

'Cymbidium Chatter'

Edition 18 - August 17 2020



Cymbidium Vanity Fair 'Hollywood'
Photograph: Graham Fear

Welcome to this edition of Cymbidium Chatter and the good news that we may have at last turned the corner with our battle with COVID-19. However, there is certainly no place for complacency and we still have at least four more weeks of Stage 4 restrictions to adhere to.

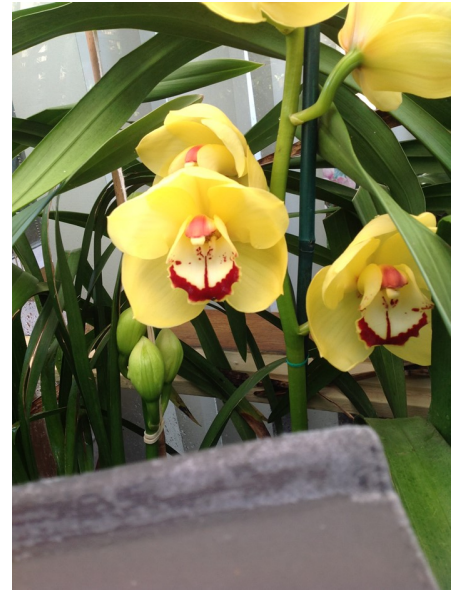
While the weather has been on the cool side there is certainly more warmth in the sun, find a place away from the cool breezes and one could be fooled into thinking that Spring has already arrived! The Spring bulbs are flowering their heads off, a bit early it would seem but I have heard from some growers that the Cymbidiums are about a month behind here in Victoria and that the flower count is down! No monthly meetings, no shows, so I guess it really doesn't matter all that much. Our interstate friends have been enjoying some Winter shows and they are now in full swing preparing for their Spring shows, I'm sure you all join with me in wishing them well! I'm sure we will all be able to enjoy some great photographs over the coming weeks!

Last week's edition of CC was almost the last, thanks to a major glitch in the computer program that I use. Those people who are on a supplementary mailing list, not the COSV members, received a copy of CC they couldn't open! Thankfully, I was able to solve the problem and once I retrieved my laptop from the garden bed outside my study window, another crisis was averted - computers are a bit like cars, when they are running well, all is well with the world!

Cymbidiums are now starting to show and develop new growths so now is an excellent time to start preparing for potting on and re-potting. An application of slow release fertiliser when completing this task should ensure that the plants get off to a good start. Regular applications of liquid fertiliser throughout the growing period will ensure that the plants build up the strength to perform to their optimum level, next flowering season. Enjoy this season's flowers but don't leave them on the plants for too long!

Over the past decade we have lost a number of orchid nurseries and so it is good to be able to bring to your attention Surf Coast Orchids. SCO is operated by Jim Frame a COSV member. The nursery specialises in standard Cymbidiums and can be found at The Great Ocean Rd Bellbrae, Victoria. With Jim's permission I will feature more about his venture into Cymbidiums in next week's Cymbidium Chatter. Jim is just about to launch his website so please stay tuned for further information. We wish him all the very best!

All contributions, articles and photographs, to grb17@bigpond.com



Graham Fear, President of the Cymbidium Orchid Club of South Australia, sent me the three photographs above. Graham does not have an elaborate growing set-up but still manages to produce some great looking flowers. When I last visited Graham, he was eyeing off an area in his backyard that accommodated a swimming pool. This would have been an ideal area to extend his orchid growing structures however he did comment that he thought the grandchildren and their grandmother might resist such a project!

I guess we all have stories to tell and I'm sure the readers would love to hear them. I can still vividly recall a playgroup meeting at our first home in Bayswater, when three of my son's play-mates each presented me with a handful of labels, straight out of the pots of my Cymbidium collection. It took a couple of flowering seasons but just about all the labels found their rightful home!

Cymbidium flowers above: (left) Cymbidium Vanity Fair 'Hollywood'

(top right) Marilyn Thomas 'WB'

(bottom right) Mesmerise (Prized x Madrush)

Hobby growers - what are they looking for?



Cymbidium lowianum 'Pitts' - Santa Barbara Orchid Estate

Vincent van Gogh, that eccentric and somewhat tortured soul, captured nature in a very different way to his artistic counterparts of the time. And so it is with Cymbidium orchids, there are those who love the wild form of the species and Primary Hybrid Cymbidiums; and then there are those who only grow the modern day hybrids, flowers that have been manipulated by hybridisers to conform to a standard, a set of objective guidelines! This probably sounds like a relatively negative statement and assessment of today's hobbyists, those folk that are members of orchid clubs and societies throughout the world. However it is important not to lose sight of the beauty that exists in all flower forms, no-one demands that you grow a particular style of flower, it is left to the individual to make up their own mind.

So what is it that hobbyists look for in today's Cymbidiums? If you are a competitive person and like a challenge and the thrill of winning, it is clear that you must grow modern style exhibition flowers. Hybridisers throughout the world have made huge advances and regularly produce flowers of outstanding quality. They strive to combine and produce the very best attributes in each of the crosses they make. I doubt that there is any hybridiser anywhere in the world who caters exclusively to the hobbyist market. Sadly most orchid clubs are in a state of decline and a hybridiser would find it very difficult to make a decent living if they were to rely solely for an income from this source.

Attributes to look for in exhibition style flowers include:

1) **shape and substance** - the flower should exhibit superior form (circular here in Australia) and spatial arrangement. How the flowers arrange themselves on the spike is important and it is important that any would be exhibitors consider the length of the pedicel (the individual flower stem). It needs to be long and strong enough to allow the flower to display properly. Substance

is often misunderstood but it refers to a flower's ability to maintain its shape, too thin and the segments of the flower may twist and furl. Most tetraploid (4n) flowers have a heavier (thicker) substance, too thick and sometimes the dorsal sepal will not open fully and in turn it can prevent the petals from opening properly.

2) Color - this is probably the most important quality. The color or combination of colors must be bright, clear, fresh and glistening. Texture refers to the natural sheen a flower has and that which enhances the color overall.

3) Habit and arrangement - the raceme should be strong enough to support the inflorescence with minimal staking or tying. The raceme should be clear of the foliage and it should not be bent or twisted. Arching or decorative spikes are permitted. At least two thirds of the flowers should be fully open.

4) Size of flower and inflorescence - size is important, as is the number of flowers. The number of flowers should be commensurate with the maturity of the plant.

Most modern day hybridisers select parent plants that should deliver all or most of the attributes listed above. We are very spoilt here in Australia as most hybridisers produce seedling crosses that not only cater for the commercial growers (cut flower and pot plant sales) but also crosses that have the potential to take on all comers on the show bench.

Orchid clubs and societies have the responsibility to ensure that all members are catered for when preparing schedules for monthly meetings or shows. As an orchid judge travelling around the various shows it is pleasing to note that most clubs have moved with the times and changed their schedules. The growers of the more unusual Cymbidium flowers are not bound by the confines of the judging guidelines, they do however still need to produce well grown and attractive looking plants.

The lovers of Cymbidium species are an interesting group, I personally grow a number but unlike many, I am not overly concerned with having the very best form of a particular species. I am not a fan of line breeding (an attempt to produce a superior form) in Cymbidiums. I can fully understand the need for hybridisers to produce and use tetraploid forms in their hybridising programs but as far as I am concerned, I much prefer the species that most closely resemble the wild collected forms. This is my own choice and I limit the success that I will have when taking plants along to monthly meetings. When it comes to orchid growing, I am not a very competitive person. My own personal goal is to grow each plant to its full potential, I am yet to fulfil this goal!

I grow a limited number of modern day hybrids, preferring to grow those hybrids, no matter how old, that really appeal to me. As a hobbyist grower I look for plants that will extend the flowering season, a careful selection should ensure that you have a Cymbidium in flower at all times of the year. Color or color combination is important and I always look for plants that produce strong, floriferous spikes, shape is only of minor importance!

I'm sure if you were to ask a number of hobbyist growers they would all have different views as to what hobby growers look for in Cymbidium flowers. I have only had a brief look at this topic but what is very clear is that by far the largest group of growers are those who grow exhibition style flowers. It is their plants that enable us to put on shows of immense beauty, that really showcase the wonderful advancements in Cymbidium hybridising. And so it is left to the much smaller group of hobbyists to provide the plants that add some diversity and visual interest to the displays - "beauty is in the eye of the beholder!"

"If you truly love nature you will find beauty everywhere!" Vincent van Gogh

Special thanks to Weegie Caughlan and Joshua White, both of whom have been regular contributors to Cymbidium Chatter, for providing their viewpoints on what it is that hobbyist growers look for in Cymbidiums. Your input is greatly appreciated!

From Weegie Caughlan:

"I feel that most novice and intermediate hobby growers are looking for easy to bloom plants with lots of flowers. Dark saturated colors are often preferred but a plethora of flowers is paramount. Form is unimportant. Pendent interest is decreasing but the spidery look is still going strong.

Most advanced growers want form added to the primary mix with color. However, some go into specific areas as the Jensoa species or specific genetic lines with primary hybridizing crosses."

From Joshua White:

"You mentioned in the latest CC that you're planning to write an article on what hobbyists/enthusiasts are looking for in the Cyms they choose to grow and wanted some input. Here are a few of my thoughts.

There are a number of factors that determine whether I choose to grow a particular Cym. My personal tastes are for the species, primary hybrids and early hybrids, particularly the more rectangular/wide blooms found in species like lowianum, insigne, tracyanum, etc. Probably the type I like least are the overly cupped round flowers that seem most common in minis.

Other factors like floriferousness, longevity, bloom time and rebloom are quite important to me as well. Once you move away from the species and primaries, I like to have plants that will give me a long blooming period and can bloom more than once from the same bulb (ironically, very few species or primaries exhibit multiple spiking or rebloom!). I do not subscribe to the focus on the traditional Cym flowering season; if I can have something in bloom through most of the year, particularly in the styles and colours I like, then I will happily do so. Another factor is colour; I may have multiple plants in a similar style or colour because they flower at different times.

I will sometimes compromise on one or more traits because the plant has something valuable to me that I want to use in a cross. Likewise, I generally try to avoid adding triploids to my collection unless I really like them as is due to their poor fertility and potential to produce aneuploid offspring. Most of the time my hybridising plans are driven either by curiosity (primaries or F2s that aren't registered, for example) or by my goal for hybrids that meet the aforementioned criteria (floriferousness, longevity of bloom, etc.) but keep the charm of the species and primaries they are related to."



(Blazing Fury x Kelly's Winter) 'Copper Ball' x Copperwall 'Copper Queen'

First flowering seedling, another fabulous orange colour Cym, bred by John Gate.

Photograph: 3 Amigos

The Cymbidium Orchid Club of Western Australia Winter Show 2020

The COCWA recently conducted their Winter Show, special thanks to Dr Carl Slusarczyk for putting together a number of photographs (4 pages) from that show.



Cym Touch My Thumb 'Tom'



Cym *sinense* 'Ri Jiang'

I will be very interested to find out whether or not this flower was awarded at the show. It is not often that we see *Cym sinense* benched in Melbourne, although we did award (AM) a plant of *Cym sinense* exhibited by Randall Robinson in 2018.

As a judge it is often difficult to assess rarely seen species Cymbidiums and this is where a program like OrchidWiz is an excellent go-to reference. In OrchidWiz you can see photographs of awarded plants, so it is possible to draw comparisons and to make sound decisions. While judges go through extensive training programs, their education never ends!



Cym Darch Vulture 'Tarantula'



Cym Darch Vanity 'High Spirits'



Cym (Darch Jabiru x Doris May)
'Apricot Slide'

COCWA Winter Show 2020



Cym Darch Explosion 'Iris'



Cym Darch Explosion



Cym [(Lady Yuka x Albert Brown) x Touchstone]
'In The Pot'



Cym Darch Avenue 'Tiny Tot'



Above: Daniel Thomas '#3'

Right: (Kuranulla x Alexandra's Flame)"
'Hard Times'

COCWA Winter Show

Thank you once again to Dr Carl Slusarczyk for some wonderful photographs and congratulations to all involved, there certainly are some outstanding plants!

Receiving these photographs of a diverse range of Cymbidium flowers is testament to my assertion that we need a variety of flower forms to make for a really interesting show.

A special mention to Kevin Butler, Ezi-Gro Orchids, WA, for some outstanding hybridising achievements.

Thank you on behalf of all Cymbidium Chatter readers!

