

# 'Cymbidium Chatter'

Edition 6: 25 May 2020



*Cymbidium tracyanum* Photo: Travaldo blogspot

**Welcome** to this edition of Cymbidium Chatter, I hope it finds you all well and enjoying a little more freedom now that the restrictions have been eased slightly. I think the governments, State and Federal, should be congratulated for guiding us through these strange and difficult times. We can only hope that everyone continues to observe social distancing guidelines. No doubt businesses throughout the State are hurting, however, I think the conservative approach has been warranted. I can think of nothing worse than going back into more severe lockdown measures. I think the 'hasten-slowly' approach, is the correct one! Stay safe and well!

You may have noticed that the numbering/lettering of each CC edition has been somewhat confusing, I even confused myself (not all that hard to do). In May I started using a number sequence, this will continue but I will also include a date. I hope this makes it a little clearer!

## *Cymbidium tracyanum*

I wasn't going to do an article about *Cymbidium tracyanum*, read on and you will discover why, however, it deserves to be mentioned, as it is a very rewarding plant to grow!

Plants of this delightful species should now be coming into flower. It is one of several species that flower at this time of year. If you like your Cymbidiums to have a fragrance then this beauty should be on your 'Wanted-list', but be warned it is a reasonably large grower and if you like to show your plants, the long arching spikes make it difficult to transport to meetings.

In the wild *Cymbidium tracyanum* can be found growing in northern Thailand, eastern and northern Myanmar and in China, southern and western Yunnan Province. It can be found growing in damp, shaded evergreen forests or on moist rocks, in close proximity to streams. It has been discovered in a constantly humid atmosphere. I have grown *Cymbidium tracyanum* very successfully here in Melbourne under 50% shade cloth, however I had most success when it was growing in an igloo, a polythene roof covered in 70% shade cloth. In this situation the plants were watered quite heavily, particularly during the warmer months. Under these conditions the plants (several different forms) all developed extensive erect aerial roots, a characteristic associated with *Cymbidium tracyanum*. In their book 'The Genus Cymbidium', Du Puy and Cribb, state that this characteristic maybe an adaptation to a moist environment. Thanks to Glenn Brown, I once again have a plant of *Cym tracyanum*. This plant was also growing in an igloo, it displays the aerial roots and will flower shortly (photos next page).

If you plan to bring your plant along to a monthly meeting it is important to allow the spikes to develop naturally. Some varieties of *Cymbidium tracyanum* will send out spikes in a perpendicular direction, straight out from the side of the pot, others will arch over but very few go straight up. From a judging perspective spikes that are allowed to develop naturally will display their flowers much better. By all means stake your spikes straight up for easier transportation but please make sure you release the ties prior to the judges commencing their duties.

Now I mentioned earlier that I wasn't going to do an article about *Cymbidium tracyanum*. Why? Sadly there seems to be some controversy over some forms of *Cym tracyanum*, primarily the tetraploid versions. I have listened to and done a fair amount of research regarding the tetraploid (4n) flowers, which were introduced into breeding lines by Andy Easton, New Horizon Orchids. There are those who believe that a hybrid *Cymbidium* was used in the creation of the tetraploid form. I can only base my own opinion on the tetraploid plants that I have seen and I certainly don't want to enter into a he said/she said type argument about a beautiful species *Cymbidium*. We have come to expect that flowers that are converted from the diploid (2n) to the tetraploid (4n) form will be superior in flower form and substance and for me that is where the story ends. Until such time as someone carries out and pays for scientific research (DNA testing), I think we have no other option than to accept them as true species. Furthermore I mentioned that I had seen tetraploid forms of *tracyanum*. Kevin Hipkins, Royale Orchids, was an agent for New Horizon Orchids and he had a large collection of tetraploid *tracyanums*. I have seen most of those plants in flower and they all had the notable characteristics of the true species - aerial roots, three rows of long hairs extending from the callus ridges to the mid lobe. Kevin grew his plants in an igloo and they received consistently heavy watering and all the plants had masses of aerial roots. Over the years I have grown many *tracyanum* hybrids and none of those exhibited these characteristics, in fact I have never seen aerial roots on a hybrid *Cymbidium*. I am about to flower a couple more *tracyanum* hybrids so I will be examining the flowers more closely and looking for any aerial roots.



My newly acquired plant of *Cymbidium tracyanum*, a green variety, with the second photo showing the characteristic aerial roots (the finer vertical roots).

Photographs below showing the natural variation in *Cym tracyanum* flowers.



*Cym tracyanum*

Photograph: Ricci Zepmeusel (in-situ)



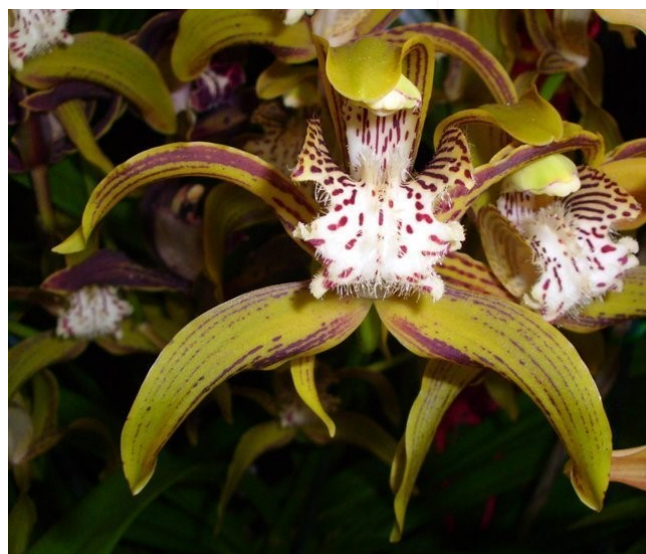
*Cym tracyanum*

Photograph: John Varigos



*Cym tracyanum* 'Burmese Bronze'

Photograph: L Batchman



*Cym tracyanum* 'Tassie Princess'

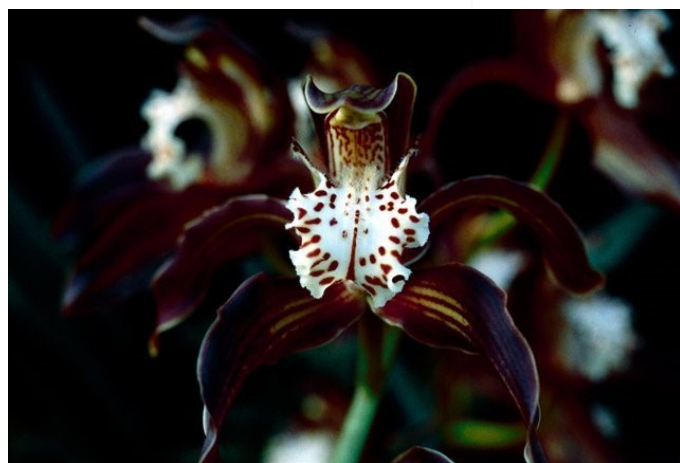
Photograph: Stephen William Swan



*Cym tracyanum* 'New Start' AM/OSNSW

Photograph: Gary Bromley

This is a teraplod form of *Cym tracyanum*



*Cym tracyanum* 'Red Knight' AD/OSCOV

Photograph: OSCOV Grower: S&M Early

## Assessing your Cymbidium flowers

An important task for any grower of Cymbidium seedlings is to carry out a regular assessment of the plants as they flower. A first flowering will give you some indication re the qualities of a particular flower, however it is often not until the second flowering or when the plant has grown to maturity, that you will see the very best it has to offer. Clearly a photographic record is the best way of making an accurate assessment/comparison. However for it to be completely accurate it is important to treat the plant in exactly the same way from year-to-year. This includes the position where it is grown, fertilising and watering programs, observations about weather and light intensity etc. Growing seedlings is very rewarding but you need to be fairly ruthless in your assessments and the culling of inferior flowers/plants. I must confess to never being able to be ruthless, the result being that I am left with many rather 'ordinary' flowers. This is about to change as I set about a major culling program, my favorites will be spared, but others will find themselves listed on eBay or Gumtree.

Jim Frame, one of our newer COSV members, sent me a set of photographs where he compared two different flowerings of the same plants. My immediate question to Jim was whether the plants were flowered under the same light conditions, they weren't. I think you will see the difference light intensity can make! Thanks for sharing you experience Jim!

1st flowering

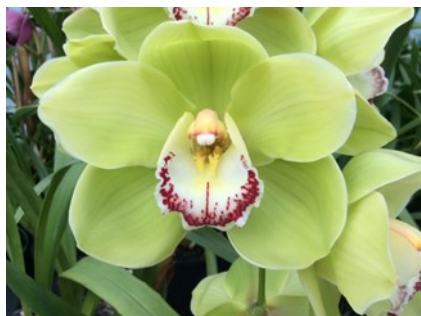


Lunara x Vivacious

2nd flowering



(Royal Fare x Coral Reef)  
x Southern King 'John  
Mata'



Khan Fury 'Nerolie'  
x  
Kurunulla 'Maestro'



The flowers in the second column were flowered under stronger light conditions.