

Make It Easier?

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This article proposes to develop criteria for determining when a genus is common enough to warrant establishing a set of judging criteria and a point scale for inclusion in the *Handbook on Judging and Exhibition*. It also proposes a slight change in format to allow adding this information without changing the score sheet or appreciably altering the process usually followed by judges when scoring for a quality award.

In recent years, we have seen a number of new genera at the judging table so often that many judges have proposed, either verbally or in writing, adding them to the table of point scales on the score sheet. These genera include *Lycaste*, *Bulbophyllum*, *Cirrhopetalum*, *Catasetum*, *Cycnoches*, *Renanthera* and *Zygopetalum*, and others. Presently, they must be judged using the General Point Scale, which cannot possibly allow proper scoring of their wide variety of forms, colors and inflorescence characteristics without making mental adjustments to the scoring process.

The AOS scoring system, created in 1949, has provided judging criteria and point scales for genera and types of orchids most likely to be seen at judging. The judging criteria and point scales are also printed on the score sheet to save time during judging, which can become quite hectic. Over the years, several judges have proposed adding judging criteria and point scales for genera they believed qualify as “most likely to be seen” (S. Slaughter, *Awards Quarterly*, volume 23, number 3; P. Bechtel, *Awards Quarterly*, volume 29, number 4). Others noted problems with a particular point scale and recommended changes (A. Dopp, *Awards Quarterly*, volume 15, number 4; T. Kalinas, *Awards Quarterly*, volume 21, number 3). However, none have convinced the Judging Committee to make those changes.

It appears that resistance to these suggestions may arise in part from a simple format issue. The space on the score sheet allocated for point scales is full. Therefore, any additions would require redesign of the score sheet. Over the years, the score sheets with preprinted point scales have been so effective and helpful to judges that they are understandably reluctant to take any action that would remove the scales. It may be argued that if we are not going to add point scales, we should not add judging criteria in the *Handbook*.

However, let's face reality. The pace of discovery of new species having quality flowers has not abated. Sooner or later, we will need to add judging criteria and point scales. This should be done with as little disruption as possible and in accordance with some accepted rules or guidelines. For instance, two questions come readily to mind:

1. How should we decide when a species is most likely to be seen at the judging table, and is not just “another flavor-of-the-month, easily forgotten when tastes change,” as coined by Paul Bechtel.
2. When we add judging criteria, how should we handle the point scales and score sheet in a way that minimizes cost to the AOS and disruption to the judges? If acceptable guidelines for handling these two issues can be developed, we should then have a system for adding judging criteria and point scales whenever the Judging Committee deems appropriate, without worry about its impact on the judges.

The first question is fairly easy to address. An arbitrary number of quality awards to a genus may be selected as a trigger or its inclusion in the Handbook. The actual number should be subject to some analysis before selection. For comparison, Table 1 lists the number of quality awards granted to several genera through 2001 (source: *Wildcatt Orchid Database*). One may wonder what the counts were when each was originally included.

It is apparent that the existing point scales have been used to grant many quality awards. The count for awards to Pleurothallids is somewhat misleading, as that scale is used almost exclusively *Masdevallia* and *Dracula*. Similarly, the *Cattleya* scale is used to score many other genera with similar flower form. This is true of all the point scales, since the judges use them to the fullest extent possible. However, when judging a genus that is not covered by, or at least compatible with, an existing point scale, judges must use the General Point Scale. This offers an opportunity that will be explored later in the discussion of Question 2.

In trying to develop a suitable trigger number of awards based on past experience, the least number of quality awards have been granted to Pleurothallids or *Odontoglossum*, depending on your outlook concerning the relationship of *Masdevallia* to Pleurothallids in this context. Pleurothallids have received 21 awards and *Odontoglossum* 343.

To be arbitrary, let's look at those genera with 100 quality awards that must presently be judged by the General Point Scale. Those include *Brassia*, *Catasetum* and *Lycaste*. If the trigger number was 300, only *Lycaste* would qualify. If the number was 50, *Renanthera*, *Stanhopea* and *Zygopetalum* would be added.

Table 1: The Number of Quality Awards Granted to Genera (1949–2001)

<i>Anguloa</i>	14	<i>Lycaste</i>	352
<i>Brassia</i>	109	<i>Masdevallia</i>	812
<i>Bulbophyllum</i>	39	<i>Miltonia</i> *.....	400
<i>Catasetum</i>	179	<i>Oncidium</i>	80
<i>Cattleya</i> *.....	963	<i>Odontoglossum</i> *.....	343
<i>Cirrhopetalum</i>	19	<i>Paphiopedilum</i> *.....	8,689
<i>Coelogyne</i>	24	<i>Pleurothallids</i> *.....	21
<i>Coryanthes</i>	4	<i>Phragmipedium</i>	676
<i>Cycnoches</i>	41	<i>Renanthera</i>	58
<i>Cymbidium</i> *.....	1,388	<i>Rhynchostylis</i>	114
<i>Dracula</i>	88	<i>Schomburgkia</i>	13
<i>Dendrobium</i> *.....	1,114	<i>Stanhopea</i>	64
<i>Encyclia</i>	126	<i>Vanda</i> *.....	768
<i>Epidendrum</i>	164	<i>Zygopetalum</i>	64

*Indicates point scale currently exists on score sheet

At first blush, one might decide to select only those few genera with a larger number of awards, resulting in less disruption to the system. However, this would unnecessarily repeat the mistakes of the past. Is there a way to add the judging criteria and point scales with only minor, temporary disruption?

This deals with the answer to Question 2, and the reference to an opportunity with the General Scale mentioned above. The solution is quite simple. First, leave the score sheet as it is. Second, add the new Judging Criteria and Point Scales to the handbook. Third, include instructions advising judges to enter point scale values into the General Point Scale column on the score sheet prior to scoring. Obviously, the values printed on the score sheet for the General Point Scale would not apply for these genera. Instead, the judges would enter point scale values from the handbook for the genus being judged. In the event the genus required the use of the General Point Scale, the judges would follow present procedures.

This would allow judges to use their present methods except when a newer genus is encountered. Even then, the information would be easily accessible in the *Handbook* for transfer to the score sheet before resuming the usual routine. The real challenge will be to revise the *Handbook* to incorporate judging criteria and point scales for newer genera. This should be a relatively simple task for the AOS with its resource of devoted experts. Paul Bechtel and Stephen Slaughter have already provided excellent criteria and point scales in their articles. In addition, this approach would allow revisions to existing criteria to be made easily, as suggested by Tom Kalinas in his article.

Here is our chance to solve an irritating problem once and for all. What do you think?

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