

World of Energy welcomes

BY ANDREA KELLEY
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orchid show

SENECA—Wandering through a tangle of tropical flowers is the perfect antidote to the winter weather.

The Blue Ridge Orchid Society is holding its orchid show this weekend at Duke Energy's World of Energy, and society president Nancy Allen said the event will have more orchids than ever.

"We have two vendors selling orchids instead of one," she said. "Trace Elliot — he's a new member of ours — he's a young guy who is renting space in a greenhouse in Florida, so he goes back and forth to tend his orchids and he has some exotics, so it's very interesting."

Walhalla-based grower Mark Reinke of Marble Branch Farms will be making a repeat appearance as well.

"What we've tried to do with this show is feature some of those unusual varieties, even if they're not currently in bloom," Allen said. "We've provided a little tag with what the flower will look like once it does bloom. But at least you can see that plant that looks like something else is actually an orchid."

Former president Julie Voss will be giving demonstrations on how to repot orchids throughout the day, including instructions on how to safely handle and prune the plants.

The event is an open house where you can "come in, wander and leave whenever," Allen said, and anyone with a sick or struggling orchid can bring it in for help, too.

"If anybody is having any issues, we welcome that they can come in, there'll be somebody that can stop and talk to them, try to give them some assistance," Allen said.

Society members will be wearing fluorescent vests so visitors can easily spot them.

The vendors donated three orchids to raffle off as prizes as well.

"It's a very full show. It keeps people quite occupied," Allen said.

THEY REWARD ME

Allen herself wasn't much of an orchid devotee until she

moved from Florida five years ago.

"I didn't really grow orchids, they just kind of were there. I put them in my trees, and they took care of themselves," she explained. "When I moved here, I brought one orchid with me and promptly forgot to take care of it because I was used to it taking care of itself."

One of her neighbors was a member of the orchid society and encouraged Allen to come and get some help.

"They were wonderful, and I got hooked," she said. "I went from one sickly orchid to about 50 — in five years!"

Her orchids live outside in the

summer, and during the colder months, they're tucked inside with grow lights, fans and a humidifier.

"I have to take one day out of the week to take care of them, but that's OK," Allen said, laughing. "They reward me."

She likes most orchid varieties but is "still trying to discover" which is her favorite.

"I think when it's in bloom, that's my favorite," she said. "And then when some other variety's in bloom, that's my favorite."

A WORD OF ADVICE — NEVER ICE

If Allen could give first time

orchid people any advice, it would be "don't use ice cubes."

"When you buy a Phalaenopsis at your big-box stores, they have tags on them that say put in three ice cubes a week," she said. "If I could go around and remove all those tags, it will have made my day. That is the worst advice anybody can give for an orchid."

Orchids are tropical plants, so the ice shocks them and they will "eventually succumb," Allen explained.

So what should people do instead?

"If the media is dry, then run room temperature water through it and then give it a

little soak, like 10 minutes in a little cup of water and then done for the week," Allen said. "But never ice. Never ice."

She encouraged everyone to come out and enjoy the show, which is free and runs today from 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

"It's a great facility. It's a scenic spot. The orchids are just spectacular this year," Allen said. "Just go and see something pretty in these winter temperatures."

The event is set up in the World of Energy at 7812 Rochester Highway in Seneca.

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SPECIAL TO THE JOURNAL

Growers Mark Reinke and Trace Elliot will have orchids available to buy at the orchid show at the World of Energy today and Saturday. Elliot has space in a Florida greenhouse and brought some exotic species to the show.