

THE VENICE ORCHID PROJECT

VAOS proposes to lead an orchid beautification and conservation project for the city of Venice. We envision a community - wide project to plant orchids in trees and landscaping in downtown Venice, city parks, school grounds and other public areas for the enjoyment of our residents and visitors and to promote the conservation of Florida native orchids.

Background: South Florida was a natural orchid paradise 100 years ago but loss of habitat, urban sprawl and theft has decimated their numbers. Many 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 require little maintenance and can grow and bloom for decades once established.

On a much larger scale, Fairchild Tropical Botanic Gardens initiated "The Million Orchid Project" to reintroduce native orchids into south Florida's landscape. In 2014 volunteers began planting 50,000 orchid seedlings into Coral Gable FL trees. This successful project has become community-wide, involving orchid society volunteers, Fairchild scientists and students.

Objective: Planting orchids in our Venice area will enhance the beauty of our town and delight our residents and visitors for years to come. We have an opportunity to restore and preserve Florida native orchids. Our objective is to lead a community-wide project that brings together VAOS volunteers, local organizations and businesses, residents and students to contribute to the beautification of our city of Venice and to promote orchid conservation.

Approach: Upon member approval, establish the project committee:

Project Directors - Jay Loeffler and Carol Wood have volunteered to lead the project.

Orchid Specialist Consultant - Bill Fender has agreed to serve as our expert.

Marketing/PR - To identify and establish partnerships and publicize the project. Anticipated partners: VAPI, Venice Garden Club, Gulf Coast Community Foundation, Venice Chamber of Commerce, Venice MainStreet, schools, businesses, etc. Seek support, volunteers and financial aid as needed.

Legal - To research and resolve liability issues. Volunteers will work under Venice Area Beautification Inc. (VAPI) and sign a waiver.

Research - To consult with AOS, Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden and Dr. Martin Motes and others to select species to focus on (i.e. tampensis, Epi. radicans, etc.)

Vendor Rep - To work with Florida orchid growers to obtain discounted plants including hybrids that will produce more rapid results/blooms and keep the cost down.

Schedule Coordinator - To establish plan and schedule to initiate plantings (locations, host trees, time line and to identify the number and types of plants per location.

Project volunteers can participate by working on the project committee and:

- Donate bare root divisions
- "Foster care" seedlings until ready for planting
- Plant and mount orchids in trees and landscapes
- Monitor and document health of established plants

AMERICA IN BLOOM COMPETITION

The Venice Area Beautification Inc. (VAPI) has invited VAOS to participate in the nationwide 2015 America In Bloom Contest. America in Bloom promotes nationwide beautification through education and community involvement by encouraging the use of flowers, plants, trees and other environmental and lifestyle enhancements. Each year cities of equal size compete on six factors: Floral Displays, Landscaped Areas, Urban Forestry, Environmental Efforts, Heritage Preservation and Overall Impression.

Venice attained the "Four Bloom" designation in last year's national America In Bloom Competition, and hopes to win the "Five Bloom" designation, the highest awarded, this year. Around June 1st two judges will tour Venice looking at the city's landscaping, tree programs, trails and other amenities. The State College of Florida will present a video to the judges and a coffee table book is being put together of local interests to present to the judges. Other local participants include: Venice Garden Club, Venice MainStreet, Venice Chamber of Commerce, Venice High School Vikings Football and other local businesses and organizations.

VAPI is a volunteer NFP organization that works to make the Venice area a more beautiful place to live, work and play by creating private and public partnerships to improve public spaces.

VAOS can participate in the competition as we initiate **The Venice Orchid Project**:

- Planting orchids in local park trees (encyclias, cattleyas) and landscapes (Epi. radacans)
- Providing photos and videotapes of these efforts
- Providing photos and videos of our orchids and our show exhibits

More Information: www.AmericaInBloom.org, On facebook: Venice-Area-Beautification-Inc