

Overawarding?

By Richard Peterson

Published in Awards Quarterly Vol. 10, No. 1, 1979, page 16-19

An interesting phenomenon occurs occasionally within the awards system. Examples can be pointed out almost as early as the system commenced. Instances have even begun to occur within the past year. A questionable definition of the phenomenon could be provided by the word "overawarding." I am not at all certain, however, that the term is completely appropriate. A careful study of the awards records reveals that the number of awards granted to hybrid crosses divide into three basic categories: one, crosses in which fewer are granted; and three, crosses to which 10 or more awards have been granted.

The great majority of awarded crosses fall into the second category, and the awards are, more often than not, granted within a reasonably short period of time, from 4 to 5 years. Not exactly overnight sensations, these crosses "peak" rather quickly, earn substantial but not mind-boggling attention, then fade back into hybridizing history as newer crosses assume the limelight. Examples of this second category are *Brassocattleya* Déesse, *Cattleya* J. A. Carbone, *Paphiopedilum* Bit-O'-Sunshine and *Phalaenopsis* Satin Rouge. The third or last category contains the phenomenon to which I referred, crosses which have received ten or more awards over the course of time, in some instances as many as 70 or 80 awards to different clones.

Nearly every major hybridized group of orchids possesses examples of this phenomenon, but not where is it so startling as within the relatively recent hybrid genus *Ascocenda* which in the 29 years since its registration has nearly outdistanced all other major genera in the number of awards given to individual clones. Seven crosses easily fall into category 3; all possess a minimum of 20 awards: *Ascocenda* Bonanza (24 awards), *Ascocenda* Eileen Beauty (20 awards), *Ascocenda* Fiftieth State Beauty (25 awards), *Ascocenda* Meda Arnold (61 awards, and the fourth most awarded orchid hybrid), *Ascocenda* Ophelia (22 awards), *Ascocenda* Peggy Foo (22 awards) and *Ascocenda* Yip Sum Wah (77 awards, and the second most awarded orchid hybrid). These are astonishing figures, particularly when you consider that none of the above seven crosses has achieved the distinction of an Award of Quality.

The use of the Award of Quality within the AOS judging system has been somewhat puzzling. Briefly mentioned in the July 1978 *Awards Quarterly* within the article on "The Rarely Used Awards," the *AQ* specifically honors a consistently outstanding cross and is "given once to a cross, exhibited as a group of not less than 12 plants or the inflorescences thereof, of a raised species or hybrid which may or may not have been made before when the result is sufficient improvement over the former type." Thirty-nine Awards of Quality have been granted over the years, though, surprisingly, not always to crosses whose award potential proved great, thereby indicating a high degree of consistent excellence. These crosses are, with the number of awarded clones in parentheses beside them: *Bc.* Mount Hood (25), *Blc.* Green Giant (5), *Blc.* Mellow Vista (6) *C.* Irene Holguin (12), *C.* Leona Bloom (6), *Ctpsta.* Leona (1 CCM), *Cym.* Balkinald (8), *Cym.* Cleo Sherman (25), *Cym.* Lillian Stewart (84), *Cym.* Showgirl (25), *Den.* Carl

Ludwig Bundt (3), *Dtps.* Lady Jewel (1), *Lc.* Ann Follis (11), *Lc.* Elizabeth Off (5), *Lc.* Walter Slagle (14), *Lc.* White Opal (5), *Lyc.* virginalis (9), *Milt.* Guanabara (2), *Onc.* onustum (8), *Onc.* pulchellum (12), *Onc.* Tiny Tim (none), *Paph.* Erie (8), *Paph.* Freckles (23) *Paph.* Huddle (15), *Paph.* Louis V. Dorp (4), *Paph.* Milmoore (14), *Paph.* Ogallala (21), *Paph.* Redezelle (4), *Paph.* Sioux (22), *Phal.* Alice Gloria (17), *Phal.* Clarence Russell (none), *Phal.* Donna Lou Askew (none), *Phal.* Helen Kuhn (4), *Phal.* Joanna Magale (11), *Phal.* Juanita May (none), *Phal.* Luedde-violacea (16), *Phal.* Princess Grace (14), *Phal.* Varina Vaughn 94) and *Rhynchostylis gigantean* (Sagarik's Strain) (7). Many of these names are legendary; a number are less so. Twenty-four of these AQ-crosses or species have fewer than 12 awarded clones. This in itself is not surprising, as there is no stipulation that the 12 flowering clones presented at the judging for an Award of Quality must all be of award quality, only that they reveal "sufficient improvement over the former type." What is ironic is that the number of crosses or species which possess more than 12 awarded clones but which lack an AQ approaches 100. The point of difficulty is the physical requirement of a minimum of 12 clones or inflorescences present at the time of judging.

The Award of Distinction, "given once to a cross, exhibited individually or severally, representing a worthy new direction in breeding," can be awarded without a given number of clones at the time of judging. One clone can apparently symbolize the achievement of the entire cross, although, presumably, judges awarding the AD will no doubt have seen other clones of the cross in question in order to be assured that the "worthy, new direction in breeding" is reasonably repetitive and repeatable.

By stipulating the actual physical presence of 12 clones or inflorescences for the awarding of an AQ, a barrier apart from the intrinsic merit of the cross is immediately erected. The worth of the cross in terms of the AQ is ultimately defined by the physical capacity of the exhibitor to flower 12 good plants simultaneously, not by the revealed potential of a cross which can possess from 12 to 70 awarded, individually owned clones, never exhibited together.

Examples of outstanding crosses, other than in Ascocenda, which have never received the Award of Quality but whose achievement in terms of clonal honors is unquestioned are *Bc.* Mount Anderson (27), *Blc.* Mem. Crispin Rosales (45), *Blc.* Norman's Bay (19), *C.* Bob Betts (66), *Den.* Hickam Deb (24), *Lc.* Bonanza (51), *Odcdm.* Tiger Butter (26), *Paph.* Kay Rinaman (21), *Paph.* Vanda M. Pearman (34), *Phal.* Samba (19), *Phal.* Barbara Freed Saltzman (26), *V.* Jennie Hashimoto (43), *V.* Onomea (35), *V.* Nellie Morley (58), and *V.* Rothschildiana (77). It is astonishing to realize that none of the above, stellar crosses have as yet been singled out by an Award of Quality.

A major question then comes immediately to mind. To what limit, if any, should judging proceed in continuing to award individual clones of a demonstrably outstanding cross? Take the oft-quoted remark (but never published in award literature) about white phalaenopsis: "they have reached such a peak of perfection that it is almost impossible to award further clones even though they may match previously awarded ones." White phalaenopsis are still awarded today, but only rarely. Apparently, in judges' minds, these

plants have indeed reached a level of quality on which further awarding would only be repetitive. At what point in time and judgment is such a position drawn up?

The Award of Quality could provide such a point. However, a basic pattern has been followed in the past. For example, consider the most honored cross in AOS judging: *Cymbidium* Lillian Stewart, receiving 84 AOS awards. Prior to receiving an Award of Quality in April of 1960, the cross had been individually awarded 38 times. The great majority of the remaining 46 awards were granted after the AQ, the latest in May of 1977, the clone 'Satin Supreme', HCC/AOS. There have been only three other clones of *Cymbidium* Lillian Stewart awarded in the '70s, with the vast number falling in the time period of 1962-1968. Two questions arise: one, wasn't the AQ rather tardy in arriving when the published presence of 38 awarded clones clearly indicated a cross of the first magnitude; and two, once the AQ was given, particularly after such a substantial proof of the high quality of *Cymbidium* Lillian Stewart, was it that necessary to proceed with further awarding of individual clones to the extent revealed?

The answer to the first question is not that difficult. The physical presence of 12 flowering clones or inflorescences is practically superfluous, given the immediately accessible, written awards records and the growing continuity of judging throughout the 17 regional and supplemental centers and at shows. One could, of course, argue that 38 awarded Lillian Stewarts does not mean that the rest will not be monsters. But is the judging of an entire cross by only 12 examples, few or none of which are of award quality, any more feasible? Or is it less so? Attention to the awarding procedure of the AQ may be in need or reexamination.

The second question may prove unanswerable: where does the individual clonal awarding of a cross end? The easiest way, of course, is to let it end naturally. Of the 66 clonal awards which the "AQ-less" *Cattleya* Bob Betts has received, only three clones, 'Marie Louis', 'Ramona' and 'Sissie' were awarded in the '70s, by far the great majority receiving awards from 1954 through 1962. What happened? Without remakes of the cross, newer clones may have been unavailable. Or newer white hybrids may have proved superior to *C. Bob Betts*. Or there was an unspoken feeling that the pinnacle in white *Cattleya* hybridizing may have been nearly reached with *C. Bob Betts*, and enough awarding was enough! Or perhaps a mixture of all three positions. At any rate, the massive awarding eventually halted. What was achieved that could not also have been achieved by the granting of an Award of Quality after a substantial number of clones had "proven themselves?" The major argument is that a great number of beautiful clones were recognized through their awards. Is this a sufficient reason? How unique was each clone, how different from one another, such that they needed to be separated so distinctly. Although there are lavender *C. Bob Betts*, the awarded clones are almost all white, full, massive flowers of good substance. A guess might be hazarded that most clones, if seen *en masse*, might prove reasonably indistinguishable from one another, although all fine. Is there a possibility that the judging of *C. Betts* became repetitive, as with a number of other crosses, and that the time to call a halt to the situation through the use of the AQ should have occurred years earlier?

A similar situation presently exists with the front-cover subject, *Ascocenda* Yip Sum Wah. With 77 clonal awards but no Award of Quality, *Ascocenda* Yip Sum Wah continues to be awarded today. Look at the three clones illustrated here: 'Carol', AM/AOS, 'Anniversary', AM/AOS and 'Sis Boom Bah', AM/AOS. They are all beautiful and were all awarded in the past two years. Only the 'Carol' clone seems to possess a certain, "different" look, while the other two clones represent the vast majority of orange-toned, well-shaped, heavy substantanced Yip Sum Wahs. The cross is demonstrably outstanding and consistent, the 77 superior clones remarkably similar. Why proceed in judging to such an extent? Varietal names can surely recognize fine forms, and truly unique color patterns size, shape, etc., could, when necessary, be indicated by awards. But repetitive judging, overawarding if you will, can lock a judging perspective (and hybridizing efforts) into a fixed mold out of which it is extremely difficult to break. It is time, it seems to me, to grant crosses such as *Ascocenda* Yip Sum Wah or *Dendrobium* Hickam Deb or *Paphiopedilum* Vanda M. Pearman, to name but a few, their long overdue Awards of Quality and then to proceed very cautiously with the further awarding of individual clones, granting such awards only when truly unique clones are uncovered. Only in this way can judging and hybridizing evolve together onto newer levels.

Modern examples of heavily awarded crosses which have also received an Award of Quality are not uncommon. To cite two: *Paphiopedilum* Ogallala (20) and *Paphiopedilum* Sioux (22). These were and are outstanding crosses and were so designated by an AQ. A search through photographic records, however, uncovers a striking similarity among the awarded clones, revealed by the illustrations of *Paphiopedilum* Ogallala. Are we going to achieve anything substantial by continuing to grant awards to clones of this or any similarly situated cross in which the differences within high standards of quality are remarkably minor? Crosses like these are the Lillian Stewarts, the San Franciscos, the Bow Bells of today! Do we let their awarding run its due course or do we address the question of limits?

One very modern example can be used to conclude: the recent remake of the very lovely 1891 cross of *Paphiopedilum* Berenice (*lowii* x *philippinense*). Three examples are pictured here in color. Little differences in color or form can be observed; the differences in measurements are minor. The flowers are gorgeous! But, while as yet not published, at least 8 clones of *Paphiopedilum* Berenice have been awarded in the past year and a half. We are clearly in the presence of an outstanding cross but a cross in which the quality of individual clones is at once both strikingly excellent and strikingly standard. Since this is also a primary cross, we are also faced with the present intense interest in such hybrids and a possible lack of perspective, resulting from overenthusiasm, which only time can remedy. *Paphiopedilum* Berenice may well prove to be one of those many crosses to which an Award of Quality rightly belongs, either through the presence of 12 flowering clones or inflorescences or through the written records of substantial awards – and to which the further awarding of individual clones may prove unnecessary and without a point.

