

Are Harlequin Phalaenopsis and Doritaenopsis Judged Fairly?

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Many of the new phalaenopsis hybrids produced today are what is often called the harlequin style. The harlequins have three distinct color flower markings. For better understanding, I will separate the Harlequin phalaenopsis into three separate groups.

The first group, the clown phalaenopsis and doritaenopsis, have a solid color background and are blotched randomly in a heavy, textured dark maroon. The second group, the marbled phalaenopsis and doritaenopsis, are of solid color with a very intricate marble-type pattern throughout the flower surface or can have a sunray picotee of this marbling at the petal margins radiating toward the flower center. The picotee would be in a color other than the color of the flower itself and will not have even margins. The third and last group, I will refer to as the fringed phalaenopsis and doritaenopsis. These flowers are of a solid color except for a complimentary-colored veined outer distal edge. These margins can vary in size from a slight halo to an estimated third of the outer distal edge of phalaenopsis petals and sepals. This distal halo gives a uniform and finished appearance, although some of the veining can penetrate inner portions of some flower segments.

Awarded examples of each follow:

Phalaenopsis Golden Peoker 'Brother', AM/AOS

Awarded 4-5-91 – The Clown Type

Doritaenopsis Happy King 'Pine Ridge', HCC/AOS

Awarded 2-27-03 – The Marbled Type

Doritaenopsis Newberry Parfait 'Picotee', AM/AOS

Awarded 1-27-99 – The Fringed Type

In traveling to various judging centers, I encounter different judges' attitudes toward these uniquely marked *Phalaenopsis*. While some AOS judges act with professionalism and tact toward these orchids, other judges seem to lose all of their manners. Even when the flower shape, count, presentation and substance seem to be superior for the cross, the markings get unfavorable reviews. I have heard some judges comment that the orchid must be virused. Others comment that one of the parents used in breeding is a cloning mutation and thus the offspring are deformed.

The AOS judging guidelines for *Phalaenopsis* color follow: "*The color should be definite and clear. Markings, when present should be pleasing. The lip should be distinctively marked or colored.*"

It does not say that the color of the flower must be definite, clear and in well-defined patterns, as it does for *Odontoglossum* judging considerations. There is no mention of markings being symmetrical.

Since the harlequin phalaenopsis are distinctly marked, we must take into account what is pleasing. Pleasing leaves much room for personal preference. If some judges are to

discount these hybrids based on their dislike of their markings, then the AOS desperately needs a criteria standard revision in the *Phalaenopsis* judging guidelines section for harlequin markings.

Are we penalizing orchids before judging just because they don't appeal to us? Have we not educated ourselves enough in phalaenopsis breeding to judge these flowers fairly? Established judges greatly influence the probationary and student judges at any judging center. Negative, unprofessional comments from judges about any flower make it very intimidating for the student judges to confidently state their opinions. The outcome could be deadly in a small center. Please remember judging is an opinion. We surely don't want to influence every judge into thinking these flowers are mutants. Just because you don't like the markings on these relatively new phalaenopsis or doritaenopsis does not mean its flowers are not awardable. Some judges may find these unique markings pleasing.