

# STORIES of New Jersey

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472 Orange Street, Newark, New Jersey

## NEW JERSEY'S ORCHID INDUSTRY



*Orchids--75 Cents to 12 Dollars*

Orchids, symbols of modern luxury, are celebrating in 1938 the centenary of their cultivation in America. Fifty years ago the orchid was a rare specimen blooming in the greenhouses of wealthy hobbyists, interested only in developing new, more exciting types. Today, despite the depression, the orchid industry, valued at millions of dollars, supplies a national market. In New Jersey alone it is a \$4,000,000 business, one of the largest specialized horticultural enterprises in all the world. Only minutes away by train and highway from the great flower markets of New York and Philadelphia, the Garden State is an ideal, large-scale production center for orchids.

The orchid is a perennial plant that grows in tropical and semitropical regions of the world. Surprisingly tough, independent and long-lived, it is classified into two distinct types: the terrestrial grows as a ground plant; the epiphyte, or tree sitter, generally is found, its roots unprotected, growing in the branches or on the trunks of living trees or sometimes clinging to high barren rocks, exposed to the sun and rains. It is definitely not a parasite feeding on other living matter. Food is usually obtained from the surrounding air and from decaying vegetable matter which is washed down by rain from branches overhead. Altogether there are about 400 genera, or group classifications, of the orchid, and within the groups are approximately 15,000 known species or individual types.

New Jersey's most widely produced genus, and the one most commonly found in the nation's flower shops, is the purple-tinted epiphytic *Cattleya*, named for William Cattley, an early English horticulturist. The *Cattleya* has numerous species and hybrids, variously colored, spectacular blooms produced by cross-breeding different species. There are also bi-generic and tri-generic hybrids, created by crossing the pollen of two or three plants belonging to different groups of the orchid family.