



# BASNCR

BOTANICAL ART SOCIETY OF THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION

*Promoting botanical art in the National Capital Region*

January 2010

[www.BASNCR.org](http://www.BASNCR.org)

Volume 6 Issue 1

**HOW TO JOIN:**  
*For information contact:*  
BASNCR, Treasurer  
7471 Cedar Knolls Drive  
Warrenton, VA 20187

## President's Message

Dear BASNCR Members,  
Our Board is now complete! Mary O'Herron has assumed the Education Coordinator position and Kelly Sverduk is the new Web Coordinator. They join Barbara Hanft who signed on as the Exhibits Coordinator, replacing Kathy Brahney. Many thanks to them in advance, as well as grateful thanks to Rita Pazzelli, Karen Coleman, and Kathy who served so well and contributed to the Board's many discussions.

We have some exciting programs and initiatives in store. One has already begun: Mary has arranged for us to have studio sessions at Brookside Gardens every Friday from 9:30-12:30. Read more about this inside. This is part of our self-education, and a chance to learn from each other. In the January 24th program, Barbara Sweeney will show us the nuts and bolts of scanning, preparing images, and copying them to CDs. This will be packed full of information. Please renew your membership (bringing your dues to the meeting is ok) so you don't miss out. All the best,

*Pamela Mason, President*



BASNCR members Jane Zander, Alice Tangerini, Karen Coleman, and Diane Berndt, standing left to right. Seated are Eva Knight of the Southwest Society of Botanical Artists, Pamela Mason, and Marcia DeWitt. Photo by Joe Coleman

## Phoenix Annual Meeting Another Big Success

by Sandra Becker with Jane Zander, Karen Coleman, and Pamela Mason

The Southwest Society of Botanical Artists in Phoenix hosted 180 botanical artists, would-be artists, and students of botanical art from all over the U.S. and from five other countries who attended the American Society of Botanical Artists' (ASBA) 15<sup>th</sup> annual meeting. BASNCR was well represented by Pamela Mason, Karen Coleman, Alice Tangerini, Jane Zander, Diane Berndt, and Sandra Becker who attended the three-day meeting. Fifty-three workshops, lectures and other activities, three field trips, and three 3-day master classes filled the event.

A much anticipated session each year is the Artists' Portfolio Sharing on the first day. Diane had a table explaining the offerings at the Brookside Gardens' School of Botanical Art and Illustration that generated a great deal of interest. Prior to the annual banquet was a silent auction of donated artwork, art supplies, and books that raised \$22,000 to support artist and education grants (one of which was awarded to BASNCR's own Debbie Bankert. See page 7 for a full article).

Two world-class exhibitions of contemporary botanical art, one at the Phoenix Art Museum ("A Natural Perspective") and the other at the Desert Botanical Garden ("Legacy: An Exhibition of Artists Who Have Received the Diane Bouchier ASBA's Founder's Award for Excellence in Botanical Art") were open in conjunction with the meeting. The Phoenix Art Museum

*Continued on page 2*

### Time to Renew Your Membership in BASNCR for 2010

Dues are \$37. Make your check out to BASNCR, and mail to BASNCR Treasurer, 7471 Cedar Knolls Drive, Warrenton, VA 20187.

Go to [www.BASNCR.org](http://www.BASNCR.org) for the 2010 membership form.

show included BASNCR members Karen Coleman and Alice Tangerini works. (Catalogs for all ASBA exhibitions are available on the ASBA website, (<http://huntbot.andrew.cmu.edu/ASBA/ASBA-Catalogs.html>.)

Karen singled out the "amazing desert plantx and birds" of the Desert Botanical Garden, the opportunity to meet with old and new friends, the two exhibitions of botanical art and the gracious hosting by the Southwest Society of Botanical Artists as highlights of the meeting. Many agreed that Phoenix "was the best conference we'd ever attended."

Pamela's classes led her to drawing and painting local plant life using new skills she'd like to keep up. She thought the field trips were exceptional because exotic cacti, euphorbias, and other succulents that starred in the desert landscape are fairly unfamiliar to most of us in BASNCR.

Jane Zander and I both attended the pre-meeting workshop with vellum artist Kate Nessler despite never having worked on vellum before. The vellum workshop drew a mixture of experienced artists (four participants had artwork in the traveling "Losing Paradise?" show) and novices. Jane said, "Vellum is actually fun to work on and forgiving of everything but too much water. I learned that many of the mistakes I make as a botanical artist are the same things that give the real experts problems. I learned to work much slower and with the greatest attention to line quality and detail."

Jane and I enjoyed the portfolio-sharing session, and she found the luncheon afterward a treat because "I got to meet so many people whose work I have admired." Jane added that "each of the workshops I attended was useful and inspired me to set the bar a lot higher for my own work." I agree.

I attended the post-meeting master class with Lizzie Sanders, well-known Scottish artist, on surface textures and fine detail using dry brush techniques. Using tiny brushes as if they were colored pencils filled with a high concentration of paint to water, we rendered fruits in whole and cross section. We struggled with various stipple and line strokes to reproduce the pitted surfaces of citrus, the hairy texture of kiwi, and the shine of persimmon. We produced color charts and distinct color palettes for each little painting. Lizzie herself uses such tiny strokes that she paints with a magnifying glass on a stand. I call myself a washy painter, and felt the class fascinating and useful.

BASNCR attendees felt the meeting was extremely well organized, full of valuable workshops, and in a great location to observe desert plant life. The bonus of these meetings, however, outside the workshops and the opportunities to view, is the chance to meet and talk with other botanical artists at all experience levels. These meetings provide an opportunity for even a rank beginner to feel welcome and learn.

## On the Calendar

**January 24:** BASNCR quarterly membership meeting, 12:30-4pm, at the U.S. Botanic Garden. Member Barbara Sweeney will conduct a workshop focusing on preparing art for scanning, scanning the final images, and transferring images to CDs.

**February 5:** Deadline for submitting art and articles for next issue of the newsletter. All are encouraged to send in material but seasonally appropriate images are especially desirable.

**Through February 28:** *The Christmas Story: Picturing the Birth of Christ in Medieval Manuscripts* at The Walters Museum, Baltimore. Wednesdays – Sundays, 10:00am-5:00pm.



There is not much detail about the birth of Jesus in the Holy Bible, but filling in the missing blanks became a specialty of illuminated manuscripts in the Middle

Ages. Now in a private American collection, the Walters will display the Cornaro Missal illuminated manuscript during Christmastime.

**March 21:** BASNCR quarterly membership meeting 12:30-4pm, at the U.S. Botanic Garden. Member Judy Brown will present "Tricks of the Trade" to include the care and feeding of brushes, rescue techniques with a magic sponge, favorite brushes, the joy of tiny containers, palettes from everyday things and other hints that just might make your chores easier.

**May 16:** BASNCR quarterly membership meeting, 12:30 - 4:00 p.m., at the U.S. Botanic Garden. Bill McLaughlin, USBG Curator, will give a program on native plants.

**May 22 - July 9:** "Botanica", the annual exhibition of the Brookside School of Botanical Art and Illustration will be on exhibit at Brookside Gardens. Opening reception and award presentations May 23.

**Through June 30:** *Botanicals: Environmental Expressions in Art*, The Alisa and Isaac M. Sutton Collection at the Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation. Details available at [huntinst@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:huntinst@andrew.cmu.edu).

**December 4-February 6, 2011:** BASNCR Annual Exhibit at Brookside Gardens.

## Meet BASNCR's New Board Members

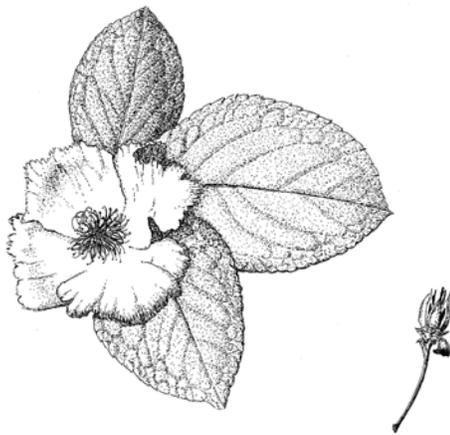
**Barbara Hanft, Exhibits Coordinator** – Mine is a family of artists and gardeners. My mother and great aunt were art teachers, and my great-grandfather was a talented silversmith who tooled a staff for the pope. When I was little, my father set aside a plot for me to raise a flower garden. Enchanted watching my seeds unfurl their colorful banners, I began my endless fascination with natural art forms. Brookside Gardens' School is the creative venue I yearned for to balance my writing and teaching as an occupational therapist helping educators and other therapists serve children with disabilities.



Springtime Valentine © Barbara Hanft

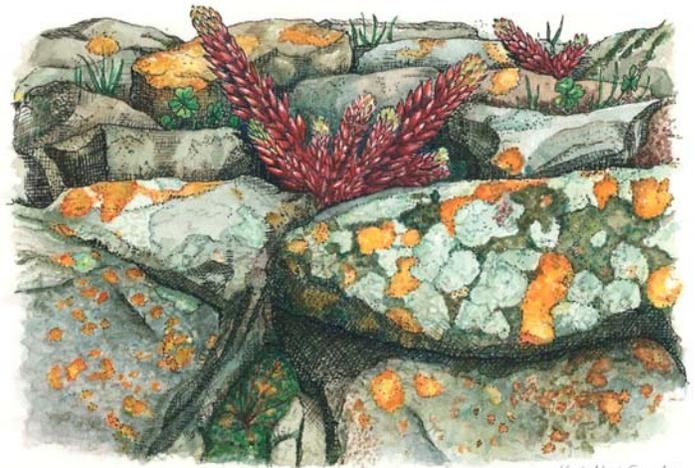
I have had three exhibitions of my bread dough ornaments in the Trees of Christmas exhibit at the American Museum of History. I also love to design and make jewelry from beads that I collect.

**Mary O'Herron, Education Coordinator** -- I am in awe of botanical art and its amazing precision and artistry, and I enjoy the challenge of trying to make plants grow forever. Joining the Brookside Gardens' School program and then BASNCR has broadened my admiration for both the art and the artists. I have done many murals over the years, and in 2004 published a children's book called *A Letter from Marty, Grandma and Grandpa's Cat*, which originated as a letter to my grandchildren. In addition, our family spent many years abroad in South Africa, Botswana, Portugal, and Belgium with the U. S. Foreign Service.



Stewartia © Mary O'Herron

**Kelly Sverduk, Website Coordinator** -- My interest in art and nature began as a child on our family's dairy farm in Delaware. I started formal art lessons at age nine and thus embarked on the path to becoming a "real" artist. I studied art in college. Since moving here, participating in BASNCR and Brookside Gardens School has been interesting and incredibly valuable. I've appreciated the feedback of other artists, as well as the opportunities to exhibit artwork. I'm excited to take on the position of website coordinator for BASNCR, and look forward to interacting with the members of this unique organization.



Kelly Mills Sverduk

Garden Wall - Tuscany © Kelly Sverduk

### BASNCR Leadership

<b>President:</b>	Pamela Mason <a href="mailto:pamelarmason@comcast.net">pamelarmason@comcast.net</a>
<b>Vice President:</b>	Joan Ducore <a href="mailto:djducore@gmail.com">djducore@gmail.com</a>
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## The Traveling Artist

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by Sandra Becker

My husband spent a week in early October in Denver on business and I had promised to accompany him. I checked online for workshops available that week and then contacted a Denver botanical artist, Terry Ruitter, at the suggestion of ASBA's executive director Robin Jess. Terry suggested that I contact Dr. Mervi Hjelmroos-Koski, coordinator for the botanical art and illustration program at the garden, to see if I could audit three classes: pen and ink with Libby Kyer; watercolor pencils with Renee Jorgensen; and watercolor with Constance Sayas. With Mervi's help the instructors agreed to my participation.

The physical space for the classes is exceptional. The room is large with ample space for 15 big tilt-top desks, each with its own lamp. Overhead lights and natural light through the windows brighten the room. The instructor has a spacious table up front and an overhead projector to facilitate art demonstrations projected onto a white wall. The instructor's table has room for students to display their work and to stand around it for critiques. Along the back of the classroom is a counter with a sink and locked cabinet space below that houses light boxes and such.

The first class was pen and ink I, in which students were learning to use a menu of lines and stippling to show form and texture. The class began with a display of homework showing the exterior and cross section of a Brussels sprout, a handful of pistachio nuts, and other less edible subjects. The lesson I attended was on adding local color where appropriate, for a multi-hued specimen or where the local color was needed to distinguish different varieties of a particular plant. We drew chrysanthemums of different hues (and some multi-hued) to learn how to add local color in black-and-white drawing.

The next day I attended a class on water-soluble colored pencils, a new offering for the program and a new medium for me. The students first used watercolor pencils alone, then in conjunction with regular colored pencils, and later with watercolor on Fabriano hot press paper. We learned that we needed to know whether the

pencils were wax-based (Prismacolor) or vegetable-oil based (Faber Castell) because vegetable-oil-based pencils do not work over the wax type, although the wax-based pencils work over any of the other media being used. Wax paper over colored pencil can lift color, clean an edge, and create texture. For the day's lesson we were working on vegetables in cross section. I chose a shallot because I liked the lavender color. The smell was a bit intense, although not as bad as an onion. The medium was fun and worth exploring further.

The last class I took was a beginning watercolor class. The subject was miniature pumpkins, but first we had to make a committed line drawing of it, then a light-and-shade drawing on tracing paper taped to the committed drawing. Then we painted an initial glaze (or tea wash) on watercolor paper using the light and shade drawing as a reference.

Connie demonstrated the second and third glazes to add the shadows and highlights that create form and also to adjust the colors. The final class would focus on dry brush techniques to add details.

In my spare time, I wandered through the garden ([www.botanicgardens.org](http://www.botanicgardens.org)). Denver's dry climate and "mile high" elevation make for plants dissimilar to mid-Atlantic ones that thrive in our

humid, moist climate. The changeable climate and the lack of rainfall result in a garden that, even with irrigation, has less showy plants and a very different feel. The buildings and the hardscape – stone walls and benches, which offered many lovely places to sit -- outshined the flowers in many of the garden rooms.

Leaving Denver at the end of the week, we flew to Boise, Idaho, to visit family. While there, we visited the Idaho Botanical Garden ([www.idahobotanicalgarden.org](http://www.idahobotanicalgarden.org)). Boise had already had a hard freeze, so the garden was making up for lost flowers by hosting an Oktoberfest. The adults enjoyed the beer while their kids and I walked up to the recently opened Lewis and Clark garden, which features many of the species collected during the explorers' expedition in the early 1800s. The garden displays the plants with information about their use by Native Americans at that time.



*Corn on vellum* © Sandra Becker

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## Of Note

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As this issue of the newsletter went to press, BASNCR's annual exhibit was in its final days at River Farm. Altogether there were 40 works in this show, and of that 8 sold.

Congratulations go to Berit Robertson, whose "Three Pears" won the "People's Choice Award" during the opening reception September 10. There was a steady stream of visitors at the mansion and our artworks were very well received. It seemed a very good match up of our art and the American Horticultural Society's historic and lovely setting. Our organization owes a big thank you to Kathy Brahney and her able team for

securing River Farm for our 2009 show, hanging the pieces selected by the juror, and putting on a stellar opening reception. For those of you eager for more exposure to your artwork, set your sights on the 2010 exhibit at Brookside Gardens, when Barbara Hanft will coordinate the show. Much more on this to follow.

**Small group painting opportunities** are now set up at Brookside Gardens on Fridays from 9:30 am-12:30 pm in the Adult Classroom Workshop. Contact Mary O'Herron, Education Coordinator for BASNCR at [tomo1427@starpower.net](mailto:tomo1427@starpower.net) or 301-587-1543 to get in on this exciting new venture.

**The Chesapeake Circle of Botanical Artists** led by Dori Novak welcomes BASNCR members to its regularly scheduled studio sessions also at Brookside Gardens in the same Adult Classroom Workshop from 9:30 am-12:30 pm. Just drop in if you wish to participate. Dori is also a member of our organization. Please contact her if you have questions at [denovak@comcast.net](mailto:denovak@comcast.net) or 410-299-6469.

**Children's Day on Sept. 19<sup>th</sup> at Brookside Gardens** was a huge success. Thanks go out to Joan Ducore, Sandra Becker, Rita Pazelli (coordinator) Judy Brown, and Pamela Mason for staffing the artwork tables and making the event fun for hundreds of visitors to the garden. We hear that there were more than 3,500



*Three Pears* © Berit Robertson

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## Small Group Start-Ups

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by Judy Rodgers

To further "opportunities for interactions that inspire the artistic creativity and support the growth and development of our members" as included in our mission statement, we are developing small groups within our BASNCR membership. While our quarterly meetings, programs, and field trips will remain centerpieces of participation, these small groups will bring together artists at all levels and will lend yet another opportunity for creative growth.

As BASNCR's new Education Coordinator, Mary O'Herron will be facilitating the start up of the groups. The first meets at Brookside Gardens in Wheaton, MD, on Friday mornings from 9:30-12:30. Thanks to Mark Richardson's (Adult Education Programs Director at Brookside) generous offer of the adult classroom's workroom, BASNCR members can sketch, paint and/or discuss one another's work.

We are not content to stop at one small group. Mary needs your help in searching for facilities to house other small groups. If you know of a venue that could provide a space once a week for botanical artists, or if you would like to see a small group formed near you, please contact Mary and she will see if she can make it happen.

This new program is meant to be unstructured and will evolve according to the interests of participants. We hope that it meets the needs of our members at all experience levels. If so, please get in on the ground floor and join or help start a small group. Let's grow together.

Make this your New Year's resolution: Step up your BASNCR involvement through small groups. If you would like to be a member of the Brookside small group, or have ideas about other locations for a small group start-up, please contact Mary O'Herron at 301 587-1543 .



*Magnolia seed pod, graphite* © Marsha Ogden

## In the Classroom

*A column wherein members may list classes they will be teaching, and read about other botanical art class opportunities.*

**A** 2010 schedule of classes, dates, and fees for **Brookside Gardens School of Botanical Art & Illustration** is available online at [www.brooksidegardens.org](http://www.brooksidegardens.org), under "Learn."

### Discover Scratchboard

Instructor: Trudy Nicholson  
When: February 13 – 15 (Presidents' Day Weekend)  
Location: McCrillis Gardens  
6910 Greentree Rd, Bethesda, MD  
Registration: [www.ParkPASS.org](http://www.ParkPASS.org). Fee: \$279  
From this master of natural science illustration, learn to realistically render the textures of nature using scratchboard, which is correctible and dramatic.

### Colored Pencil I

Instructor: Merri Nelson  
When: March 13 & April 10  
Location: McCrillis Gardens  
6910 Greentree Rd, Bethesda, MD  
Registration: [www.ParkPASS.org](http://www.ParkPASS.org). Fee: \$186. This elective includes blending, layering and creating texture using different surfaces, including colored paper.

### Painting Fancy Tulips (Master class)

Instructor: John Pastoriza-Piñol When: April 26 – 29  
Location: Brookside Gardens Visitors Center, Wheaton, MD  
Registration: [www.ParkPASS.org](http://www.ParkPASS.org). Fee: \$425

Learn how to paint fancy tulips such as parrot tulips with their complex structure and colored patterns, using John's unique painting techniques.

### Tuscany Workshop and Tour

Instructors: Margaret Saul & Kandy Vermeer Phillips  
When: May 29 – June 13  
Location: Tuscany, Italy  
A botanical art workshop designed for beginners and experienced artists. Students will create illuminations of flowers inspired by the work of Renaissance artists in Siena. Meet Italian botanical artists. our Tuscany and Umbria. Detailed itinerary and information at [www.brooksidegardens.org](http://www.brooksidegardens.org). Call Mark Richardson, Adult Education Programs Manager at Brookside, 301-962-1470 for brochure.

### El Charco, Mexico Classes

Instructors: staff of the botanical illustration program at the Denver Botanic Garden  
When: 5 – 7 day classes Feb. 5 through Oct. 1  
Location: El Charco del Ingenio, a nature reserve and botanical garden in San Miguel de Allende  
Registration: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/21340254/Botanical-Illustration-in-ElCharco.com> or contact Dr. Mervi Hjelmroos-Koski, coordinator for the Botanical Art & Illustration program at the Denver Botanic Garden, [bi.dbg@att.net](mailto:bi.dbg@att.net).

## What (Else) I Learned In Photoshop

by Pamela Mason

Alice Tangerini shared her Photoshop "Tips and Tricks" at the October 4 meeting. She recommended scanning at 1200 dpi at 8 bit gray scale (not black and white) for black-and-white work, and not to make a scan different than the original work (Tips #1 and #2). She emphasized that it was important to have well-defined edges in the image or else it is difficult to manipulate the background well. Therefore, Tip #3 is clean up scans of original art. When working in Photoshop, it is critical to save every stage of work (Tip #4), so you can return to any of them if you change your mind. "History" tracks all steps since the last saved file. Alice demonstrated her working methods using the "magic wand" and other selection tools, in Page 6

which she was able to change the background and edges of a scanned orchid painted on vellum by Kathy Brahney, used for demonstration. She also adjusted light and dark areas using the "eraser" set to different opacities. It was an impressive display of the many options the artist has in the Photoshop program, even for those of us botanical artists familiar enough with the software to use it



*Alice Tangerini demonstrated "Photoshop" techniques at October meeting at USBG. Photo by B.Sweeney*

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## How to Mount a Mini Exhibit

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by Betsy Farr

Prompted by a desire to publicize our annual show at River Farm, I cast a lustful eye on the huge display case at our local library in Falls Church back in February 2009. (We've since moved to Manassas.) I'd like to encourage all members to tap their inner kindergarten teacher--I think Kathy will attest that mounting this library display was a lot of fun and cost very little effort. The fruits: Wider name recognition for BASNCR and a chance to announce to a very large and diverse assortment of people that botanical art 1) exists and 2) is practiced right under their noses.

Any member might well consider mounting such a display as local sites come to mind. On inquiry, the Tysons-Pimmit Library was quite eager to accommodate us. We didn't let an eight-month wait discourage us, because understandably its display case stays booked. In my note to the director, I identified us as a nonprofit organization with membership from within the library's target area (ME!), and mentioned our association with the U.S. Botanic Garden (pretty impressive, that). I included a newsletter and brochure with our mission statement (I have both on hand as our Membership Coordinator--call me if you need these).

Here's what we were able to pile into a 94"x51" space (for which only one small shelf could be located--take small boxes to vary elevations). Starred items are available from either Kathy or me on loan.

- Clipped art from past BASNCR newsletters and my home copy machine produced a beautiful sampling of enlargements of members' works\*
- A random selection of "Personal Palettes" that illustrated clearly how accomplished our members are. All were mounted simply on colored paper\*
- A very short exposition on the history of botanical art that surrounded an enlargement of a Redoute rose\*
- Real antique botanicals that are originals owned by Kathy and me
- Botanical art books
- Original pieces by Kathy and me, and a work-in-progress with palette and brushes displayed nearby
- A mounted copy of the BASNCR mission statement, and contact information\*
- Information on the River Farm show

As it was October when we made our debut, props included a fall-themed, plastic table cloth and fake chrysanthemums from the dollar store together with some real seed pods and holly for good measure.

This is a great way, in essence, to mount a mini exhibit of



*Kathy Brahney mounts the library display. Photo by Betsy Farr.*

your own work. One thing you can be sure of in a venue where the public comes and goes: A lot of people will see it. So scissors and paste to the ready...and don't forget pushpins!

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## Debbie Bankert Awarded Grant

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by Sandra Becker

The American Society of Botanical Artists (ASBA) announced at its annual banquet in Phoenix last October that our own Debbie Bankert had been awarded a grant to document endemic and endangered plants in the Santa Marta desert area of Colombia, South America. Debbie already has been working in the reserve documenting its flora this past fall. The ASBA grant funding will enable two more trips to photograph and undertake field studies. She will keep a written journal of her work, which she may later turn into a field guide. Also, she plans to visit schools to promote careers in art, with a particular focus on botanical art. She has promised to share details of her travels with BASNCR.



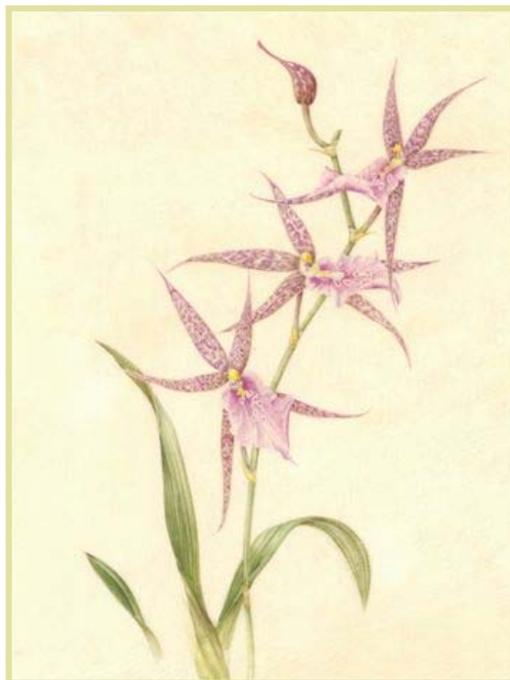
*Debbie hard at work capturing her subjects in Colombia. Photo courtesy of Debbie Bankert*

# What's Blooming Now

by Lee D'Zmura

The natural world has entered its brown period when the garden is dormant and reveals its skeletal structure. For those of you fortunate enough to have taken Doreen Bolnick's workshop this past winter, you view the winter landscape through discerning eyes eager to record the detail in twigs and branches. For those of you who prepared wonderful detailed field studies in the summer of beloved garden plants, this winter will provide a long opportunity to complete beautiful paintings.

This column, however, is addressed to those of you unprepared for winter. To paraphrase Mr. Robinson's advice to Benjamin in the classic movie *The Graduate*: "TROPICALS." At this time of year we really are surrounded by color. Grocery stores, The Home Depot, and garden centers are filled with blooming plants: African vio-



*Odontobrassia Orchid on vellum from Carol Woodin's master class. ©Lee D'Zmura*

lets, Christmas cacti, streptocarpus, and even the dreaded cyclamen. And what about those bulbs you got for Christmas? If your thumb is anything like mine, the amaryllis planted for Christmas blooms is beginning to emerge in January. Each of its stages, from bud to waning flower, provides wonderful subject matter. If you can stand the smell of paperwhite narcissus, the flowers and bulbs of these delicate plants make interesting studies. Soon pots of forced tulips and daffodils will fill our groceries.

And finally there are the orchids. Phalenopsis orchids can be found everywhere with colors ranging from white to fuchsia to florescent green. Dendrobiums, odontobrassia, and cymbidiums offer variety in form, color, and foliage. A word of warning, however: Orchids are a challenge. The orchid is a flower with a very complicated structure and it requires study to understand. Investing in a general reference on orchids, searching the web, and researching at the library will yield the information and understanding to accurately depict these highly evolved monocots.



# BASNCR

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BOTANICAL ART SOCIETY NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION

*Next Meeting*

*January 24, 2010 12:30-4pm*

*U.S. Botanic Garden (USBG)*

*www.usbg.gov*

*See calendar for details.*