'Cymbidium Chatter'

Edition 8 June 8 2020

Cymbidium Cherry Blossom 4n
Photograph: Joshua White

Welcome to this edition of Cymbidium Chatter, I hope it finds you well and staying safe! The committee will be meeting later this month, so we should soon have an idea of whether or not there will be a show this year. I guess a lot will depend on the government's directives on June 22 and whether or not Monash Council is allowed to hire out halls for a significant gathering of people. Stay tuned!

The articles about Cym *tracyanum* attracted a lot of attention and I was kept busy reading a flurry of responses. For the time being I think the only way to proceed is to accept that the tetraploid flowers are in fact true species. For this position to change someone will have to carry out some scientific research and prove that they are hybrids. The flower that received an AM/AOS in California earlier this year was assessed by a panel of Cymbidium species experts, including one of the authors of 'The Genus Cymbidium' and they determined that it was true to the species. Species Cymbidiums are highly regarded in the US and from what I witnessed and heard, the judges maybe better trained in this area. Joshua White, one of our own members, who has a keen interest in species Cymbidiums raised an interesting point in one of his emails to me. He wondered whether the change of ploidy (2n to 4n) has resulted in some of the changes, lack of hairs on the lip and side lobes, that we are witnessing. We expect 4n flowers to display improved form, wider flower segments and to be of a heavier substance, perhaps we should be looking more closely for other changes. **Observation** will be an important tool moving forward, I'm sure our own judges will be honing their observation skills.

To close off this topic I have included the photographs (right) of a Cym *tracyanum* flowered by one of our own OSCOV judges, Marg Thomas. Marg suspects that the flower is a 4n, zoom-in and you will see that there are very few, if any hairs on the lip and side lobes of the flower. Whatever the ploidy, this is a fine looking Cym *tracyanum* and what a great color!

Putting on my glasses and zooming-in on the flowers, I can actually see some hairs on the side lobes - back to the drawing board!

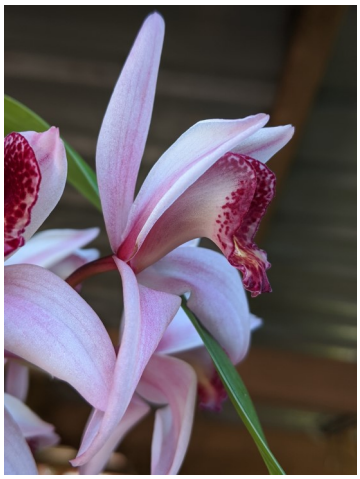
Photograph: Marg Thomas

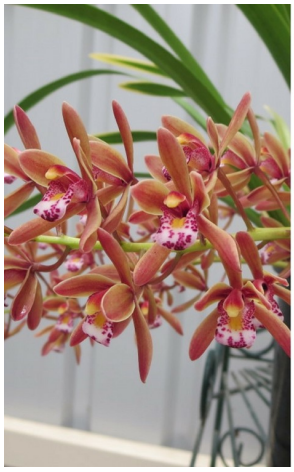
From Joshua White

My first Cym. Cherry Blossom seedling is now fully open. It is one of two that I bought from Springfield Orchids a couple of years ago (Nado made it twice, using a different floribundum for each). As far as I am aware, Nado is the first one to make this hybrid as 4N.

The seedling is Cym. floribundum 'Tokiwa' X erythrostylum 'Tikitere'. It has 8 flowers on the spike and the flowers are about 6cm tall and unscented. The lip is also a better shape than the regular diploid form.








Left: The parents of Cymbidium Cherry Blossom 4n (*floribundum*'Tokiwa'x erythrostylum 'Tikitere').

Seedlings of this Primary Hybrid are still available from Springfield Orchids, Western Australia. Near flowering-sized plants are available for $17.

Cymbidium Cherry Blossom is a rewarding small growing Cymbidium, it is ideally suited to hanging baskets.

Cymbidium Cherry Blossom was first registered in 1963 by the originator, Greenoaks. This places it in the Vintage Class but it is not a plant that flowers around show time, it takes after its Cym *erythrostylum* parent, flowering early in the season. It looks particularly good as a specimen-sized plant. It is not a flower that meets the current judging standards, in fact it has only ever been awarded on one occasion. In 2004, a plant in the US received a cultural award for its owner, it had 19 spikes, with 208 flowers and 69 buds.

Cymbidium Cherry Blossom has been used sparingly as a 2n parent, with only nine crosses recorded. The very attractive miniature (left), East Blossom 'Suzaku' (Cym Cherry Blossom x Cym *sinese)* was registered by its originator, Mukoyama, in 2004.

I know that Joshua is giving serious thought as to how best use his Cym Cherry Blossom 4n, hopefully we will see some great new miniatures in the future!

Photograph: Orchidweb

Des Betcher, President of the Orchid Club of South Australia, sent me the following article. This club has an active schools program and while this article is meant for the students within that program, I'm sure our newer growers will be able to glean some valuable information from it. I will present the information in two parts. Thanks Des, for your contribution!

CYMBIDIUMS – COMPOST and WATER

COMPOSTS OR STICKS AND STONES

Compost elements ability to provide continual benefits to your orchid are impacted by their environment and human intervention. Element selections for your orchids will differ according to your location, availability, cost, water and fertiliser retention and loss capability, compost longevity, PH and EC levels.

Most orchid enthusiasts use (soil-less media) organic or non-organic elements for their epiphytic orchids. The list below contains an array of elements used by orchid growers around the world. The list is not all inclusive and you may find more with further research.

Treated Pine Bark	Fir bark	Perlite	Shell grit
Attapulgite	Grape Marc	Pumice	Soil
Bagasse	Gravel	Rice Husks	Sphagnum Moss
Brewery Wastes	Lignite	Rockwool	Hardwood
Charcoal	Marble Chips	Rubber Tyres	Tezontle
Clay Pellets	Oyster Shell	Sand	Styrofoam
Coco Husks	Peanut Shells	Sawdust	Vermicompost
Coco Husk Chips	Peat Moss	Scoria	Vermiculite
Cork	Horse Manure	Diatomite	Volcanic Rock
Cotton Seed Husk	Osmunda Fibre	Crushed Glass	

WATER QUALITY

The quality of the water you use is important. Factors such as: salts, pH and alkalinity, mineral content, and contamination, determines the suitability of water for use on foliage and flowering plants.

Rainwater: is the most suitable due to its low level of contaminants. However too little or too much can have negative effects on plants and catchment frequency may affect availability.

Tap Water: may vary in quality as a result of contamination by catchment areas and treatment by the local water authorities, this also applies to underground water supplies. Tap water may also contain recycled water and there are supply/treatment costs to be considered.

Treated Water: Chlorination, aeration, flocculation, coagulation, sedimentation, filtration, desalination, disinfection, and reverse osmosis, are processes which vary in setup and maintenance outlay. These may vary according your local water authority and costs involved.

Ground water: may contain dissolved minerals and gases e.g. sodium, magnesium, potassium, calcium or may be contaminated as a result of human/animal activities which affects PH levels but is less susceptible to bacterial pollution than surface water.

WATERING PROGRAM

Plant watering programs vary according to a number of variables including-

Plant Species e.g. refer to natural habitat

Size of Plant e.g. newly potted and adult plants

Plant Requirements e.g. amount of water and frequency of watering

Size, Shape and Type of Container e.g. self-watering pots and pot material

Type of Growing Medium e.g. compost aeration ratio

Environmental Conditions e.g. location and weather

Type of watering system e.g. sprinklers and injectors

WATERING

Three ways to determine if a plant needs watering: -

Determine the weight difference between a wet and dry pot.

Estimate the weight by picking up various pots or by placing plants on a physical weight scale.

Placing your fingers into the compost of your pot until you feel moisture at a predetermined depth is another measure which takes practice. (Cymbidiums about 40-50mm depth)

And finally, the use of a plant/soil moisture meter.

Compost air porosity ratio is an important factor in watering. The air porosity of your compost is the space between your compost particles, which when you water your pots become filled with water and filled with air between watering's. Cymbidiums require about 17-22% air spaces in your pot compost for optimum growth.

Roots Need As Much Water As They Do Air

Root rot can have two sources — one is a prolonged exposure to overwatering that may cause some roots to die due to lack of oxygen

The other source is fungus. Fungus may lay dormant in compost for long periods and then thrive when the plant is overwatered.

Water typically makes up 80 – 95% of plant tissue

If there is not enough water for a plant, the nutrients it needs cannot travel through the plant.

A plant cannot grow if it does not have healthy roots, so the proper balance of water is key when growing plants.

Summary: Because the plant transpires around 97 percent of the water it absorbs, its main task is to maintain the internal water flow so that the plant may remain stable and sufficiently supplied with substances for transport and solubility. Only little of this is taken as "food".

Part B in next week's Cymbidium Chatter.

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