

# Cymbidium Chatter



**Issue 29 (Vol. 2 No. 1): February 2021**

*Cym. Memoria Geoff Laird (madidum X lowianum) in the editor's collection.*

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## News

### Introducing the New Editor

Welcome to the first issue of *Cymbidium Chatter* for 2021. As you may be aware, Issue 28 (published in December 2020) was the last issue with Geoff Bailey as editor, for reasons he has touched on in the previous few issues. I want to thank him for starting *Cymbidium Chatter* and his efforts to produce

issues through 2020 (often on a weekly basis during the COVID-19 lockdowns) and will do my best to build upon his work.

For those not familiar with me, my name is Joshua White. I live in the south eastern suburbs of Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, and am an electrical and computer systems engineer. I grew up with Cymbidiums in the family (my grandmother has grown them for decades), but it was only about five years ago that I started growing them myself. I now have a modest but eclectic collection with examples of just about every type of Cymbidium, although my favourites are the species and hybrids with strong species traits.

At 32 years of age, I am one of the younger members of the Cymbidium Society of Victoria (COSV). I am also the COSV webmaster (a role I have held since mid-2018) and it is my hope that between the [website](#) and *Cymbidium Chatter* I will be able to encourage more of my age group into the rewarding hobby of growing orchids.



## A New Name for Cym. Little Black Sambo



Photo courtesy of Jim Hawk  
<https://garden.org/users/profile/hawkarica/>

In other news, I am pleased to report that Cym. Little Black Sambo (*Cym. canaliculatum* X *madidum*) has finally been renamed. The racist connotations of the name have long been an issue, but it was not until the 2009 edition of the International Code of Nomenclature for Cultivated Plants (ICNCP) that a process was made available for offensive names to be changed.

Julian Shaw, the RHS Orchid Registrar, discusses name changes in his article published in the September 2011 issue of *The Orchid Review*, which is available online to read at:

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/about-the-rhs/pdfs/publications/the-orchid-review/2011/september/sense-and-insensitivity.pdf>

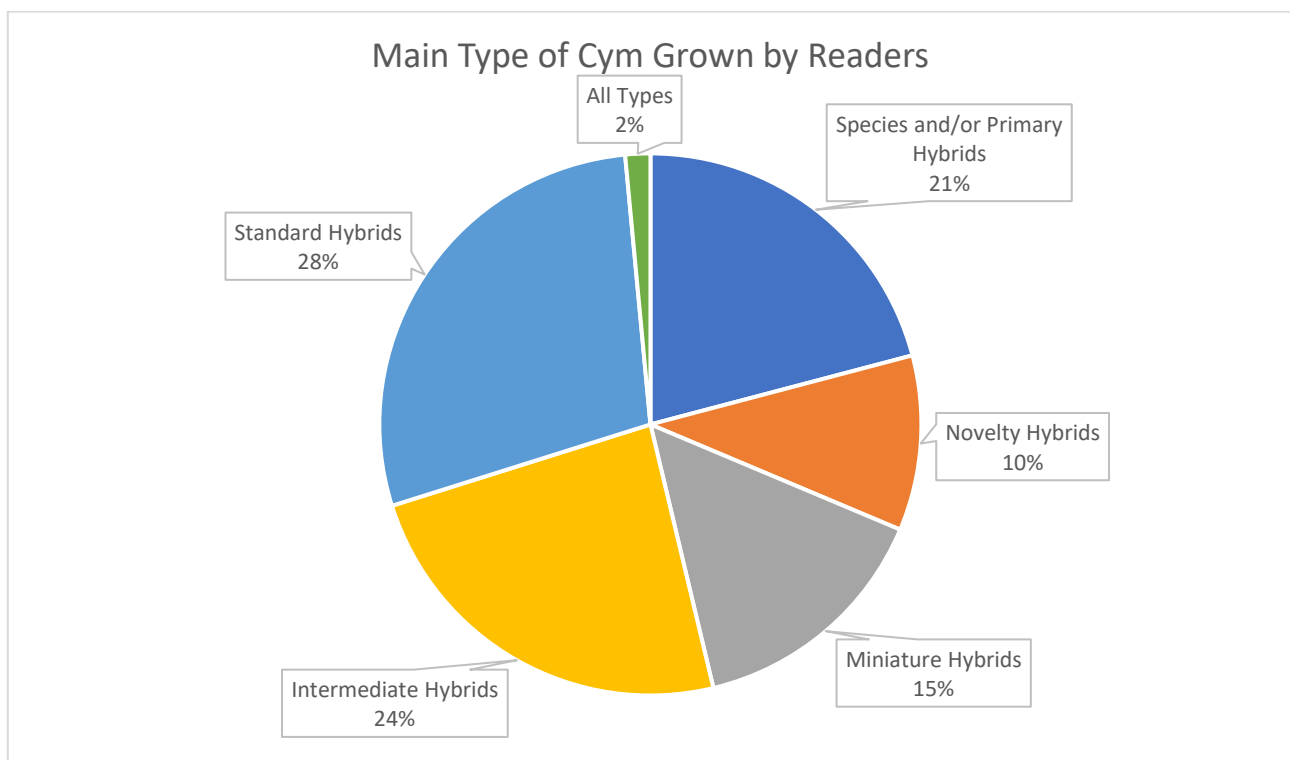
The new name, **Cym. Helen Bannerman**, is a reference to the author of the 1898 book *Little Black Sambo* and it takes precedence over the original name. The RHS Orchid Register reflects the new name in all hybrids with it as a parent, such as Cym. Son of Sambo (which itself may be a contender for a future name change).

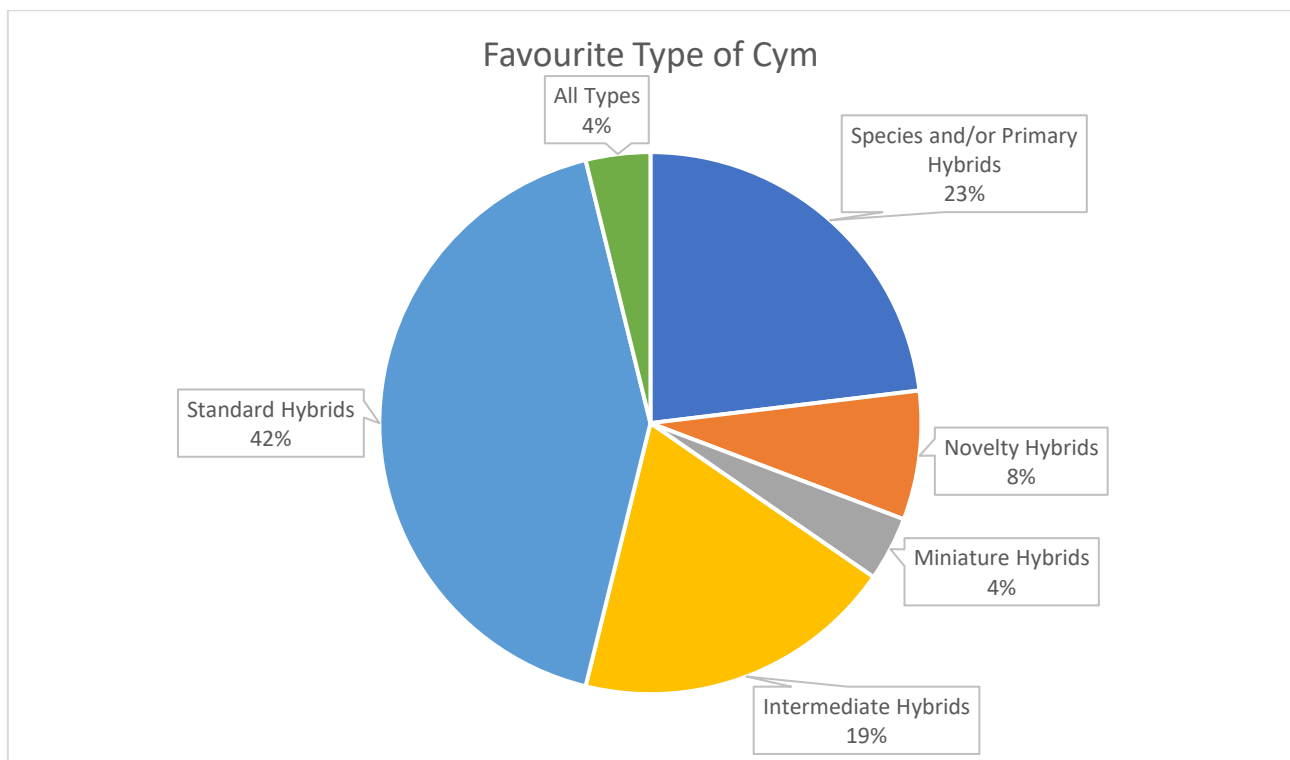
## 2020 Survey Results

At the end of the previous issue, Geoff included a link to my reader survey. This was written with the goal of helping direct *Cymbidium Chatter* for this year and to ensure that I was sourcing and producing content of interest to the readers. I also wanted to give readers the opportunity to provide structured feedback (I also welcome any feedback and contributions sent to me at [jwhite88@gmail.com](mailto:jwhite88@gmail.com)).

I had 26 respondents to the survey and thought readers may be interested in the general results.

First up were some questions to identify types of Cym's readers predominantly enjoyed and grew in their collections. Unsurprisingly, standard hybrids were the favourite. What I did not expect was that standards, intermediates and species or primaries were grown in similar numbers. This imbalance could be the result of many different factors – perhaps growers like variety in their collections, or perhaps space constraints prevent them from growing standards, or maybe supply is an issue. It is impossible to draw any conclusions from the limited survey results, but it is certainly worth investigating further.





I also asked whether readers exhibited their plants and if so, where. The vast majority (88.5%) said that they did exhibit their plants and most of these were at clubs or shows in their local area. Over 60% of exhibitors reported that they displayed plants at most of the meetings or shows they attended. Of those who elected not to show their plants, the primary reason given was that they simply were not interested in doing so.

Finally, I asked about the types of articles readers enjoyed and what they would like to see covered in future. The most popular (tied in first place) were articles on Cymbidium culture and photos from other growers (so to all readers, please send a few photos when you can – this will enable me to include a photo gallery in each issue with a variety of different blooms). There was also strong support for commentaries on individual plants, show reports and interviews with growers, nurseries and hybridisers.

The most popular topic not mentioned above that readers wanted to see covered in future editions were reports on new and upcoming hybrids. Readers were also keen to see more international content included.

I want to thank everyone who took part in the survey and I will endeavour to provide readers with interesting content in each issue!

## Cymbidium Candida

Candida is an old hybrid, registered in 1934 by Garbari as the cross of Florinda X *tracyanum*. Florinda is a primary hybrid (*erythrostylum* X *iridioides*) and the influence of all three species is evident in Candida.



*Cym. Florinda*



*Cym. tracyanum*

The few plants in circulation today that I am aware of originate with Royale Orchids' remake of the grex in the last decade or so, which was the reverse cross: *Cym. tracyanum* 'Royale' X Florinda 'Royale'. A'na Sa'tara<sup>1</sup>, who has kindly provided photos of her plant for this article, noted that even her plant originated from Royale Orchids:

*"Did you know that the Cym Candida ... came from Royale? I've never seen it in the States. It was in the pile of divisions that Kevin brought to Cal Orchid one summer, and I thought it was a very interesting combination of species. The small division was effectively rootless, so I wasn't sure on how well it would do."*



*A'na Sa'tara's Candida on its first flowering in April 2018.*

<sup>1</sup> More of A'na's photography can be found on her website: <https://www.aeorchids.com/>

Interestingly, the first time *Candida* flowered for A'na, it was off-season in April 2018. The blooms were lighter in colouration and the lip a stronger yellow. Subsequent flowerings (shown below) have been a strong pink with a cream-coloured lip and A'na notes that it flowers at the same time as her *tracyanums* (December or January). My best guess is that the combination of temperature and light levels produced this unusual outcome on its first flowering.



*A'na's Candida in full bloom in January 2020 (top) and December 2020 (bottom).*

A'na also reports that the spikes on *Candida* last 1-2 weeks longer than her *tracyanums* and that they exhibit the *tracyanum* trait of all the flowers declining simultaneously.

## An Interview with Gary Sweikert

**Editor:** *It is my hope to feature an interview with a grower, enthusiast, hybridiser or nursery operator in each issue. For this interview, Gary has generously put together a detailed response and cultural information on the Australian species. Photos are Gary's unless otherwise stated.*

Hello readers, my name is Gary Sweikert and Joshua has asked me to do an article for Cymbidium Chatter. I wish Joshua well in taking over the production of the newsletter.

I began in orchids way back – 50 years or so ago – when living at home with my parents in the southern suburbs of Sydney. Dad used to grow Australian Native Orchids back in those days and they were easy to source from some great nurseries, all now gone, and so my passion started with encouragement from Dad all along the way. We grew orchids up till 1980, when I moved out and started a new job further afield. For the next 10 years or so I did not grow an orchid but still subscribed to a couple of Orchid Journals.

In 1990 we moved again to the NSW Central Coast and orchids again became part of my life; we then moved up to the NSW Mid North Coast 10 years ago. I still grow Dendrobium Native Orchids, but I have diversified into the three Aussie Cym species and their hybrids – more on that later in this article.

We have always lived in NSW – seven locations over the years in total. Apart from growing orchids as a hobby only, we also grow heaps of vegetables, fruit trees, have chooks for eggs, I like to walk in the bush, relax and listen to good music and enjoy cooking. Having an Electrical Engineering background, I also play around with building audio amplifiers when I get a spare moment – these are few and far between these days, it always seems to happen when you retire from a permanent job, you are always busier than ever. Living on a couple of acres has allowed me to grow my orchid collection, but I have scaled it back to a manageable size; my wife is happy with that decision. You can't grow every orchid you see for sale; one needs to specialise and channel your time and energy into growing a few genera and species and do that well.



*A specimen of Cymbidium suave in the wild near Gary's place.*

**Editor:** *What got you interested in growing Cymbidiums and how long have you been growing them for?*

As I mentioned above, I have always grown Aussie Native Orchids, now selecting just a couple of the species to concentrate on that also grow well here. My passion for Cymbidium orchids grew instantly from the day we moved to our current location and a few short bushwalks later revealing some magnificent clumps of *Cym. suave* in full flower, all only 10 minutes' drive from home.

The other thing to spur me on was a visit to a long-time friend's nursery, a prominent grower about an hour from here. The visit was perfectly timed, viewing a magnificent display

of flowering *Cym. canaliculatum* in all its forms and colour combinations. Also, on that visit I was fortunate to see many flowering Cym hybrids using all three great Aussie Cym species in their breeding. From that day I was hooked; I also came away from that visit with many Cym seedlings to start my Cymbidium journey.

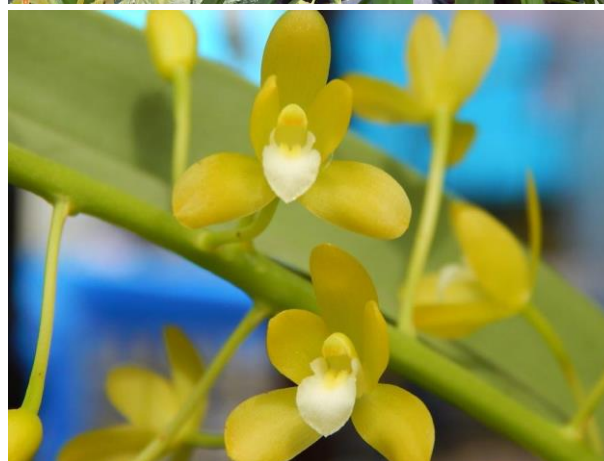
So, I have only been growing Cyms for 10 years or so seriously – but I am no expert. I concentrate on the three Aussie species and hybrids containing them. I have also a small collection of “normal” type Cyms – mainly miniature and cascading or pendulous types. I steer away from the intermediate and standard types and leave them to others to grow, but still appreciate their beauty.

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

As I have mentioned, my focus is solely on the three Aussie Cyms. – namely *suave*, *madidum* and *canaliculatum*. I also collect primary hybrids of the three as well as later generation hybrids with other Cym species and hybrids. I am drawn to these types because of the smaller flower size, abundant number of flowers on a raceme, smaller-growing plant size in general, and the fact that many are fragrant and the spikes are gently arching or pendulous.



One of Gary's plants of *Cym. Black Stump*, which puts on a great show.



Two different *alba* forms of *Cym. canaliculatum* – green (top) and yellow (bottom) – owned by Gary's friend.

These make a great sight in the greenhouse when hung at eye level to view the detail of the individual flowers and to get a whiff of the intoxicating fragrance. I have plenty of hanging space in my three greenhouses and so these types relieve a lot of bench space for growing other orchids (and in the case of my wife, ferns).

**Editor:** *What is the climate like where you live? Have you had to create any special microclimates (such as a heated or cooled greenhouse, use of humidifiers, etc.) in order to grow your preferred Cyms?*

Where we live, slightly inland on the NSW Mid North Coast, is not the ideal climate for growing a diverse range of orchids – one could ask, where is? Our summers can be extremely hot with temps up to 45°C on the odd day, but normally mid 30's. Our winters can get down to just below zero at night on the odd nights with an occasional light frost thrown in for good measure, winter daytime temps would average around 15°C. When you talk to the old



timers around here who have lived here all their life, it was not unusual 30 years ago to get 45 days in a row with a good frost (last winter we had 2 days with frost) – this points to global warming and its overall affect, I say.

The spring and autumn months are perfect, mid 20°s average, so we have a dose of all weather during the year. I got the three greenhouses (40 square meters each) built when we moved here (they were finished and ready to go before our house was finished, you need to get your priorities right) and they are covered in good quality 70% knitted shade cloth with the roof also fitted with Solar Weave for winter frost protection. They are fitted with automatic sprinkler systems controlled by timers and with fertiliser injection. I do not have heating or cooling, so the orchids must adapt to the climate.



*Cym. Morris West in Gary's collection.*

I have worked out over the last 10 years what grows well and what does not. I don't waste time and energy in trying to grow exotic orchids that need extra care – again I leave that to others who have the facilities and climate to succeed.

**Editor:** *What challenges (pests, disease, culture, etc.) have you encountered whilst growing your Cyms and how did you overcome them?*



*A seedling of Cym. Son of Sambo, which flowered for the first time for Gary in 2018.*

Living here has raised some challenges over the early years; having enclosed greenhouses has not really seen a pest problem to any great extent, but scale attack raises its ugly head from time to time. One needs to be vigilant and treat it as soon as it is spotted; if not, it can spread through a collection quickly. I have had a few fungal problems over the years, but as I do not like spraying chemicals very often, I bite the bullet and these days dispose of any orchid that shows signs of disease.

Culture of orchids is always an evolving issue – growers say never change a perfect mix, but I am still to find the perfect mix. What suits one grower may not suit another grower. Basically, I use Orchiata bark from NZ; yes, it is dear, but it lasts in the pot. Sometimes I add an ingredient or two depending on the orchid being potted. I have always used Peter's Excel Cal Mag water soluble fertiliser and supplement that with organic based fertilisers every month. I normally fertilise all year round, applying every 2 weeks normally, then increase to every week in the peak

growing season mainly to try and get the orchids to flowering size as soon as possible. I also supplement with 9-month Nutricote slow-release fertiliser on many of the orchids, but not all.

**Editor:** *What has been the easiest Cym for you to grow?*

This might seem a funny answer to many, as a lot of growers have struggled with this species. Now I know how to grow *Cym. suave*, I am rewarded with great growth and beautiful flowering in

November, and I find it easy to grow once the plant gets to a certain size. The fragrance from the small flowers fills the greenhouse in the morning hours. I will add more on its growing later in this article.

A lot of the “common” Cyms are quite easy to grow – hell, they will even grow out in the garden with all the other plants, so it is pleasing to see how well one of the more challenging species grows when you get the conditions right.

**Editor:** *Is there anything you would 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?*

After growing orchids for 50 years and Cyms for the past decade or so, I most definitely would only grow the species and hybrids that grow well in the wild and concentrate on growing them to emulate how they survive naturally in their native habitat. Of course, I am only talking about the Aussie orchids when I say that.

Advice to newcomers (unfortunately they are few and far between these days) would be to do your research (we did not have the internet or computers when I started out – so it was books, journals and catalogues back then) and decide what will be easy to grow, be readily available and not too expensive to get hold of and be willing to provide the correct conditions required to grow them well and to the best of one’s ability and always appreciate them. It is of no use whatsoever to see a beautiful orchid in a sales catalogue or an online website, pay out top dollar for the orchid and get it home to find you cannot provide the correct conditions or climate for it to survive.



*Cym. suave in cultivation.*



*Cym. Pakkret Sunrise.*

The best thing to do for any newcomer, no matter how old, is to join and actively participate in an orchid society or two (they are always looking for new younger members). Listen, ask questions, read as much as possible, take advice from other members on board and go and visit their collection at their homes to learn and view the tips and tricks of the trade.

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

This question raises all sorts of scenarios for me in my mind. A lot of things have occurred in the past, mostly trivial and soon forgotten. But I do find it odd for example, when one gets to know certain so-called “experts”, judges and authorities on all matters orchid – only to find out that some of them do

not actively grow a single orchid. Putting it another way – like students just out of university, they might have all the theory in the world tucked up in their brain, but put that theory into practice and it all comes unstuck quickly.

**Editor:** Gary has also kindly provided his notes on the Australian Cymbidium species, with much of the material drawn from his friend and expert, Mr. Ken Russell. These are reproduced here for the benefit of the reader.

## Some notes on Australian Cymbidiums in Nature

Ken Russell has made an extensive study over the years of these three species where they grow naturally in NSW and QLD. He has found surprising differences in their cultural likes and dislikes, particularly to do with pH of the decayed material surrounding their roots. These results provide especially useful clues as to how these species can be grown more successfully by the hobbyist grower. Ken has done many society talks on this subject; I have been to three of them and he has evoked much discussion on each occasion, with members going away to re-evaluate the growing of these species.



*Cym. canaliculatum* in the bush in northern NSW.

For *Cymbidium canaliculatum*, Ken has studied plants in situ over a 1500km range in NSW and QLD with daily temps in the range from -10°C to +50°C.

pH tests were made around the root system near the surface and well down around the lower root system. The pH near the surface differed markedly from lower down as shown below.

| Host                  | pH Near Surface | pH Lower Down |
|-----------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Live pines            | 6               | 9             |
| Pine logs on ground   | 6.5             | 9             |
| Other live trees      | 7               | 9.5           |
| Other stumps and logs | 7.5             | 9.5           |

From the results above it can be said that the *Cym canaliculatum* root zone prefers an alkaline condition.

For *Cymbidium suave*, Ken studied plants over a 1000 km range, some near sea level and others up to 700 metres above sea level. Most hosts were various types of Eucalypt trees, with a few occurring on pines and she oaks and a few occurring on rocks as well.

| Host              | pH Near Surface | pH Lower Down |
|-------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Dead stumps       | 4 to 5          | 4             |
| Logs and deadwood | 4 to 5          | 4             |
| Live trees        | 4 to 5          | 4             |
| Rocks             | 5               | 4             |



*Cym. suave* growing in the bush.

Looking at these results, the root system of this species prefers acidic conditions (totally different to *canaliculatum*). All plants in nature had at least a 25mm layer of good leaf mould from decaying leaves, twigs and bark around their base. This species is renowned for very long root systems penetrating down into the decayed centre of stumps and trees; the decayed matter (known as mudgut) from stumps had a pH level as low as 3.5 in some locations. Ken recommends getting hold of some of this matter when potting up this species at home.

To lower the mix pH for this species, one can use vitamin C tablets, 5ml per litre of pure pineapple juice, Phostrogen Acid Plant Food or coffee grounds which has a natural pH of 4.5. Never apply lime to *Cym. suave* as it hates alkaline conditions and the plant will slowly fail.

*Cymbidium madidum* plants that were studied in north eastern NSW all living in trees and on logs and stumps. The pH around the root zone was typically 6 to 6.5; with this pH requirement, this species is easier to maintain in cultivation.

All three species are very difficult to raise and grow ex flask and this is not recommended for the novice grower, especially when one sees the price of some flasks today. For the average hobbyist and new grower, I advise one to seek out established seedlings or plants; they are available, but one needs to ring around and do some research on availability. Experienced growers working in this field do not advertise but rely on word of mouth advertising these days. The orchid world is still small at times.



*Cym. madidum* growing on a tree stump.

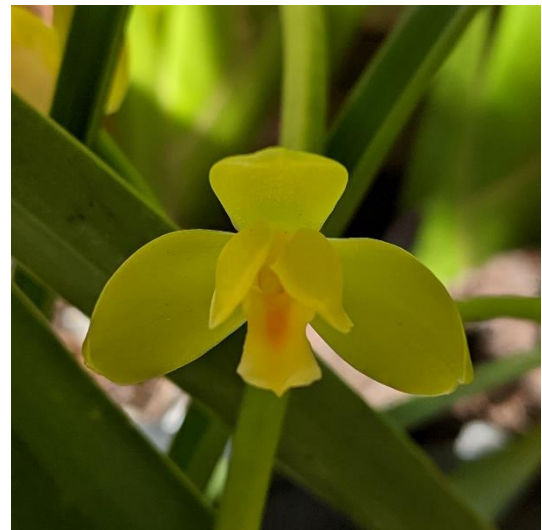
The following is a summary table to help compare the traits of the three different Aussie Cyms:

| Trait                      | <i>Cym. madidum</i> | <i>Cym. suave</i> | <i>Cym. canaliculatum</i> |
|----------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| Growth                     | large               | small             | in between                |
| Raceme                     | 300 -900mm          | 150 – 300mm       | 200 – 400mm               |
| Flowers                    | 20 – 70             | 10 – 30           | 15 – 60                   |
| Flower size                | small               | small             | slightly larger           |
| Flowering time             | Aug – Feb           | Aug – Jan         | Sep – Nov                 |
| Average rain               | lots all year       | avg all year      | lots summer only          |
| Habitat                    | moist forest        | temp forest       | arid woodland             |
| Temps                      | warm to hot         | cool to warm      | cool to very hot          |
| Growth cycle               | Spring – Autumn     | Summer – Winter   | Summer – Autumn           |
| Rootzone pH                | Neutral 6-6.5       | Acidic 4-4.5      | Alkaline 9-9.5            |
| Sun/shade in situ          | 50-70% shade        | 50% shade         | 0-30% shade               |
| Cover/shelter              | shade cloth         | shade cloth/poly  | poly                      |
| Pot size                   | big standard        | long or stump     | normal                    |
| Mix                        | bark                | bark/heartwood    | bark, gravel, perlite     |
| Fertilizer                 | OK                  | acid no lime      | OK plus lime              |
| Availability               | average             | below average     | average                   |
| Pod/Pollen                 | can be both         | better pod        | better pollen             |
| Registered primary hybrids | 18+                 | 6+                | 12+                       |
| Ease of culture            | easy                | difficult         | challenging               |
| My overall rating*         | 2                   | 7 to 8            | 6 to 7                    |

\* where 1 = no problems and 10 = impossible

Of particular interest these days is the increasing availability of albinistic forms of these species:

- *Cym. canaliculatum* has a definite pure colour green form and a pure colour yellow form in existence.
- *Cym. madidum* has a pure colour yellow-green form that has dark yellow colouring at the back of the labellum. This is known to be a true alba based on breeding behaviour.
- *Cym. suave*, to date, has not had a confirmed alba form found yet, but exciting news is that there is pure green form known to exist (closely guarded I might add). Photos and maybe some pollen will be available later this year (2021) – fingers crossed for that exciting prospect. More on that in the years to come perhaps.



The alba form of *Cym. madidum* (editor's photo).

I do hope the reader finds some useful information here and I encourage all to look more closely at our great Aussie Cyms. Even though their flowers might be small, they have found their way into many a great hybrid Cymbidium on the world stage.

## New Hybrids from the Australian Species by Andy Easton

### *Cym. madidum* Progeny

We have worked with this species for several generations now. The *madidum*-derived hybrid I will discuss here is Balls of Fire 'Red Raider' 4n, from the crossing of Phar Lap and Valerie Absolonova, both at the tetraploid level. This is the best of the cross that we have bloomed.

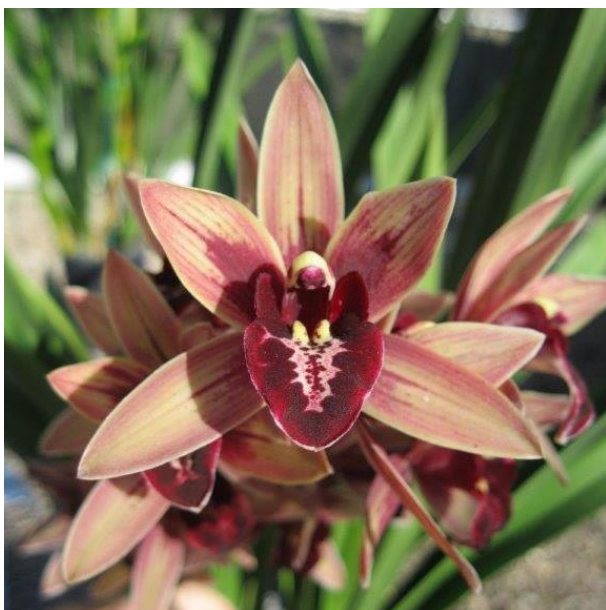
*Cym. madidum* always imparts serious warmth-tolerance to its progeny but typically also large pseudobulbs. When we made it into a tetraploid, it seemed to produce smaller offspring than as a diploid. Not sure why! We also have found that the addition of *Cym. ensifolium* greatly adds to warmth-tolerance and further reduces bulb size.

The goal for this crossing was to produce an upright spiked intermediate that had red coloration and regular intermediate foliar habit. Warmth-tolerance was expected and indeed has been achieved. The very useful flower longevity of *Cym. madidum* has carried through and this clone of Balls of Fire can be used also as a cut flower. There is little demand for spotted Cyms from commercial operators so although some scattered spotting is evident in the photo, we have not made any hybrids seeking a spotted outcome. Season would be May in the Southern Hemisphere.



*Cym. Balls of Fire 'Red Raider'*

### *Cym. canaliculatum* Progeny



*A diploid seedling of Cym. Joseph Schmidt.*

We don't grow *Cym. canaliculatum* and have been given pollen when needed. I don't even remember now where the pollen for the hybrid registered as Canal Parish came from. Of course, if the cross was being made today, it would be treated with oryzalin, but Canal Parish is an old-timer.

The cross that really got me into the *Cym. canaliculatum* fan club was Joseph Schmidt (*Cym. sinense* f. *album* X Canal Parish). That diploid pod was indeed treated with oryzalin at Pakkret Floriculture's lab in Thailand. Not many seedlings and only a few that were diploid; most seemed to be 4n. The cross was very hard to sell; we offered them at the Cal-Orchid Summer Hummer and I think only one person bought a plant, Terry Boomer. It bloomed a few months later, as did a couple of

mine, and suddenly we were fighting off customers. We have made one hybrid with a diploid Joseph Schmidt and have only a handful of seedlings about to bloom.

Various tetraploid Joseph Schmidt hybrids have bloomed or soon will bloom. (Joseph Schmidt X Phar Lap) is registered as Trevor Yee while Viscount Nigel (Joseph Schmidt X Belgian Therapy) is extremely interesting – what is very amazing is the flower size; in the 9-10 cm range so far. So while the lesser *Cym. canaliculatum* influence has allowed a larger flower, the combined *canaliculatum* and *sinense* influence is quite adequate to impart warmth-tolerance to the coming Joseph Schmidt progeny.

Considering Canal Parish again, we crossed it with Magic Devon 'Maisie' 4n and in January bloomed the front runner with a high arching spray of 18 shapely blooms. It will be registered as Llewellyn Kouba. The cross was treated with oryzalin in the hopes that we might get a hexaploid which could then be then crossed back to a diploid *Cym. devonianum*, but I am fairly sure the precocious one is a triploid.



*The first seedling to flower of Cym. Llewellyn Kouba.*

Doctor Miles Seton was a wonderful hybridizing influence for all three Australian Cym species. Sadly, I do not see anyone working on his fusion lines in Australia today but with the demise of the Australian Orchid Review, it is much harder to keep up with new players. Hopefully, new enthusiasts exist and can build on his lines.

## *Cym. suave* Progeny

This was my least favored of the trio but it is starting to appeal more and more. One of Dr. Seton's best hybrids was Bunyip (*Cym. suave* X Carisona 'Glendessary') and some seedlings from the crossing were imported to the US by a great enthusiast, Bill Bailey. Bill got the labels mixed and the plant was originally known as Squirt, but eventually it was sorted and then a local grower had it cloned and treated with colchicine (back in the 1980's). It was likely re-cloned and when I returned to the US in 2000, plants of the 4n Bunyip were readily available.

I fiddled around with it and crossed it to our *Cym. parishii* 'Emma Menninger' 4n, looking for pinks and also excellent warmth-tolerance. So far three of the crossing have bloomed and it is now named John Fogerty. The first was OK but a very small plant. The second was a beauty and has already made viable seed as well as bloomed again last December. The third to bloom was a cull pot plant.



*Cym. John Fogerty*, which is 25% *suave*.



*Cym. Ray Davies #2*

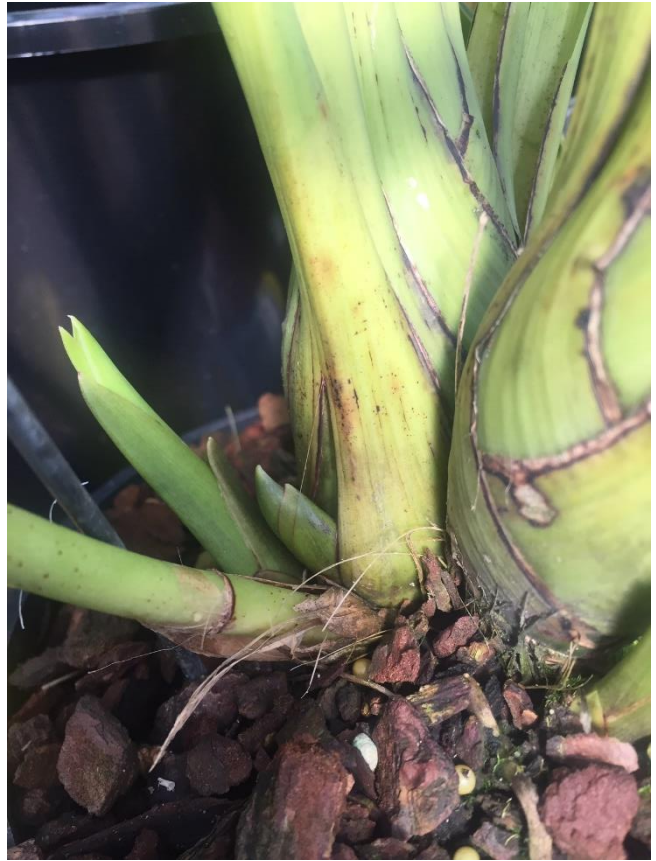
I'm sure people may question whether *Cym. suave* has much warmth-tolerance but even so, it does experience reasonably hot climatic conditions over much of its range. Last year we bloomed two seedlings of Ray Davies (Game of Love X Scallywag). Both were interesting flowers and blooming very precociously in 5" pots. We are about to send their pods off to Thailand and both are back in bloom. Plant size is quite compact because of the influence of both *Cym. suave* and *Cym. pumilum* [*Cym. floribundum*]. Flower color is marginal, but it won't be difficult to punch it up as we have all sorts of pinkish *Cym. tigrinum* line tetraploids that will both add color and lock in the late season blooming. We are of course aiming for the Mother's Day potted plant market in Europe.





*Cym. Ray Davies 'Mem. Alf Day'*

Andy notes that this was incorrectly staked in his absence over Christmas.



*Cym. Ray Davies 'Mem. Alf Day'*

The base of the current open spike with the new spike emerging. Andy notes that *Cym. suave* lines are almost continuously spiking in Colombia!

## Disney Girl and Related Hybrids from Bert Ruiter

Bert Ruiter, of [Ruiter Orchids](http://RuiterOrchids) in the Netherlands, has kindly provided some photos of some of his hybrids using Disney Girl (*Cym. tracyanum* X Robin).



*Cym. Disney Girl*

Bert writes that "I used Disney Girl mainly because I like the size of the flower and my buyers like bigger flowers". The grex has been used by other hybridisers as well; Andy Easton backcrossed it to Robin to make Annette Funichello, whilst Kevin Hipkins used it with Pywacket to make the well-known Death Wish (previously covered in Issues 22 & 23).

Bert describes Jungle Girl (Melinga X Disney Girl) as "a very commercial cross, easy to flower specially on a smaller

plant and impressive spikes.” He has made the cross twice, once using a 4N Melinga and the other with a typical 2N Melinga.



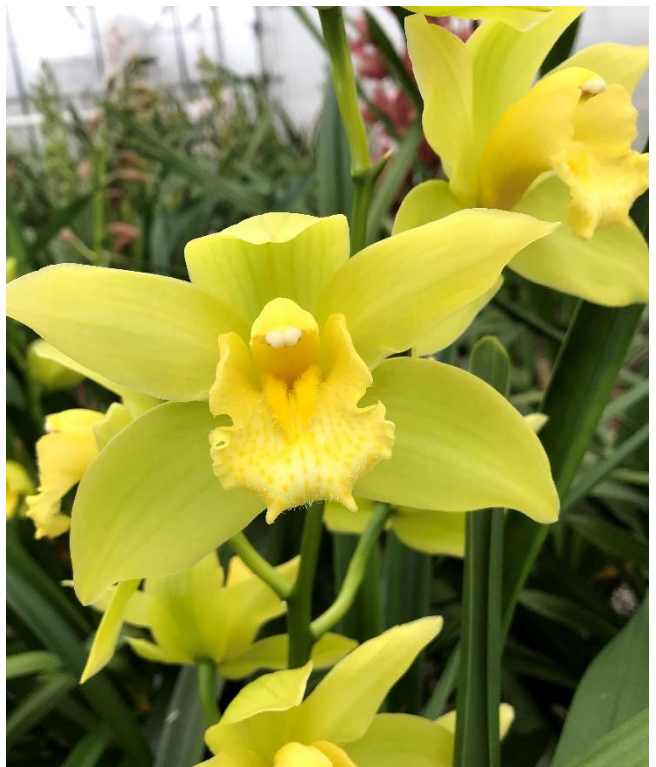
*Jungle Girl #1 (made using the 4N Melinga)*



*Jungle Girl #2 (made using the 4N Melinga)*



*Jungle Girl (made using the 2N Melinga)*



*Melinga 4N*

Bert also crossed the diploid *Melinda* with a *Cym. tracyanum* selection from Portugal nicknamed 'Banana', so-called due to its light-yellow colouration with spots. Whilst it is not his favourite, he notes that it has gotten enough attention for him to clone it.

Carol Connelly (*Cym. schroederi* X Disney Girl) is another of Bert's successful crosses. *Cym. schroederi*, which is the natural hybrid of *lowianum* X *iridioides*, seems to have had limited use thus far, with only five registered hybrids to date (within none between 1933 and 2008!).

Bert was pleased to see that the *lowianum*-influenced lip of *schroederi* was inherited. He notes the grex sells well, but takes time to get it to flower, much like Disney Girl.

Finally, (Disney Girl X *erythraeum*) is one of two crosses Bert has made with the species. He comments "I will leave this species behind me;



*Melinda* 2N x *Cym. tracyanum* 'Banana'



Carol Connelly



Disney Girl X *erythraeum*

there are more interesting paths and I don't have the time money and space to do everything. I am constantly limiting myself to certain lines or type of flower that sell well for me."



*A tetraploid example of Cym. tracyanum f. album, exhibiting the hairy labellum and callus ridges that is common to the species.*

Looking to the future, Bert is now working on some hybrids with the alba form of *Cym. tracyanum*, shown above.

## Climates and Microclimates

*"Climate is what ... we may expect, weather is what we actually get."*

*Andrew John Herbertson (1901)*

Climate is the long-term average weather conditions for a given area and since 1934 the World Meteorological Organization has used 30-year periods for calculating climate statistics. Several different systems exist for classifying climate zones or regions, each with their own advantages and disadvantages.

In the US, the [USDA Hardiness Zones](#) are commonly used to guide what plants can be grown where. It is based upon the average annual minimum temperature and is divided into 10°F zones. USDA zones have been calculated for other areas of the world too, including [Australia](#). Much of the state of Victoria (excluding the Great Dividing Range) is classified as USDA Zone 9 or 10.

The [Köppen Climate Classification](#) system is one of the most widely used and it is arguably more useful than the USDA zones. It factors in both temperature and precipitation to divide the world into

five different climate zones (A through E) which are then further subdivided. Victoria, Australia, falls in Zone C (the warm/mild temperate zone), with the subzonal classification varying on the exact location.

[Microclimates](#), on the other hand, are much more localised and range from areas no bigger than your backyard to a township or valley. The key is that the conditions differ from the typical climate of the larger area or region. Humanity often creates their own microclimates, both intentionally and unintentionally, in the way we build our gardens, houses and cities.

What does all this have to with growing Cymbidiums, you might ask? Climate is a good starting point for working out what you can grow, but it is really microclimates that play the biggest part in your garden. Sometimes we can create or modify microclimates in the growing spaces available to us – greenhouses and shadehouses are examples of deliberately controlled microclimates. Of course, it is not always possible to control the environment to the degree we would like; in that case it is important to take advantage of the available microclimate(s).

Urban areas, particularly with lots of concrete and brickwork, tend to retain a lot more heat which is slowly released at night-time. Cyms that are dependent on the diurnal fluctuation for blooming may struggle in this environment without additional cooling, or may bloom off schedule. My own personal experience with this comes from my family's *Cym. lowianum*, which produced five spikes last year – the first one appeared in early April and opened late August, whilst the last one (a small, weak spike) appeared mid-June and opened late October. The plant was positioned on the southern side of the house, protected from the direct weather, but surrounded by concrete and brickwork that would retain a significant amount of heat.

In contrast, my *Cym. lowianum var. concolor*, hanging under the porch on the northern side of the house, started to spike at the same time (April 2020) but did not open until late October. Its position meant it had more direct sunlight during winter but also more airflow and less radiant heat from the concrete and brickwork.

I have also noted that plants with a degree of warmth tolerance (which may suffer in the windy and cold weather of winter) show less damage when they are adjacent to the house brickwork – no doubt due to the combination of radiant heat and reduced exposure to the damaging winds (unfortunately the area around my residence tends to act like a wind tunnel in winter and this causes windburn to vulnerable plants, such as *erythrostylum* and its hybrids).



*My inherited Cym. lowianum opening its first spike late August 2020.*



*Windburn damage to the back of an erythrostylum hybrid.*

The microclimates at my residence affect my other plants as well. Varieties of Liliium that should grow in my climate (and grow very well just outside Melbourne) cook here because of the amount of concrete and brickwork – all my garden beds are adjacent to large masses of concrete. Instead, I have to select varieties that can cope with the heat and position pots where they will not get the afternoon sun.

A piece of advice that I sometimes hear for new homeowners or those starting a garden is to look at what grows where on the property over the course of a year. You want to understand what the conditions are like in the space you have available and then, if needed (and where possible), make modifications to provide the right microclimate(s) for your chosen plants.

For the grower who may not have a greenhouse or shadehouse, think about factors like wind, rain, sun and heat retention – Cyms rarely like staying wet in cold weather, so do you have a

spot that is protected from the worst of the winter and spring rains? If, like me, you have lots of concrete and brickwork around, can you hang plants to provide more airflow, or do you have some spots that won't get the hot afternoon sun (and hence won't retain as much heat overnight)? Cymbidiums can be very tolerant and hardy, but in order to get the best results from them you will want to consider where the best spots are in your garden or around your house to grow them.

## 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](mailto: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 Jim Hawk, A'na Sa'tara, Gary Sweikert, Andy Easton and Bert Ruiter.

The next issue is planned for April 2021.