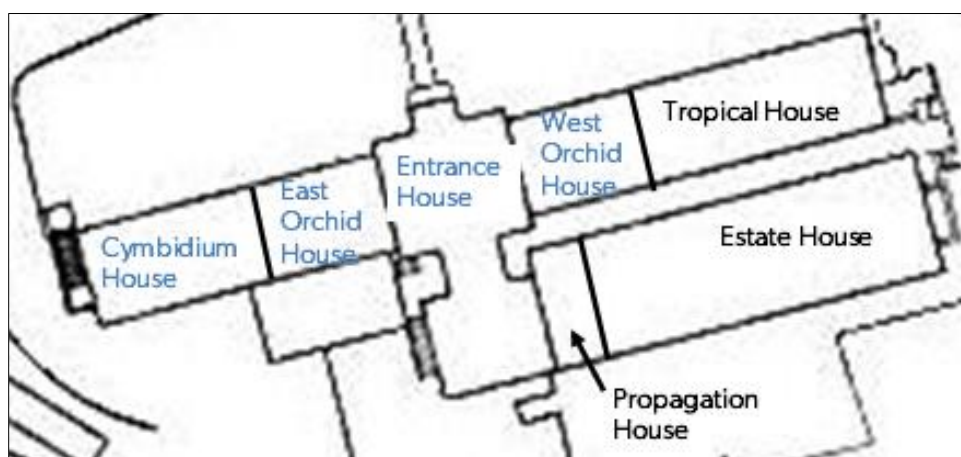


CELEBRATING ORCHIDS AT HILLWOOD

Jessica Bonilla, Director of Horticulture

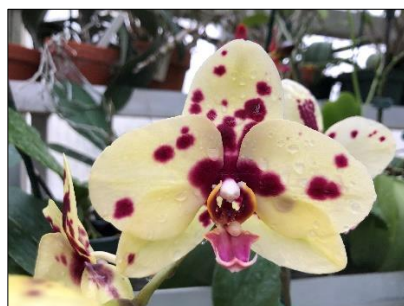
From displays of love in railroad cars to bridal arrangements, paintings and corsages, orchids were a special part of the life of Marjorie Merriweather Post. So much was her interest in these exotic looking blooms that she had the greenhouse enlarged to support a collection and employed a grower to care for it. Today, Hillwood's horticulture staff continues her legacy and love of orchids in the current greenhouse complex.

Four "houses" or greenhouse sections are dedicated to the two thousand plants retained in the orchid collection. Having these separate spaces allows the staff flexibility to provide different growing habitats. We consider the entrance and east orchid houses as warm growing spaces with temperatures not dropping below sixty degrees at night in the winter. The west orchid house is our intermediate space with temperatures not below the upper fifties. Finally is the cymbidium house, our coolest section, where temperatures can dip into the upper forties.



The blue names indicate the orchid houses in the greenhouse

Some of the most familiar orchids are warm growing. *Phalaenopsis* or moth orchids, commonly seen in grocery store floral departments, are warm growing. These orchids are great for beginners and can be found in a wide variety of colors just like those in Hillwood's collection. Cattleyas, favorites of Post, with exceptionally large blooms, are also warm growing. There are many other genera that are similar to cattleyas, which have all been interbred to produce an amazing variety of flowers. These are known collectively as the cattleya alliance. Many members of this alliance are represented in our collection. Other obvious, but lesser known orchids in this section are the Vandas. Vandas have long aerial roots that are not contained in pots. They are the clearest example of an epiphyte, which is a plant that derives its moisture and nutrients from the air and rainwater. Vandas are also among the most sun tolerant in the greenhouse whereas the *Phalaenopsis* need shade and are protected in the greenhouse behind shade cloth.



Phalaenopsis Sogo Yukidian
x Princess



Cattleya Casitas Spring
'Linden'



Vanda Memoria Katherine
McCartney

Orchids that like intermediate temperatures are the Paphiopedelums and Oncidiums. Paphiopedelums or slipper orchids have a very distinct lip that resembles a slipper. They are terrestrial orchids meaning that they root into the ground. When growing these slipper orchids, it is important to remember that they would grow naturally in chunky rainforest soil not soils we would associate with vegetable production here in the Mid-Atlantic. Hillwood uses a bark-based media. Oncidiums are similar to the cattleyas in that they are part of an alliance with other similar genera. These alliance members can sport a wide variety of flower forms from dancing ladies to those resembling spiders.



Paphiopedilum Nitens
'Sue'



Oncostele Catante 'Pacific Sunspots'- dancing lady



Brassia Rex- spider orchid

Cool growing orchids reside in the cymbidium house, which is named after the cymbidium orchids that reside there. Like many other orchids, cymbidiums have adapted to periods of irregular rainfall and use a pseudobulb to store water. Cymbidiums are also more likely to be found in the ground like the slipper orchids than in the treetops. Blooming depends both on a cool and dry period. Dendrobium is another diverse genus of orchids in the Hillwood collection. *Dendrobium nobile* prefers cool growing conditions and puts out multiple flower stems loaded with fragrant, waxy flowers. Andrew Bedenbaugh, our orchid and tropical specialist, recently entered Hillwood's Dendrobium Spring Bird 'Kurashiki' into the National Capital Orchid Society Show where it won first place in its group.



Cymbidium Lovely Moon
'Crescent'



Cymbidium pseudobulb



Dendrobium Merlin

Although orchid month and the peak of the orchid blooms occurs in March, the flowers are long lasting and display well into June. Please stop by and appreciate this annual marvel and the intricacies that goes into making it a reality.