

World News

United States

19th World Orchid Conference

This was advertised as the largest, most outrageous orchid show in American history. That was a large claim, but one that I can now accept as truth after attending the show. I admit that I love orchids and have a small



< Fascinating orchid displays at the Miami show in January.

collection in my back yard shade house. But, let me also declare that I am no orchid expert, so my comments are based on my overall impression of the show and not the fine details. Well, the novices were out in force at this show alongside the experienced growers; visitors came by the busload from cities all over Florida and further afield. The show was buzzing with folks of every age group walking around with flower heads bobbing out of bags. I can say that the displays of orchids were simply awesome. There were several themed displays with hundreds of hanging orchids that looked like nature displays gone wild. There was a Volcano that rose from the show floor with so many orchids surrounding it that it seemed as if you had

been transported to some movie set where a dinosaur was about to appear. There were expert presentations, orchid paintings, orchid quilts, orchid pins and just about everything else you can imagine to do with orchids. This was not just a place to see spectacular orchids, this was a buying show and from what I saw sales were brisk. I myself fell prey to the allure of so many stunning specimens and it is a good thing I did not take more cash with me or I would have needed a new shade house.

It was truly an international show with Far East countries well represented. There was also a Dutch display with their trophies proudly displayed for a white Cymbidium. In conclusion, if you love orchids this was not a show to have missed and I would highly recommend a visit to the 20th World Orchid Conference. *William Armellini*

European Union

Thousands of cut roses confiscated

In the build up to Valentines Day the efforts of breeders against the infringement of their Intellectual Property Rights reached its first peak. On application of 15 leading cut-rose breeding companies from all over the world, customs authorities in six member countries of the European Community determined whether imported cut-roses infringed the intellectual property rights of these breeders. The goal of the breeders was to monitor the imports of cut roses from various target countries and to stop imports of illegal cut roses in one of the peak seasons of the year in order to give a strong message both to infringers but also to their licensees and traders, exporters and importers of cut roses that infringement of Plant Breeders' Rights will not be tolerated anymore and that those not following the rules will be chased.

From February 4-11, customs officers in the airports of Amsterdam, Frankfurt, Paris, Madrid, London and Lisbon checked, in co-operation with experts of the breeders, several thousand boxes with cut-roses from several target countries. Against the background of the millions of flowers which are imported to the European Community in this period of the year, it was a great logistic challenge for the customs authorities to do, on the one hand, proper checks and on the other hand to avoid serious disturbances of the logistics of legal imports. In this regard, the customs officers were especially challenged by the fact that often flowers coming from legal and illegal sources were mixed

in one shipment and that it was time-consuming to separate them. However, the customs authorities were able to minimize the negative side-effects of this action, e.g. as far as delays in the logistics of the legal flowers were concerned. The Valentines action turned out to be a complete success. During the eight days of the action, the customs authorities suspended the free release of dozens of shipments. After detailed checks by the breeders, some 20 shipments have been confiscated. All in all ten thousands of cut roses from unauthorised sources have been found. But even more important than these figures, is the fact that through this action significant awareness has been raised about the intellectual property protection of breeders in the whole flower business. Breeders have also been able to show that they have effective means at hand to enforce their intellectual property rights.

The customs action was based on the European Plant Variety Right law, which provides the breeders with a patent-like protection for their plant varieties, in combination with the European Anti-Piracy Regulation. It was supported by the European Commission (DG TAXUD and DG SANCO) and the Community Plant Variety Office (CPVO), which grants the Plant Variety Right titles to breeders. The action was coordinated by CIOPORA, the International Association of Breeders of Asexually Reproduced Ornamental and Fruit Varieties, which represents its members in Intellectual Property matters on international and national level.