

Greetings Fellow Calochortus Fanciers!

This is the first edition of what I hope will be a permanent newsletter. Our focus will be on both botany and horticulture, but will emphasize the latter. The botanical studies of these plants are both more advanced than the horticultural studies, and less perspicuous to non-botanists. While there is a body of literature on growing the plants, if one digs deeply enough, the horticultural knowledge of calochorti is limited. There have been few professional studies of germination, watering, soil and potting media, pH, and the like.

One of the focuses of this newsletter will be to present, in historical order, the horticultural information on the plants, beginning with Carl Purdy at the beginning of the century. A further, important series will be the sharing of information from members on their successes (and failures) in growing these plants. Letters from members are strongly encouraged, whether your success has been with one species or many.

Another focus will be publicity. I recently talked with the president of the San Luis Obispo chapter of the Cal. Native Plant Society, seeking a source of seed for Calochortus Obispoensis. She had never heard of calochorti at all, much less the rare local variant. A genus which at one time is reputed to have covered the state with its unique beauty is now confined to a few shrinking habitats, squeezed between cattle and developers. Despite its suitability for California landscapes, it is known to few, and grown by fewer still. Partly this is a result of the limited horticultural knowledge of the plants, and the resultant reputation for difficulty of the genus. Bringing together the cumulative cultural knowledge of the plants in one forum, as well as increasing it with member advice, will help to offset these tendencies.

Another project involving publicity is to harass the government into doing more to conserve wild stands. Many of these are threatened by development, grazing, etc. One species is presumed extinct. In truth, the State Dep't. of Fish and Game has been quite cooperative with CNPS, has listed three Calochorti as rare and endangered, and placed others on a "watch list." But its list of rare and endangered species is incomplete. Here, field observations of members for the F & G "resource diversity data base" would be useful. More about this in future letters.

Thirdly, members are encouraged to notify potential new members of

our endeavors. There must be other calochortus lovers out there, judging by seed sales. Their input would be most welcome.

Each issue will include a column which examines a particular species in detail, including the history of its botanical differentiation. We will also discuss variations which have been ranked as species by some botanists, and their evidence. Finally, new species will be covered as they become discovered.

As advisors, we will have eminent horticulturalists well-known to calochortus fanciers. Mr. Stan Farwig and Mr. Vic Girard have grown a wide variety of Calochortus spp. They have also presented slide shows publicizing the plants, contributed articles on growing the plants to journals, and written of the discovery of new species.

Mr. Chas. Baccus is a successful commercial grower who offers 10-20 species of Calochortus bulbs each year. Without his efforts and expertise many of us would have had to start from scratch.

From time to time we will tap the expertise of these gentlemen concerning the growth and care of the species. Questions from members are encouraged.

Our guiding philosophy will be that Calochorti are one of the most beautiful group of plants in North America, well worth both growing and conserving in the wild. The range of these plants has been reduced, public knowledge of them is limited, and horticultural information of them inaccessible or just unavailable. It is easier to get tulips from Holland than many Mariposas from our own states. The genus deserves an organization devoted to their conservation, appreciation and to accumulating and publicizing information about them.

With this philosophy, we hereby establish the American Calochortus Society. We are asking for \$2. per year for a subscription, which will cover mailing and copying costs for 4 issues per year. A collection of all issues will form a calochortus reference library, as I hope to cover practically everything ever written in this century on the genus. Also: A SUBSCRIPTION WILL CONSTITUTE MEMBERSHIP IN THE CALOCHORTUS SOCIETY. There will be no additional fees for membership, only the newsletter subscription.

Again, we would encourage you to publicize our formation to others you may know who are interested in Calochorti, or other horticultural societies to which you may belong. Thank you each for joining what I hope will be a mutual endeavor. Best wishes until October.

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