

It's Not My Job!

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What job is that? It's the same job that you don't need to worry about doing – taxonomic verification of species that are presented for judging. That's why we have provisional awards.

With few exceptions, we judges do not have a formal education in biology, and do not have the knowledge or the materials necessary to make full taxonomic verification of an orchid species at American Orchid Society regional judgings and shows. The safest recourse under such circumstances is to grant the award provisionally and have the plant identified by a professional taxonomist.

In the Handbook on Judging and Exhibition (9th Edition), the orchid judge's glossary defines a provisional award as “a conditional award which cannot be certified for publication pending registration of a hybrid, or taxonomic verification of a species. Species considered for awards other than CBR or CHM, and not identified to the satisfaction of the judging team, may also be given provisional awards.”

As a student judge, I learned this lesson the hard way. At a show, our team was screening a *Sarcochilus hartmanii*, which was under consideration for a Certificate of Cultural Merit (CCM). One of the judges questioned if the plant was truly what it was labeled, and asked if we thought it possibly could be *Sarcochilus fitzgeraldii*. Instead of reminding the team that we could award it provisionally, pending verification of its identity, I fell right into the trap of pulling out library books, looking at pictures and drawings, and in general, trying to do what none of us were trained to do – confirm that the plant was, in fact, *Sarcochilus hartmanii*. This beautifully bloomed plant was passed over for the CCM award. When the exhibitor learned of the discussion that had occurred, she had the plant verified to be *Sarcochilus hartmanii*. The exhibitor was justifiably angry about the way we had handled the situation. Rather than remembering that it was not our job to verify taxonomy and thus award the plant a CCM provisionally, we had done a disservice to the exhibitor.

We are all aware of the need to inform exhibitors whose plants receive a Certificate of Botanical Recognition (CBR) or Certificate of Horticultural Merit (CHM) that the award is provisional until taxonomic verification is provided, but we often forget that this condition can also be applied to species that receive quality or cultural awards. When a *Cattleya jenmanii alba* received an First Class Certificate (FCC) at the Houston Orchid Society Show, the team of judges awarded it provisionally. The plant was subsequently identified and the award stood. This is an example of the proper usage of provisional awards. Wouldn't it have been a shame to not recognize this fine example of the species because an unqualified person decided to be the Linnaeus of the AOS judging system?

So the next time you are considering a species for a CHM, CBR, CCM, FCC, etc., and someone calls into question the plant's identity, remember – that's why we have the

safety net of the provisional award. If any accredited judge on the judging floor questions the identity of a species being considered for any award, then the award will be held in a provisional status until identification is complete. That *is* our job.

However, if a judge who is not an accepted authority decides the plant can't be what it is labeled because some feature of the flower or plant does not meet his/her expectations, remind that judge that it is not our job, and a provisional award would be in order.

The AOS lists a number of people as acceptable sources for taxonomic verification. As mentioned earlier, there are a few individuals in the AOS judging system who are recognized authorities for various genera or specialized areas of Orchidaceae. The current list of accepted authorities follows:

Miguel Angel Soto Arenas
Asociación Mexicana de Orquidología
Research Staff
Apartado Postal 53-123
11320 Mexico, D.F., Mexico

John Atwood
Director, Orchid Identification Center (OIC)
Marie Selby Botanical Gardens
811 South Palm Avenue
Sarasota, Florida 34236

Thomas F. Daniel
Associate Curator and Chairman
California Academy of Sciences
Department of Biology
Golden Gate Park
San Francisco, California 94118

Margaret Dix
University del Valle de Guatemala
Apartado Postal No. 82
Guatemala City, Guatemala
Specialty: Guatemalan orchids

Robert Dressler
Route 2, Box 565C
Micanopy, Florida 32667

Rodrigo Escobar
P.O. Box 3674
Medellin, Colombia
Specialty: Venezuelan orchids

Leslie A. Garay
1408 Gladewood Drive
Blacksburg, Virginia 24060

Ing. Eric Hágsater
Asociación Mexicana de Orquideología
Herbarium Director
Apartado Postal 53-123
11320 Mexico, D.F., Mexico
Specialty: Epidendrum and Oerstedella and Encyclia only for Mexico, Barkeria, orchids of Mexico in general

Harold Koopowitz
Professor, Ecology and Evolutionary Biology
University of California
Irvine, California 92717
Specialty: Paphiopedilum, orchids from Southern Africa, including Eulophia, Disa, etc.

Carlyle A. Luer
Research Associate of the Missouri Botanical Garden
3222 Old Oak Drive
Sarasota, Florida 34239
Specialty: Pleurothallidinae

Rolando Jiménez Machorro
Asociación Mexicana de Orquideología
Research Staff
Apartado Postal 53-123
11329 Mexico, D.F., Mexico
Specialty: Oncidium of Mexico

Lawrence K. Magrath
Professor of Biology
University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma
USAO Box 82308
Chicasha, Oklahoma 73018
Specialty: North American terrestrial orchids

Marv Ragan
126 Wild Orchid Lane
Orange Park, Florida 32065
Specialty: Orchids of the Western Hemisphere with emphasis on the areas bordered by the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean. Some knowledge of orchids from the Philippines and Thailand.

Lic. Dora Emilia Retana
Director of Jardin Lankester
Esucela de Biologia
2050 San Pedro de Montes de Oca, Costa Rica
Specialty: Costa Rican orchids

Gerardo A. Salazar
Asociación Mexicana de Orquideología, Research Staff
Apartado Postal 53-123
11320 Mexico, D.F., Mexico
Specialty: Mormodes, orchids of Mexico in general

Emly S. Siegerist
Associate/Botany, Harvard University Herbaria
12949 Windy Hill Drive
St. Louis, Missouri 63128
Specialty: Bulbophyllum and Cirrhopetalum

Mrs. Joyce Stewart
Sainsbury Orchid Fellow
Royal Botanic Gardens Kew
Richmond, Surrey
TW9 3AB United Kingdom
Specialty: African orchids, especially Vandaeae

Kenneth Wilson
189 West 150 North
Valparaiso, Indiana 46383
Specialty: Oncidium section Oncidium