The FOBG Orchid Show & Sale is intended for beginners who'd like to learn to grow orchids, as well as for experienced growers. On both days of the event, vendors will be happy to give you details on cultivation requirements and show you a full range of orchid growing supplies to make your endeavor successful.

If you're a dedicated orchid collector, you'll be able to find new treasures amongst well known favorites. In case some of your own orchids need repotting, bring them in to Clive Atyeo, who supervises orchids at the US Botanic Gardens. For a small fee, he'll repot your gems. He'll also be demonstrating orchid potting techniques that you can practice at home.

Joining FOBG for this event is the Brookside Gardens Orchid Club, an affiliated club of the American Orchid Society. Members will exhibit highlights of their stunning collections and also present classes for orchid novices.

Come celebrate the beauty and variety of these most popular flowers! Join us on March 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> for FOBG's annual Orchid Show & Sale. Admission to the orchid festival is free. And remember: Proceeds from sales and orchid clinic fees will help support Brookside Gardens' plantings and programs.

*See you there!*

## Orchid Mania



*Did you know that the orchid family is probably the largest family of flowering plants, with perhaps 25,000-30,000 species worldwide? Orchids come in every color of the rainbow, with an infinite number of intermediate shades. They grow in nearly every habitat – from tropical cloud forests to seashore scrub, and from the tundra to semi-desert environments. The shape of the blossoms can be as diverse as the colors – including forms like slippers, buckets, and helmets, not to mention insects. Even the scents of orchids span a huge range, from faintly pleasant to overpoweringly sweet. Certain varieties smell so foul that they could empty a room full of people in just a few minutes.*

## FOBG FOUNDER HONORED BY NEW ORCHID

A few days ago, Joan O'Rourke got a package in the mail with a set of beautiful note cards. They showed a splendid orchid in an elegant shade of pure lavender. When she looked more closely, Joan was stunned to see that this new orchid had been named for her: *Rhyncholaeliocattleya* Dubious George 'Joan O'Rourke.' (More about that name later!)

As many of you know, Joan is the founder of the Friends of Brookside Gardens and served multiple terms as president. She is also the perennial chairman of our annual plant sale and is well known for her popular Brookside workshops. Joe Francis, a private orchid grower in Virginia for over three decades, wanted to honor Joan for her years of dedication to Brookside, and so, he named his latest award-winner for her. The name – and the orchid itself – went through a rigorous process to become official.

As Joe explains it, "*Rhyncholaeliocattleya*" is the *genus*. The name indicates a hybrid created from only two parent *genera* – *Rhyncholaelia* and *Cattleya*. The hybrids in this category include some of the most spectacular of the cultivated orchids. "Dubious George" is the *grex*, the designation given to a hybrid. And "Joan O'Rourke" is the name now given to the clone. When "Dubious George" was bred and developed, the grower was able to keep one parent-orchid's flatness, a highly attractive characteristic in orchid flowers. Joe further explains that he did not create "Dubious George"; he grew it from a seedling and then beat all his orchid-growing competitors in getting the clone recognized and awarded by the American Orchid Society.



Photograph courtesy of James Ossen

That process takes time. Joe acquired "Dubious George" about six years ago but had to nurture it and wait until it first flowered. It looked successful, but he couldn't enter it for judging until it bloomed a second time, which was 2011. The second flowering was perfect! On December 3, Joe took it to the monthly judging event of the national capital chapter of the American Orchid Society. The judging team researched the lineage of the orchid – parents and grandparents – then examined and measured the plant and evaluated it against a long list of attributes. The new orchid is required to be superior to its parents.

Joe learned of his orchid's recognition at the competition. The orchid was awarded the "Highly Commended Certificate," which is attached to this clone. Joe does not plan to go through the complicated reproduction procedure to commercialize the clone, but he will produce divisions of his award-winner as the plant continues to grow. With orchids as with people, there's only one Joan O'Rourke.

## **FOBG BOARD SEEKS THREE NEW MEMBERS**

*FOBG members help support Brookside by contributing membership dues. But sometimes we need more than funding. The Board is now looking for a few new members to join its ranks, offering their ideas, expertise, and a bit of time. New Board members take office on April 1, 2012 and serve a 2-year term.*

*As a Board member, you would be involved in the planning and manning of our annual events: the plant sale, the orchid show and sale, the holiday greens sale, and our annual meeting, as well as special events such as the "garden party" in conjunction with Behnke's Nursery. You would also participate in creating new events, such as a silent auction, and in ongoing activities such as marketing and membership development. Our monthly meetings, on the afternoon of the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday, always offer spirited discussion and an open exchange of ideas.*

*Please consider joining us and contributing your creativity and time in support of FOBG and Brookside Gardens. If you're interested or if you'd like more information, please contact Taffy Turner at 301-681-9133 or [taffyt@verizon.net](mailto:taffyt@verizon.net)*

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**Suggestions? Ideas? Let us know!**

### **Friends of Brookside Gardens Inc. Board of Directors**

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