

Judging Intergeneric Oncidiinae
By Steve Drozda

In *The Pictorial Encyclopedia of Oncidium*, Mark Chase states that there are more than 1,200 species sorted into over 70 recognized genera that make up the *Oncidium* Alliance. The genera used to create the intergeneric hybrids most frequently encountered and awarded by AOS judges include *Oncidium*, *Odontoglossum*, *Cochlioda*, *Miltonia* and *Brassia*. These five genera can be combined into a very large number of combinations. However, *Odontocidium* (*Odm.* × *Onc.*) and *Wilsonara* (*Cda.* × *Odm.* × *Onc.*) account for the largest number of AOS awards to intergenerics.

Orchid breeders have long been interested in creating hybrids from the different genera within the Oncidiinae. The first intergeneric hybrid flower was exhibited at the Temple Show of the Royal Horticultural Society in 1904. The hybrid was an *Odontioda*, a cross between *Odontoglossum* and *Cochlioda*. Since that time, orchid breeders have created more than 39 different bigeneric crosses; 22 hybrids of three genera, 14 hybrids of four genera, 4 hybrids of five genera and finally *Brilliandeara*, which combines the genes from six different genera: *Aspasia*, *Brassia*, *Cochlioda*, *Miltonia*, *Odontoglossum* and *Oncidium*.

Each of the genera used in breeding have particular species that seem to be most influential and provide the greatest benefit to the overall quality of a cross. When judging, determine the extent to which the individual clone displays superior qualities that have been derived from its ancestors, while simultaneously judging the extent to which the clone has overcome the faults of its ancestors.

Ned Nash stated that "... only in *Odm. crispum*-based hybrids do we find the truly perfect flat, rounded and proportionate form that is considered ideal in orchids." He also states the "Odonts are the ideal spray orchid, especially when the blooms are flat and well rounded, of clear color or boldly patterned, and borne well-shingled, perfectly arranged, on an arching spike." Milton Carpenter remarked that "more than 100 years have passed since the heady days when *Odontoglossum crispum* reigned supreme in the world of orchids, its unique beauty is still sought fervently by the hybridists of today." The aims of intergeneric Oncidiinae orchid breeders have been to:

- Create plants with long, branched inflorescences and higher flower counts.
- Improve warmth tolerance over *Odontoglossum* hybrids.
- Produce more vigorous plants.

It appears that the classic orchid beauty and charm of odontoglossums, coupled with their intolerance of hot growing conditions has been a motivating force behind much of the ongoing Oncidiinae intergeneric hybridization efforts.

Oncidium tigrinum and Oncidium unguiculatum Of all of the intergenerics that contain traditional *Oncidium* genes, there have been about 36 grexes that have received six or more AOS quality awards (excluding CCMs, JCs, etc.) More than half of those hybrids could have derived at least 25 percent of their genetic material from *Onc. tigrinum*.

Oncidium tigrinum is a handsome, fragrant species that originates in the cool, highland oak forests of Mexico. It carries large flowers on inflorescences that measure 60 – 90 cm in length, typically with a weak display on its apical branches. Sepals and petals are yellow and heavily overlaid with brown blotches and bars; the broad lip is clear, bright yellow. The flowers can attain a natural spread of 6.7 cm and the lip width can reach 4 cm. The species does not have a distinguished award history, having earned only two AOS quality awards. One of those awards was an AM to the clone 'Lauren Soule'. In 1983, the judges awarded the clone with five flowers on two inflorescences and commented that the large flowers and pseudobulbs might indicate that the clone was a tetraploid.

Sharing the same range as *Oncidium tigrinum* is *Oncidium unguiculatum*. It is suspected to have contributed qualities to the *Onc. tigrinum* progeny. *Oncidium unguiculatum* can be distinguished from *Onc. tigrinum* by the much longer isthmus on the lip and basal branching of its inflorescences compared to *Onc. tigrinum*'s apical branching habit. One of the faults possessed by the *tigrinum* species, and frequently

passed on to its progeny, is the tendency for color fading. Three to five days after opening, the bright yellow *Onc. tigrinum* lip fades to muddy white.

Oncidium unguiculatum has been credited with parenting 22 crosses and commended for its superior color-retention characteristics.

So far, *Onc. tigrinum* has been the parent of 132 crosses since it was first used in 1909. As a grandparent, *Onc. tigrinum* shows up in 255 crosses. There are three *Onc. tigrinum* hybrids that are quite distinguished. *Odontocidium* Tiger Hambühren (*Onc. tigrinum* × *Odm.* Golddrausch) and *Odontocidium* Tiger Butter (*Onc. tigrinum* × *Odm.* Golden Avalanche). Both grexes have been quite successful as parents and as AOS award winners. The third, *Mclnra.* Pagan Lovesong (*Onc.* Tiger Butter × *Brs. verrucosa*) has also received significant recognition at AOS judging tables.

Odontocidium Tiger Hambühren has earned 26 AOS quality awards. Registered by Arthur Elle in 1976, *Odcdm.* Tiger Hambühren earned all of its awards between 1978 and 1993. It's worth noting that Tiger Hambühren's lip does not fade. Röhrli attributes this to the fact that Elle used a nonfading *Onc. tigrinum* in making the cross.

The Rod McLellan Company registered *Odcdm.* Tiger Butter in 1962. The grex has earned 1 FCC, 15 AMs and 26 HCCs between 1966 and 1985. The clone 'Chocolate Crunch', HCC/AOS, carried 31 flowers and six buds on one inflorescence. The shiny, starry flowers had a natural spread of 7.1 cm and a lip width of 3.4 cm. The judges noted that the flowers were flat and that "There was no evidence of fading, as can be expected from the *tigrinum* parent." A natural spread of 6.6 cm and lip width of 3.4 cm is about average for all of the awards to the grex. When the clone 'Unicorn Myra', AM/AOS, was awarded, it carried 9 flowers and six buds on one inflorescence. The award description mentioned that the flower was "jiltcupped" (one wonders where that word came from) but was commended for its full, round form.

Odontocidium Tiger Butter 'Little Black Sambo' earned the only FCC to the grex in 1972, carrying 28 flowers and four buds on two inflorescences. It more closely resembled the *Odontoglossum* parent in terms of form and color patterns, as well as inflorescence habit.

Maclellanara Pagan Lovesong is one of the two intergenerics with the highest number of AOS awards. The Rod McLellan Company registered this cross of *Odcdm.* Tiger Butter with *Brassia verrucosa* in 1978.

From 1978 through the 1999, clones of *Mclna.* Pagan Lovesong have earned 54 AOS awards, including four FCCs. *Maclellanara* Pagan Lovesong can be a very imposing plant with a rather narrow range of variability. The *Brassia* parent improved the arrangement and increased the size of the flowers. The base color of the grex tends to be light green to yellow with a typical display of a dark, well-defined spot pattern arranged around the central two thirds of the flower. While the *Brassia* increased flower size, it adversely dominated the lip shape. The side of the lip tends to roll under, while the apical portion of the midlobe frequently curls outward.

The four FCC awards were presented beginning with the clone 'Ruby Charles' in 1972, with ten flowers and three buds on one inflorescence and a natural spread of 11.2 cm. The clone 'Sheila', which was awarded in 1984 with the same number of flowers and buds, had a natural spread of 14 cm and superior arrangement on a strong inflorescence. Another superlative example of the cross is 'Lorraine', which received a CCM in 1996 with 45 flowers and 16 buds on two branched inflorescences that reached 239 cm in length — that's a full 8 feet long.

Maclellanara Pagan Lovesong has not yet distinguished itself as a successful breeder. So far, it has been used 24 times. However, there have been some recent awards to its progeny, including three different *Alexanderara* (*Brs.* × *Cda.* × *Odm.* × *Onc.*) crosses. With the crossing of *Mclna.* Pagan Lovesong back to *Odcdm.* Tiger Butter, we have *Mclna.* Hansruedi Isler, which received two HCCs and one AM. Ideally this would be an exciting cross, but *Odcdm.* Tiger Butter heavily overpowered *Mclna.* Pagan Lovesong, and the resulting flower was much less striking than either parent. When it was awarded in 2002, the clone 'Elmore's Chocolate', AM/AOS, carried 15 flowers and 26 buds on two branched inflorescences, with a

natural spread of 7.2 cm. The size was good, but the dorsal was not flat and the sepals and petals were rolled at the edges. Perhaps time will show us if *Mclna*. Pagan Lovesong's excellent arrangement, good flower placement and size can be passed on to future generations.

Onc. leucochilum has also left a rather large footprint on intergeneric Oncidiinae. A variable and widespread species that occurs in Mexico, Honduras and Guatemala, it is a large plant, with inflorescences reaching over 12 feet (3.7 m) in length.

As a parent, *Onc. leucochilum* is dominant for vigor, lip shape, long branching inflorescences and smaller flowers. It is also a source of dark, rich colors and bold, interesting patterns. So far, the species has received AOS quality awards and a CCE in 2002. The species offers a wide range of variability.

Oncidium leucochilum 'Silvia Di Pollina de Palmieri', AM/AOS, was awarded in 2002 in Guatemala, with 103 flowers and 58 buds on six inflorescences. The flowers were cited for their rich chocolate markings; the natural spread measured 4.1 cm and the lip width reached 1.9 cm.

Oncidium leucochilum has been a successful parent as well. It has been used 66 times as a parent and its direct progeny have been popular with AOS judges. Its progeny includes *Odcdm*. Dark Charmer (*Onc. leucochilum* × *Odm*. Tenchita). Of the 11 AOS quality awards to the grex, the natural spreads ranged from 5 to 7.4 cm, with numerous comments praising the strong, well-branched inflorescences and the good arrangement. The clone 'Enchanted World' carried 81 flowers and 51 buds on one strong, 180-cm inflorescence, with commendation for its deep floral coloration.

The cross (*Onc. leucochilum* × *Odm*. Summit) was registered by Doug Kennedy as *Odcdm*. Cherry Fudge in 1994. *Odm*. Summit (*bictoniense* × *brevifolium*) has profoundly affected the color of the flower and lip, while *Onc. leucochilum* has improved the fullness, floriferousness and flatness, without significantly reducing the flower size. The clone 'Arbec', AM/AOS, carried 11 flowers and 16 buds on one inflorescence, with a natural spread of 5.7 cm. The predominant texture for the grex seems to be a glossy, almost varnished look with heavy substance.

No review of intergeneric Oncidiinae would be complete without recognizing *Colmanara* Wildcat (*Odma*. Rustic Bridge × *Odcdm*. Crowborough). It is a trigeneric cross that combines *Miltonia*, *Odontoglossum* and *Oncidium* with the distinction of being the most highly awarded *Colmanara*. In fact, it is the most highly awarded of all of the intergenerics. With more than 54 AOS awards and a half dozen cultural awards, its closest rival is *Mclna*. Pagan Lovesong.

The capsule parent, *Odma*. Rustic Bridge, has received no awards. One point of interest is the fact that *Milt. warszewiczii* is the miltonia used as a parent. Unlike other miltonias, it has been cited for its ability to contribute longer, multi-flowered inflorescences. The pollen parent, *Odcdm*. Crowborough (*Onc. leucochilum* × *Odm*. Golden Guinea) has received a fair amount of recognition with 12 AOS quality awards.

The natural spread of the awarded clones of *Colm*. Wildcat range from 4.5 to a really broad 7.6 cm, a rather wide range in flower size. The flower count has reached 113 flowers and two buds on one branched inflorescence. The grex is usually exhibited with gracefully arching inflorescences, but can be a show stopper with the upright inflorescence and branches arranged in an espalier style.

While odontocidiums have a larger percentage of AOS awards to intergenerics, as a group the wilsonaras are well represented. Because the hybrid mix includes the genus *Cochlioda*, there is the addition of red and carmine colors that are a change from the browns and yellows that predominate in odontocidiums.

When judging intergeneric Oncidiinae, keep in mind that the breeding is not highly advanced. Slight imperfections can be expected in almost any specimen or plant entry, and generally the range of variability within a grex will be quite broad. After all, most of the intergenerics that involve oncidiums are only a few generations from the species.

The 11th Edition of the *Handbook on Judging and Exhibition* states that the “*Odontoglossum* point scale is designed primarily for the *crispum*-type odontoglossums, odontiodas, vuylstekearas, oncidiums, miltonias and similar orchid flowers that have lips approximately equal in size to the petals and sepals.” It continues that “For larger-lipped forms, score by the *Miltonia* point scale.”

Here are some point considerations:

- Form (30 points)

Using either scale, the general flower form should be balanced and tend toward roundness, flatness and fullness. Where *Brassia* has been used, star-shaped and open-formed flowers can be expected and should not be faulted.

Sepals and Petals: These should be full, flat and relatively equal in size, with some overlapping of segments expected; pointed segment tips are not considered a fault.

Lip: The lip should be balanced with the other parts of the flower, and be flat and full; excessive frilling or curling should be considered a fault.

The *Miltonia* scale weighs the form of the labellum at 9 points and the form of the sepals and petals at 6 points; the lip should be symmetrical and not be too deeply notched.

- Color (30 points)

Colors should be clear and never muddy. Markings, particularly spots and blotches, should be well defined and clear. Dullness and fading should be considered a fault.

The *Miltonia* scale weighs the color of the lip at 9 points, with the color of the sepals and petals weighed at 6 points.

- Other Characteristics (40 points)

- Size of Flower (10 points)

Size should approach 7 cm in natural spread, especially if *Onc. tigrinum*, *Onc. leucochilum* and *Odm. bictoniense* have contributed 25 percent or more to the genetic pool. The size of the flower should be considered as inversely related to the number of flowers. That is, smaller flowers should not be faulted as long as their numbers are greater. Flowers with *Brassia* influence should be larger.

- Substance and Texture (10 points)

Substance and texture can vary substantially among the intergenerics. The substance should be moderate; weaker substance is not desirable and should be penalized. Texture ranges widely from matte to crystalline to glossy, with the latter two being somewhat preferred.

- Habit and Arrangement of Inflorescence(s) (10 points)

Because intergenerics are spray orchids, they should approach the ideal set by *Odm. crispum*-type hybrids. The flowers should be well shingled and perfectly arranged on an upright, arching spike. With branching, the inflorescence should be more upright and its flowers neither crowded nor too widely spaced.

- Floriferousness (10 points)

Generally, the number of flowers should be greater than eight to twelve per inflorescence, and higher for entries with relatively smaller flowers due to their parentage.

Remember, the selection of the appropriate point scale with a particular entry should be decided in advance of scoring.

References

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Stephen Drozda is a probationary judge with the National Capital Center, 661 Harrowgate Drive, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15241 (e-mail sdrozda@adelphia.net).