

Awash in a Sea of Names – An Orchid by Any Other Name

By Ron McHatton, PhD

Published in Awards Quarterly Vol. 35, No. 1, 2005, page 86

In the December 2004 issue of *Orchids Magazine*, Dr. Alec Pridgeon, PhD, wrote an excellent article about impending nomenclatural changes in orchids. While it is becoming apparent that the naming of orchids is yet another subject one doesn't discuss in polite company, ignoring current problems will not make them go away. The over-arching challenge we face is that there is no universally accepted list of orchid names. Perhaps the closest such list is the Kew Monocot Project list of orchid names, but even that is disputed by many taxonomists. For instance, a plant awarded under the name *Panarica brassavolae* might come back from another taxonomist on our certified list with the name *Prosthechea brassavolae* or *Encyclia brassavolae*, depending on the taxonomist. This problem affects us in a couple of ways. First, the question of species nomenclature; the second involves changes to hybrid registration lists as names of species change. Until such time as the AOS selects an approved list of names, we will publish awards in the name under which they were awarded, listing any and all synonyms of which we are aware. As an example, an award to *Rhynchostele bictoniense* would be published with *Odontoglossum bictoniense* and *lemboglossum bictoniense* as synonyms. Unfortunately, while we would all like to have a stable, official list of names, it just isn't possible right now.

Odontonia Irene or Oncidium Irene; a Case of Mistaken Identity

Orchid nomenclature has been a work in progress for 200 years, and will probably continue to be so for as long as we study orchids. As time passes, it has become evident that certain characteristics used to distinguish between genera have led to complete confusion about genetic relationships. For example, *Oncidium* has long been distinguished from *Odontoglossum* based on the angle formed between the lip and column, even though variation between species in the two groups creates an unreliable blur. With the advent of molecular analysis, significant upheaval in this Alliance and others has been inevitable.

What impact do nomenclatural changes have on judging? Simply put, they are finding their way into our hybrid registration lists and the result can be quite confusing. We must be very careful, when researching the hybrids on our judging tables, to take into account recent nomenclatural changes incorporated by the RHS and followed by Wildcatt. For instance, what for years has been called *Miltonia warscewiczii* is now well accepted as *Oncidium fuscatum*, and the RHS database and Wildcatt have been changed to partially reflect this. A search of either database for *Milt. Warscewiczii* x *Odontoglossum hastilabium* yields negative results, even though the cross was registered in 1918 by Charlesworth as *Odontonia Irene*. Why? *Miltonia warscewiczii* has been changed to *Onc. fuscatum* in all records and *Odm. Hastilabium* to *Oncidium hastilabium* everywhere it occurs, and the database does not automatically cross reference. A search of the database for *Onc. (fuscatum x hastilabium)* results in *Oncidium Irene* with the notation that the cross was registered in 1918 by Charlesworth. The situation is remarkably complicated by the fact that the changes are not complete. For instance, *Miltonia (warscewiczii* x

Alderwood) has now been changed to *Onc. fuscatum* x *Milt. Alderwood*, but the grex name remains *Miltonia* Endeavour.

Another word of warning to those who use Wildcatt's Quick Information section for researching previous AOS awards: this section was never intended for that purpose and is structured for rapid retrieval. In most cases this is not a problem, but many awards can be missed — for example, awards to *Odontobrassia* Kenneth Bivin. *Odontoglossum cariniferum* is now *Miltonioides cariniferum* (*Oncidium cariniferum* for registration purposes) and a Quick Information search for Kenneth Bivin results in *Brassidium* Kenneth Bivin with no previous AOS awards. Searching the AOS Awards section using the hybrid name Kenneth Bivin will retrieve all the previous awards to *Odbrs.* Kenneth Bivin.

As in the case with species, we will publish awards under the name in which it was received and list synonyms. Thus *Odontonia* Irene would list *Onc. Irene* and vice versa. While it doesn't solve the immediate problem, it will help to alleviate confusion.

Mule or Hinney A mule and a Hinny, while genetically distinct, share the same parents. One is a hybrid resulting from a female horse and a male donkey, the other the offspring of a male horse and a female donkey. Until recently, such reverse crosses in orchids have conventionally carried the same hybrid grex name, though the crosses can be quite different genetically. For example, *Phalaenopsis* (Golden Pecker x I-Hsin Gold Coin) is *Phal. I-Hsin Canary*. When made with a normally spotted clone of *Phal. Golden Pecker*, the cross results in essentially 100% yellow base color overlaid with tiny oxblood spots arranged in concentric circles reminiscent of the *Phal. Gold Coin* parent. When a harlequin clone of *Phal. Golden Pecker* is used, the cross results in the complete spectrum, from flowers virtually identical to *Phal. I-Hsin Gold Coin* to those so heavily suffused and overlaid oxblood as to appear nearly solid in color, and every harlequin form in between. Under the rules to which we are accustomed, both crosses would be named *Phal. I-Hsin Canary*, but this situation is changing. Current nomenclatural rules allow the registrar to accept multiple names for crosses if the strains are genetically distinct. This means that it is technically possible to name forward and reverse crosses with distinct names if, in the opinion of the hybridizer, the strains are distinctly different or a cross is made with two different color forms. As far as I am aware, we have not seen this exercised with forward and reverse crosses; however in this issue we have an example of the latter.

In July 2004, David Grove, PhD, registered *Vanda* (Lumpini Red x *coerulea* pink-flowered group) under the name *Vanda* Grove's Dream. Two months later, Arciaga registered the same cross, using a blue-flowered *V. coerulea*, under the name *Vanda* Pelegrina Lorenzo. Both names are valid and considered distinctly different from a genetic perspective, and both are retrieved in a search of the RHS database. We have since awarded both strains; they appear in this issue on page 48. We as judges need to be aware that this situation may become more common, and it will be exceptionally important to accurately record the parentage of award crosses. Heretofore, with the exception of the Award of Quality (AQ), clonal epithets of cross parents have not been

published in AQ. It is now important to publish clonal epithets, should they be determined to result in a genetically distinct grex.