

# Guide to AOS Meetings

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## **GENERAL INFORMATION AND PROCEDURES**

The Trustees of the American Orchid Society and its Standing Committees meet twice each year, in the Spring, in the US or outside its borders, and in the Fall, within US borders only. Spring meetings are usually held in March, April or May; Fall sessions in September, October or November. The event typically begins on a Wednesday and ends on the following Sunday. An accompanying orchid show is usually open to the public from Friday morning until Sunday afternoon.

Whether your local society has already committed to host a meeting or whether this is merely under consideration, we hope the information presented here will be useful to you.

The AOS Affiliated Societies Committee recommends future meeting sites to the Trustees — the volunteer leadership of the AOS — who make the final decision. Meeting sites are normally selected and approved four to five years in advance and are, if possible, located in different geographical areas, alternating from east to west.

Four to five years of advance planning is essential to allow time for working out the necessary arrangements and for the organization of suitable publicity. It has become practical to combine AOS Trustees Meetings with meetings of the Orchid Digest Corporation (ODC) and/or one or more of the regional orchid groups such as the Mid-America Orchid Congress (MAOC) and the Southwest Regional Orchid Growers Association (SWROGA). These meetings may also include one or more of the specialty orchid groups (e.g., the International Phalaenopsis Alliance, the Pleurothallid Alliance, the Odontoglossum Alliance and the Slipper Orchid Alliance). AOS staff at the AOS Visitors Center and Botanical Garden will have names and addresses of contact persons. Contact the specialty groups early on so that you may be certain which of them will attend. You will then be in a position to plan attractive, adequate accommodations for all official functions.

Since some of those attending your function do not take part in the meetings, there should be a good balance of business and pleasure planned or available. Remember throughout your planning efforts that you are about to show off your city and your region.

Two events will be occurring simultaneously: the AOS Members Meeting and your orchid show. Your show will probably be larger than usual, so be sure to provide adequate staffing to accommodate both.

Learn as much as possible from host societies who previously have tackled this exciting — but demanding — event. Send representatives to AOS Members Meetings if you are hoping to host one yourselves. The Chair of the Affiliated Societies Committee can provide statistics and reviews of the most recent meetings. Contact the chair by email at [affcomaos@hotmail.com](mailto:affcomaos@hotmail.com).

## **EXTENDING AN INVITATION**

It is essential to have the voted approval of the host society before issuing an invitation to the AOS. Bear in mind that cooperation from all members is essential. The minutes of the organization should reflect this commitment. Contact the Chair of the AOS's Affiliated Societies Committee to obtain a list of available dates (season and year). Consult the April issue of *Orchids* and the *AOS Orchid Source Directory* to review future AOS commitments. Ask for a list of dates that must be avoided because of conflicting dates of national and international shows, as well as holidays. Meetings will not be approved on Christian or Jewish religious holidays since those who attend AOS meetings celebrate with family at those times. It is also important that the judging center that will be responsible for handling the AOS judging of your show is consulted about your proposed dates. Once you've decided that your society would like to proceed, contact the AOS's Executive

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Director for information on the professional convention planner who is available, at no cost to you, to begin a preliminary search for suitable facilities in your city. The planner is fully aware of the details of these meetings and can save a great deal of time by pre-screening hotels for you. The AOS's Executive Director or the Chair of the Affiliated Societies Committee will send an application form to you. Once you've chosen possible dates and have discovered that there are potential hotels in your city, send your written invitation to the Chair of the Affiliated Societies Committee. The Affiliated Societies Committee will consider your invitation at its next scheduled meeting.

In your invitation provide information, as fully as possible, about:

- WHO: How large is your society's membership? How involved is it in AOS and in regional activities? What is its experience as to shows? Are any of your members AOS volunteers?
- WHEN: List proposed dates for Spring and/or Fall meetings. Explain the advantages of these (weather, local events, etc.).
- WHERE: City, possible hotel/show site. Transportation to and from airport, etc.
- WHAT: Cite local attractions, tours and activities; suitability and size of hotels.
- COSTS: Ask the planner for current hotel prices with the understanding that final rates will likely be 10-15% higher.

Because your geographic area must be considered, give alternate seasons or year(s), if at all possible, for consideration in the event that your first choice is not available. The Chair of the Affiliated Societies Committee will notify your society of the Committee's recommendation and the Trustees' action.

As soon as you have received approval of your date, call together your Show Committee for a meeting. At this meeting, have a close look at the manpower available to you in order to spread the load as efficiently as possible. Have yet another look at your financial situation. Do not underestimate costs!

Bear in mind that you will need, among other designees: an Event Chair, Event Vice-Chair, Registrar, Secretary, Treasurer, Fund-Raising Chair, Event Scheduling Chair, Bulk Mailing Chair, and people to handle transportation and tours, vendors, seminars, publicity, the show booklet, audio-visual needs, hospitality, the registrants' tote bag and the assistance center.

There need not be one individual for each of these assignments. Related responsibilities can be handled by one person. Starting early will make every member of your team aware of the tasks ahead — and the importance of shining in all of the areas — and will provide enough time for recruiting extra helpers.

In your invitation to the AOS, you were required to state hotel possibilities. Now is the time to follow up. Give the convention planner referred by the AOS your final dates and ask him to solicit proposals from those facilities that were interested in your event. He will come back to you with a short-list of your options. It is vital that several members of your working committees visit the hotels to ensure that your final choice will accommodate the necessary meetings and the show. The planner has experience with the schedule of events, the meeting space and set-up we use, and he knows how to negotiate for the best rates. (It should be pointed out that the AOS receives not one penny of recompense from the event planner or the chosen hotel; our only objective is that your society commits to the best possible financial arrangements, and this

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professional can get you there.) Once you have a contract in place, it remains for you to keep in touch with the hotel of your choice at least once a year in the early going, and much more frequently as the show date approaches. When you know the cut-off date before which you may cancel your contract without penalty, make sure to do a thorough site visit to make sure that the hotel still meets your requirements. You'll find that hotel personnel change frequently; even ownership of the establishment may change. Make sure the hotel's staff remain aware of you and your show.

## **SEMINARS AND TOURS**

The events listed here are at the discretion of the hosting society, which, of course, will eventually have to pay the bills. A number of the events have become so standard and customary that they are largely taken for granted by AOS Members Meeting attendees. It does, however, make sense to evaluate carefully what you can and cannot afford. If, for example, a banquet would be too costly, there is no decree that says you have to host one. The banquet meal itself will be paid for by attendees, but there will be decorating and possibly entertainment expenses that would need to be covered by your registration fees. You may have to arrange other functions differently if you do not have a banquet.

### **Seminars**

The educational part of the AOS Trustees Meeting — that is, a well planned series of lectures or seminars — should be a high point of the week for your society and attendees. It may be the first opportunity many of your members have to hear and learn from orchid experts from around the world. Consult the Speakers Lists of the AOS, SWROGA and MAOC and ask the presidents of those groups that will be attending your meeting for their suggestions. Some of the specialty groups will agree to sponsor speakers in exchange for their meeting room space, and some will also sponsor trophies. Contact the current president of each of these groups to determine just what their plans are in this regard. You should have already checked the hotel's arrangements for adequate lecture space. Appoint a member of your society to check again, prior to the lectures, and have him/her tend to possible technical problems with projectors and the like. Have this person make himself or herself familiar with the position and operation of light switches. Arrange for a water station in the lecture hall. Have a coordinator introduce each speaker and also be ready to run point on keeping speakers and eager audiences on schedule. Regarding the latter responsibility, remember that your lecture times have been published and that your audience often has to focus on their own meeting commitments.

### **Tours**

Find out what is available in your area at the time of your show. In the past, many attendees were not involved in meetings so tours of cultural and/or natural attractions (not necessarily orchid-related) were arranged. Recent meetings have demonstrated a reduction in the number of non-orchid participants in these affairs, so tours are often not necessary. If you do plan tours, then any changes in tour attendance should be cleared at your Registration/Assistance Center. Have a member of your society act as host for each tour. Schedule some tours following breakfast for those not involved in meetings. Quite a number of attendees may be free only for Saturday tours. Tours may have to be cancelled due to small numbers of advance reservations. Have a back-up plan to rent smaller buses if a larger group is not feasible. Determine from tour providers how close to departure you must give them last-minute changes. Some host societies have delegated all tour arrangements to a local travel agency. This frees up your society members to work in other areas.

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## **ENTERTAINMENT AND HOSPITALITY**

### **Hospitality Room**

This is optional. Such a room would be available to all registrants. The hospitality room's number should be published in the show booklet along with the operating hours. Provide snacks, coffee and soft drinks yourselves, if the hotel will permit this. Have the room open — and staffed — as long as possible. The hospitality Chair will find that making personal phone calls to society members is the best way to ensure an adequate supply of suitable food. Without question, the hospitality room is a great place to meet and make new friends!

### **Show Preview and Reception**

This function may be as simple or elaborate as finances allow. Determine with the hotel if they would provide a cash bar for wine and spirits. It is a good idea to allow non-registrants to purchase tickets for this event, which normally is free to full registrants. With this in mind, make sure that your registration fee is adequate to cover the cost of this event. Be specific in your registration packet about the type of food that will be available so that people can make plans to eat dinner before or after the party. Joint sponsorship with a charitable organization can spread the cost of the event over a larger number of people, but the trade-off is a certain loss of control. While larger numbers add to the festive atmosphere, it can make it difficult for the orchid registrants to see the flowers and visit with their friends.

### **Judges Luncheon**

The cost for this luncheon, served to Judges and Clerks working the show, is customarily absorbed by the host society. Since you will have a far greater number of Judges than you have at your typical shows, you should tie the free lunch to a registration requirement. Judges and Clerks who are registered for the conference are provided lunch, while those not registered are billed at cost. This should be clearly indicated in the information mailed with the registration packets. Since judging teams are usually assigned to sit together for this meal, it does not make sense to encourage non-judging spouses to attend this function (though if space is not a problem, you certainly may opt to allow this). Judges have every right to take part in the judging, but you may have to explain the luncheon policy. Be polite and pleasant, but be firm if necessary.

With the likelihood of a great many Judges in attendance, it is a good idea to assign team numbers to the tables at the luncheon. If you have provided a notice board at the Registration/Assistance Center listing the teams (as far, of course, as completion has been possible), the Judges on each team will be able to sit together. It is helpful to have displayed in a prominent position both an alphabetically sorted list as well as one sorted by team number. A microphone for the AOS Judging Chair and the Chief Clerk (to be used for last-minute assignment changes and/or additions) will be very helpful. And you should, of course, have enough judging supplies on hand. Grouping score sheets in packets of 10 and including two sets in each team folder helps speed the process. Place a folder on each table containing a sign-in sheet and the list of team members with their judging status, as well as basic score sheets. Special score sheets, filed alphabetically to assist with easy retrieval, should be available from the Chief Clerk's desk.

### **Final Banquet**

This social affair is customarily where the host society briefly thanks its workers, as well as the place where AOS awards, if any, are presented. Also, it is usually preceded by the AOS auction. As stated previously, the banquet is not a necessary function, but if you are having one, keep formalities brief — this function is often your group's last collective effort of the week, and you want to send everyone home on a high note!  
You may

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wish to introduce distinguished guests and visitors, along with key personnel (General Chair, Presidents of participating organizations), but this, too, is not mandatory. Another reason that after-dinner programs should not last too long is because many attendees will depart early on Sunday morning to return to work on Monday. Music for dancing is not often successful because many attendees are not accompanied by their spouses.

The banquet, as well as the Affiliated Societies Breakfast and the Judges Forum Breakfast, are generally listed at cost to the participants on the registration form. For those rare free-time lunch and dinner opportunities, be sure to include in the registration packet a list (plus map) showing locations of restaurants in the area so people can go and have dinner by themselves, with local society members, or with orchid acquaintances they only see twice a year at these meetings.

If there will be no banquet, alternate venues and times for the awarding of AOS members' accomplishments and the AOS auction should be noted in the conference schedule and, if possible, posted at the Registration/Assistance Center. Coordination of the AOS auction should be made with the Chair of the AOS's Special Funding Committee.

### **SHOW**

It is advisable, whenever possible, to have the show in the host hotel or in an adjacent building. This preferable arrangement will alleviate the need for transportation between hotel and show site (as well as negating the possible problems and added expense of a shuttle service). Consult the latest edition of the AOS Handbook on Judging and Exhibition in the "exhibition" section. Read about other AOS requirements with regard to space at the show (for example, in view of the numbers of judges, try to have aisles between exhibits as wide as possible, with a few benches or chairs against walls wherever suitable), the sales area and the AOS membership display. The hotel will need to pre-approve the set-up of both the sales and the show areas since there will be local regulations set by the Fire Marshall.

The vendors play an important part in these meetings, so you will want to make your selection carefully and do all you can to make their experience enjoyable and successful. These shows are a great opportunity for your society members to buy plants and products from commercial growers they would otherwise never see.

If you choose a good mix of commercial growers with a wide variety of genera and you advertise the show well, then sales will be brisk. Don't have too many vendors since it may then be difficult for any of them to do well financially. Allow sufficient space for them to set up their tables attractively and have enough room to store extra plants. How many vendors you invite will depend on the space you have available and the funds you feel you will need to support the show. Consider providing assistance with loading and unloading and with unpacking plant materials. It is always appreciated if you have some society members who are willing to spell the sales people at lunch time. Also, don't extend the hours when the sales areas are open beyond what is reasonable for them to cover. Most vendors prefer to pay a fixed table fee rather than to pay the society a percentage of profits so that they know what their expenses will be up-front. The laws regarding the payment of sales taxes vary quite considerably so be sure to have that information available before vendors make a commitment to attend your show. To avoid last-minute surprises, have a firm cut-off date for cancellation beyond which there will be no refund of vendors' fees.

As soon as registrations start to come in, pass along names of those wishing to judge and clerk to the Ribbon Judging Chair, the AOS Judging Chair and the Chief Clerk so the preparation of teams can begin. The three persons in these positions should preferably have attended previous AOS Members Meetings and have

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experience in dealing with large numbers of Judges and Clerks. It may also be necessary to arrange for extra show photographers to assist the local Judging Center photographers with the added number of awards you might expect to receive. They must know how to organize and conduct this important aspect of the show. Your registration packets should include information for exhibitors and vendors. Make sure those from abroad are aware of CITES and import/export regulations. Contact your Department of Agriculture as well as Customs (for those planning to import articles other than plants) and inform your visitors. The vendors listing on the AOS's Web site and in the *AOS Orchid Source Directory*, as well as the advertising pages of *Orchids*, can both be valuable aids in helping you choose vendors to invite. However, invite your local people also; they are most important to your next local show! Check with local government agencies to verify the amount of sales tax that the vendors will need to collect. You may agree to collect these fees and forward them under your own society license. If you are also hosting regional organizations, consult with them about mandatory plant entry schedules, the use of entry tags, etc. AOS Members Meetings held outside the USA will involve special consideration for CITES, import permits, bringing plant exhibits across borders and their safe return, and casual purchases made by returning US citizens. All attendees may be affected by these various regulations. Arrangements for dealing with the resultant paperwork should be made available at the hotel or show site in advance of attendee departure.

### **AOS TRUSTEES AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

AOS Committees meet on Thursday morning during ribbon judging and before AOS judging, which takes place in the afternoon. There are 10 committees that each need appropriate space to conduct their meetings. The AOS Trustees meet all day on Friday and break for lunch around noon. The host society is responsible for providing the meeting locations and making all related arrangements with the hotel. In the initial negotiation with the hotel, the convention planner will have specified the number of meeting rooms and the amount of public space required. Both the AOS's Executive Director and the Chair of the Affiliated Societies Committee must approve the final schedule of the meetings. Provide them with the name and telephone number of the hotel's banquet/catering manager so that specifics concerning AOS charges may be arranged. The AOS usually pays for a beverage set-up (sodas, coffee, tea, hot water, etc.) for the Trustees and Chairs Planning Session, the Executive Committee Meeting and the Trustees Meeting (twice, before the meeting and a refreshing of the set-up during the meeting's lunch break). The AOS also pays meal charges for the following meetings: Executive Committee, the Committee Chairs Breakfast, and the Trustees Meeting lunch. Inspect carefully (and discuss with hotel staff) the meeting site's facilities for private meetings. Have the AOS list of meeting events and meeting room requirements in hand so as to make sure nothing has been forgotten.

### **AOS MEALS AND OTHER FUNCTIONS**

#### **Judges Forum and Affiliated Societies Breakfasts**

The host society is responsible only for arranging the hotel facilities for these two breakfast meetings (billed at cost on the registration form). The program included in the Affiliated Societies breakfast is coordinated by that committee's Chair. The program at the Judges Forum breakfast is coordinated by the local Judging Center. These programs often require a floor lectern, microphone and, frequently, a slide projector and screen. All meals during these meetings should be served efficiently since adherence to schedules is critical. The room should be large enough to hold 100-150 people. Registration will dictate final set-up numbers.

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**AOS Chairs Breakfast and Lunch Break for the AOS Trustees Meeting**

The hotel may require that the host society sign the contracts for these meals, even though the AOS is paying for them. Menus and prices must be cleared by the AOS's Executive Director prior to contract signing. Check with the Executive Director for the latest requirements.

**AOS Auction**

The AOS Auction is usually held on the last evening of the meeting, prior to a final banquet or other event you may have planned. The host society is responsible for arranging the room and the facilities for this event. Anywhere between 100 and 175 folks will attend this popular event, now enthusiastically run by the AOS's Special Funding Committee. The best auction set-ups have plenty of seating for those attendees who would have a tough time standing for the duration of such an event, though there shouldn't be a premium on "standing" space either. The worst auctions are the ones where everyone is crammed in and suffocating — air-conditioning is must for so crowded a room. Foyers rarely work. Lighting, audio, seating, and item display are all problematic. Seating should be neither too narrow with the rear seats far from the podium, nor should it be too wide so the wings are out of touch. A cash bar(s) (provided by the hotel) is traditional, and ample bar space seems critical; several tenders help move lines quickly so bidders are back in play, and ample milling/drinking space behind the seating area encourages social ease and avoids crowding the adjacently seated folks who may be inhibited by commotion looming over them. A large number of tables (about 15, draped and covered, for the display of auction items) will need to be set up in the room, which also must have a raised podium with a microphone. The Chair of the AOS's Special Funding Committee should be contacted for any special requirements and room-layout preferences. The committee may ask for a local liaison to assist with auction items shipped in advance. Note that the room must be available to the committee several hours before the auction so that the available items can be positioned for optimum viewing by attendees.

**OTHER AOS REQUIREMENTS**

**AOS President's Suite**

It is customary for the host society to provide the AOS President, without charge, a suite of appropriate size for use throughout the meeting. The AOS President will need to occupy this suite starting on Tuesday night due to meetings on Wednesday. Check with the AOS President shortly before your meeting. Most hotels will comp (furnish free of charge) this suite because of the number of hotel rooms that will be booked during your affair. The convention planner will negotiate with the hotel for this suite before the contract is signed. This suite is used for a number of meetings (e.g., the Executive Committee, the Nominating Committee), as well as a number of AOS ad hoc committee meetings and impromptu conferences.

**AOS Displays**

Space should be made available at the show — in the sales or exhibit area — for an AOS Membership display. This should be staffed for the entire time the show is open. It is recommended that local society members plan on no more than two-hour shifts; they will be assisted by AOS volunteers whenever possible. A 3' x 8' table on which to place the display is all that is needed.

Setting up the display is the responsibility of the host society, as is its safe return to AOS headquarters. Contact AOS headquarters early for directions on ordering and returning the display. Or you may wish to build an AOS display following the directions provided by members of the Membership Committee. This would reduce shipping costs since you would only need to order an appropriate number of membership brochures. This display would then be available for your society to use for future shows.

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The AOS Conservation display is also available to your society, should you choose to do so. If your society feels strongly about conservation or wishes to highlight conservation activity in your area, this makes a great focal point for any material you might wish to add. Again, it is the responsibility of the host society to make sure that the display is returned promptly after your show.

### **Specialty Group Functions**

While it is usually mutually beneficial for the specialty groups to hold their meetings in conjunction with AOS meetings, it is not the responsibility of the host society to pay for their meeting room space. However, if the group makes an early commitment to attend, their meeting room space can be negotiated in the initial hotel contract. The presence of the specialty group may increase attendance at the meeting; the group may provide speakers or offer to share speaker expenses with the host society; they may donate significant trophies; or they may plan a meal function (e.g., the IPA luncheon) that offsets the cost of their space. These factors should be taken into consideration before the host society might discourage a group's participation or ask for financial assistance. Meeting space for the Orchid Digest Corporation and the regional organization (e.g., MAOC or SWROGA), if the host society belongs to one, is always included in the hotel contract at no charge to these groups.

## **BUDGET PLANNING AND FUND RAISING**

Develop an overall budget for the event as soon as possible. You can set registration fees only after basic contracts have been signed with the meeting facility (and the show site, if different) and when expenses have been determined. Do not underestimate costs!

Remember that there are really two events taking place simultaneously — the show and the meeting. Ascertain whether it would be best to handle expenses separately (e.g., show vendor fees and admissions for show expenses; registrations for meeting expenses, including the show preview). Have in place a good treasurer/bookkeeper/accountant. Keep registration fees as low as possible, bearing in mind that all participants pay their own way to the show. Much will depend on your local range of fees/costs. The hotel contract should include the free rooms for the AOS President, a hospitality suite, and for the meeting and show space. Start special fund-raising activities early — auctions, garage sales, pin sales, etc., are always popular. Consult the AOS's Executive Director, the Chair of the Affiliated Societies Committee and your AOS representative for further ideas.

## **REGISTRATION**

### **Registration Packet Contents**

Each packet should include the following:

- Introductory letter written by the Chair of the event
- Registration form with space for an email address, as well as the usual information
- Schedule of events
- Program book advertising information
- Descriptive information concerning tours and special events
- Hotel information
- Airport information (this should include which airport is best situated to serve the meeting site, and information concerning transportation from the airport to the hotel, including the approximate cost if not provided by the hotel)
- Information for show exhibitors and vendors

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### **Mailings**

Consider obtaining a bulk-mail permit. Your society will be doing a number of mailings, and savings in postage for AOS Members Meeting-related items, as well as other society mailings, may be worth the paperwork involved. However, bear in mind that bulk mail often takes three weeks to arrive at its destination, so you will need to mail the packet in plenty of time to allow for this lag time. If you decide not to apply for a bulk mail permit, then you can often save money by using a professional mailing service.

Ask the Chair of the Affiliated Societies Committee for a list of current AOS volunteers. This list is maintained by that committee and avoids the duplications often encountered when volunteers serve on multiple committees. You may find it easier to request the list in electronic form so that you can merge the list with local AOS members or other regional lists. AOS headquarters can provide you with labels for any AOS members within a designated area — you can request that this list be sorted by Zip code or by state. To allow time for printing and shipping, AOS headquarters should be contacted several weeks in advance of the time labels will be needed. Bear in mind that bulk mail must be pre-sorted by Zip code before the post office will accept it.

About three months in advance of the meeting, registration information should be sent to the following:

- AOS Personnel: Officers, Honorary Vice-Presidents, Past Presidents, Trustees, Committee members (including Consulting), Judging personnel (including students), Affiliated Society Representatives in your geographic region, and the AOS's Executive Director (7-10 registration packets in one envelope, to be distributed to the staff). Instead of mailing to each Judge, you may wish to send multiple packets to each center Chair. This list is also available from the Affiliated Societies Committee.
- Orchid Digest Corporation: Officers, Directors, Committee members, and ODC Affiliated Societies in your geographic region.
- Regional Organizations (e.g., SWROGA): Officers, Directors, Committee members, Representatives of any Affiliated Societies, Presidents of the Affiliates, Speakers.
- Specialty Organizations (e.g., Pleurothallid Alliance): Officers, Directors, Speakers (if you are working with these Alliances to schedule seminars).
- Commercial Orchid Firms: Use a recent issue of *Orchids* and the vendors listing in the *AOS Orchid Source Directory* (also found on the AOS's Web site) to assemble a listing of likely prospects; don't forget commercial firms in your local society's vicinity.
- Orchid Societies: Your society membership; the membership of other societies in your area.

### **Registration Confirmation**

Send a response form (or an email confirmation if that address is available) confirming the events and meals for which payment has been made. This communiqué can be used to include any other information not previously sent (e.g., driving instructions, etc.).

Encourage timely registration! This is usually done through an increased registration fee after a reasonable cut-off date. An alternative approach is to offer an incentive, such as a free plant, to the first 100 or so who register.

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### **Refunds and Complimentary Registrations**

Policy regarding refunds and complimentary registrations is completely at your discretion; however, you may wish to consider waiving the registration fee for your speakers and possibly even for your show's vendors. As a courtesy, you may also agree to refund registration for anyone canceling before the beginning of the meeting. This will be a working meeting for the two or three members of AOS staff who attend, but they usually need to go to the preview party and the banquet. If your budget allows, perhaps you might consider a reduced registration fee for these individuals.

### **Registration Badges/Event and Meal Tickets**

Most societies do not bother with individual tickets for meals and tours. The use of color coding on registration badges (via colored "dots") seems to eliminate the "lost ticket" problem. You may also wish to color code your registration badges for full or partial registration, or for any other information that needs to be easily assessed. Your registrants will appreciate it if you print names in large, bold-faced type so as to be clearly legible from a reasonable distance. Include on the registration badge (in smaller type) pertinent information such as office held or home society.

### **Goodie Bags**

Registrants customarily receive small bags of souvenirs and promotional items supplied by local merchants, the Convention and Visitors Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, and possibly, commercial orchid firms. Past inclusions have been along the lines of "post-its," small pads of paper, a pen, an "orchid badge" commemorating the affair, "munchies" and the like. Future hosts may request that their promotional materials be distributed with this material, too. The registration badge (and any tickets for meals or events, if these are being used) are customarily handed to the registrant in a separate envelope. If you have not made (and put on display) a master list of teams and assignments for Judges and Clerks, such assignments are also included. Use the master registration list to keep a record of receipt.

## **EVENT PROGRAM (Show Booklet)**

### **Costs**

Plan conservatively when estimating advertising revenues from vendors and other advertisements.

### **Contents**

The program may contain anything you feel pertinent to the meeting(s) you are hosting. The following is a list of items frequently included:

- Introductory letters from the current AOS President (also Officers of ODC, etc., if this is a joint meeting), show Chair and local/state officials
- A roster of the host committees; the Officers and AOS Representative of your society
- Officials of the AOS (Officers, Trustees, Committee Chairs, Executive Director)
- Officials of the other organizations meeting jointly (ODC, SWROGA, etc.)
- A listing of AOS Affiliated Societies within your geographic area (also a similar listing for Affiliated Societies of the other organizations meeting jointly, if available)
- As much advertising as you can procure
- A detailed schedule, including meeting rooms, etc.
- A map of the hotel that clearly identifies the locations of meeting, lecture and banquet rooms
- Acknowledgement to the commercial orchid growers, societies and individuals who have made financial or other contributions
- Show schedule for plant entries, rules and regulations – this can be a separate item if you prefer
- Biographical information concerning your lecture program speakers
- Brief tour itineraries

(cont.)

## **REGISTRATION/ASSISTANCE CENTER**

This area dispenses registration packets, late and on-site registrations, and provides a message board. A board listing judging teams and their assignments is also advisable.

Because many people arrive for the meeting on Wednesday afternoon or evening, and will need their registration packets before their first activity on Thursday morning, it is important that the Registration/ Assistance Center remain open late Wednesday night, as well as prior to 7:30 a.m. on Thursday.

The Registration/Assistance Center can be expanded to fill whatever additional roles your organization deems important or beneficial. Society badges/pins and admission to the show itself may be sold at the Registration/ Assistance Center. A computer, printer and small copy machine are useful. Please be aware that AOS staff, Officers and committee Chairs will need access to a computer and printer to prepare reports. If they cannot be provided at the Registration/Assistance Center, then information about other locations or sources for these business aids should be included in registration packets. As noted previously, many hotels now have business centers.

## **AUDIO-VISUAL EQUIPMENT**

This is so important to the success of your meeting that it warrants a separate section.

Six months prior to the meeting, contact all committee Chairs and seminar speakers about their audio-visual needs.

Microphones, lighted podiums, slide projectors and screens are a necessity for seminars and some meeting functions. Some speakers require a special projector for use with PowerPoint presentations. These are quite expensive to rent, so it is not unreasonable to ask speakers to provide their own. Since they are becoming more readily available, it will be worth asking society members if they are willing to loan theirs to the society.

If they can be obtained, lapel microphones, laser pointers and wired remote controls for projectors will make presentations smoother and more professional. Many hotels will allow you to use your own equipment, but there will usually be a charge to hook into their PA system. Hotels often outsource this aspect of their offerings to meeting organizers, so check early about such requirements and plan your budgets accordingly.

The lighted podium is crucial. Have flashlights on hand! An extra projector bulb is vital. Make sure the person you have appointed as "technical staff" is present! Remember that some audio-visual equipment may be provided by the hotel free of charge; in most cases, however, it must be separately contracted and budgeted.

## **PUBLICITY**

### **Orchid Society Publications**

The AOS provides one page of free advertising space in *Orchids* magazine to assist your publicity efforts. You may choose to run one full-page ad, two half-page ads, four quarter-page ads, etc. Size is your decision. The AOS provides the space free of charge; your society is responsible for all other associated costs (color, composition [if you do not provide camera-ready ads], etc.). Remember that *Orchids*, as a monthly publication, must adhere to advance deadlines. Contact the AOS's Advertising Coordinator for an Advertising Rate Kit and further details. This information is also available on the AOS's Web site.

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The AOS will provide space in the AOS Calendar section of *Orchids* for your event, and print an official notice of the meeting. The AOS will also run editorial copy promoting your event in our flagship publication, *Orchids*, and, very early on (as soon as you group is approved as a future host), contact information and applicable links will go up on the AOS's popular Web site ([www.aos.org](http://www.aos.org)). Contact the AOS's Director of Publications for deadlines tied to publications-related marketing efforts, and the Society's Executive Secretary to secure information about getting publicity through the AOS's Web site.

Consider placing an ad, too, in the issue of *Orchid Digest* that is set to run the quarter preceding the AOS Members Meeting (for instance, place an ad in the July-August-September issue for an October meeting).

Also, submit articles and registration information to the newsletters of local societies and regional organizations.

#### **Advertising at the AOS Members Meeting Preceding Yours**

Arrange to have at least one member of your society present at each of the AOS Members Meetings preceding the one you will host. Fliers can be handed out. Pins advertising your upcoming meeting can be sold, thereby combining fund-raising and publicity. Bookmarks have been distributed at regional shows and preceding AOS Members Meetings. If provided in time, information sheets generally can be included in registration packets or made available at the Registration/Assistance Center of the immediately preceding meeting. Some societies have sponsored an orchid flower arrangement to be placed at the registration desk accompanying advertising material. Arrange such latter actions with the current meeting host well in advance.

#### **Local Advertising**

By now your society has well-established procedures for gaining publicity for your annual show. Because you are also hosting the meeting of an international organization and will likely have exhibitors and vendors participating in your event from a much wider geographic area, these factors, if suitably emphasized, may result in better coverage by the media. Press releases or public-service announcements can be sent to radio and television stations. Articles can be prepared for the gardening section of local newspapers. You may also be able to get placement of your event in the Calendar of Events sections of magazines such as *Fine Gardening*, *Horticulture*, *Southern Living*, *Sunset* and similar publications. These publications need your material up to a year ahead of the event, so plan to have promotional materials completed early.

### **SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS/CONSIDERATIONS**

#### **VIP Transportation**

You may wish, if society personnel numbers allow for such accommodation, to extend courtesy transportation to speakers and Officers of the various organizations participating in the meeting. Those vendors who are traveling by air will be bringing large boxes with them that do not fit well on shuttle buses or cabs; please consider them when scheduling courtesy transportation. Many society members have mini-vans that would make this type of transportation very much easier. If you choose to go this route, the coordinator will need to contact those concerned well ahead of time to determine arrival and departure schedules.

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### **Medical**

If the meeting site (hotel) does not have a physician on call, provision should be made to provide appropriate medical service should the need arise. All fees would be borne by the patient. Procedures for securing medical attention should be outlined in the registration packet (if possible), and personnel at the Registration/Assistance Center should be well versed in procedures. Society volunteers should also know how to summon emergency medical attention at the show site if it is located outside of the hotel.

### **Other Resources**

The Mid-America Orchid Congress has prepared an excellent manual for societies hosting their shows and meetings. Therein lies a wealth of useful information. The Timing and Planning Calendar with a weekly countdown to the meeting and show is something many societies might well wish to adapt to their own events. For information on availability and cost, please write to the Chair of the MAOC's Annual Meeting Committee. Equivalent information is available from other regional organizations (e.g., SWROGA). Contact AOS headquarters for names, addresses, phone numbers and Web-site links tied to this information.

Finally, AOS headquarters has sample documents (letters, contracts, forms, etc.) used by past hosting societies that cover most of the communication activities discussed above. There is also a CD titled "Orchid Show in a Box" that is available to affiliated societies from the committee Chair or AOS headquarters.

## **CHECKLIST**

### **4 - 5 years prior**

- Initial search for suitable facilities by convention planner
- Letter of invitation to AOS headquarters
- Letter of response received from AOS headquarters
- Notification from AOS Executive Director
- Communication of AOS Trustees approval of site
- Trustees appointment of liaison
- Contact Specialty Groups
- Appoint Show Committee
- Coordinate with your Judging Center Chair

### **4 years prior**

- Receive approval of show date from AOS headquarters
- Book hotel and show space

### **4 years (continuing to 6 months prior)**

- Initiate fund-raising activities

### **3 years to 18 months prior**

- Finalize prices if at all possible

### **3 years (continuing to 18 months prior)**

- Propose working budget (income and expenses)

### **2 years prior**

- Appoint Chair of judging activities
- Obtain event schedule from the Affiliated Societies Chair

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**18 months prior**

- Finalize speakers list and confirm speakers
- Contact vendors and exhibitors
- Contact AOS headquarters for meeting set-up list
- Contact regional and specialty groups for their requirements. Inform them of the six-month deadline for speaker bios and topics
- Finalize tours and activities
- Select entertainment
- Complete final schedule (get approval from the AOS's Executive Director)
- Prepare advertising material

**6 months prior**

- Contact Committee Chairs for audio-visual needs
- Contact all speakers for their bios and topics
- Finalize menus

**3 months prior (or earlier)**

- Print and distribute programs/registration material

**1 month prior**

- Contact VIPs and vendors for transportation needs