

# Guide to Hosting an AOS Meeting

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*American Orchid Society*

*at Fairchild Tropical Botanical Gardens*

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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 Membership & Affiliated Societies Committee recommends future meeting sites to the Trustees who make the final decision. Meeting sites are normally selected and approved two to three years in advance and are, if possible, located in different geographical areas, alternating from east to west, north to south.

Three to four years of advance planning is optimal to allow time to make the necessary arrangements, gathering the volunteer organization and for creating and disseminating the publicity. At least one year preparation is essential.

It is practical to combine AOS Trustees Meetings with meetings of one or more of the regional orchid groups such as the International Slipper Symposium, Mid-America Orchid Congress (MAOC) and the Southwest Regional Orchid Growers Association (SWROGA) the International Phalaenopsis Alliance, the Pleurothallid Alliance, the Odontoglossum Alliance and the Slipper Orchid Alliance, *Angraecoid* Alliance and the Orchid Digest Corporation (ODC.) AOS Administration [AOS@aos.org](mailto:AOS@aos.org) will have the names and addresses of contact persons. You should contact these groups early to confirm which of them will attend so you can plan accommodations, meals, meeting rooms and schedule of times. Since these attendees do not take part in the AOS meetings, there should be a good balance of business and pleasure planned or available.

The AOS Members Meeting and your orchid show will be occurring simultaneously. This orchid show may be larger than your local event because of the vendors and exhibitors, so be sure to provide adequate staffing. Learn as much as possible from previous host societies who have tackled this exciting but demanding event. If you are interested in hosting, it would be a good idea to send representatives to an AOS Members Meeting so they can see firsthand how it all works. The Chair of the Membership & Affiliated Societies Committee ([membership\\_committee@aos.com](mailto:membership_committee@aos.com)), can provide statistics and comments from the most recent meetings.

## EXTENDING AN INVITATION

It is essential to have the voted and recorded approval of the host society before issuing an invitation to the AOS. Contact the Chair of the AOS Membership & 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. It is also important that the judging center that will handle the AOS judging of your show is consulted about your proposed dates. Check your local area for conflicting large events and other annual orchid show dates so you don't put them too close together.

Once you've decided that your society would like to host a meeting, contact the AOS Chief Operating Officer or the Chair of the Membership & Affiliated Societies Committee who will send an application form to you. Once you've chosen possible dates and have confirmed that there are potential hotels in your city which can accommodate 300 to 500 room nights, send your invitation to the Chair of the AOS Membership & Affiliated Societies Committee ([membership\\_committee@aos.org](mailto:membership_committee@aos.org)). They will consider your invitation at their next scheduled meeting.

### **In your invitation please provide, in detail, information about:**

- **WHO:** How large is your society's membership? How many of your members belong to AOS? How involved is it in regional activities? What is its experience in shows?
- **WHEN:** List proposed dates for Spring and/or Fall meetings. Explain the advantages of these (such as weather, local events, etc.) 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.
- **WHERE:** City, possible hotel/show site, transportation to and from airport.
- **WHAT:** Cite local attractions, tours and activities. What is the suitability and size of hotel and relationship to exhibits and to the show?
- **COSTS:** Know the current hotel prices with the understanding that final rates may be 10-15% higher when you sign the contract.

The Chair of the AOS Membership & Affiliated Societies Committee will notify your society of the Committee's recommendation and the Trustees' action.

## 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 & show facility 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 and costs. Commercial online registration services may charge both registration fees and credit card fees.

In your invitation to the AOS, you are required to state hotel possibilities. If you are fortunate enough to have a member of your society with meeting and convention planning experience, your job will be much easier. You may wish to hire a meeting planner who usually gets his or her fee from the hotel. If you do it yourself, you can negotiate out the fee the hotel usually pays a professional planner. If you have a member of your society with graphic design experience, you will save about \$10,000 in costs to develop the ads, flyers and show book over using a freelance designer.

The hotel contract should include the free room for the AOS President, a hospitality suite, and rooms for the meeting, show and vendor space. Start special fund-raising activities early — auctions, garage sales, pin sales, etc. Consult the AOS Chief Executive Officer, the Chair of the Membership & Affiliated Societies Committee ([affiliatedsocieties@AOS.Org](mailto:affiliatedsocieties@AOS.Org)) and your AOS representative for additional ideas.

As soon as you have received approval of your date, call a meeting of your Show Committee to have a close look at the manpower available to you in order to spread the load as efficiently as possible. Have another look at your financial situation. Do not underestimate costs! In 2014, costs ranged from \$30,000 to \$70,000 depending on the area of country and specific location. Evaluate carefully what you can 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.

You will need an Event Chair, Event Vice-Chair, Registrar, Secretary, Treasurer, Fund-Raising Chair, Event Scheduling Chair, Publicity Chair, and people to handle transportation and tours, vendors, seminars, the show booklet, audio-visual needs, hospitality, the registrants' welcome bag and the reservation and assistance center. There need not be one individual for each of these assignments, but overloading volunteers can lead to stress. 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.

Now is the time to follow up. Give the potential hotels your final dates and ask for proposals from those facilities that were interested in your event. They will respond with a 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.

Once you have a contract in place, you must keep in touch with the hotel regularly in the early stages, 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 ensure that the hotel still meets your requirements. You'll find that hotel personnel change frequently; even ownership of the establishment may change. Confirm that the hotel's staff is aware of you and your show.

## **SEMINARS**

A well-planned series of lectures or seminars should be a high point of the week for your society, AOS members 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 ([www.AOS.org](http://www.AOS.org); click Affiliated Societies Tab; click "Speakers List" on left side under heading "Additional Information"). Contact the presidents of SWROGA and MAOC and ask those that will be attending your meeting for their speaker suggestions.

Some of the specialty groups will agree to sponsor speakers in exchange for their meeting room space, and some will also sponsor trophies. 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 manage any technical problems with projectors, lights or audio. Arrange for a water station in each lecture hall. Have a coordinator introduce each speaker and also be ready to run point on keeping speakers and eager audiences on schedule. Remember that your lecture times have been published and that your audience often has to focus on their own meeting commitments.

## **ENTERTAINMENT AND HOSPITALITY**

### **HOSPITALITY ROOM**

This is optional but if provided it must be available to all registrants. The hospitality room number should be published in the show booklet along with the operating hours. Provide snacks, coffee and soft drinks yourselves or even home-cooked dishes, if the hotel and local laws 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 your finances allow. Determine with the hotel if they will 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.

## 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 lunches, while those not registered are billed at cost. This should be clearly indicated in the information supplied at the time of registration. 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 and 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 the list and table number displayed in a prominent position both alphabetically sorted list and 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 helpful. You should 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. Have at least one Wi-Fi connection per table (two per team is better) as all research of previous awards is done online. You may need to provide an awards photographer and photo area too – check with your Center Judging Chair.

## Final Banquet

The banquet may be preceded by the AOS auction, however, care should be given to allow enough time for auction attendees to get to the banquet and the food presented promptly. This social affair is customarily where the host society briefly thanks its workers, as well as where any AOS awards are presented. You may wish to introduce distinguished guests and visitors, along with key personnel (General Chair and Presidents of participating organizations); but this, too, is not mandatory.

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! After-dinner programs should not last too long 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 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 and Assistance Center. Coordination of the AOS auction should be made with the Chair of the AOS Special Funding Committee.

## SHOW

It is best to have the show in the host hotel or in an attached adjacent building whenever possible. This will alleviate the need for transportation between hotel and show.

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. Consider the space needed based on the number of judges. Try to have aisles between exhibits, the sales area and the show as wide possible, with a few benches or chairs against walls wherever suitable.

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. Allow sufficient space for them to set up their tables attractively and have enough room to store extra plants. Have convenient access to an area where they can water plants. Be sure the vendor and show areas can be tightly secured when they are not open for business (theft has been an issue).

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. Ask previous hosts about the number of vendors and attendance. The vendors listing on the AOS 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!

Due to the growing-climate, there are many more attendees, AOS members and the general public at a show held in Florida than in Michigan. 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. Check with the hotel about the procedures and cost for accepting vendor shipments. These can be quite costly and need to be passed on to vendors so they can decide on their own arrangements if desired.

It is always appreciated if you have some society members who are willing to stand in for the sales people at lunch time and deliver cold water periodically during the day. Don't extend the sales hours 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. Provide vendors with sales tax information when you solicit their attendance. You may agree to collect these fees and forward them under your own society license. 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 to begin preparation of teams. These three persons should preferably have attended previous AOS Members Meetings and have 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 information about importing articles other than plants and inform your visitors. 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**

The host society is responsible for providing the meeting locations and making all related arrangements with the hotel. Both the AOS Chief Operating Officer and the Chair of the Membership & Affiliated Societies Committee must approve the final schedule of the meetings.

The ten AOS Committees meet on Thursday morning for 3-4 hours in separate rooms during ribbon judging and before AOS judging, which takes place in the afternoon.

The AOS Trustees meet all day on Friday and break for lunch around noon.

In the initial negotiation with the hotel, you should specify the number of meeting rooms and the amount of public space required. Water is to be available in every meeting room. 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 Membership & 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 Membership & 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 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.

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

The host society must arrange rooms and meals to be billed directly to attendees at registration.

### **AOS Auction**

The AOS Auction may be held on Friday or Saturday evening, prior to any other event you may have planned. The host society is responsible for arranging the facilities for this event. Anywhere between 100 and 175 folks will attend the auction run by the AOS's Special Funding Committee. The best auction set-ups have plenty of seating for these attendees and lots of space in the rear for standing room and a cash bar or two. About 15 draped tables for the display of auction items must be in the auction room. Air conditioning is must for so crowded a room. Adequate lighting and microphone with raised podium are necessary. 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. The Chair of the AOS 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 or purchases needing to be shipped out afterward. Note that the room must be available to the committee several hours before the event so that the action items can be positioned and cataloged.

## **OTHER AOS REQUIREMENTS**

### **AOS Executive's Meeting Room**

The AOS President and Chief Executive Officer must have available to them a small meeting room to accommodate up to 12 starting on Tuesday night until Sunday morning to be used for a number of meetings such as the Executive Committee and the Nominating Committee, as well as a number of impromptu conferences. This information should not be included in the Show Book, but executives should be informed individually when they pick up their registration materials.

### **AOS Displays**

Space should be made 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. The AOS has a tablecloth and a vertical banner available for use in the display. Borrowing these items is the responsibility of the host society, as is the safe return to AOS headquarters. Contact AOS headquarters early for directions on ordering and returning the display. You will want to print off an appropriate number of membership applications, benefits of membership forms and culture sheets from the website [www.aos.org](http://www.aos.org)

The AOS Conservation display is also available to your society. If your society 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; or they may plan a meal function (e.g., the IPA luncheon) that offsets the cost of their space; or as MAOC does, split their auction proceeds with the host society. These factors should be taken into consideration before the host society asks for financial assistance as it might discourage a group's participation. 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.

## **REGISTRATION**

**Internet registration is absolutely necessary. Remember to plan for the costs of commercial online registration services**

### **Registration Website Contents should include the following:**

- Introduction and welcome message written by the Chair of the event
- Registration form with space for an email address, as well as the usual information
- Schedule of events
- 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 including Show Book advertising information

### **Registration Confirmation**

Send an email response form confirming the events and meals for which payment has been made. At a later date you can send any other information such as driving instructions, airport transportation and nearby restaurants. 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.

### **Refunds and Complimentary Registrations**

Policy regarding refunds and complimentary registrations is completely at your discretion. 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 cancelling before the beginning of the meeting. Know your cut-off dates for meal counts. Late cancellations may be charged to you whether or not they attend a function.

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

Most societies do not bother with individual tickets for meals and tours. The use of color coding or letter acronyms on registration badges is adequate. 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. A banquet meal choice could be a separate piece of paper in the back of the badge holder. 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.

## Welcome 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-it,” small pads of paper, a pen, an “orchid pin or patch” commemorating the affair, “munchies” and water. Future hosts may request that their promotional materials be included. The registration badge and Show Book is 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 on your computer to keep a record of receipt.

## EVENT PROGRAM (Show Book)

### Costs

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

### Contents

The program may contain anything you feel pertinent to the meetings you are hosting but must include a detailed schedule, including times, event and rooms.

### **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 and a similar listing for Affiliated Societies of the other organizations meeting jointly.
- As much advertising as you can procure
- A map of the hotel that clearly identifies the locations of meetings, lectures, show, exhibits 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

## **REGISTRATION and ASSISTANCE CENTER**

This area dispenses registration packets, handles late and on-site registrations, and provides a message board. A board listing judging teams and their assignments is also advisable, however teams change up to the night before. Because of the many changes, it might be easier to post the morning of judging. If you pre-post, folks ask to change teams or be moved which causes confusion and problems.

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

The Registration and Assistance Center can be expanded to fill whatever additional roles your organization deems important or beneficial. Society badges and pins and admission to the show itself may be sold at the Center. A computer, printer and small copy machine are mandatory. Please be aware that AOS staff, Officers and Committee Chairs will need access to a computer and printer to prepare reports. The hotel usually has a business center, but may charge unless prior arrangements have been made as part of your contract.

## **AUDIO-VISUAL EQUIPMENT**

Six months prior to the meeting, contact all committee Chairs and conference speakers about their audio-visual needs. Microphones, lighted podiums, projectors and screens are a necessity for many meeting functions. Society members may be willing to loan their projector or computer for use by the speakers. Most speakers bring their own computers or a flash drive containing their visuals. 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. Check early about such requirements and plan your budgets accordingly. 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.

## **ADVERTISING and PUBLICITY**

As host you have two groups of people you must reach with messages about the show and meetings. The first and most important audience is all AOS members plus orchid society members throughout your region. The second group is the local public who might enjoy seeing the orchid displays and purchasing some for their home.

### **To AOS Members**

*Orchids* magazine will provide you two full color pages, space in the AOS Calendar section of *Orchids and* contact information and applicable links on the AOS Web site ([www.aos.org](http://www.aos.org)) free as an AOS meeting host. Contact John Wrench

(jwrench@aos.org) and ask him about sending out one or two email blasts to AOS members using some of the materials you will produce. These ads are critical. In addition, consider advertising in *Orchid Digest* that is set to run the quarter preceding the AOS Members Meeting

Ask the Chair of the AOS Membership & Affiliated Societies Committee (affiliatedsocieties@AOS.Org) for a list of names and email addresses of current AOS Committee volunteers, AOS personnel, Honorary Vice-Presidents, Past Presidents, Trustees, Judging personnel (including students), and Affiliated Society Representatives in your geographic region. 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.

Arrange to have at least one member of your society present to hand out flyers at each of the AOS Members Meetings preceding the one you will host. Bookmarks, post cards, small flyers have been distributed at regional shows and preceding AOS Members Meetings. Information sheets can be included in registration packets or made available at the Registration and Assistance Center of the preceding meetings.

Contact any commercial orchid firms using a recent issue of *Orchids* and the vendors listing in the *AOS Orchid Source Directory* or on the AOS Web site to assemble a listing of likely prospects; don't forget commercial firms in your local society's vicinity.

### To Other Societies

Prepare flyers for nearby orchid societies to send to their members or hand out at one of their own shows. These same flyers can be used as welcome bag stuffers for the two or three AOS meetings preceding yours. Both ads in *Orchids* and flyers for welcome bags must be developed well in advance of your show date in order to be included in the magazine or other society's show. Also, submit articles and registration information to the newsletters of local orchid societies and regional organizations.

Contact regional orchid organizations such as SWROGA and MAOC specialty organizations such as International Phalaenopsis Alliance, Pleurothallid Alliance, Slipper Orchid Alliance and the Angraecoid Alliance.

### To the General Public

Your second audience, the public, is harder to reach and may require ads in local newspapers or on popular radio stations. The use of news releases to local TV stations may generate some interest by their producers. Of equal importance is the use of social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and Bebo. Use them to spread the word about your orchid show.

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*, *Master Gardener*, *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.

Consider advertising in any regional plant or gardening magazines which might be read by plant enthusiasts such as Master Gardeners or garden club members.

## **SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS and CONSIDERATIONS**

### **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 and Assistance Center. If there is an attraction in the area, the hotel may already or be willing to offer free scheduled shuttle service. If they do not offer tours, be sure to include information in the show book or gift bag about local attractions. 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.

### **VIP Transportation**

You may wish 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 minivans 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.

### **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 and personnel at the Registration and 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. 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. For useful information on designing an orchid show, go to [www.AOS.org](http://www.AOS.org), tap Affiliates Societies tab at the top of the page. On left side of new page under heading "Additional Information" select "Show in a Box."

## CHECKLIST

### ASAP

- Initial search for suitable facilities
- Letter of invitation to AOS headquarters
- Letter of response received from AOS headquarters
- Notification from AOS Chief Operating Officer
- Communication of AOS Trustees approval of site
- Trustees appointment of liaison
- Contact Specialty Groups
- Appoint Show Committee
- Coordinate with your Judging Center Chair
- Receive approval of show date from AOS headquarters
- Book hotel and show space locking in meal & room rates if possible
- Initiate fund-raising activities

### 18-12 months prior

- Propose working budget (income and expenses)
- Appoint Chair of judging activities
- Obtain event schedule from the Membership & Affiliated Societies Chair ([affiliated\\_societies@AOS.org](mailto:affiliated_societies@AOS.org))
- Prepare advertising material
- 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)

### **6 months prior**

- Contact Committee Chairs for audio-visual needs
- Contact all speakers for their bios and topics
- Print and distribute programs/registration material
- Finalize menus

### **1 month prior**

- Contact VIPs and vendors for transportation needs and provide full information on what is available to them.