

The New Awards — Certificate of Horticultural Merit and Certificate of Botanical Recognition

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The publication of these two new American Orchid Society awards in this issue of the *Awards Quarterly* constitutes their formal entrance into the system. An appropriate point scale for the Certificate of Horticultural Merit is given below. Score sheets for this award and appropriate forms for the Certificate of Botanical Recognition are being distributed to all regional and sub-regional judging centers. It is recommended that these new awards go into effect on March 1, 1978. At this time, the Certificate of Botanical Merit will be discontinued.

A reasonably full explanation of the two new awards is given in this article. Discussion will also appear in the forthcoming, new edition of the *Handbook on Judging and Exhibition*. The March 1 deadline, while later than was anticipated, should provide ample time for all judges and centers to discuss the various implications of the two awards, prior to putting them into effect.

#### CERTIFICATE OF HORTICULTURAL MERIT

Awarded only to well-grown and -flowered species or natural hybrids with outstanding characteristics such as aesthetic appeal and educational interest that contribute to the horticultural aspects of orchidology.

A minimum of 80 points on scale #11 is required for a Certificate of Horticultural Merit. This Certificate may be granted more than once if other clones have significantly different and desirable characteristics. Customary photographs and a written record of each C.H.M. must be submitted with each award, along with an authoritative taxonomic verification of the plant name. (Responsibility of taxonomic verification is the responsibility of the exhibitor.)

#### POINT SCALE #11

*Flower Characteristics*

|       |    |
|-------|----|
| Form  | 12 |
| Color | 12 |
| Size  | 12 |

*Plant Characteristics*

|                 |    |
|-----------------|----|
| Robustness      | 12 |
| Condition       | 12 |
| Floriferousness | 12 |

*Other Characteristics*

|                  |           |
|------------------|-----------|
| Aesthetic appeal | 14        |
| Educational      | <u>14</u> |

TOTAL 100

## CERTIFICATE OF BOTANICAL RECOGNITION

May be granted only to healthy, flowering, previously unawarded species or natural hybrids deemed worthy of recognition because of rarity, novelty and educational value. This award should be granted only once to a species and the awarded subject must be fully identified by a taxonomist acceptable to the American Orchid Society, Inc. (Obtaining a taxonomic verification is the responsibility of the exhibitor.)

To qualify for the Certificate of Botanical Recognition, a complete description and measurements of the flower, along with two color transparencies, must be on record in the Cambridge offices. No point scale will be used. A unanimous vote of the judging team is required.

After considerable, years-long discussions, some quite pointed, others less so, the familiar Certificate of Botanical Merit will be discontinued on March 1, 1978. In its place will be the two new awards described above, the Certificate of Horticultural Merit and the Certificate of Botanical Recognition. In effect, the C.B.M. has been split into two supposedly different aspects, emphasizing the considerable dispute over its "misuse."

This dispute rose primarily over what many judges felt was a contradiction of terms within the title of the award. There can be no such thing, many judges maintained, as "botanical merit" used in a competitive or comparative sense. All species or natural hybrids are meritorious, in botanical terms, for all possess intrinsic scientific interest. To "grade" species or natural hybrids on this basis was, the argument maintained, valueless. Nature, and botany it appears, see impartially; aesthetic differences, a product of imaginative and emotional response, have no place in that world.

The argument has much truth. The term "botanical merit" was perhaps not the best possible choice, although what was clearly implied in the point scale and discussion of the C.B.M. was a species or natural hybrid deemed exceptionally worthy, for various reasons, of horticultural cultivation. Nevertheless, the award gradually became used as a catch-all for any species not previously awarded. The aesthetic requirement, however ambiguously it may have been stated in the title "Botanical Merit," took second place, if any place at all, in the discussion of an impending C.B.M.

Clearly the creation of two new awards dealing with both aspects of the C.B.M. — one, the need to determine exceptionally lovely species or natural hybrids for horticultural purposes and two, the need to single out species or natural hybrids exceptional for reasons other than aesthetic appeal — is a linguistic improvement. However, the judging problems existent in the C.B.M. still persist, unchanged, in these two new awards. They have simply been given separate rooms in which to live.

Let us look at a few of these problems. It is obviously impossible for any written statement to encompass succinctly the many subtleties implied in the term characterizing the Certificate of Horticultural Merit — "aesthetic appeal." It is this concept which

overarches all other sections of Point Scale #11, and it is this Scylla and Charybdis term upon which the previous Certificate of Botanical Merit constantly foundered. What appeals to one person may simply not appeal to another. This is particularly evident when small to miniature species are involved whose flowers are less than ostentatious to the naked eye. The dividing line between the Certificate of Horticultural Merit and the Certificate of Botanical Recognition, in many cases, is going to be quite elusive. *Luisia indivisa* ‘Nittany Ghost’, CBM/AOS (81 points) might possibly represent a species almost certainly destined for the new C.B.R., had it not already been awarded. The flower may possess a wealth of beauty under the lens, but, to the average observer, it is of more interest than beauty.

What would have happened, though, if a species such as *Pleurothallis linearifolia* ‘Eichenfels’, CBM/AOS (81 points) had been considered for the new awards? The point score is low despite a superlative “review.” The award write-up states: “well-flowered, delicate miniature with white to tinged green flowers beautifully displayed on slender stems above the clean foliage...” The color illustration reveals a most beautiful orchid in a genus whose species are by and large not breathtaking. Why so low a score? Did this imply in some judges’ eyes a lack of substantial aesthetic appeal? Or was this aspect simply not considered? Is it not puzzling that no distinction in scoring exists between this *Pleurothallis* species and one which is perhaps more indicative of pleurothallis, less unique: *Pleurothallis ghiesbreghtiana* ‘Surprise’, CBM/AOS (81 points)?

With such a low score on a well-grown, well-flowered, previously unawarded species, whose portrait quite clearly draws a most admiring response from viewers, would *Pleurothallis linearifolia* ‘Eichenfels’, CBM/AOS have been considered for a Certificate of Botanical Recognition rather than a Certificate of Horticultural Merit? And if so, would it have survived that test? A Certificate of Botanical Recognition, while not scored, requires a unanimous vote. Could the possibly one judge, to whom the species was first and foremost lovely, honestly agree to deny the basic aesthetic appeal of the plant by voting for the C.B.R.? Or would he or she vote nay, thereby canceling all other positive votes, however many they may have been. Would the plant, caught truly on the horns of a dilemma, remain unawarded, or would a low-score C.H.M. be grudgingly given, thereby inflicting the same basic damage on the award process as the previous C.B.M. often experienced? The judging problem of the C.B.M. — what is aesthetic appeal and how do you determine and express it to other judges — remains unchanged in these two new awards.

Many interesting discussions should ensue at judging centers concerning the distinctions between these two awards, as well as their basic definitions. It is only hope that the C.B.R. will not be used for everything that fails to receive a C.H.M., that both will have their own demanding criteria of merit gradually developed as judges seriously experiment with both awards.

Most judges were not aware that, according to the present edition of the *Handbook on Judging and Exhibition*, the Certificate of Botanical Merit could be granted more than once to the same species, provided that “different clones have significantly different

characteristics.” The same statement holds true for the Certificate of Horticultural Merit, though *not* for the Certificate of Botanical Recognition. Examples of this are shown in the two illustrations of awarded botanical varieties of the striking *Masdevallia chimaera* — *Masdevallia chimaera* var. *wallisii* ‘Carlos’, CBM/AOS and *Masdevallia chimaera* var. *robledora* ‘Mt. Tam’, CBM-AM/AOS, as well as the awarded alba form of *Paphiopedilum hirsutissimum* var. *album* ‘Gleneyrie’, CBM/AOS, the colored form having been previously granted a C.B.M.

With more than 17 A.O.S. judgments monthly, and the relatively dependable blooming season of species, it was and will be inevitable that the same species is awarded a C.B.M. (or C.H.M. or C.B.R.) nearly simultaneously in different judging areas. Obviously, only the chronologically first C.B.R. will be accepted, as a C.B.R. may be granted only once to a species. With the C.B.M., and by March 1 the C.H.M., the problem is more complex. Here at Cambridge, we cannot simply accept only the chronologically first C.B.M. or C.H.M. Only the judging teams can determine, often months later, that the clones of the species or natural hybrid awarded were not “significantly different.” This *ex post facto* determination is nearly impossible to make. Hence it is extremely important that (one) accurately descriptive records of all C.B.M. or C.H.M. awarded plants be made against which future comparisons of clones of the same species or natural hybrid may be more properly assessed; and that (two) judges always refer to all past records prior to granting any award. As for nearly simultaneous awards, relatively few in number, such will have to stand unless the judging teams involved feel that they can make a thorough determination to reject chronologically subsequent awards.

Finally, to symbolize the subtle, perhaps insurmountable distinctions between the two new awards, the C.H.M. and the C.B.R., what is one man’s cattleya may be another man’s coryanthes. Which award would you select for *Coryanthes albertinae* ‘Linda Kraus’, CBM/AOS (81 points)? The evolution of these two new awards will indeed be interesting to follow.