

FSBA

Florida Society of Botanical Artists

GrapeVine

Spring 2014

“Love Botanicals” at the Art Center Manatee

The Art Center of Manatee presented a wonderful venue for our group to show our work. It was clear that the artists were inspired—the show’s title, “Love Botanicals” was apt.

The opening was on Thursday, April 3rd from 5 to 7 p.m. For the festivities there were tasty treats and a wine and beer bar. The wall space we had was situated in a hallway that was at the entrance of the building. People had to walk through to get anywhere, so we had a good spot. Kudos for the people at the Art Center for hanging all our pieces professionally. Each piece was displayed well. We had 33 members submit their work and the talent and workmanship was well received. Two other shows ran simultaneously which brought in over 200 patrons.

Susan Benjamin, our president was asked to speak about



Barbara Harrison and her friend Gwen Fryer enjoy the show.



Gail Swanson and Carole Gorin

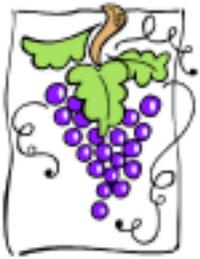


*Susan Benjamin with her *Oncidium sp. Dancing Ladies**

FSBA, and she described how we look at plants with different eyes. As artists we prefer to show the attachments of plants as leaf to stalk, pistil to stamen, sepal to petal. The botanical art that we do, she said, is to educate and show the excitement we have and our knowledge of plants and the uniqueness of each plant in various mediums.

People filled the rooms looking at our art and had a good understanding at what “Love Botanical” vision was. Enjoy the photos and don’t miss out on showing your work the next time. What a fun event!

See more photos on next page...



"Love Botanicals," continued

Below: Diane Harm's Zygocactus sp. 'Christmas Cactus'

Right: Cindy Clifton with her Pontederia cordata 'Pickerelweed'

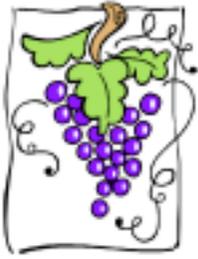
Center: Margaret Johnson with her Cattlya sp. 'Christmas'



Left: Kim Conkllin with Saintpaulia sp. 'Africal Violet'

Right: Mary Jane Dimino's Trillium cuneatum





An Introspective Approach to Botanical Drawing

—LINDA CRAWFORD

In early November members of FSBA participated in an exciting Master Class Workshop conducted by Botanical Artist Hillary Parker. “Deliberate Composition” launched me on a journey of self-discovery beginning with a group discussion on why we love to create botanical art.

Throughout Hillary’s multi-step process to executing a botanical drawing, she required each of us to express ourselves through observation, writing and sharing personal impressions of our chosen botanical subject. The final result was a single-line composition ready for transfer.

This workshop offered me a totally new ap-

proach to botanical drawing which, admittedly, had never been quite so thought provoking. Long ago I abandoned the fully rendered drawing for a single-line composition. However, it was for the wrong reasons. I did it out of sheer laziness and a burning desire to move on to my watercolor painting.

By following Hillary’s well-prepared presentation, I was challenged to sharpen my observation, sketching and drawing skills. In so doing, a final single-line composition will provide me with all the right information needed to transfer a drawing to my watercolor paper. Works for me! Thank you, Hillary.

19th Annual ASBA Conference in Pittsburgh

—SUSAN BENJAMIN

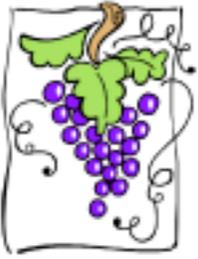
Six members of FSBA attended the ASBA conference in Pittsburgh in September and I believe I can speak of all of us by saying it was an educational and inspiring experience. Nothing can give me more motivation to start drawing or painting than being submerged in botanical art for three days.

“Portfolio Sharing” is one of the activities that I really enjoy. Not only is the artwork on view amazing, but also the artists are always willing to discuss their artwork, discuss their creative process or share a special technique or two.

The Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation held its 14th International Exhibition in conjunction with the conference. 41 works of art by 41 international botanical artists were on display. Congratulations to our own Charlotte Staub Thomas whose painting of Bear Grass, *Xerophyllum tenax*, (at right) was in the exhibition and has been accepted into the Hunt’s collection.

Also congratulations to Margaret Johnson who is a new member of the ASBA Board of Directors.





A New Website for Us —CAROLE GORIN

Yes, it is true! We are working on a new beautiful website. It is not finished and right now has only our old information on it. But the look has changed. As soon as we get all the information together, it will go up on the site and will be a useful tool for you!

We wanted not only to bring you up to date on the new website, but also to ask for your help. There will be information on each ASBA/FSBA member. There will be a gallery page where every member can have 1-3 pieces of his or her work displayed as well as a short bio. One thing you can start doing now is going through your work and seeing what you would like to have displayed; what works that you have professionally scanned (we want us all to look good). Any images posted should be scanned at 300dp and 600dpi, cleaned up, then downsized for the site. The reason for the high dpi is because we may be enlarging sections of the image. Your images should be cleaned up from any background speckles. This will look professional and make our website very impressive.

A short bio should be included with your artwork. Your bio could give your botanical art background, how you got started in this field and any awards you have received. Olivia Braida has mentioned that some of you have your work in her books and that should be included in your bio. (Olivia Braida is author of *Ten Steps: A Course in Botanical Art & Illustration*).

There will also be a page on past events and upcoming exhibits, events and workshops. We need your help in gathering photos to post so people can learn more about our group.

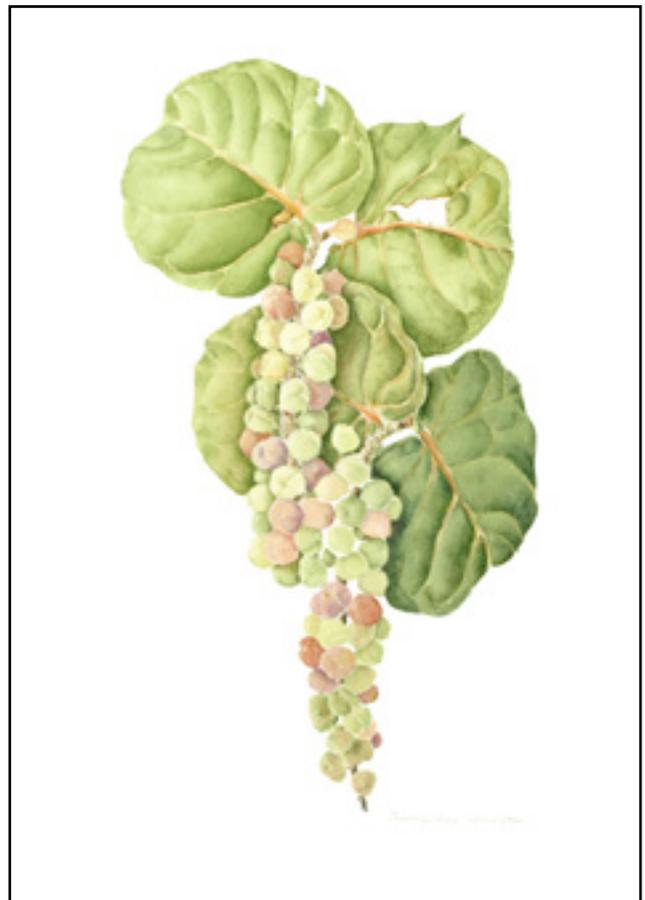
Another page of the website will have links to places of interest in our area and links to plant information sources. We would like to encompass the whole of our FSBA membership. We need your help in making sure that any art supply stores, art centers, museums, and anything else that you think would be appropriate is represented on the site.

We are not only a Sarasota-Bradenton group. Just in case you didn't know, we have members up and down the west coast of Florida and other parts of the country too.

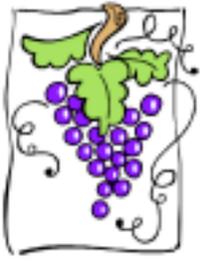
I think that the new website will be beautiful! It will be a place that will be useful to you and others to learn about our group and botanical art. Please take a look and send me suggestions and compliments. Remember that the website is a work in progress and the new information may not be there yet. With that in mind, the address to the working website is: <http://jamrok-designs.com/fsba/>

—Carole Gorin chgorin@gmail.com

** If you want to learn more about quality scanning, there is a wonderful article: <http://myartteacher.com/likes/taking-digital-images-of-art-for-print-or-web/>



Jeanette Atkinson's Sea Grape. Jeanette lives in Naples.



The Guild of Natural Science Illustrators

—JEANETTE LEE ATKINSON

Members of FSBA, especially those who consider themselves artist-naturalists, might consider joining the Guild of Natural Science Illustrators (GNSI). The GNSI was formally organized in 1968, and is now an international organization with over 1000 members. There is significant overlap in membership between the GNSI and ASBA, since both emphasize the unity of science and art. As the Guild's pamphlet *Careers in Scientific Illustration* states, "A scientific illustration is judged for its aesthetic qualities, as well as its accuracy."

Annual membership is \$85 for printed publications, or \$75 for digital delivery. Among other benefits, membership provides a newsletter 6 times a year and the quarterly *GNSI Journal*. Back issues of the newsletter and *Journal* may be ordered. First time members also receive a 29-page *Technique Sheet II*, which is packed with information. GNSI members also qualify for a big discount when joining Science-Art.com, an online marketing resource. (Its website contains an excellent discussion of preparing and protecting digital images). The GNSI also maintains a website, <http://www.gnsi.org>. - www.gnsi.org.

The Guild Handbook of Scientific Illustration is a treasure-trove of information. (2nd, revised edition, 2003). *The Handbook* covers everything the scientific artist/illustrator might need, from specifics on tools and techniques, including computer graphics, to business practices. Even though this 624-page tome covers areas like medical illustration that may not be of particular interest to botanical artists, it is still a worthwhile investment. And investment it is, at a hefty \$190. I was lucky enough to purchase mine at a reduced rate at an annual meeting auction. I refer to it often, and seem to learn something new each time I read it.

The chapter on illustrating plants, written by the late Marion Ruff Sheehan, a name both botanical illustrators and botanical artists will recognize,

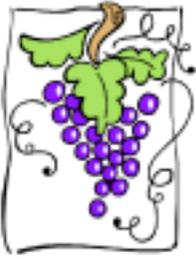
packs an impressive amount of information into its 22 pages. Chapters on illustrating animals, from invertebrates to mammals, also are potentially helpful to the botanical artist.

If you attend an annual meeting, you will find the members a friendly bunch who welcome newcomers. Being accepted as a colleague just by virtue of showing up was a heady, confidence-building experience for me. The artist/illustrators I talked to were very forthcoming about their techniques and even insecurities. The core conference is 3 days, with workshops and fieldtrips following. You may attend all or any part of the meeting. This year's conference will take place at the University of Colorado in Boulder, July 13-19.

The annual auction is a highlight of the core conference. A silent auction is followed by a raucous live auction, which will make you laugh so hard it hurts. Artwork, which gets bid up to high prices by the discerning audience, new and used equipment, professional services, and utterly ridiculous novelty items, all donated by members, make up the list of goodies. The auction closes with a performance of Tom Lehrer's *The Elements Song*, either live or via cellphone.

While some scientific illustration is strictly utilitarian, much of it qualifies as fine art. Since illustrations serve a wide variety of needs and audiences, there is great latitude in media and execution. Apart from traditional drawings and paintings, digital work, posters, postage stamps, advertising and educational materials, 3-D models, dioramas, murals, and interpretive exhibits designed for sensory-deprived individuals are all examples of member work. The annual members' show is a virtuoso display of talent.

I am sure that members who have attended ASBA conferences will agree that the experience is invaluable. You come home refreshed and recharged! I have gained new perspectives and enthusiasm for my own work through such contact.



Submitting Work for the Hunt International Exhibition

—CHARLOTTE STAUB THOMAS

A number of our members are producing artwork of a caliber that would warrant inclusion in the International exhibition series and possible subsequent inclusion in the Hunt Institute of Botanical Documentation through donation or possible acquisition (hunt-bot.andrew.cmu.edu). I was honored to have one of my works included in the 14th International Exhibition of Botanical Art and Illustration which opened in September 2013. The experience was a great boost to my self confidence as an artist, so I am happy to share the information you need to have your work considered for the International.

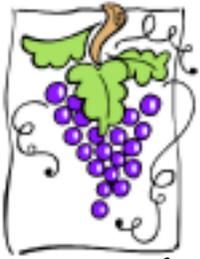
To quote its website, “Hunt Institute specializes in the history of botany and all aspects of plant science [It] acquires and maintains authoritative collections of books, plant images, manuscripts, portraits and data files... and ... meets the reference needs of biologists, historians, conservationists, librarians, bibliographers and the public at large....” It began its International series of exhibitions in 1964, with the aim of encouraging and supporting *contemporary* botanical artists. The shows are held every three years, so it is presently accepting submissions for its 15th International Exhibition in 2016.

The process of submitting artwork for the International series has changed only slightly since I showed my work to Lugene Bruno, Curator of Art, in 2010. At that time, artists attending the ASBA Annual Conference in Pittsburgh were invited to set up an appointment with her. That gave me the chance to present my work, and I was truly impressed at the care with which Ms. Bruno examined it. Her comments were helpful and revealed her eye for detail, technique, and composition. She had joined the Institute in 1996 and

worked with then-Curator of Art James J. White. I have come to know her as a warm and engaging person, truly interested in her artist friends.

Read the submission guidelines at <http://hunt-bot.andrew.cmu.edu/HIBD/Exhibitions/International.shtml>. Then submit an “Intent to Submit” form to Carrie Roy, Assistant Curator of Art by 30 January 2015. It is very important for artists to participate in the portfolio review at the ASBA conferences as that is currently the best way for Ms. Bruno and Ms. Roy to see new work, talk with artists, and set up possible appointments for future reviews between conferences. This may not happen at every ASBA conference, but they do try to attend as many conferences outside of Pittsburgh as possible. Next, either send a CD or DVD of up to three images along with your submission form, or set up an appointment to have Ms. Bruno and Ms. Roy review your original artwork, by 19 June 2015. You will then be contacted by 14 August 2015 if the Institute is interested in seeing an original artwork for possible inclusion. Detailed shipping information is given on the site. If your work is accepted you will be notified within a week of the receipt of your original. Later, biographical information and a portrait will be requested for those to be included in the show.

Each show is unique in its inclusion of both the breathtaking and the unusual. It’s a tribute to Ms Bruno’s and Ms. Roy’s taste and dedication. You will also enjoy working with Carrie Roy, Assistant Curator, whose exuberance and professionalism help everything fall into place. I urge each of you whose hard work and devotion to botanical art has raised your work to a high level of professionalism to submit it to the Hunt Institute!



Art Supplies Review: *Possum Palette*

—MARGARET JOHNSON

There are an overwhelming number of art products on the market ranging from brushes, paints, holders, and palettes to studio equipment. I am constantly on the search for truly useful materials that somehow add value to my art materials arsenal without bankrupting my funds. One of these products is the Possum Palette. Let me share why!

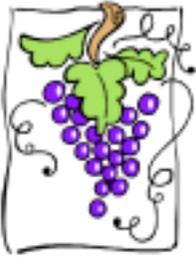
What makes this palette particularly ideal is its design. The palette consists of a one piece, heavy-duty plastic mixing tray with 22 wells. The wells hold 22 removable and interchangeable reservoirs or paint cups. Each paint cup has a flip-top lid keeping its contents separate from the other colors on the palette and in the case of watercolors keeps them moist and ready to paint for weeks. It also comes with adhesive labels, which can be stuck onto the paint cups for paint identification. In total the Possum Palette measures 16" × 10¾" (41 cm × 27 cm), about the same size as a medium 12" x 16" block of Arches Watercolor paper.

I have adopted this product as my everyday working palette because the movable/removable reservoirs make organization and customization of my palette easy. The movable paint cups allow me to organize the colors on my palette (warm to cool) as my inventory of paints grows, my taste in colors changes, or as I switch out colors to reflect a particular project. I love being able to re-arrange the colors around the palette at will!

The ability to pick a custom palette at will provides true economy, because you are not wasting paint when you move to a new palette or wasting time scraping paint off of the old palette so a space can be reused. An added bonus is the adhesive labels that negate the necessity of making a color card of your palette. Instead the paint manufacturer and pigment color can be noted on the paint cup label. I personally abhor palette card painting and repainting; to me they are a waste of time. I would rather spend my time creating color studies.

As a travelling palette the Possum Palette is beyond compare! Having circled the globe with my paints in tow, I have learned traveling with paints has its very own inherent issues like arriving intact, occupying limited space and weight, as well as leakage. Arriving at my first workshop in London with a shattered palette made me realize I needed something more than the ubiquitous lightweight plastic travel palettes that I had been taught to use as a student. Being made of heavy duty plastic the Possum Palette is both lightweight and sturdy. Mine has stood up to any punishment the airlines have so far inflicted. The size of the Possum Palette, although large, is not a concern because it fits a standard carry-on suitcase. It is only about an inch high and fits the top of my check bag nicely. The size also provides a larger mixing area, which comes in handy at workshops. By far the worst problem with most standard palettes is leakage. I used to travel with several small plastic palettes and many tubes of paint enclosed in a plastic bag. This arrangement took too much space in my suitcase and caused a suitcase disaster. On one trip a tube of paint split from the pressure on the plane leaked through a pinhole in the plastic bag and covered the contents of the suitcase in a lovely phthalo blue. I wish I had had the Possum Palette with its airtight paint cups. They seal completely with no leakage, as long as they are properly seated.

Being a skeptic I tested the seal by submersing a closed container of sepia into a full glass of water and it kept popping up to the surface, floating. I pushed the container under water and held it down with a spoon; leaving it submersed for an hour. Much to my surprise the container remained sealed and the paint inside was completely dry. I further tested the airtight theory when I loaded a full set of newly acquired M. Graham paints into the palette just before flying to a master class in Newfoundland. These particular paints take months to dry out and therefore my entire palette



Art Supplies Review, continued

of paints was runny wet and sitting on top of my newly acquired wardrobe. True to the tricks of the airlines, my bags were tossed about and the wet paints were spattered about the containers and lids, but thankfully none had escaped any container's seal!

Sealing the Possum Palette paint cups is not an issue, I burp mine like Tupperware by closing the lid and pushing it down in the center with my forefinger. Easy! By the way, opening them is not difficult either; with a little pressure from the fingertips the lid pops open.

In addition to the palette itself, there are two useful accessories: the Possum Pouch and the replacement set of paint cups.

The Possum Pouch is an envelope-style pouch designed for transporting and storing your Possum Palette. It is made of premium-quality waterproof black nylon with Velcro closures, and includes an extra storage pocket for accessories. I have found that the pouch protects the palette from being scratched. To absolutely prevent paint leakage and just to keep my pouch clean I place my palette into a plastic bag before putting it into the pouch.

The replacement set includes eight paint cups contained in a plastic storage bin, and includes adhesive labels. I have one set of replacement cups which I use to hold my favorite colors that are not already on the palette. It also travels well and is so compact that it fits anywhere.

My only apprehension in the beginning in using this palette was the size. I was taught to use small inexpensive plastic palettes, which served me well when I was a student defining my needs. But I found I was using a new palette for each project and felt I was wasting too much paint. As a seasoned artist I have developed my palette of favorite specially selected pigments that seldom changes. As my techniques have altered to a more dry brush approach, I find I require the increased palette surface. More space is better to create concentrated

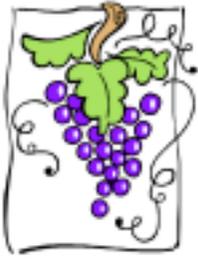
dry pigment (skins) with which to paint. As I became more comfortable with the size of the palette I found it easier to economize the table space in which I paint, which is perfect for limited space workshops. I also discovered I can tape my brushes onto the clean dry palette for travel and the tips always remain protected and intact.

What may be a consideration for some artists is cost; at \$25.00 the possum palette is pricy, especially if you already have a favorite palette. The accessories are pricy as well. But after my suitcase disaster, \$25.00 is cheap for peace of mind! The entire line can be found at Dick Blick, Cheap Joe's, Amazon and Possum Products.

Overall, I find the Possum Palette a most satisfactory addition to my art material arsenal because it makes paint organization a synch and assures leak-proof traveling. Specializing your palette to accommodate a specific teacher, class or workshop is as easy as selecting your interchangeable reservoirs. For me it has proven itself to be an outstanding world traveler!



Susan Benjamin's Bignonia capreolata, Cross Vine



From the Botanical Bibliophile's Corner

—MARGARET JOHNSON

THE ART OF BOTANICAL PAINTING

by Margaret Stevens in association with The Society of Botanical Artists (SBA)

The *Art of Botanical Painting* is the definitive practical guide to botanical art. While it provides a complete course of instruction, it is intended for artists with some drawing and painting experience.

Botanical Merit

What gives this book a considerable edge over others of this type is that the book is intended to be and is used as the textbook for the SBA Distance Learning Diploma Course in Botanical Illustration. The author is the course director and the book was created as a collaborative effort with other SBA members, many of whom have extraordinary credentials within the botanical genre, such as: RHS Gold-mentalists, Kew Botanists, Hunt & Shirley Sherwood Collected. The Society's aim was to write a book that helps develop those skills required to become a good, well-rounded botanical painter. In my estimation they have succeeded!

In fourteen chapters of step-by-step demonstrations the book features a wide range of subjects from exotic and common plants, flowers, fruit and vegetables to gardens as a whole. The book includes useful information about materials, basic plant anatomy, and leaf shapes. It explores various techniques for drawing in graphite, ink and colored pencil, as well as for painting in both watercolor and gouache. It also contains art concepts in regard to colors used for the painting of foliage and flowers, working with photography as an aid, working in the field, contemporary composition, framing, presentation and exhibition.

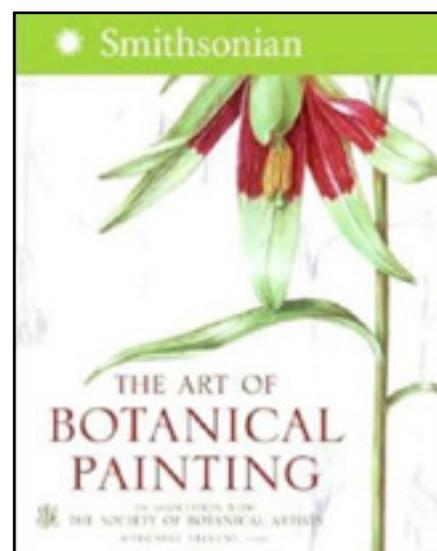
My favorite parts about the book are the breadth of subjects covered, as well as the thorough treatment of each subject. For example: the chapter on drawing discusses line drawing versus a complete tonal study with textural detail, in either pencil or ink, using the hatch, stipple or continuous tone

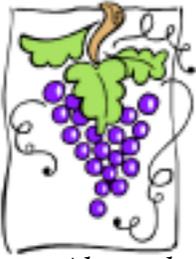
methods. In addition, the instructions are clear and comprehensive and illustrated by a variety of SBA members artworks.

My only disappointment with this book is the print quality. Harper Collins failed to capture the true quality, especially in the detail, of the original artworks, many of which I have seen at the SBA exhibitions in London. Unfortunately, this gives the reader the impression of a lack of form and detail in the book's illustrations when the original paintings are stunning. In spite of this shortcoming I find the book a personal inspiration and an invaluable reference. A variety of internet sellers are asking \$20 to \$30, which I also feel is a good value.

Rating

I would highly recommend *The Art of Botanical Painting* to all serious students of botanical painting. This book is essential to the novice botanical artist because it covers all aspects of botanical drawing and painting, including contemporary mediums such as colored pencil. It is also a must for the seasoned botanical artist who aspires to exhibit in Europe and who requires a thorough





From the Botanical Bibliophile's Corner, continued

understanding of European painting expectations, especially acceptable watercolor choices for exhibition in the United Kingdom.

About the Author

Margaret Stevens is the President Emeritus of The Society of Botanical Artists (SBA). The SBA was founded in 1985 in order to bring together artists of repute in this field and the Course Director of the Distance Learning Diploma Course. She has been working as a freelance botanical artist, illustrator and educator for over 20 years. Margaret has received 13 medals from the RHS including the Gold and Silver Gilt Lindley medal for work of special educational interest and her work is held in collections worldwide. Margaret has written sev-

eral books on botanical painting and is a leading authority on the subject of botanical illustration worldwide.

Product Information

Rare Book - This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title. A number of distributors still have this book for sale and there is a second edition currently available.

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The next issue of The Grapevine is scheduled for the fall. Please send contributions to Jeanette: jeanettelatkinson@comcast.net by the first week in September. Suggestions are welcome. Many thanks to the contributors for this issue!



Cynthia Rice's Encyclia sp. 'Little Nuggets'



Carole Gorin's Dendrobium nobilis, Noble dendrobium Orchid

Florida Society of Botanical Artists

President Susan Benjamin

Vice-President Charlotte Staub Thomas

Secretary Barbara Harrison

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Popular on Grapevine. News. Follow Iceland's Volcanic Activity In Real Time. Music. Five Icelandic Christmas Songs That Don't Suck. Opinion. Iceland: One Of The World's Best Places To Have A Pussy. Grapevine Podcast: The Trans Icelandic Broad Cast #1 - Myths And Misconceptions. 13 Days Of Grapemas: Heli Happy Hour by Art Bicnick 12:16 pm Sponsored. Beer, Beer & More Beer At Bryggjan Brugghús by Sam O'Donnell 9:01 am Sponsored. Show me more. The Grapevine Store. Buy Awesome Merchandise Here. grapevine (plural grapevines). The plant, a vine of genus Vitis, on which grapes grow. Although many grape vines have geographical names, those rarely reflect their real origin, if known at all. A rumor. An informal person-to-person means of circulating information or gossip. I heard through the grapevine that Jim will be leaving soon. 1920, Mary Roberts Rinehart; Avery Hopwood, "The Shadow of the Bat", in *The Bat: A Novel from the Play* (Dell Book; 241), New York, N.Y.: Dell Publishing Company, OCLC