

Environment

# Miami botanical garden hosts can't-miss event for orchid lovers

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By Ana Mengotti

Miami, Mar 19 (efe-epa).- Blooming in a range of colors and a seemingly infinite variety of shapes and sizes. Some of them fragrant and others scent-less. Growing in trees, on the ground or in a laboratory setting.

Orchids are everywhere at the Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden just south of Miami, Florida, a natural space that is currently hosting its annual showcase for these attractively flowered plants.

Known as "Orchids in Bloom," the 10-day event featuring exhibitions, conferences, live plant demos, orchid vendors and even weekend concerts began last Friday and will conclude on Sunday.

<https://www.laprensalatina.com/miami-botanical-garden-hosts-cant-miss-event-for-orchid-lovers/>

One of the exhibits is a sound art installation by Miami-based Slovak artist Juraj Kojš titled "Orchid Music," which turns the DNA sequence of 10 native Florida orchid species, such as *Encyclia tampensis* (Tampa Butterfly Orchid) and *Cyrtopodium punctatum* (Bee Swarm Orchid), into musical expression.

According to the artist's website, "each orchid was assigned a particular sonic world, including those of a custom-made synthesizer, water, clay pots, paper, wood, musical instruments, speech and even typewriters."

In another corner of the botanical garden, a large sculpture by Dale Chihuly, an internationally renowned glass sculptor, competes in color and beauty with a multi-colored orchid bush.

The main exhibit of "Orchids in Bloom," however, is the "Richard H. Simons Rainforest," a two-acre (8,100-square-meter) space that features lush vegetation, aerial irrigation systems to enhance rainfall and humidity and a meandering stream.

That rainforest is home to bromeliads, ferns, palms and other jungle plants, but the orchid species brought in from different parts of the tropics by scientists are the star attraction.

Founded in 1938 by David Fairchild (1869-1954), a food explorer who introduced plants such as mangoes, nectarines and horseradish into the United States; and Robert H. Montgomery (1872-1953), an accountant, lawyer and businessman with a passion for collecting plants, the Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden boasts much more than pretty scenery.

Throughout the vast property, scientists are working on initiatives including the Million Orchid Project and a collaborative study with NASA to determine the best edible plants to cultivate at the International Space Station.

The goal of the Million Orchid Project, launched in 2012, is to reintroduce native species of that plant family into the urban landscape of South Florida, a region where they used to grow naturally and abundantly in trees.

At Fairchild's Micropropagation Laboratory, a scientist explained to Efe the process of growing orchids for later attachment to trees in parks or alongside streets.

She said these plants can only grow in places where the fungus that provides them with the sugars and starch they need to develop is present.

In the laboratory, the fungus is replaced with a compound of sugars and starch on which the sprouts of germinated seeds are planted, the expert said in a space filled with hundreds of small jars with sprouts of different sizes and species.

The project's goal is to ensure a wide variety of orchids are in bloom in urban places where people live, study and work.

Tatiana Castro, a spokeswoman for the Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden, told Efe that the idea is to give nature a boost and preserve Florida's native species for future generations. EFE-EPA