



Image courtesy of Morikami Museum & Japanese Gardens

Selby Gardens is home to the best scientifically-documented orchid collection in the world. The majority of Selby Garden's orchid specimens are from the tropics and subtropics of Central and South America, where over half of the more than 27,000 known orchid species are found. For this year's Orchid Show, however, Selby Gardens has decided to shift focus and highlight another strength of its collection – the orchids of Asia. This will not only afford an opportunity to feature different orchid species, but also enable an examination of the cultural significance of orchids, as manifest in Asian art, philosophy, and religion.

"Blossoms of Asia" will combine a dazzling display of living orchids in the Tropical Conservatory with an elegant exhibition of orchid treasures from Selby Gardens's bibliographic and preserved collections in the Museum of Botany and the Arts. The magnificent orchids in the Tropical Conservatory will include Asian specimens from Selby's living plant collection. The display will reference traditional Japanese garden design and horticultural practices, including ikebana (the art of flower arrangement) and bonsai (the creation of miniaturized trees), in order to evoke a sense of Asia in the heart of Sarasota.

The sources of inspiration for the conservatory display will be explored, in detail, in the south

gallery of the Museum of Botany and the Arts. This will help to contextualize the features of the display and explain the thinking behind them. The south gallery will also include information on Selby's Asian orchid collection, accompanied by a selection of Asian orchid spirit and herbarium specimens.

The north gallery will feature rare botanical books and prints from the Selby Gardens' Research Library, coupled with ink paintings and watercolors generously lent by the Morikami Museum and Japanese Gardens in Delray Beach. The mix of works from Europe and Asia will enable comparisons between different styles of illustration, some representational and scientific, others decorative and symbolic. The inclusion of works from Asia will also make it possible to explore the cultural significance of orchids, particularly in China and Japan. The orchid is one of four plants (the others being the plum blossom, bamboo, and chrysanthemum) known as the "Four Gentlemen." Each plant signifies one of the four seasons and is associated with certain desirable human traits. The orchid signifies spring and is associated with integrity and friendship.

The Orchid Show will be accompanied by a series of educational programs and events appealing to every orchid enthusiast.



Above: Four Gentlemen, by Nakabayashi Chikuto, mid 19th Cen., handscroll; ink on paper.

Orchids, bamboo, chrysanthemum, and plum (ran, take, kiku, and ume) are the 'four gentlemen.' Each plant is associated with a season (orchids with spring, bamboo with summer, chrysanthemum with autumn, and plum with winter) and a range of qualities that resonated with Confucian and Zen ideals. The orchid is associated with purity, loyalty, incorruptibility, and modesty and its long, tapered leaves and fine petals of the plant make it ideally suited to the play of ink and brush.

Right: *Cymbidium giganteum* or *iridioides* plate from *Lindenia Iconographie des Orchidées*, 1885

Far right: *Cymbidium okagami*, watercolor by Zuigetsu Ikeda, approximately 1930-1940, commissioned by Japanese banker Shotaro Kaga who bred orchids in the first half of the 20th century



ORCHID SHOW KEYNOTE LECTURE

ASIAN INSPIRED: The Roots of The Orchid Show 2019

November 13 from 12 - 1 P.M.

This talk will explore the traditional Asian art forms, such as ikebana and bonsai, which have influenced the design of The Orchid Show 2019. The talk will examine the history of these art forms and explain how they have come to captivate Western audiences.

David Berry is the Associate Director of Academic Affairs and Special Projects at The Ringling. David has worked as a consultant with Selby Gardens since 2014. He is the guest curator of The Orchid Show in the Museum of Botany and the Arts.

FREE with general admission. RSVP at selby.org.