



# THE MONTHLY BULLETIN OF THE KU-RING-GAI ORCHID SOCIETY INC.

(Established in 1947)  
A.B.N. 92 531 295 125

October 2021 Volume 62 No. 10  
Annual Membership : **\$15 single, \$18 family**

**President :** Dennys Angove 043 88 77 689  
**Secretary :** Jenny Richardson (Culture Classes)  
**Treasurer :** Lina Huang  
**Vice President :** tba

**Editor** (Hon volunteer) Jim Brydie

**Society mail to - PO box 1501 Lane Cove, NSW, 1595**

**web site (active link) :** <http://kuringgaiorchidsociety.org.au>

**Committee** Jessie Koh (Membership Secretary / Social Events)  
**Committee** Herb Schoch (Community outreach and liaison)  
**Committee :** Chris Wilson (Library and Reference Sources)  
**Committee :** Lee Payne (Sales Table, Sponsorship)  
**Committee :** Fred Gorginian (Sales Table)

**Email –** [kuringgaiorchidsociety@gmail.com](mailto:kuringgaiorchidsociety@gmail.com)

**Next Meeting :** \* \* \* **No October meeting** \* \* \*. *The barriers are finally being lifted but at the moment the rules still restrict the number of members we can have at a meeting making it impractical to hold one. Ah well, we are at least under way and I am dying to get a haircut.*

Thank you so much to all the members contributing wonderful pictures for the monthly Virtual Benching. Not only a magnificent array of different orchids, especially our Australian natives at the moment, but great photos too. I can see that you are all trying extra special to show us the best. Please keep it up everyone.

**Dendrobium gracilicaule** a garden specimen from Trevor and Pauline Onslow. This one just had to be my favourite from the Sept VB. Especially with the lovely bit of history that came with it. The piece was originally collected from the wild around 1950 by Trevor's dad and the family has now been growing it for about 70 years.

These days we might tut-tut someone collecting a piece of native orchid from the wild but this was a long time before the public felt so protective of wild orchids.

Trevor's family story took me back to when I first became interested in orchids and a trip Cynthia and I took to one of the first Dungog shows we attended. On the Sunday after the show we drove up to see the guest house up at Barrington Tops. It was one of my first trips to see Australia's orchids in their natural habitat.

There was a visitors area up there and walks out along the ridge among the massive gums that formed the forest canopy. The speciosums from that area are epiphytes way up in the crown of these gums, often forming huge

clusters around the trunk where a big limb branched away from the main trunk. For one reason or another parts of these clusters seemed to sheer off occasionally and fall to the ground. As you walked the trails up at the top, or around any of the camping areas around the Barrington Tops, you could hardly resist picking up pieces to rescue them before they just rotted on the ground like all the other rotting pieces you walked past. It was the same with smaller orchids like *gracilicaule* and many of the terete leaved species. When a branch came down in a storm, there were pieces of orchid everywhere on the ground, doomed to death where they fell. Just part of the cycle of life. But keen orchid growers walking past, who couldn't bear to see orchids die needlessly, would often rescue a small piece to give it a chance somewhere. I didn't take any speciosums from the tops, but after we left the guest house area we drove on further along dirt roads to see what the rest of these forests were like, and came across a camping ground called White Horse Gap that sat along a river. We parked and went for a hike to explore and headed to the river. As I described earlier, there were huge rotting clumps of speciosum on the ground among fallen limbs and many smaller pieces of orchid among the branches and detritus. Hundreds of orchid seedling were among them, still attached to the branch that had come down in a recent storm. It was the first time I had seen the prolific-ness (if that is a word) of life in the rainforest and it was a bit shocking to see such future beauty condemned to rot. As we headed back to the car to drive on further, I found a seedling of *Den gracilicaule* on a branch and rescued it.

Like Trevor's dad's plant, it is still growing today. I labelled it *D. gracilicaule* 'White Horse Gap' and mounted it on a piece of wood hanging in my shadehouse. It was dreadfully slow growing (I don't water enough for mounted orchids) and it took years to flower but I was very proud when it did. In more recent years I transferred it to a terracotta pot and it doubled in size in two years. Trevor's lovely plant puts mine to shame, but I still enjoy my little orphan *gracilicaule*. The flowers are small but such a lovely colour in yellow-gold with speckles of red.



The opinions and recommendations published in this bulletin are those of the authors of the various items. The Ku-Ring-Gai Orchid Society Inc disclaims responsibility for any losses or damages that may be attributed to the use or misuse of any material or any opinion published in this bulletin. The bulletin and its content are protected by copyright and no part of them may be reproduced or re-used without the permission of the author.

**Society News** (if anyone has a news item, please phone Jim on 9476 3383, or email at [jimbrydie@aussiebroadband.com.au](mailto:jimbrydie@aussiebroadband.com.au) )

**President Dennys' Desk** – It seems vaccinations are going to plan and lockdown in NSW, in Sydney at least, is finishing although some restrictions will remain in place. I am hoping that after December 1st we will be able to get together as long as the KMC has eased the restriction spacing back to 2 square metres. That said, we will not be able to hold a viable meeting until that happens. So, keep your eyes posted for advice when that occurs.

**New member** – Welcome Bill Saunderson to KOS. I hope you enjoy our outreach publications and look forward to meeting you in person. When you arrive at your first meeting make yourself known to our club hosts for a chat.

**Talking to Mary** – I received a lovely phone call from Mary Ahonen, one of our members who moved to the South Coast some time ago. Mary was very excited about an unexpected event with one of her orchids and rang me to let me know about her news. Mary does not have internet access and relies on the bulletin and was inspired by it to contact me directly to tell me of her news about her *Angraecum*. After some consultation, Mary was able to send some photos to Jenny for the VB with the help of one her gracious neighbours. Thank you, Mary for the contact and it was a pleasure to talk to you. When it comes to orchids, excitement can generate a will and a way.

**Someone else is walking in my LGA** – Janine and I were driving down into Galston Gorge recently and saw Cynthia and Jim Brydie entering a fire trail near their home. I contacted Jim after we arrived home and he said the trail had just been upgraded. He said he and Cynthia found some “beardies” along the trail edge. Undaunted, Janine I went and walked along the same trail and also found some “beardies”. I took a photo (maybe 200 photos) and my best photo was still poor since the orchids were just finishing. I let Jim know of our adventure and so he and Cynthia went for another walk along the same trail and found some more orchids.

They took some photos and two of their finds are presented herein with their permission. To the right is a “beardie” which is a *Calochilus* species. I don't know the full name. They also found some “ducks” or duck orchids which



are a *Caleana* species (left). I have never seen them before in the wild or elsewhere. It will be exciting to have another hunt for them. It is rewarding to find orchids when on a walk. It seems we are getting a nice list of fairly easy walks which will yield some nice orchid finds that we can add to Chris Wilkson's library of walks.

You may remember recently that Chris' walk that was planned for the Hornsby Valley was cancelled due to the pandemic lockdown. Janine and I were able to do part of the walk in our own bubble and found this lovely white *Caladenia* similar to what we found in Carr's Bush at Fagan Park.



**Virtual benching Issue #16** – Another wonderful 11 pages of benching effort. I thank all members who were able to send in photos this month. The in-garden delights by Pauline and Trevor Onslow, John Chang, Bob Taffel and Jenny caught my eye in this edition. That said, the stunning Paph sent in by the Fulchers and the other by Jim Brydie were fantastic. Thanks again Jenny and her supporters for another fine edition.

**Orchid hunting in Tasmania** – This link will take you to an informative article on orchid hunting in Tasmania <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-10-03/orchid-hunting-growing-in-popularity-but-tread-lightly/100496800>

**Member's welfare** – If you are aware of any of our members having difficulties with the isolation caused by COVID restrictions then please let a committee member know. Alternately, if any member needs to have a chat, then they are most welcome to contact me at any time, 24/7 on 043 88 77 689 – please keep safe and conscious of the need to wear a mask.

## Humour

**The Car Crash** – My wife crashed the car again today. She told the police that the man she crashed into was on his mobile phone at the time and drinking a can of beer.

The Police told her it didn't matter, the gentleman was entitled to do whatever he wanted in his living room.

**Medical Leaflet** – Today I got a leaflet in my mailbox, informing me that I can still have sex at 85. That really perked me up and made me happy, because I live at number 83, so it's not too far to walk home afterwards, and, it's the same side of the street. I don't even have to cross the road!

## Coelogyne Unchained Melody benched by Jenny



What a lovely orchid this is and so easy to grow and flower so long as you treat it reasonably. And Jenny sure has grown this one beautifully.

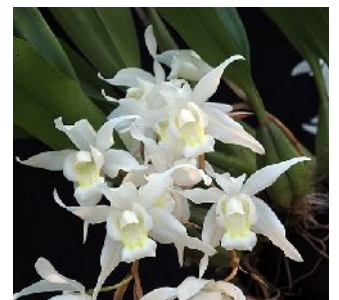
For those who don't already know, Unchained Melody is the hybrid between *Coelogyne cristata* and *Coelogyne flaccida*. For many, many years it used to be cultivated under the name *Coel. intermedia* as though it was a species but in 1990 David Banks, here in Sydney, remade the *cristata* x *flaccida* cross deliberately to prove that *intermedia* was really that same plant but a hybrid. Unfortunately, David couldn't name the new official hybrid "Intermedia" because that name was already taken for another hybrid. So he called it "Unchained Melody" - a very appropriate and lovely name.

Unchained Melody is a vigorous grower, just like both its parents but it also seems to have a nice dose of 'hybrid vigour'. It tolerates our Sydney winters in an open shade house or under a tree so it's tough, but I haven't seen it tested by frost so perhaps some caution would be sensible before you test it to extremes.

In the picture above, can you see the lovely yellow in the lip which highlights the column? Well just as there is an albino form of *Coel. cristata* that growers prize highly, there is also an albino form of Unchained Melody, and Jenny showed us hers in the VB as well as the bigger specimen. It is not a matter of one better than the other really, it's just a matter of preference, but I rather like the whiter version.



You can see from the close ups of the parent species that *cristata* (closest left) is the 'flossier' of the two and has broader floral segments, but *flaccida* (far left) has longer racemes and a few more slightly smaller flowers. The albino Unchained Melody above is a bit closer to *cristata* in its floral design but if you compare it closely to the close up of *cristata* (single flower at the left) you can see that Unchained Melody's petals aim more upward making a star shape flower. *Cristata*'s petals aren't always as floppy as this close up but the general shape of Unchained Melody is nearly always in the star shaped *flaccida* pattern.



Both the species and the hybrid between them are shady, moist growers that do well grown in a hanging baskets once they are big enough. Don't be in a rush with fresh divisions or small plants though. They don't appreciate being overpotted in too large a container. They will grow to a large plant when managed and left undivided.

The distribution regions for *cristata* and *flaccida* overlap. Both start in NE India in the lower Himalayas and extend across Myanmar but although *cristata* perhaps also extends into the mountains of northern Thailand, the range of its sister *flaccida* extends further across Laos and into Yunnan in SW China. The maximum elevation range of *flaccida* is also lower at 1800 m (*cristata* extends to 2600 m) even though 1800 m is still substantially high in the tropics.

In view of Jenny's lovely specimen above, I should be getting her to tell us how to treat it (how about it Jenny?) but for the moment, this little paragraph from an article I wrote long ago will have to do.

**Potting** – all of these like a potting medium with a mix of size components (barks) but perhaps favouring the small to medium size (not too fine or it will break down too quickly). Some growers throw in some perlite for water retention but I don't like to mix bark and perlite so I don't. They have a seasonal growing pattern. Usually flowering in spring or summer and starting a new seasons growth around the same time. To be precise, you would aim to pot/repot around the time the new shoots are starting make some real progress (75 – 150cm tall) but while they are still just a leafy shoot. However, if needs must, repot anytime they are actively growing in the summer. Avoid the really hot spells, and be as careful and gentle as you can. Try not to damage any of the new roots or shoots while you are doing it.

Fertilise regularly while they are growing, back off when they are not.

## Covid Brings out the best

One of the highlights coming from the covid lockdowns is the wonderful array of knowledge and experience being published in society newsletters all over Sydney and the effort clubs are taking to keep members connected.

Manly Warringah Society recently published a special hotline email address for members to go to when they have a growing problem or plant that needs help. We have tried to do much the same a little less formally but Manly's effort just has to be applauded. I am also busy cutting and pasting all sorts of lovely growing advice from bulletins wherever I find them so I can to republish for you as opportunities arise.

I particularly liked this following item of Cary Polis's from the Manly Warringah Society Sept newsletter because of its wonderful practicality, bringing you Cary's experience and experiments. I am sure it will provide more ideas and solutions for many growers struggling with plants that just don't seem to want to grow for some reason.

### **Cary's Shadehouse** (republished with Cary's permission, thanks Cary)

Spring has really sprung at my place, especially with the natives. The Dockrillias in particular have been outstanding. Things like calamiformis, teretifolia, fairfaxii, schoenina and pugioniformis. I'm really finding that the ones that are in mesh pots are doing far better than the ones on mounts, no matter which way they have been planted. I have used 3 basic methods:

*1) just plant straight into the pot*

*2) cut a window or flap on the side of the mesh pot and poke the roots through making sure that the plant is secure*

*3) cut a window or flap in the base of the pot and poke the roots up into the pot.*

Seeing that they mostly have hefty roots, I use large or medium bark. This technique works well with other things as well, including *Sarcocylus falcatus*, especially on the side of the pot. In fact Guy (Cantor) just ties them onto the side and this allows the roots to find their own way in.

One of the really good things about growing orchids (and gardening in general) is that you can experiment quite a bit with your growing techniques. It can lead to unusual and spectacular results.

How many times have you admired a plant on the bench which has been grown in an unconventional manner, ending up in not only a healthy, robust plant but almost a work of art? For example, it wasn't that long ago that the idea of growing orchids successfully in water well pots would have been debunked by the "experts". There is a whole range of orchids that are more than suited to this technique with brilliant results. I have never been able to grow *Dendrobium agrostophyllum* for any length of time, just standing by helplessly, watching it go into an irreversible state of decline leading to death, but now I have one in a waterwell and it is one of the stars in my bush house.

*(JB: just in case some growers haven't tried 'net' pots or waterwell pots before, the pictures to the right show some examples of the pots I think Cary means. The net pot is 140 mm wide, the two waterwell pots are 200 and 155 mm but other sizes are available in each type. The waterwell pots don't have a clip on base, they only have one drain hole in the centre, on a short pedestal which makes a water reservoir.)*



Of course when trying different things you must be prepared for some failures, but this tends to happen anyway no matter what you do. Right now you should be actively engaged in repotting, feeding and general maintenance. I've been having too many distractions and interruptions like fishing, bushwalking and car projects, not to mention all the things that Jill wants me to help her with in the garden and the house. Just repotting the odd plant on the run here and there is not exactly the most efficient way of doing things but it's still something. Even this week is not looking that good for me especially now that the COVID restrictions have eased. I certainly have a number of big potting jobs looming that I need to get onto and this is the best time of the year for that.

So somewhere, sometime I'm going to have to bite the bullet and get stuck into my "orchid jobs", and sooner rather than later. I still make the time every day at least once, to go into both the bush house and the hothouse and cast an eye over while doing a walkpast to ensure that nothing awful is happening anywhere. Like any interest, what you put into it is directly related to what you get out of it.

Good growing and I hope to see you all at a meeting soon.

### **The Prenuptial Talk.**

A young woman brought her fiancée home to meet her parents. After dinner, her mother told the girl's father to find out more about the young man. The father invited the fiancée to his study for a little talk.

"So, what are your plans?" The father asked the young man. – "I am a biblical scholar," he replied.

"A biblical scholar, hmmm?" The father said. "Admirable, but what will you do to provide a nice house for my daughter and your children to live in?" – "I will study," the young man replied, "and God will provide for us."

"And how will you buy her a beautiful engagement ring, such as she deserves?" asked the father.

"I will concentrate on my studies," the young man replied, "God will provide for us."

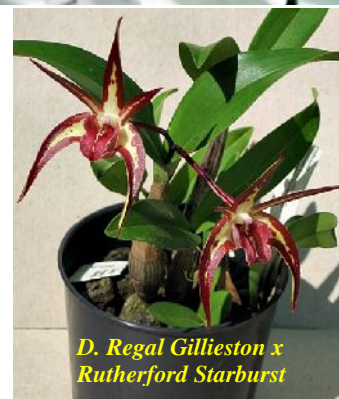
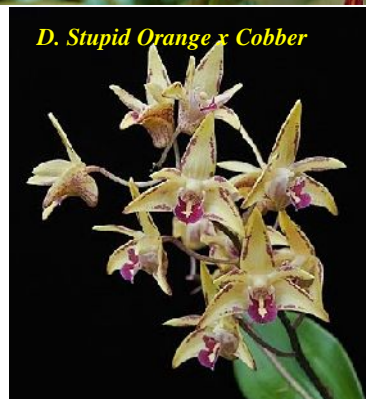
"And children?" asked the father. "How will you support children?" – "Don't worry, sir, God will provide," he replied.

The conversation proceeded like this...and each time the father questioned; the young idealist insisted that God would provide. Later, the mother asked, "How did your talk go, honey?"

The father answered: "He has no job; he has no plans. And he thinks I'm God."

## Items from the KOS September Virtual Benching - Australian Natives

We always get a lovely display of Native species and hybrid Dendrobiums as spring arrives and even without a meeting we had a magnificent exhibition in our Sept Virtual Benching. Not only did a few members surprise us with what can be done with massed displays along a driveway or in a backyard, we had some excellent individual pictures of some of the species and of the new and old hybrids. We had pictures of two different Den. Bardo Rose, a cross that was made way back in 1961 but remains hugely popular because of its lovely simplicity, strong hardy growing, and lovely soft colours. And we also saw more modern hybrids like Trevor Onslow's Den. Australian Butter Bright and Den. Khe San, and Jenny's Robbie McInnes (listed in the VB as speciosum x Aussie Parade). I am sure there are many more interesting hybrids to come in the future.



As a footnote, last month Dennys told us of the many lovely spots around our area that members can bushwalk to get some exercise away from the crowds and although the lockdown is about to lift, you might find that it is just the perfect way to relax and keep yourself from over-suffering lounge chair bulge syndrome. Cynthia and I took Dennys's advice and restarted our daily walks, and took in local bushwalks as part of the regime. I must say walking in our natural bushland is far more satisfying than doing laps of the local oval. A few days ago we even found this delightful little 'beardie' growing by the side of the path. I think it is *Calochilus paludosus*.

## Lovely Yellow Catts.



In those far ago days when we used to have actual meetings with benches full of gorgeous orchids, and you could just walk around admiring, or go and ask any grower how they did it, one of the types I always used to head for was the various rich yellow gold Cattleyas. There was no use me asking anyone how they did it though. I can grow them, just nowhere as good as the Trevor Onslows and the Garrie Bromleys and the Gloria Cushways, not to mention the other dozen very successful Catt growers in our club. But I didn't care about that. You can't be an expert in everything, or sometimes even anything. But that didn't mean I couldn't just love the richness of the colours and how fantastically the specialist growers grow.

Many of the 'yellows' have mixes of orange or red in the lip or in flares on the petals, but that just adds to the lusciousness. These 4 were 'benched' in the Sept VB and while they are not quite up to the grade A we sometimes see, they sure are delicious. The two on the left have purple in the lip rather than red which does happen with many of the parent species having a purple or mauve lip, and it is not unusual for some crosses to have some red lip cultivars and some purple. I think I prefer the red/orange myself but that is just a personal choice.

It is a great asset to have such a wide range of good growers to show us the way, isn't it.

**Fancy coloured Oncidiinae** This is another group that I love but which seems to be waning in popularity and I have a theory as to why this might be so. I might turn out to be wrong, but I suspect that popularity began to fade when DNA analysis of the Oncidiinae proved that half the dancing ladies that we had always regarded to be *Oncidium* were proven to actually be from the genus *Gomesa*. At the same time they decided that the genus *Odontoglossum* didn't really exist and that all those previous *Odontoglossum* species were mostly *Oncidium* while some were *Rhynchostele* and I think one was something else. At the same time again, the little bright red flowered species we had always known as a *Cochlioda noezeliana* was now an *Oncidium*, and so on and so on.

All of those changes meant that nearly every *Oncidium* family hybrid had to have its genus name changed. Some hybrid genera, the man made artificial genera, disappeared altogether because one of the component genera had disappeared. It just got too complicated. And if that's not enough, Orchid clubs had to totally restructure all their *Oncidium* related orchid benching classes. Members didn't know what their beloved orchids were called anymore or have a clue where to bench what. And we haven't fixed it all yet.



In this month's VB we saw a number of examples of the complex Oncidiinae hybrids that were caught up in the naming mess, plus the one at the right that I just threw in to make the point about how lovely these can be.

These are still as attractive and desirable as ever, but with half the genera they used to be in turned upside down and shaken, we haven't yet figured out what to do with them. It's still a bit complicated to exhibit them but we will sort it out eventually.

**Poor judgement** - A husband walks into Victoria's Secret to purchase a sheer negligee for his wife. He is shown several that range from \$250 to \$500 in price -- the sheerer, the higher the price. He opts for the sheerest item, pays the \$500, and takes it home. He presents it to his wife and asks her to go upstairs, put it on, and model it for him.

Upstairs the wife thinks (she's no dummy), 'I have an idea. It's so sheer that it might as well be nothing. I won't put it on. I'll do the modeling naked, return it tomorrow, and keep the \$500 refund. She appears naked on the balcony and strikes a pose. The husband, looking up from below says, 'Good Grief! You'd think for \$500, they'd at least iron it!'

The poor guy didn't even hear the shot. The funeral is on Thursday at Noon. Closed coffin.

**A few Japanese?Northern?Cool? ...Oh hell, how many kinds of Cymbidiums are there?** --- by Jim Brydie  
Well when you can't even write the defining title, you just know you have a problem right from the start.

As I hinted at last month, what I really wanted to talk about, is a few of the northern Asian group of species Cymbidiums. Although I didn't say so last month, what I had in mind were those species found in the temperate zones around the latitudes of Japan, or perhaps a bit south of that if they were mountain dwellers used to a cool climate.

To grow Cymbidiums in Sydney, we have two criteria to worry about. The first is temperature tolerance for growing. We get hot dry summers and some parts of Sydney regularly experience overnight frosts in winter. And secondly, we need to be able to make them flower. For example, experience tells us that our friends in Queensland often have a hard time growing show-bench Cymbidiums because in their climate they don't get the mid summer cool nights needed to trigger the next season's flowering.

I don't know Cymbidiums as a group that well so I decided that the more northerly species should meet both growing and flowering criteria. I would be avoiding the tropical growers to avoid those with more strict minimum temperature tolerance, and I should be ok with flowering triggers if I discuss plants from areas with more distinct summer and winter temperatures - ie temperate zone plants.

But where do you draw the line between Tropical and Temperate? Officially, 'the Tropics' is anywhere between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn. But for practical purposes in horticulture we need to allow some flexibility in where to draw the line.

For example, in the northern hemisphere, the Tropic of Cancer cuts right through the Island of Taiwan, about one third of the way up from the bottom (Taiwan is roughly 400 km north-south). I guess you could officially call the top half of Taiwan temperate, but to give it an Australian context, the latitudes occupied by Taiwan (turned upside down) more accurately equates to something like the state of Queensland from Yeppoon (north of Rockhampton) to about the Gold Coast below Brisbane. For a Sydneysider that makes the whole island tropical to quasi-tropical.

Wanting to avoid the squishy line zone, I started by researching which Cymbidium species occur naturally in Japan. I chose Japan because it is distinctly more Sydney like than tropical and a long way north of Taiwan. So, I dragged out one of my old Japanese orchid books to see what was listed as native. The book was written in Kanji but there is an English index and it has lots of pictures with English labels and I cross checked the list in the index against data in Orchidwiz to see which were currently valid. A few are now regarded as synonyms of other species and a couple are natural hybrids but most were quite valid as occurring wild in Japan.

When I looked over the list though, I was really surprised to find that Cym. dayanum grows in Japan. This must be one of the most widespread species in tropical Asia. It is found from India to as far east as the Philippines, and in the south from Indonesia and Borneo, to Japan in the north. That's one heck of a distribution. However, if an orchid grows in Japan but is found mostly in the tropics at elevations of about 300 - 1200 m, can you really still regard it as temperate?

Cym. dayanum is a very popular orchid in Sydney. I have grown it for ages and it flowers every year but my shadehouse has a polycarbonate roof and I grow it hanging well off the ground. The picture at the right is from Lina Huang and was shown in the March VB this year. I don't know how Lina grows hers but I regard this species as a cool grower with limitations. I wouldn't want to grow it in an open shadehouse in Campbelltown, and I was certainly not expecting to find that it is a native orchid of Japan.

So, I looked at dayanum a bit deeper. It seems that dayanum and a couple of others on the list don't actually occur further north than the Ryukyu Islands. That is still "Japan" but I need to briefly explain the geography.

The 4 main islands of Japan are Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku, and Kyushu, which form an almost interconnected cluster. When most people talk of Japan, they mean these 4 islands, however, Japan also includes many other smaller islands around the 4 main ones, and also a whole archipelago of islands (mostly the Ryukyus) in a wide sweeping arc of the ocean between the 4 main islands of Japan and the island of Taiwan far to the south. The Ryukyus include Okinawa, a name many of my generation will remember in the context of the battles of World War 2.

With Cym. dayanum and Japan, some just say Japan, others limit it more exactly to only as far as the Ryukyus. But it is much more difficult to find out which actual part of the Ryukyus it comes from. Some of its islands are quite tropical. ***Hmmm, it seems my initial basis for selecting species was based on a false premise.***



Back to the drawing board. We haven't really gone anywhere yet, but are you enjoying the journey so far?

So how do the Taxonomists see the genus *Cymbidium*? Well the genus *Cymbidium* comprises 86 species, spread from NE India right across Asia to the Philippines, and also including 3 species in Australia. The present view is that it is divided into 12 subdivisions called "Sections", each section comprising one or more species that each conform to some common descriptor that defines them as a separate evolutionary group but still within *Cymbidium*.

However, in their book "The Genus *Cymbidium*", David Du Puy and Phillip Cribb also state that in terms of culture the genus can be regarded as just three main groups. They explain the 3 groups over several pages but on Jay Pfahl's website 'Internet Orchid Species Photo Encyclopedia' he summarises those explanations more succinctly as follows :

***... The first group are the large flowered species that are found in the Himalayas and higher elevations of China and they require a pronounced cool period to initiate flowering.***

***The second group grows in cool to intermediate temps year round and does not need a distinct cool snap to flower.***

***The third and last group are the warm growing tropical plants that require year round warm temps and because of their pendant inflorescence are best planted in hanging wire baskets. ....***

So which species and hybrids fall within each of these three cultural groups?

**Group 1- *pronounced cool period to initiate flowering.*** What we recognise today as Show Bench *Cymbidiums* fall within this first group. Show bench *Cymbids* are the types with large, heavy textured flowers, upright to aching spikes with many flowers. Most also have large conspicuous pseudobulbs.

The species that have contributed to this group nearly all come from just one of the 12 taxonomic Sections of *Cymbidium* - Section *Cyperorchis*. This Section contains 25 species including *Cym's* *lowianum*, *hookerianum*, *insigne*, *eburneum*, *iridioides*, and *sanderæ* but there are of course quite a few smaller more curious types as well, such as *Cym. cochleare*, *Cym. mastersi*, *Cym. elegans* (syn *Cyperorchis elegans*) and others.

As an example of a typical modern show bench hybrid, look at the gorgeous *Cym.* Elisabeth Rickard 'Anne' at the right. Now that is a good *Cymbidium*. Bred by our friends Royale Orchids, north of Sydney, it was registered in 2018. It has 9 species listed in its genetic profile (two more were listed but are now regarded as synonyms of species that already appear in the genetic makeup). 8 of the 9 (*Cym* *insigne*, *lowianum*, *eburneum*, *hookerianum*, *tracyanum*, *sanderæ*, *iridioides*, and *schroederi*) are from Section *Cyperorchis*. These types grow well in Sydney because our climate provides the right light, temperature, and the appropriate flowering trigger.



***Cym. Elisabeth Rickard 'Anne'***

Here are some examples of those constituent species. Modern hybrids have certainly come a long way.



***Cym hookerianum***



***Cym tracyanum***



***Cym insigne***



***Cym sanderæ***



***Cym lowianum***

But as I said earlier, Section *Cyperorchis* can be far more interesting (said the man who doesn't grow show bench *Cymbids*). How about that lovely species Lee Payne showed us in the September VB – *Cym. wenshanense*. I hadn't seen this one before but how pretty. As Jenny told us, it comes from SE Yunnan in China and in Vietnam (Yunnan is to the right of Myanmar and above N. Vietnam). These are tropical areas, or just north of, but the orchid grows as an epiphyte in evergreen broadleaf forests (presumably shady) at elevations up to 1500 metres above sea level which suggests much less tropical temperatures and conditions. I eventually found annual weather charts for Yunnan and found that it has distinct annual wet/dry seasons like all the other Himalayan species of this group. Winter temperatures get down to 15°C high to 1°C low so it is sounding more like Sydney tolerant all the time.



© Ron Parsons

*Wenshanense* is a large plant in that it has lots of narrow leaves that can be up to 90cm long, but it is what we might call a miniature in other respects. It has small pseudobulbs (4cm high), a short, 35 cm inflorescence with about 7 moderately sized flowers (about 6 cm wide x 10 cm high). The important thing though is that apart from it being a shade grower (as it is an epiphyte in evergreen forests), I would assume it is used to much the same growing temperatures as *Cym. dayanum* and be subject to the same flowering trigger.

**Group 3 – warm tropical growers.** I will deal with 3 before 2 because don't wish to go into these deeply, but many (not all) of these species tend to have stiff, heavy textured leaves, grow as epiphytes, and have a pendent flower spike with spaced attractive, smaller flowers. The two examples here are *Cym. aloifolium* and *Cym. atropurpureum*. Interestingly, Cribb and Du Puy include *Cym. dayanum* in this group. They would be less cold tolerant than others.

**Group 2 - cool to intermediate temps year round and does not need a distinct cool snap to flower.** These types may experience more even monthly rainfall although there would still be seasonal changes. These are generally smaller plants with smaller flowers but when I say smaller, I don't mean tiny, I just mean mini Cymbid small such as 3 to 5cm.

Species included are *Cymbidiums devonianum*, *ensifolium*, *floribundum* (which used to be called *Cym. pumilum*), *munroanum*, *sinense*, *kanran*, *cyperifolium*, *faberi*, *goeringii*, *lancifolium*, and *macrorhizon*.

Seven of this 11 belong to Section *Jensoa*. The description for Section *Jensoa* says it's species are characterised by being terrestrial growers, flowers with 4 pollinia in unequal pairs and a few more technical details. The full description is available in the *Internet Orchid Species Encyclopedia*, but so is the list of species if you prefer shortcuts.

Anyway, some of these are widely grown and growers don't seem to have much trouble flowering them. I have killed a few but that doesn't count as I don't really provide what they need. The more easily found and grown ones that I know of are *devonianum*, *ensifolium*, *sinense*, and *floribundum*. One I had never heard of before is *Cym. macrorhizon* which apparently has an underground rhizome, no pseudobulbs and no leaves. Very weird but it doesn't sound very attractive even if it could be grown. Another is *Cym. munroanum* (named after a Mr Munro) which is often known as *Cym. ensifolium* var *munroanum*. There seem to be distinct differences between *ensifolium* and *munroanum* but they are also very similar. Just the same, I doubt you will come across *munroanum* very often.

Which leaves us with *kanran*, *faberi*, *goeringii*, *lancifolium* and *cyperifolium*. It seems I am getting closer to my ghost northern group after all. Let's see what these 4 look like.



*Cym. aloifolium*      *Cym. atropurpureum*



*Cym. goeringii*

----- *Cym. kanran* -----

*Cym. lancifolium*

*Cym. cyperifolium*

So, are these really Japan main island type temperate climate orchids, or bogus temperates? To find out we need to know more about each species.

***Cym. goeringii*** – This is a terrestrial species. Flowers shaped like the one in the picture are the most common and are about 5 cm across. But there are forms, particularly varieties with narrower petals that look a bit more like the shape of *kanran*. There are also rare varieties found in other colours but green is the most common.

It is found in a reasonably wide range of locations. In *Orchidwiz*, the Bakers wonderful database tells us “... *Japan on the islands of Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku, and Kyushu. It is also found in Korea, the Bonin and Ryukyu Islands, and is widespread in China and Taiwan. It is reported to occur, but is rare, in northwest India near the western border of Nepal. It grows at elevations of 500-3000 m, with the higher elevations occurring in the warmer, more southerly locations. In Japan it is usually found near the sea, growing as a terrestrial in open forests on lightly shaded cliffs or slopes. In northern Japan it grows in coniferous forests, while on the southern islands it occurs in the warm, temperate vegetation zone in broadleaved, evergreen forests, often among grasses and bamboos. In Taiwan, it occurs at 900-1500 m in the central mountain region, usually on dry slopes that face east or southeast.*”

Culture wise, this one looks like a genuine ‘coldie’. Hokkaido is the northernmost of the main Japanese islands and it snows there in winter. Although *goeringii* only grows at the south end of Hokkaido, that is still around latitude 42 degrees N and the furthest north of any *Cymbidium*. The Bakers also confirm that in its southern habitats it occurs at up to 3000 m in the mountains. That is very high and very cold. It is an unusual species that usually has just a single flower on each inflorescence although sometimes there are more.

I have always admired this orchid but have never seen it grown here even though I believe some specialists do grow it. I suspect we might be just a little too warm for it here in Sydney without special care.

***Cym. kanran*** – A very elegant looking orchid somewhat reminiscent of *Cym. sinense*. The flowers are star shaped with the petals forming a hood over the column and are about 6 or 7 cm across.

*Cym. kanran* is found in China, Taiwan, Japan, and the Ryukyu Islands. In China, it occurs in 11 different provinces but all are in a band from just below to just above the latitudes of Taiwan. ie tropical to mildly temperate. Plants are usually found in slight shade in moist, rocky soil in forests or along ravines at 400-2400 m. In Taiwan plants are found in broad-leaved forests at 800-1400 m, usually in areas with strong air flow near ridges on SE slopes. In Japan (much further north), plants have been found on the islands of Honshu, Kyushu, and Shikoku, but precise locations and elevations are unavailable. It also occurs in the Ryukyu Islands. This suggests that we should be able to grow *kanran* as easily as we grow *sinense*. It appears to be a shade grower however, and may need protection from the peak of Sydney's harsh summers and from the worst of our winter. A worthwhile species to look out for.

***Cym. faberi* and *Cym cyperifolium*** – The flowers of both remind me strongly of *Cym kanran* but all 3 are distinct in their own way. I won't go into them in much detail but they should be 'growable' here in Sydney. *Faberi* extends further north than *cyperifloium*, grows at higher elevations, and takes more light, so it would be the safest bet for those worried about low temperatures in winter. It is less a shade lover than *cyperifolium* or *kanran*. It has long narrow 60-90 cm leaves resembling the miscanthus grass in which it often grows. The upright 30-60cm inflorescence can have up to 20 flowers but usually much less.

*Cyperifolium* is much more tropical but still grows up to 1600 m elevation so should take moderate winters here. It has shorter leaves, perhaps 60 cm, and they are slightly wider. Named for some supposed resemblance to *Cyperus* leaves but I can't find any *Cyperus* species that looks anything like them.

The inflorescence is still upright, perhaps 30 - 45cm, and has up to a dozen 5cm flowers if doing well. It grows as a terrestrial on steep banks in shady forests. I don't ever recall seeing this one for sale but it must come up occasionally.

***Cym. lancifolium*** – Now this one sure doesn't look much like your standard *Cymbidium*. A small-to medium-sized terrestrial or semi-terrestrial plant that is variable in size, generally depending on its origin. Larger plants are usually from the warmer, tropical regions, while the smaller ones are from more northerly, colder locations.

Leaf sizes vary and can be from 9 to 50 cm long. Dull green, rather broad in the middle narrowing to a slender folded stem. The broad leaves are particularly well adapted to the low light intensities of the forest floor. Leaves of Taiwanese plants, commonly known as *Cym. aspidistrifolium* are usually only 10-12 cm long. The unusual pseudobulbs are from 3-15 cm tall, erect, swollen in the middle and tapering at both ends (somewhat like a cigar), and often crowded towards the apex of a rhizome like stem.

The inflorescence is quite short but can be just over 30 cm. It generally has from 4 to 8 flowers, each only 3 to 5 cm across. In most individuals the petals point forward over the column but this doesn't always seem to be the case.

Likewise, in colour, most are basically white or cream or green but some can be more colourful or striped.

And where does it come from? Is it possible to grow it?

Well you might find this hard to believe but this one beats *Cym. dayanum* hands down for distribution. It is the most widespread species in the genus and is found from Nepal in the west, through N. India, Myanmar, Thailand, right across Indo China, China (right up to more northerly provinces), Taiwan the Ryukyu Islands and Japan. Also Malaysia, Indonesia, Borneo, the Moluccas, N. Guinea. It normally grows in deep, humus rich soils & leaf litter, in the deep shade of broadleaf forests and is recorded at elevations from 350 – 1800 m which is quite wide. 1800 m is reasonably high though, and any plant that grows that high will generally grow cool here in Sydney. I don't have enough info to relate habitat elevation to latitude, but the fact that it is found as far north as Japan suggests that it would tolerate Sydney so long as we don't press it too far. And don't forget, this is another forest floor high humidity shade lover. If you can meet those needs this looks like another nice one to keep an eye out for.

***One last species?*** Now to cap off this strange article that has wandered from one end of *Cymbidium* to the other, I wonder how many of you knew that there was a *Cymbidium* that grows like a vine, with sprout like leafy growths with no pseudobulb, spaced out along a rhizome. Just have a look at *Cymbidium repens* from Vietnam. It was only described in 2016 but it makes you wonder if this is where the genus came from or where it is headed? Whichever, it is, you can no longer believe that each *Cymbidium* is like any other *Cymbidium*.



***C. faberi***

***C. cyperifolium***



***Cym. lancifolium***



***Cym. repens***