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# World of color

## Orchids take over World of Energy for annual show



PHOTOS BY CAITLIN HERRINGTON | THE JOURNAL

**Blue Ridge Orchid Society president Julie Voss gives a demonstration on repotting orchids at the annual show hosted at the World of Energy. The society has hosted the show at the World of Energy for nine years and sees hundreds of people at the free event.**

BY CAITLIN HERRINGTON

THE JOURNAL

SENECA — The Blue Ridge Orchid Society and Duke Energy's World of Energy have teamed up again for an annual orchid show that brings some vivid color to the usually dreary days of February.

Former Blue Ridge Orchid Society president Myrtle Diefendorf said the display not only brings orchid lovers, but people who have seen the flowers in stores and have a little curiosity about the plants.

"I think everybody loves flowers," she said. "And we do it in February, which we have beautiful weather now, but that isn't usually the case this time of year."

World of Energy communications consultant Mikayla Kreuzberger said more than 100 people stopped by the first day to look at the plants, learn about re-potting, ask questions of society members and maybe purchase a flower of their own.

"We see several hundred people over two or three days," Kreuzberger said. "Duke Energy is proud to host this free event for such a supportive community. There are plenty of avid orchid growers in this area who make an effort every year to attend."

One of the big draws is grower and hybridizer



Members of the Blue Ridge Orchid Society bring their own plants to form a vibrant display at the World of Energy.

Mark Reinke, who lives in Mountain Rest and spends his days cultivating orchids of all kinds. While one species is common in grocery stores, Reinke brings a new flower to the table almost every year.

"Mark is an internationally known grower, and we're so fortunate to have him nearby," Diefendorf said. "He's got stuff you'll never see anywhere else."

Reinke, who owns Marble Branch Farms, will be selling orchids of all varieties that he has grown from seeds. It's a tall order, but a task he's been at for more than 50 years now.

"We moved to Florida when I was 11, and a couple of doors away, there was a middle-aged woman who had a big orchid collection," Reinke said. "She hired me for \$2 an hour to help her out, and that's how I got my start."

He has been creating hybrids and growing orchids full time since 2000, when he sold his business in Atlanta to try to make a living off the dynamic flower.

"You don't always get perfect results," he said. "Every single one is different. Genetics can be pretty complicated. There are some orchids that have 19 or 20 species in their background, and their family tree may go in to the late 1800s."

Current president Julie Voss loves the growing popularity of orchids, and hopes the orchid show will help the society's membership grow a bit as well.

"I think the predominance and ease of buying them at the large-box stores now, and the fact that they last longer than cut flowers, has made them more popular," Voss said.

"I mean, I used to get roses, but don't get me roses that will last a week — get me an orchid that will last a month."

While the grocery store variety is still colorful and likely to bloom once or twice a year, Voss said to be careful with watering them.

"The vast majority of orchids are killed by novices by overwatering," she said. "And the ice thing doesn't really work. These plants grow in the tropics and aren't used to temperatures under 60 degrees, no less freezing."

Diefendorf advised potential purchasers to check the roots for green — brown, rotting roots have likely been overwatered and won't easily recover.

The show will be open to the public from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. today and noon-4 p.m. Saturday.

Duke Energy's World of Energy is located at 7812 Rochester Highway in Seneca. The World of Energy is an interactive education center that focuses on informing the public about energy production and the environment.

All events and activities are free and open to the public. For more information, call (864) 873-4600 or visit [duke-energy.com/worldofenergy](http://duke-energy.com/worldofenergy).

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