

A Judge's View of Vandas and Ascocendas

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This article deals with a few of the aspects of judging vandas and ascocendas. Many people think that, since present *Vanda* hybrids are fairly large, *Vanda* species are also large. This is not true. Most *Vanda* species are small in terms of flower size. Of the 27 *Vanda* species listed below, excluding *Vanda coerulea* and *Euanthe (Vanda) sandariana*, the average size of the flower is about 1&7/8 inches or 4.7 cm across. Though *Euanthe (Vanda) sandariana* continues to be listed as a *Vanda* species, in all published hybrid records, it is according to accepted taxonomic opinion the only species in the genus *Euanthe*. *Vanda coerulea* and *Euanthe (Vanda) sandariana* average 4&1/2 or 11.4 cm across. As you will see, much of the flower size of awarded *Vanda* hybrids comes from these two species.

Vanda Species	Natural Spread of Flower	Vanda Species	Natural Spread of Flower
<i>Vanda amesiana</i>	2.5–3.8 (1–1&1/2")	<i>V. liacina</i>	1.8 cm (3/4")
<i>V. alpina</i>	2.5–3.8 (1–1&1/2")	<i>V. limbata</i>	5.0 cm (2")
<i>V. bensoni</i>	5.0 cm (2")	<i>V. luzonica</i>	6.3–7.6 cm (2&1/2–3")
<i>V. brunnea</i>	3.8 cm (1&1/2")	<i>V. merrillii</i>	3.8–5.0 cm (1&1/2–2")
<i>V. coerulea</i>	7.6 cm–10.1 cm (3–4")	<i>V. parviflora</i>	2.5 cm (1")
<i>V. coerulescens</i>	3.1 cm (1&1/4")	<i>V. roeblingiana</i>	5.0 cm (2")
<i>V. concolor</i>	5.0 cm (2")	<i>V. sandariana</i>	8.8–10.1 cm (2&1/2–4")
<i>V. cristata</i>	5.0 cm (2")	<i>V. spathulata</i>	3.1 cm (1&1/4")
<i>V. dearei</i>	5.0 cm (2")	<i>V. sumatrana</i>	5.0 cm (2")
<i>V. denisoniana</i>	6.3 cm (2&1/2")	<i>V. teres</i>	6.3–7.6 cm (2&1/2–3")
<i>V. hookeriana</i>	6.3 cm (2&1/2")	<i>V. tessellata</i>	5.0 cm (2")
<i>V. insignis</i>	6.3 cm (2&1/2")	<i>V. tricolor</i>	2.5 cm (1&1/2")
<i>V. kimballiana</i>	5.0 cm (2")	<i>V. tricuspadata</i>	5.0 cm (2")
<i>V. lamellata</i>	3.1 cm (1&1/4")		

The following chart shows the awards to all *Vanda* species and hybrids and the size of representative flowers from January 1978 through December 1981.

	Maximum Spread	Minimum Spread	Average Spread	A.M.	H.C.C.	F.C.C.	Total Awarded
1978	12.3 cm	5.0 cm	9.39 cm	6	7	1	14
1979	11.4 cm	7.6 cm	9.51 cm	11	4	0	15
1980	14.5 cm	5.2 cm	9.54 cm		8	1	22
1981	12.2 cm	6.5 cm	9.98 cm	21	10	0	31

In 1978, two *Vanda* species were awarded by the American Orchid Society: *Vanda cristata* 'Circle J', HCC/AOS (79 pts) 5.0 cm across, and *Vanda denisoniana* 'Davie Ranches', AM/AOS (81 pts.) 5.3 cm across. In 1979, no *Vanda* species received an award. In 1980, there was one award to *Vanda denisoniana* 'Gayle', AM/AOS (82 pts)

5.2 cm across. In 1981, there was one awarded species, *Vanda luzonica* 'Evelyn', AM/AOS (85 pts) 6.5 cm across. These were the smallest vandas awarded in those three years. All hybrids were considerably larger in size.

The average size of an awarded *Vanda* hybrid flower has gone up every year. I think that all judges, and every reader, should reread the article by Mary Noble McQuerry in the American Orchid Society's *Awards Quarterly*, Volume 11, Number 1 – 1980, page 20, titled "Size is Only 10 Points." To quote from Mrs. McQuerry's last paragraph, "The best way to measure flower size is with the eye. The rule should be used only after the scores are added up to record the measurements." I think we too often pass over plants simply because we think they are "too small."

Of all the American Orchid Society awarded vandas, only four hybrids do not have *Euanthe (Vanda) sandariana* as a parent, contributing large size. Of these, one hybrid has been awarded two times:

Vanda Tan Chay 'Alice', AM/AOS (85 pts) August 14, 1963, Miami, Florida

Vanda Tan Chay 'Ann Marcus', HCC/AOS (78 pts) February 14, 1963, Honolulu, Hawaii

V. Miss Joaquim 'Caribbean', HCC/AOS (77 pts) September 21, 1968, Puerto Rico

V. Francis France 'Alpha', HCC/AOS (76 pts) May 16, 1964, Honolulu, Hawaii

V. Mimi Palmer 'Zeba', AM/AOS (80 pts) February 5, 1976, Puerto Rico

Of the AOS awarded *Vanda* species and hybrids, *Euanthe (Vanda) sandariana* leads all in having 94 awards. *Vanda Rothschildiana (coerulea x sandariana)* is second with 77 awards. In third place comes *Vanda Jennie Hashimoto (sanderiana x Onomea)*, with 43 awards. In fourth place is *Vanda Onomea (Rothschildiana x sandariana)* with 33 awards, and in fifth place with 27 awards is *Vanda Mabelmae Kamahale (Ohuohu x sandariana)*. *Vanda Nellie Morley (Emma van Deventer x sandariana)* is next with 22 awards.

Euanthe (Vanda) sandariana is the most productive species parent to date. It tends to give good shape and size to its progeny. A few negative characteristics include an intolerance of cool weather or dark days. *Vanda coerulea* is the second most productive species parent and tends to produce blue color and size. *Vanda dearei* and *V. luzonica* are tied for third place. In fourth place would be *V. tricolor* and its variety *suavis*. All of these are strap-leaved vandas. Terete-leaved *Vanda* species include *Vanda teres*, *V. hookeriana*, *V. tricuspadata*, *V. masperoeae* and *V. simondii*. Semi-terete-leaved *Vanda* species are *Vanda amesiana* and *V. kimballiana*.

Ten *Vanda* species have been awarded by the American Orchid Society:

Vanda amesiana (1 award)

V. coerulea (8)
V. denisoniana (94)
V. furva (1)
V. luzonica (2)
V. sanderiana (94)
V. spathulata (1)
V. stangeana (1)
V. tessellate (1)
V. tricolor (1)

I would like to see more primary and less-complex *Vanda* hybrids made from some of the little-used parents named above. We could produce nice hybrids that would be smaller in growth and flower size and, I think, would produce some awarded clones. Such hybrids might be a little easier to grow and to bloom in the cooler regions than the *Vanda* hybrids which have so much *Euanthe (Vanda) sanderiana* in the background. In most present hybrids this could be more than 80 to 90 percent. Also with a smaller size plant, I think more people would try and grow vandas. At the present time most *Vanda* hybrids grow so large that many growers just do not have room to grow them.

Ascocenda hybrids for the similar period (1978–1981) have received awards 221 times, as opposed to 82 *Vanda* awards, a ratio ca. 2½ to 1. The following chart shows the AOS awards to all ascocendas and the size of representative flowers from January 1978 through December 1981.

	Maximum Spread	Minimum Spread	Average Spread	H.C.C.	A.M.	Total Awarded
1978	10.0 cm	2.6 cm	5.64 cm	28	20	48
1979	10.0 cm	2.4 cm	5.37 cm	22	19	41
1980	8.8 cm	3.1 cm	5.81 cm	29	24	53
1981	10.5 cm	3.5 cm	5.92 cm	37	42	79

The average natural spread dropped a little in 1979, but, since then it has gone up. We are looking at and awarding more: 79 ascocendas in 1981. The largest *Ascocenda* flower in every year except 1980 has been larger than the average *Vanda* flower for the past four years. The average *Ascocenda* flower size also has gotten larger.

The original idea behind *Ascocenda* hybridizing was excellent: well-shaped flowers with lots of bright, different colors on a compact-growing plant. This meant that people with limited growing space could grow them. Most hybridizers have crossed ascocendas back to *Vanda* hybrids and *Euanthe (Vanda) sanderiana* so many times that many *Ascocenda* hybrids are approaching and even surpassing *Vanda* hybrids in size, thereby undoing one of the basic reasons for making ascocendas in the first place.

I believe there are a number of good primary hybrid ascocendas that should be awarded — if we can remember that “size is only 10 points” and that we still have 90 points to work within scoring.

In Richard Peterson’s article entitled, “Looking at Something Different,” *Awards Quarterly*, Volume 12, Number 4, page 225, paragraph 5, I quote, “Size, at least in the way it appears to have been interpreted, is one of the more unfortunate bugaboos which the present judging system has inherited from the past. The antique tendency to judge bigger as better, a gift from the days when hybridizers were primarily commercial growers and the flower market demanded massive blooms to display on imposing bosoms, has been, on occasion, a major stumbling block to the recognition of excellence in almost every genus. Proportion and harmony of segments, rather than their individual size, would seem the more valid, more expansive approach.”

A good example is a plant of (*V. denisoniana* x *Asctm. miniatum*) that I have in my collection. The overall natural spread of the bloom 3.2 cm. This clone has orange flowers on a good, upright inflorescence, with all flowers well arranged. There have been four *Vanda denisoniana* clones awarded, with an average natural spread of 5.0 cm. *Ascocentrum miniatum* clones received two H.C.C.’s and one A.M. from the American Orchid Society. They averaged 1.5 cm in natural spread. I think the primary cross’s natural spread of 3.2 cm is what one would expect from the natural spreads of 1.5 cm and 5.0 cm of both parents. I have discussed this with other judges but the only comment I receive is, “It’s too small.”

Many different hybridizing adventures in vandas and ascocendas could be undertaken if the judging community adjusted its “it’s too small” frame of mind to accommodate a less rigid preoccupation with size. Just think what lovely and different flowers we would see — judge!