

Cymbidium Chatter



Cym. Pan Am Clipper, a long-lasting pendulous hybrid.

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Latest News

Welcome to the sixth and final issue of *Cymbidium Chatter* for the year. It has certainly been a chaotic year here in Melbourne, with COVID triggering multiple lockdowns and disrupting events across Australia. The Melbourne Orchid Spectacular had to be cancelled for the second year in a row, but this year the OSCOV panel elected to conduct a virtual show instead. It was a mammoth undertaking with almost 1000 photos to catalogue and judge. Weeks of work were involved in preparing for judging and it took several teams of judges, working in parallel, a full day to assess each of the entries. The results are available online at <https://www.oscovirtualshow2021.org/>.

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About a dozen plants were exhibited at the November 2021 club meeting, with two less common *Cymbidium* species standing out from the group – a division of *Cym. tigrinum* ‘Tigress’ and a first-flowering seedling of *Cym. wadae*, a member of the *Eburnea* section (which includes *Cymbidium eburneum*, *parishii* and *mastersii*).

Sadly, COSV life member Joyce Sunderland passed away in late November. She and her husband Peter, who passed away in 2019, started Kimberley Orchids (featured in Issue 32 earlier this year) and were very active in the orchid community here in Australia. She leaves behind an extensive family and our thoughts and prayers are with them at this difficult time.

Plant Profile: Cym. Red Pepper 'Janice'

This Cym is one that many Australian growers (especially those in Victoria) are likely familiar with. It is unusual in its dark russet tepals and cream lip. According to records provided by Graham Morris, it was hybridised by Bob Nicolle in 1985 (then proprietor of Valley Orchids) and was crossing 8513: Ruby Eyes 'Black Silk' X Rolf Bolin 'Marble Bar'. It was registered in 1992 and when Graham took over Valley Orchids in 1999, two varieties were in production: 'Paprika' (V476) and 'Spice' (V513).

In the early 90s, Jan and Andy Leamon obtained a batch of seedlings and mericlones from Valley Orchids, including (Ruby Eyes X Rolf Bolin). Andy comments that "We were sufficiently pleased with its growth and spike habit that we purchased more clones in tissue culture. From that group of tissue cultured clones one had no lip markings and a cream border around sepals and petals and was subsequently named 'Janice'." Andy went on to clone 'Janice' and all the clones were consistent with



Red Pepper 'Janice' has an unusual cream labellum. Andy Leamon explain that multi-generational clones of 'Janice' sometimes exhibit faint purple stripes like the one at the centre of the labellum above.



Cym. Red Pepper 'Paprika' (left) and 'Spice' (right). Photos courtesy of Graham Morris.

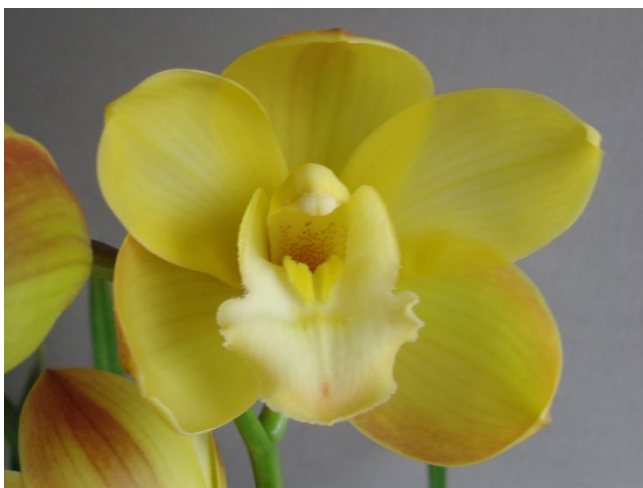
'Janice'. They were sold to orchid clubs and enthusiasts when they flowered. It is unclear which of the two Red Pepper clones produced 'Janice', but Andy suspects it was 'Spice'.

Red Pepper 'Janice' is still in circulation today and can be seen at exhibitions, shows and club meetings from time to time. It is unclear how many times it has been cloned, although first-generation clones can still be found if one asks around. Andy explained that no pieces of the original 'Janice' were ever released or shared, so any new clonal runs conducted by others must be at least second-generation. Kevin Butler of Ezi-Gro Orchids obtained flasks from Sims Orchids and reported that all have flowered true to the original 'Janice'.

Kevin has also used Red Pepper 'Janice' in several crosses and unfortunately found that the pale labellum is not dominant – most seedlings he has flowered have had marked or strongly-coloured labellums. One of the few exceptions is a seedling of ((Nancy Quach X Beau Guest) X Red Pepper 'Janice'), which he has kindly provided photos of and are shown below.



Red Pepper 'Janice' exhibited at the 2019 OSCOV show.



*Left: (Nancy Quach X Beau Guest)
Right: (Nancy Quach X Beau Guest) X Red Pepper 'Janice'*

An Interview with Teresa Bourke

Editor: *It is my hope to feature an interview with a grower, enthusiast, hybridiser, or nursery operator in each issue. For this issue, hobbyist Teresa Bourke has kindly agreed to participate. All photos are Teresa's unless otherwise indicated.*

My name is Teresa Bourke. I'm married with three grown children. They have all left home now, so we're feeling a little bit like empty nesters, my husband more than I (I just have too many things to do!). I have a multicultural background – my father was Egyptian and my mother is Italian. We immigrated to Australia in the 60's when I was a baby. I have never been back to visit Egypt and have never had the inclination to do so.

I grew up in the Inner West suburbs of Sydney NSW and went to school in Balmain. I absolutely hated school, but my father was a strong advocate for education; therefore I was forced to finish Year 12 (back then it was 6th Form). I didn't do all that well in my HSC, but my mathematical brain got me through, thank goodness. I managed to convince my parents that education was not for me and so I went to work straight after high school. I did eventually go back and complete a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration and a Master's degree in Management. Ironically my career journey led me to the last 30 years in the education sector. I am now an advocate for education too.

I now live on the south coast of NSW where it's beautiful one day and magnificent the next.



*One of Teresa's many orchids,
Cym. Pharoah's Dream 'Dural'*



Cym. President Wilson, the first family plant, consistently tested negative for virus since Teresa inherited it.

Editor: *How did you become interested in growing Cymbidiums and how long have you been growing them for?*

When my parents purchased their first home in Sydney in 1970, they were given a Cymbidium orchid as a house-warming gift. I had no idea what the plant was back then. I only knew it flowered every year and my father had to repot it into bigger pots every two or three years. Not being an orchid enthusiast, he would always repot the plant in ordinary garden soil. It kept growing bigger and bigger

until we were told we could split the plant to make more plants. The backyard was eventually inundated with black pots of the same Cymbidium. It was only when I got engaged in the early 80s and my fiancé (now husband) gave me a Cymbidium as a gift that I started to appreciate their beauty and resilience, now knowing what the plant was that my father had been struggling with for years. However, I really didn't become interested in Cymbidiums until we moved to the South Coast in the early 90s. I would see them in nurseries and admire the beautiful colours and sprays. I would buy them for their flowers, but I didn't look after them very well as I was working full time and trying to look after a family. They all passed away.

When my parents purchased a holiday home on the south coast, they brought down the large Cymbidium pot to adorn their new garden; it was the last one they had. It was repotted every couple of years, always into a bigger pot until it ended up in a 400mm pot which weighed a ton. My father passed away in 2008 and my mum stopped travelling south, preferring to stay in her home in Sydney. I took the plant home with me to look after it, but did nothing with it – I didn't know anything about orchids or culture and care. It sat on my front veranda and was watered by the rain. Yet, although neglected, it still flourished, producing beautiful flowers every year.

Up until 2016, I believed that Cymbidiums were the only orchid. I was taken to an orchid show and I was astonished to see the different varieties of orchids. It was then that I took a real interest in, not only Cymbidiums, but all orchids.



*Teresa now grows a selection of Orchid genera, including Paphiopedilums.
Top left: Rosy Dawn, Bottom left: Paph. insigne, Right: Winston Churchill.*



Cym. tracyanum and its hybrids are some of Teresa's favourites. This is one of her Amy Winehouse selections, sourced from Royale Orchids.

Editor: *What groups or types of Cymbidiums are your favourite and what do you like about them in particular?*

Even though I've branched out and have started collecting other types of orchids, my favourite orchids are still Cymbidiums – they are easy to grow, resilient and beautiful. Well, they are now that I know a bit more about how to grow them! However, I've tended to stray away from the typical nursery Cymbidiums and now look for more unusual Cymbidiums for my collection. For example, my favourite Cymbidiums are *insigne*, *lowianum* and *tracyanum* and their hybrids.

Editor: *What is the climate like where you live? Have you had to create any special microclimates to grow your preferred Cyms?*

I live near the beach, just 90 minutes past Wollongong. The climate here is quite reasonable; we get frost from time to time but it isn't common for our region. The summers are quite hot. Unfortunately, I don't have a greenhouse or special microclimate – my orchids live under a



The majority of Teresa's Cymbidiums live under a Laserlite roof on mesh benches.

makeshift shade awning and seem to be doing okay. I did replace the Perspex roof with a Laserlite roofing specifically for shadehouses. I've also semi-enclosed the area with 70% shadecloth.

Editor: *What challenges have you encountered whilst growing your Cyms and how did you overcome them?*

At first, I was quite oblivious to orchid pests and diseases – after all, my father's Cymbidium had been resilient enough to withstand neglect and the elements. To this day, it is one of my hardiest plants. Not knowing about viruses, pests, and culture, I just kept buying orchids and adding them to my collection. My plants became very crowded, and it was only when I joined the local orchid society that I began to understand the different ailments that can affect my orchids.

I found out the hard way about scale and viruses. First, I discovered my plants were not doing well due to a scale infestation. I literally had to take every one of my plants and clean them leaf by leaf and then spray them regularly with pest spray. I now religiously check each plant on a weekly basis.

Then, in early 2020, I was given a plant by a friend. It was very big and produced spikes every year and yet the leaves just did not look right. I tested it with a home virus test kit and it was negative for CymMV and ORSV. My friend, Joshua White, suggested I send a sample to [DPIPWE] Tasmania, so I did. The result was positive for Orchid Fleck Virus. I then noticed quite a few of my orchids had the same leaf markings. Since then, I have sent a sample of every one of my plants to Tasmania



Cym. (It started with a Kiss 'Royale' x tracyanum 'Outer Space')



Cym. Strathdon 'Cooksbridge Fantasy'

pelorics. I have had success with one of them this year, *Cym. Strathdon 'Cooksbridge Fantasy'*, but it's taken five years to produce a single spike.

Editor: *Is there anything you'd do differently if you were starting out in the hobby today, but knowing what you know now? Alternatively, if you were giving advice to a newcomer just starting out in the hobby, what key things would you want them to know?*

If I was starting out in the hobby today, I would just slow down and not be in a hurry to just purchase every orchid I came across. It's an addiction. I would join an orchid club or society and learn from the more experienced growers. Read as much as you can about the care and culture of your favourite orchid before diving into the unknown. I would try new methods of growing, taking the advice of other growers in combination. Not every grower's method will be right for you.

Editor: *Just for fun, what's the oddest or most interesting piece of Cymbidium-related trivia you've come across?*

In ancient Greece, the Cymbidium orchid stood for masculinity and fertility. Later the Cymbidium orchid became a symbol of morality, virtue, beauty, refinement, and love. To give and to receive a gift of a Cymbidium orchid or flower arrangement was regarded as such an honour. It has been considered throughout time in Asia as a gift of respect.

Trivia courtesy of [Little Flower Hut](#) (2019).

for testing and I lost a lot of plants. After a long, expensive process, I can say with hand on heart that my collection is virus free. The moral to the story is: always have your orchids professionally tested before adding them to your collection. I think I've become an expert at spotting virus now!

Editor: *What has been the easiest and the most challenging Cymbidiums for you to grow?*

My easiest Cymbidiums are the older type Cymbidiums like *tracyanum* and *lowianum*. My most challenging are the novelty orchids like



Ba Trieu = (Cym. erythraeum var. flavum 'Paradise' X Cym. floribundum var. album 'Peats Ridge')

Cym. canaliculatum by Ken Russell & Gary Sweikert

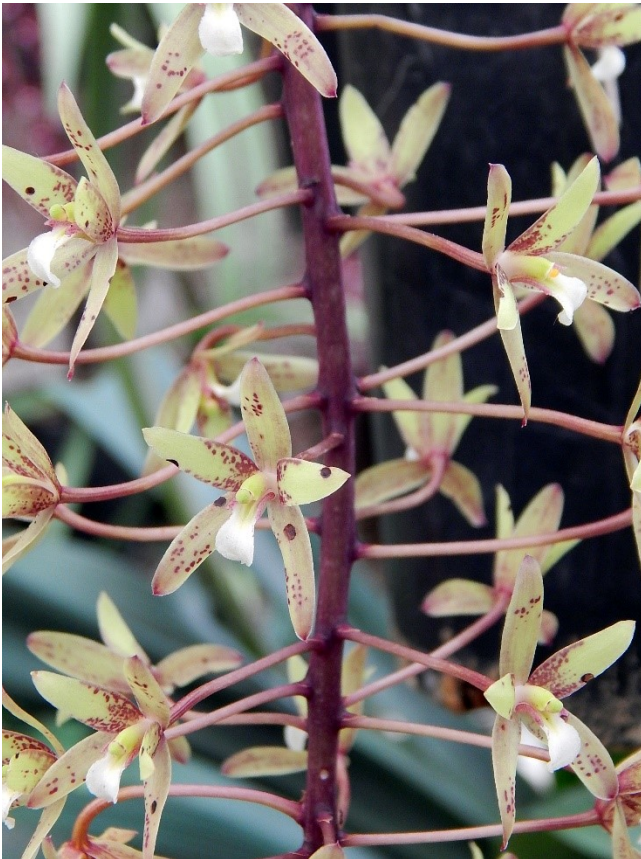
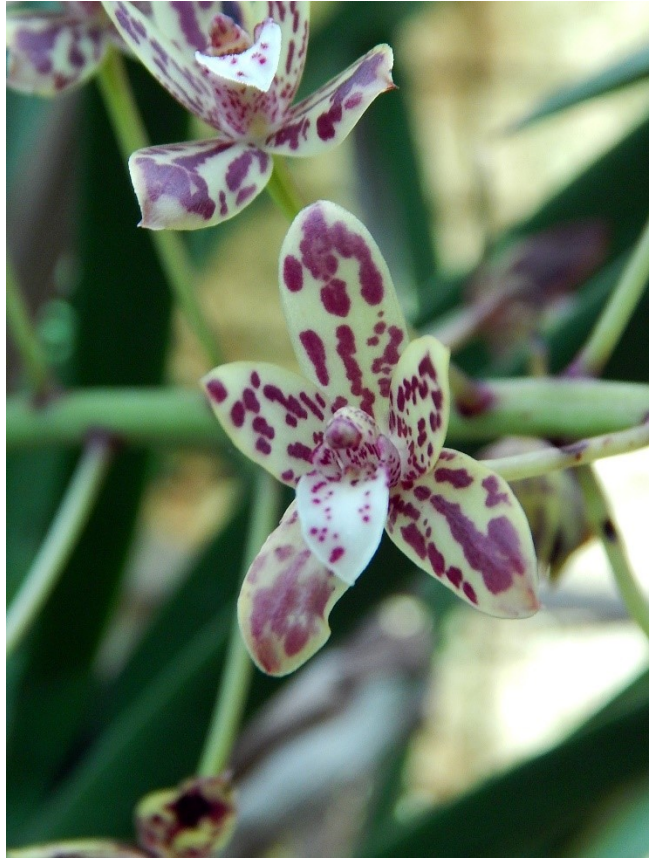
Ken's *Cym. canaliculatum* Selections

Some readers may be familiar with Cym enthusiast and hybridiser, Ken Russell, who lives in New South Wales. He grows a wide variety of the three Australian Cymbidium species as well as a selection of hybrids. For this issue, Gary Sweikert visited Ken during his *canaliculatum* flowering season and took a selection of photographs to highlight the variation in this interesting species.

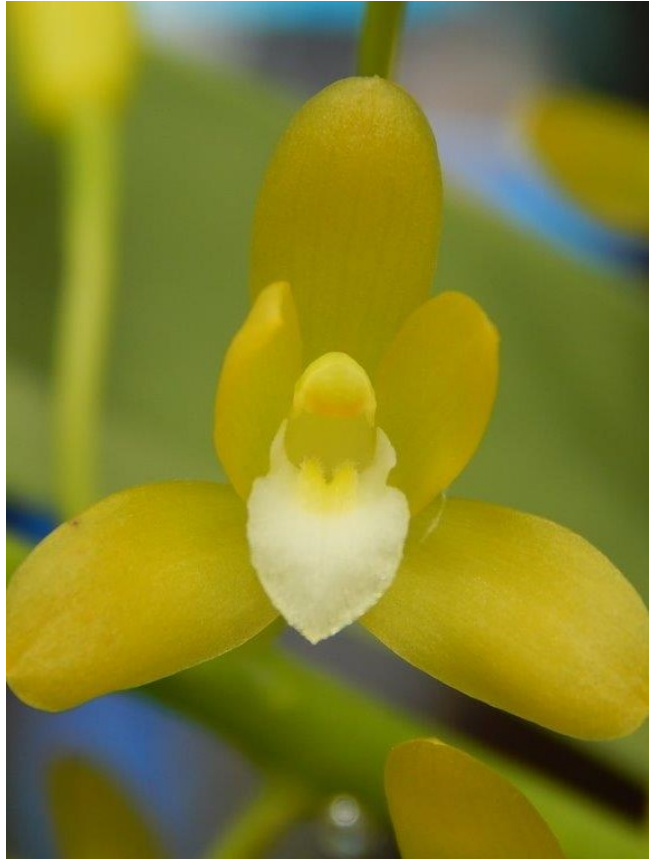








Cym. canaliculatum varies significantly in its markings. The two photos shown here are a very unusual form of the species that was discovered amongst a population of the *sparkesii* form. I had wondered if there might be some introgression from *Cym. suave*, but apparently this population is sufficiently isolated from the nearest known *suave* to exclude that possibility. It may be a rare mutant form that arose naturally.



Last but certainly not least are the two alba forms of the species. Cym. canaliculatum has both a green and yellow alba form, as shown above.

Care and Culture in the Greenhouse

Ken Russell has been growing orchids for many years – too many to remember. He has amassed a large collection of many genera, but apart from his focus on Australian *Dendrobium* and *Sarcochilus* species and hybrids, he has concentrated over the last decade or so on the Aussie *Cymbidium canaliculatum*. He says this species is very adaptable in culture and tolerant of a wide range of climates – provided some basic conditions are met. The following is a basic description of how Ken grows this very diverse species in the Upper Hunter Valley of NSW.

Ken says many people tend to kill this orchid with kindness – more are killed by over watering than any other species. It requires little water (as evident from where it grows in nature), even during its growing season over the warmer months into autumn. His plants receive water basically once a week and maybe an extra splash in heat wave conditions on the hottest summer day. The plants basically receive no water over the months from May through to September. Once new growth and flower spikes emerge, then water is applied again weekly.

Cymbidium canaliculatum likes alkaline growing conditions. The application of a little lime, either by spray (1g CaCO₃ per litre four times a year covering the whole plant and media) or a small amount sprinkled on the media surface, during the growing season is very beneficial. *Cym. canaliculatum*



A flowering-size *Cym. canaliculatum*. Photo: Joshua White.

grows vigorously in spring and summer, slowing down into autumn, and benefits from diluted organic fertiliser applications once a month over the growing period. Due to the different growing conditions this orchid prefers, Ken keeps them all together and not intermingled with other orchids to make it easy to maintain the correct watering and liming/fertiliser regime.

The potting mix Ken uses has evolved over the years after careful study of this species from mid NSW up into far north Queensland (FNQ). It contains medium and coarse bark, eucalyptus dead wood and mulch and some dead Casuarina needles in small amounts. When potting up or dividing, Ken always adds a small handful of the old mix back in with the new mix to maintain all the healthy microbes, that were in the pot for the plant to establish quickly in its new surrounds.

This species likes to be left undisturbed, but if grown well, there will come a time when the orchid outgrows the pot. Dividing and potting on

is not done often, as the potting mix tends to last longer with this species due to the use of minimal water compared to other orchids. Once the orchid has filled a 200mm pot, it is time to divide after the flowering has finished. When dividing, all the old roots are removed and trimmed; this sometimes sets the orchid back a bit but does allow for new root development in the new mix. Any major cuts to rhizomes are dusted with old fashioned sulphur. The flowering the following season may not be up to the standard of the previous season after dividing and repotting. Ken limits his plants to a

200mm maximum pot size, as most of his are hung from the roof or on the walls of the shade house. You need a strong framework to support the weight of many 200mm pots!

Ken houses his *canaliculatum* collection under cover to avoid the cold winter rain. A polycarbonate roof is ideal with around 60% light transmission. Most of this species are hung or mounted high under the roof above eye level, with a few larger plants on benches, but still under cover. No additional heat is provided over winter; in summer, the internal temperature under the roof can get to over 45°C with no leaf burn evident. The walls of the shade house are covered in shade cloth to allow a breeze through. Ken might bring out some of his bigger pots and hang just under shade cloth in the growing season, but come mid-autumn, these will go back under cover for the colder months.

Ken finds pests are not a problem with this species, probably due to their tough leathery leaves. Occasional black spots can occur on leaves during winter but can be controlled with one or two doses of a fungicide spray. Ken might also apply a fungicide during the growing season as a preventative measure for good luck.

Ken's flowering season generally starts around mid-October and will go through to early December. The inland and southern forms of the species with spotted green/brown flowers are the first to flower along with the albas, followed by the FNQ 'sparkesii' forms. The *canaliculatum* hybrids he has made usually follow the species in flowering and can flower well into the summer months.

Ken will admit that raising this species and some of its hybrids as seedlings out of flask can be challenging for the beginner and novice grower, as one can expect quite a large loss. Once established after a year or so they will grow well. Therefore, he recommends the grower who wants to try this species seeks out already established plants or seedlings – although these are usually sort after and can be expensive. One might have to do some research in tracking down a reliable supplier, but they are around.

In summary, the important points are:

1. Don't overwater.
2. Grow under cover, especially over the colder months.
3. Don't overpot.
4. Don't divide too often.
5. Maintain alkaline growing conditions (see next section)
6. Use a deep pot as they have long root systems.
7. Use an adequate free draining media – check the pH.
8. Hang them high under cover.
9. Fertilize only when growing with a weak solution.



Even backbulb propagations of some of the rarer forms of Cym. canaliculatum can be expensive!
Photo: Joshua White.

Cym. canaliculatum in Nature

Some notes on this species as it grows in the bush will help the new grower understand how to best give it the correct conditions to succeed. The species is found inland from the coast, from the NSW Upper Hunter Valley, inland into QLD, then right up the inland stretch of QLD up to the Gulf. Its habitat then stretches west across the border into the NT, across into the Kimberley region of northern WA. Its habitat covers a very wide area of the continent – likely more than any other native orchid. What this vast habitat range has in common is the dry and arid locations that the species is found in.

Cym. canaliculatum is usually found growing on live trees, but sometimes will still survive on fallen dead trees and logs, stumps, fence posts, etc. You will find them growing on the forks of trees and hollows in branches and the clumps can attain a large size with enough weight to finally snap off a branch from the tree. Where it grows usually only sees rain in the warmer summer months, with the colder months seeing virtually no rain.

The species has a very long root system, with the roots penetrating nooks and crannies in the tree. Once the roots find the ever-moist internal tree heartwood, they then have a constant supply of moisture. In a lot of these trees, the middle of the tree is broken down usually as the result of termite infestation. Roots can travel 10 metres or more seeking out the moisture and internal nutrients within the tree. The channel like leaves additionally direct any moisture provided by rain, dew, fog, and frost to the base of the plant. Decayed leaf matter provides the main source of nutrients to the plant in the bush.

It is not uncommon to see very large clumps growing in trees usually quite high up that can have over 100 racemes when in flower. Native bees and insects help pollinate the flowers; it is not uncommon to see perhaps more than 100 pods develop on the clump. Hopefully some of the millions of seeds the pods contain will lodge in the tree and germinate to form new plants.

Ken has done a study of this species in situ together with support from Sydney University researchers and his findings are presented below.

The pH values of the medium in which *Cymbidium canaliculatum* grows in nature have been studied. Results have been compiled after studying 145 different plants over a wide growing range. Plants of the species were examined between the Upper Hunter Valley in NSW up to around Roma in QLD, a habitat range of approximately 1400kms and ranging over many elevations. Daily temperatures in this habitat range vary from a winter minimum of -12°C to a summer maximum of +50°C. Specimens were found on a variety of hosts – eucalypts, native pines, and native oaks (Casuarina) – both living trees, stumps and fallen logs. Ten specimens were found on live native pines, while 30 were growing on fallen pine logs.

pH tests were made around the root systems of each plant, both near the surface and well down around the lower root system. The pH near the surface always differed markedly from lower down in the root zone, as shown by the following values.

Host	pH near surface	pH lower down
Live native pines	6.0	9.0
Pine logs on ground	6.5	9.0
Other live trees	7.0	9.5
Other stumps and logs	7.5	9.5

The pH measured near the roots of natural established seedlings (average leaf length of 150mm) growing on live pines was only 4.5, but measurements taken on older established plants on the same trees ranged from pH 6 to pH 9. It seems therefore that the root systems in *Cymbidium canaliculatum* prefers alkaline conditions, preferably about pH 9, and may modify its environment to suit.

For the hobbyist, if you can replicate the conditions as close as possible that this species likes in its native habitat, then you should have little trouble in growing this rewarding species and its hybrids.

Note: Although Ken has not done a pH study on the species in central and FNQ across into the NT and the top of WA, where they generally grow on different trees to the southern form, he sees no reason why its pH requirements would be any different. The forms Ken grows from those areas respond equally well in the shade house to the same pH levels he maintains for the southern forms.



Another of Ken's canaliculatum selections in bloom. Photo: Gary Sweikert.

TeePee's Treasures

Terry Poulton has kindly provided a large selection of photos from his recent flowering season that will no doubt take me a few issues to get through!



Top: Khanebono 'Jacinta'; Bottom: (Khanebono X Last Tango).



Top: Laramie Gold 'Golden Anniversary'; Middle: Khan Fury 'Dural' & (Amesbury X Masquerade) 'Green Passion'; Bottom: Laramie Lady 'Pastel' & Laramie Lady 'Coji Berry'.

Another Look at ANOVA Pots

Editor: After reading my article on the ANOVApot® in Issue 27 (October 2020), Steve Thomas (interviewed earlier this year for Issue 31) shared his experience with ANOVA pots.

I have used ANOVA pots since they first came on the market. [The] photos are of plants that I have grown in ANOVA pots. My culture is simple: 70% hydroponic grade coco and 30% coarse perlite; nutrient: Peters Excel Cal-Mag Finisher, ec: .80 pH: 5.8. Plants receive nutrients through a drip irrigation system (but they can be hand watered) – Spring and Autumn daily, Summer twice daily and after heavy rains in Winter. Plants are never irrigated with plain water except when it rains.





Acknowledgements and Contributions

I hope you have enjoyed this issue. If you have any feedback or would like to contribute (whether it be just one or two photos, an idea for an article, or to volunteer for an interview), please get in touch! I can be reached at jwhite88@gmail.com.

Previous issues are available at <https://www.cosv.com.au/publications-and-resources>. All material is copyright © the original owners and used with permission. Thanks to all those who have contributed to this issue, including Teresa Bourke, Kevin Butler, Andy Leamon, Graham Morris, Terry Poulton, Ken Russell, Gary Sweikert and Steve Thomas.

The next issue is planned for February 2022. Until then, I wish you all a safe and happy Christmas season and all the best for the New Year.