

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

### **Look Up When you Walk Through the Park. Do You See the Orchids?**

Venice, Florida October 15, 2015: For years the city of Venice has promoted itself as "the Shark's Tooth Capital of the World". However, after multiple beach renourishment projects it's becoming increasingly difficult to find those shark's teeth on our beaches. It may just be in the not- so -distant- future that Venice has a new claim to fame - "the City of Orchids" - thanks to an ongoing community project to populate our city parks and trees with Florida friendly orchids.

In 2014 the Venice Area Orchid Society (VAOS) and the Venice Area Beautification Inc. (VABI), with the support of our city leaders, began a project to plant and mount orchids in our city parks and trees. About 50% of the initial 100 plants have survived the squirrels and weather and are thriving. And because divisions of mature plants and not seedlings were planted, we should start to see some blooming orchids this spring.

The Venice project is nowhere near the scale of the Million Orchid Project initiated by Fairchild Tropical Botanic Gardens in Coral Gables, FL where 50,000 orchid seedlings will be planted in the coming years. However, their project does serve as a terrific role model to initiate our own - to reintroduce Florida friendly orchids to Venice.

South Florida was a natural orchid paradise 100 years ago. Loss of habitat, urban development and poaching has decimated their numbers to the extent that they have no hope of recovering on their own. Many Florida native orchids are now endangered or extinct. South Florida is the only sub-tropical part of our country where orchids can be grown outside with minimal risk of freezing. Orchids grow on trees in their natural habitat. They are not parasites and do not damage the

trees. They require little maintenance and can grow and bloom for decades once established.

Planting orchids in our city landscape will enhance the beauty of our Island City and delight our residents and visitors for years to come. So the next time you walk through one of our downtown parks, look up. You might just see a blooming orchid!

The Venice Area Orchid Society is one of the largest and most active orchid societies in Florida with over 300 members. The annual Venice Orchid Show and Sale, held the first weekend in February each year, draws more than 4000 visitors.

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