

Observations on Judging Lycastes and Other Single-Flowered Genera

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As you may already know, there are no genus-specific judging criteria for lycastes. As judges, we must develop a standard of hypothetical perfection together with the empirical experience of the judges participating and/or a comparison with similar types previously awarded for this particular genus

As stated in the AOS Handbook on Judging and Exhibition under general judging criteria, "the purpose of judging quality is to recognize superiority and improvement. In scoring for quality, judges should evaluate the qualities to be scored in terms of:

- 1) The hypothetical standard of perfection at the time;
- 2) The qualities and merits of previously awarded or known plants of comparable type, breeding or characteristics;
- 3) The extent to which any quality or characteristics; plant represents an advancement over what has been witnessed heretofore and thereby establishes a new standard for the future. In this connection, new lines of breeding, including new shapes, colors or growth habit, should be considered but should not be awarded unless the new line has superior characteristics and quality."

However, a standard for lycastes also must be developed beginning with the score sheet. In reviewing the point scales for AOS awards for flower quality, none of them fit the flower characteristics of the genus *Lycaste*. The flower shape most closely resembles a cymbidium; however, *Lycaste* is a single-flowered genus and the points allotted here and in the general scale for habit and arrangement of inflorescence should be distributed elsewhere. The scale for *paphiopedilums* allows for *lycaste* flowering habit but not for the floriferous nature of the species and the hybrids. Currently there is no acceptable scale that allows judges to evaluate the special nature of the flowers of this very beautiful genus.

As we try to evaluate lycastes in terms of developing a standard for judging we must start by developing a database of knowledge to use when we encounter this genus. Our basic understanding of the genus must come from our knowledge of the species, including their diversity of form and color, distribution, growth habit and floriferousness.

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Recently in the American Orchid Society Bulletin, there was a series of articles by Dr. H. F. Oakeley, an English psychiatrist with a more-than-amateur regard for the genus *Lycaste*. He presented a timely comprehensive review of the genus from his personal perspective developed through travels to Central America, research of the literature and knowledge of Commonwealth nurseries specializing in *Lycaste* hybridization. Additional background on lycastes can be obtained from Dr. A. J. Fowlie's book, *The Genus Lycaste*. Both authors present valuable knowledge from their own bias and background.

Starting with a superficial review of some of the important species and natural hybrids, we can build a database for judging lycastes.

Lycastes are distributed from Southern Mexico through Central America to the Andean chain of northern South America. They are divided into three main sections based on their growth habit, the presence or absence of fimbriations in their flower lips and the color of the sepals and petals.

The northernmost group, section *Deciduosae*, is the deciduous, generally yellow-flowered types, with spiny pseudobulbs, that range from Southern Mexico to Panama. They usually lose their leaves after their pseudobulbs develop and as the dry season approaches. This section also includes subsection *Paradeciduosae*; its members may or may not lose their leaves but usually have spines on the pseudobulbs after the leaves are shed. The flowers are borne one per stem from both sides of the pseudobulbs as the new growth begins to emerge. The flowers are usually quite small, clustered and arched around the bulbs, and frequently fragrant. Flowers may reach the height of the tallest pseudobulb, but rarely tower above it.

Overlapping this range is section *Macrophyllae*. These plants usually have leaves on at least one pseudobulb and are characterized by large flat flowers, held well above the pseudobulbs. Again, the flowers are usually slightly fragrant and of heavy substance.

The members of section *Fimbriatae* have flowers that are usually green in color, and pseudobulbs that are evergreen, round and spineless. The dominant feature of this group is the fringed lip. They are distributed in the Andean foothills of Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia.

As you review the available references on *Lycaste* species, different sections and the individual flowers of each, notice several things about the species that can be used for

judging them as well as their hybrids. Observe the flowering habit. Where is the flower in relation to the pseudobulbs and the leaves? How many flowers should there be? What about the shapes of the flowers? Are they large and triangular, or are the flower parts of almost equal length? How flat are they? Do the sepals twist? Are the sepals pinched near their ends? Do the petals tent over the lip? Do the petals recurve or meet unevenly? Is the lip furrowed, pinched, too narrow for the rest of the flowers, fimbriate or hairy? What color are the species? What colors should their hybrids be? Is the color even or the same on all the sepals and petals? Think about these questions when you consider and evaluate these flowers.

Lastly, when you are convinced that the flower presented for judging may be above average from your experience, then compare it to the size, form, color and number of flowers already awarded for that particular species or hybrid. This point score may not be too helpful for it depends on the scale the judges used to evaluate that particular awarded flower.

For your consideration, two point scales to help evaluate lycastes have been proposed. In each case, more weight is given to the sepals, because usually this is the dominate feature of the lycaste flower. In the second example, substance and texture as well as floriferousness are taken as always being present. Therefore, fewer points are allocated for those characteristics. Consider also that by standardizing the score sheet, all judges are scoring the flower the same and giving the same weight to the same individual flower characteristics rather than using the general scale and weighing one characteristic more than another.

We can employ the same methods and scales to standardize the scoring for most pleurothallids and other single-flowered species and their single-flowered hybrids.

Lycaste Flower Quality

Point Scale Proposal

Lycaste	#1	#2
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Form of flower

General Form	15	20
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Sepals	10	10
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Petals	5	5
Labellum	5	5
Total	(35)	(40)

Color of Flower

General Color	15	20
Sepals	10	10
Petals	5	5
Labellum	5	5
Total	(35)	(40)

Other Characteristics

Size of Flower	10	10
Substance and texture	10	5
Floriferousness	10	5
Total	(30)	(20)

Further References

During 1991, Dr. H. F. Oakeley's series of articles on lycastes was published in the AOS Bulletin, Volume 60:

The Cultivation of Lycastes and Anguloas - 1. 1:19-30: -- 2. 2:126-139.

A Survey of Lycastes - 1. *Lycaste aromatica*, its Allies and Their Hybrids. 3:222-231; - 2. The Fimbriate Lycastes and their Hybrids - Pt. 1. 4:316-326; - Pt. 2. 5:426-433 - 4. *Lycastes brevispatha* to *Lyc. xytriophora*. 7:634-644.

Lycaste skinneri: Hybridization in Nature and in Cultivation. 8:738-747.

Final Thoughts on the Genus *Lycaste*. 9:851-855.