

Creative Living

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Corinne Abatt editor/644-1100



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Rare plant business grows more exciting all the time

By Corinne Abatt
staff writer

The name of the West Bloomfield greenhouse which specializes in rare plants is almost as obscure as the items it carries — unless you are a Latin student or a card-carrying intellectual.

Then, you'd probably know right away that Preter Tellis means "beyond earth."

But, it suits the business, co-partnered by Sam DeFazio and Pat McKown, both of Troy, perfectly. In a friendly, open manner, they are ready, at the drop of a trowel, to talk plants and soils with a generous sprinkling of Latin names and fascinating historical tidbits.

They passed common geraniums and African violets years back and now have some 11,000 plants they've raised from seed, a total of 1,500 species including 300 species of orchids.

"Michigan is a real hotbed of orchid activity," said DeFazio, smilingly ignoring his pun.

ADMITTEDLY, he said, orchids have a mystique and many people assume they are difficult to grow, but this isn't always the case.

Preter Tellis has several species which do nicely as house plants — the white moth phalaenopsis (lots of blooms on a long stalk) and the philodendrons, related to the lady's slipper, among others. Orchids, McKown pointed out, are found in all parts of the world from pole to pole, even near the Arctic Circle.

"Some are beautifully scented, they will scent the whole house when in bloom. Vanilla comes from the seed pod of the orchid," he noted. And while on the subject of scent, DeFazio pulled on a leaf from a lemon geranium in the next aisle and held it out to be sampled. "That's what they use to make Lemon Pledge."

And sure enough, there was the fragrance now often associated with freshly polished wood.

Back to orchids, McKown said the largest diversification of orchids, expected, is in the rain forest, but he added, "Quite a few can be found in Michigan."

Among the hundreds of unusual plants which are in abundance at Preter Tellis, is an intriguing section of

lithops, appropriately labeled "living stones." These small, highly efficient solar collectors which look more like jade cabochons than living, growing plants, have been used by the Saudi Arabians as design prototypes for their large collectors.

THEIR resemblance to sculptural, abstract art forms, makes these succulents fascinating, particularly the ones with tiny new sprouts or blossoms — positive evidence they are alive and growing.

Of the same Lippittian proportion, but totally different in character were two other species, one, the delicate utricularia andersenii, with white flowers on thread-thin stems and the other, sinningia, an African-violet family relative whose full-size blooms dwarf the tiny fairy leaves.

Still the best-known of miniature plants may be those that are made as far as size is concerned. DeFazio and McKown have a large area of bonsai trees and plants which range from the dwarfed English Ivy in an easily affordable \$15 range to a \$1,000 75-year-old Chinese juniper. Between these two are a wide variety of bonsai plantings, from groves of trees in trays to the more traditional Japanese approach of using rock formations for the base.

On land north of Rochester, the partners have a nursery where they are raising about 1,000 trees for bonsai purposes.

Both work with the state of Michigan on propagation projects and both teach at Cranbrook. Their courses, starting the second week in October, are "Lilies and Lotusess" and "Plant Propagation."

THEY also work in a curatorial capacity with Dr. James Wells of Cranbrook on the maintenance of Maja Schjollin's wild flower garden.

DeFazio and McKown, both married, each with one son, have been working with plants for about 15 years, at first as a hobby and later as a business.

Their move to one section of the greenhouse complex that was, for many years, Johnson's Gardens, 7315 Drake Road, just north of 14 Mile, West Bloomfield, was a major one in many ways. They are now fully into retail sales. They have much more space than



Sam DeFazio (left) and Pat McKown like to tell visitors about the wonders of the thousands of plants they grow from seed. Many of

the orchid plants beside them are almost ready to bloom.

ever before and their plans for use of the space are very ambitious.

Planters, known for interior scaping, with prime specimens of large and small plants for interiors, occupies a large part of the space. The combination of the two has developed into a happy relationship. There's little or no duplication, but a great deal of mutual

admiration.

Preter Tellis didn't move in time to make it into the current phone book, but they can be reached by calling 661-1515.

Visitors will find DeFazio and McKown open and ready to talk about and sell their rare plants noon to 5 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday.



The unusual succulents pictured include the "living stone" in the center which is native to South Africa. A member of the daisy family, it has an attractive flower which bears a strong resemblance to its more common cousins.



The white flower, utricularia andersenii, is one of the many miniature plants that the partners carry.

Staff photos by Mindy Saunders

exhibitions

● HALSTED GALLERY

Friday, Sept. 30 — Photographs by Edward S. Curtis are some of the most memorable in documenting the way of life of the American Indian. Photographs and orations of Curtis's work will be on exhibit through November. There will also be a selection of North American Indian baskets. Hours are 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Wednesday-Saturday, 560 N. Woodward, Birmingham.

● SHELTON ROSS GALLERY

Saturday, Oct. 1 — Drawings and watercolors by George Gross. Included are 25 of his biting satires on life in Germany and two watercolors from his "Stuckmen" series. Hours are 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, 250 Martin, Birmingham.

● MEADOW BROOK ART GALLERY

Sunday, Oct. 3 — First two-person exhibition of Meadow Brook Invitational II with multi-media paintings by Diane Carr and Denise Corley. Reception to meet the artists, 2-5 p.m. Sunday. Hours are 1-5 p.m. Tuesday-Friday, 2-5:30 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, Oakland University, Rochester.

● MULLALLY MATISSE GALLERIES

Sunday, Oct. 3 — The gallery's crafts invitational is always a highlight of the fall season. This time 37 artist-craft people from throughout the country are participating. And the unusual wares include large wooden flowers by Larry Brigg, bath capes by Iva Kneel, baskets by Maxine Kirmeter, Jane Sauer,

Rox Shirley and Jan Yastko along with pitted ceramics, porcelains, functional stoneware, glass and dolls. Hours are 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, 1025 Birmingham.

● ALLEY ARTS & ANTIQUES

Mark Chatterly is the artist featured in a show titled, "On the Wall, Off the Wall and Fountain." Hours are 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., 32800 Franklin Road, Franklin Village.

● THE ART CENTER

"Fibers & Pigments" features paintings by Ray Frost Fleming and soft sculptural pieces by Robert Kidd. These well-known Michigan artists are each outstanding in their particular medium. Hours are 1-5 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, 1-4 p.m. Sunday, 125 Macomb Place, Mount Clemens.

● UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Monday, Oct. 3 — Watercolors by Bernice Forrest of Franklin Village will be displayed in the Commons Building Gallery, North Campus, through the month, Ann Arbor.

● FEIGENSON GALLERY

A show of gallery selections including new work some of the regulars, Carole Alt, Brenda Goodman, Michael Lachs, Ann Mikolowski, Nancy Pines and Gordon Novner, continues through the month. Hours are 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, 810 Fisher Building, Detroit.

● GALLERY BIRMINGHAM

Photographic works by Jerry Sloczek will be on display through Oct.

15. Photography has long been a part of the life of this newspaper. This is his first area show. Hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday-Saturday, 251 E. Merrill, Birmingham.

● TROY ART GALLERY

Handwoven works by Sandi Lummern and clay works by Maxine Ovlitt continue through Oct. 22. Hours are 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, 755 W. Big Beaver, Troy.

● CANTOR/LEMBERG GALLERY

Paintings and drawings by Sylvia Birch Halperin continue through Oct. 15. Hours are 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, 538 N. Woodward, Birmingham.

● SIXTH STREET GALLERY

Sculpture and drawings by the members of the Kalamazoo Bronze-casting Company are on display through Oct. 29. The 10 members come from diverse backgrounds from bronze-casting workshops at the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts. They continue to share an interest in casting their own works. Jo Regan from Birmingham commutes so she can cast her own pieces. Others are William Tye, Jack Glover, Patricia S. Daggett, Frank Newman, Maria Chio, Joseph Wyss, Karin Kirulis, Charles Wynne-Tye and Helen Dahlberg. Regular hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, 214 Sixth St. Royal Oak.

● CRANBROOK ACADEMY OF ART MUSEUM

"Ojitoon," an exhibition of North American Indian artifacts will continue on display through October. The 50 objects are from the Cranbrook Institute of Science's 4,000 piece American Indian collection. Included are textiles, blankets, rugs, baskets, pots, marks, dolls, costumes and bead work. There are photographs by Edward Curtis. Museum hours are 1-5 p.m. daily except Monday and major holidays, 500 Lone Pine, Bloomfield Hills. Admission charge.

● GALLERY 22
New paintings and graphics by 20 local and internationally known artists including James Colnagard, Max Papart, Nanci Closson, Marilyn Derwenskus, Irene Simon, Charles Gale and Penny Fay. Continues through Oct. 12. Hours are Monday-Friday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Thursday, until 9 p.m., Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., 22 E. Long Lake, Bloomfield Hills.

● YAW GALLERY

Ceramics by Jun Kaneko, head of the ceramics department at Cranbrook Academy of Art, will be on display for a month. He is considered one of the most innovative artists in the field, 550 N. Woodward, Birmingham.

● BIRMINGHAM BLOOMFIELD ART ASSOCIATION

Annual juried exhibition by members of the Birmingham Society of Women Painters continues through Oct. 15. It's always a good show because these artists maintain an admirable level of professional expertise. Hours are 9

a.m. to 5 p.m. daily, 1516 S. Cranbrook, Birmingham.

● SCHWEYER-GALDO GALLERIES

"Zaffig Ladies" by Richard Kozlow may do more than surprise longtime fans of this usually serious painter. They may stare in amazement as they discover their favorite artist has a refreshing sense of humor. Continues to Oct. 15, 330 Hamilton Row, Birmingham. Hours are 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday.

● SUSANNE HILBERRY GALLERY

Works by John Egner, Ron Gorchov, Alex Katz, Nancy Mitchell, Judy Pfaff, Ellen Phelan, Tony Smith and John Torreano are on display through Oct. 8. Hours are 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, 555 South Woodward, Birmingham.

● HABATAT GALLERIES

The "Bagged Bag Series" by John Littleton and Kate Vogel and the jewel-like works of Michael Glancy are on display through the month. Gallery hours are 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, until 9 p.m. Friday, 28355 Southfield Road, Lathrup Village.

● VENTURE GALLERY

"Special Comments in Glass" by Walt Lieberman will continue through the month. Hours are 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, until 9 p.m. Friday, 28355 Southfield Road, Lathrup Village.

● ROBERT L. KIDD ASSOCIATES

Group exhibition featuring works by

Ted Schwetz, Harry Bertola, Roy Slade, Lyman Kipp, Ed Mieczkowski and Edward Evans continues through Oct. 8. Hours are 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, 107 Townsend, Birmingham.

● BIRMINGHAM UNITARIAN CHURCH

Paintings by Greta Weekley of Royal Oak will be on display through Oct. 2. She is on the art faculty at Wayne State and combines a knowledge of physics with training in art and psychology to achieve an interesting synthesis of the spiritual and the intellectual. Open to the public each Sunday afternoon, 651 N. Woodward at Lone Pine, Bloomfield Hills.

● GALLERY ART CENTER

Watercolors by Mac Jamison along with works by Chagall, Miro, Maxwell, Yamagata and Agam. Hours are 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday-Saturday, 18931 W. 12 Mile, Lathrup Village.

● KINGSWOOD LOWER GALLERY

Exhibit of works by the Kingswood and Cranbrook schools art faculty continues through Oct. 14. Included are prints by Christine Goodale, furniture and woodwork design by Andrew Fisher, metalworking by Mary Jo Macey, ceramics by Susie Symons and Kirby Smith, sculpture by Pamela Stump Walsh, weaving by Marilyn Harsard and drawings by Elizabeth Land. Gallery hours are 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekdays, 885 Cranbrook, Bloomfield Hills.