

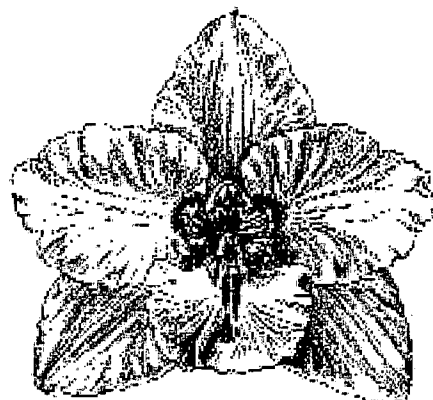
# Odontoglossum Alliance Newsletter

Volume 4

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## Odontoglossum Crinitum Rchb.f By Stig Dalstrom

NOTE: Benedict Rözl first discovered *Odontoglossum crinitum* near Medellin in the Central Cordillera of Colombia. In 1872, Wallis also found the species in the same area and provided additional herbarium material for Reichenbach who described the species in "Xenia Orchidacea" 2: 207, 1874, primarily based on the Rözl collection (sheet 20862). One of Wallis' specimens is a unique (in herbaria) richly branched and multiflowered panicle (sheet 20863), whereas plants of *O. crinitum* generally produce very short and dense racemes. Eventually living plants found their way into cultivation through Sander's nurseries, and in March 1882 a Mr. Broome in Woodslawn, England, sent a raceme plus a drawing of a flower to Reichenbach for determination (also on sheet 20863). The drawing showed the lip of the flower richly ornamented with long hairs (an inflorescence from the same plant was later sent to James O'Brien at Kew as well, which Rolfe intended to describe as "*O. fimbriatum*", but apparently never did). This led Reichenbach to write an additional article about the history of the species in Gardeners Chronicle 2: 40, 1882, where he states: "The first proof of sympathy I received from Mr. B. Rözl was this: a Hamburg traveler came to me bringing a very large card box that might have served before for a fine lady's dress, but which was now filled with rich dried specimens of New Granadan orchids. I felt very much struck by an *Odontoglossum* in the way of *Odontoglossum odoratum* of Dr. Lindley, but racemose, striped and blotched, having the lip covered with numerous filiform processes, as if bearded. The same plant reappeared but once more. Two one-sided dense panicles were presented me by poor G. Wallis [the original description was based on these specimens, in 1874]. Now [1882] I have at last obtained a very fine fresh raceme. The plant, which I have never seen, is said to have bulbs in the way of *Odontoglossum crispum*, but round. The leaves are said to be erect and narrow. It was kindly sent me by Mr.

Jos. Broome, Wood[s] Lawn; Palatine Road, Didsbury, Manchester, who has had the first time in Europe, a new *Odontoglossum*, which is none of those mule-like things, but a most distinct species, not even comparable to any one previously known.”

In January 1885, another little plant from Sander’s nurseries flowered in the collection of a Mr. H. Smee. An inflorescence and a couple of pseudobulbs were sent to Reichenbach for determination. Reichenbach identified it as “*O. crinitum sapphiratum*”. The flowers closely resemble those of *O. crinitum* but the lip has only a small tuft of bristles, or hairs, near the base of the lamina. This specimen is mounted on sheet 14670. A drawing of the flower is dated June -86 and is mounted on sheet 20863. Below the drawing Reichenbach refers to the same rare plant from Mr. Broome [18]82 of “Sanderian origin”. In 1888 yet another drawing and flower were sent to Reichenbach from a Mr. Findlay. Again, the plant originally came from Sander. This drawing shows a flower with almost no hair at all on the lip, only a divided and lacerate callus and a column with ca 2 mm long tendril-like, projecting wings (the wings of the column of *O. crinitum* are typically insignificant, short and pointed). By then Reichenbach was convinced that he was dealing with a new species and wrote up a description of “*Odontoglossum dimystax*”, complete with a latin diagnosis. He seemed somewhat troubled with the characterization of the plant, however, but nevertheless ended by stating: “No doubt it is an honest species”. Reichenbach died in 1889 and the description was never published. About a century later, Bockemuhl recognized the difference between the hairless form of “*O. crinitum sapphiratum*” (= “*dimystax*”) and the typical form, and published *O. sapphiratum* Rchb.f. ex Bockem., in *Die Orchidee* 36(6): 249, 1985. Bockemuhl later realized that Cogniaux beat her to the punch with his description of *Odontoglossum tenue*, in “*Journal des Orchidees*”: 265, 1895. The typical form of *O. tenue* had this far only been reported from southern Ecuador and northern Peru (Bockemuhl, 1989).

This could have been the convenient end of the story, but unfortunately things get more complicated when we dig into the archives a little further. As for most other species in the genus, *O. crinitum* is not an isolated phenomenon but rather a wide spread complex of variable taxa. The Medellin form has to be the “typical” form because that is what the species description is based on. As we travel south in the Andes we find plants that obviously represent the same species with a very close general similarity, but with minor differences in the flower morphology. This change is very subtle, making it impossible to distinguish the local forms as any kind of recognizable and useful taxa. Lehmann and Kränzlin described a plant from near Popayan in south central Colombia as *O. popayanense*, in 1899. It is here treated as a synonym of *O. crinitum* due to a lack of useful distinguishing features. In central Ecuador, the column tends to be slightly longer and the lip shape is different, although still covered by a rich pubescence (hairs). In southern Ecuador the hairs suddenly disappear almost completely. Only a small but still variable tuft can be seen near the base of the lamina. If the two forms had occurred together without inter-breeding, they could be recognized as distinct species, but this is not the case. One form gradually changes into the next, which support treating them as subspecies rather than distinct species. The question is how could this happen? The answer may have presented itself by the recent discovery and description of *Odontoglossum alvarezii*, near Bogota in Colombia. When compared to *O. crinitum* the two entities clearly differ by the lack of hair on the lip in *O. alvarezii*, which is, however, quite indistinguishable from plants of *O. tenue*. It is reasoned by Father Ortiz, the author of *O. alvarezii*, that the differences in the floral morphology together with the distant populations support recognizing *O. alvarezii* and *O. tenue* as different species. When we analyze the situation closer we find that the “geographical” feature is not particularly useful. First of all, *Odontoglossum* species in general have very wide distributions throughout the Andes. There may still remain long gaps between some populations but that probably indicates a lack of field-work rather than obscure taxonomic delineations between indefinable species. It is also in the nature of *Odontoglossum* species, and apparently for most other living organisms, to change locally due to mutations

and occasional natural hybridization. Plants of *Odontoglossum crinitum* share most features with the other species in the genus, except for the richly pubescent lip. Only the much larger *O. harryanum* and its subspecies show a somewhat similar structure. My conclusion is that the pubescence is a derived feature from plants with a more simple and “normal” callus. This process probably began as a local mutation somewhere in the middle of the present distribution of *O. crinitum*, which proved successful. Gradually, plants of the original and hairless form were pushed out through competition and are currently restricted to the ends of the area of distribution where the hairy form not yet has conquered the habitat. Due to the elongated shape of the Andes, it seems that it would not take much competition to cut off the distribution of a species limited to the upper elevation cloud forests. Consequently, and gradually, we got one large central area for various hairy forms and two disjunctive smaller areas, widely separated, with more “primitive” forms with less hair on the lip. Since they originally (and presumably) were all one species it seems logical to treat the two hairless forms as sub-taxa of the typical, but yet variable hairy form. In addition, it is unclear whether the plants examined by Reichenbach (“*crinitum sapphiratum*” and “*dimystax*”), represent the Bogota form or the southern Ecuador form, or both. It seems safe to assume, however, that all the plants with a “Sanderian origin” were from the same collection/collector (Colombia). The type of *Odontoglossum tenue*, however, is from Ecuador and represents the hairless form of this taxon commonly found in the southern part of the country. When Bockemühl validated the name *Odontoglossum sapphiratum* (1985) she used a plant from northern Peru as the holotype (not the Colombian hairless plant sent by Smee = *O. alvarezii*), which is inseparable from the type of *O. tenue*, and thus becomes synonymous.

**HABITAT:** Epiphytic in cool and wet, upper elevation Andean cloud forest from northern Colombia to northern Peru, at 2400—3000 m. Plants are rarely seen in cultivation or herbaria but can be locally common. A large number of plants were once found on a single cut tree by the author, south of Nudo de Sabanilla in southern Ecuador.

**FLOWERING SEASON:** December (in cultivation), otherwise probably December to March.

## CD's of Awarded Orchid Plants of the Past

A must for odont growers and particularly those interested in hybridizing is the new Compact discs available from the Royal Horticultural society picturing many of the awarded orchid paintings for the last 100 years. It is great fun viewing the different awarded jungle collected crispums and early parents of many of our contemporary hybrids. Attached to this issue of the Alliance newsletter is the form that can be filled in with a credit card number and FAXed to the RHS.

The North England Orchid Society had its own judging system and also painted their awarded orchids. In addition, the society inherited a large number of paintings from private estates. These have been included in their CD which is available by sending 12 pounds sterling and postage. Unfortunately they do not take credit cards, so you have to arrange for a money order in pounds sterling. Despite these difficulties, it is worth the trouble since many of the reproductions are even better than the RHS CD.

**Note:** The following two pages were taken from a WEB site and converted to a Word document. As a result they are distorted from the original. However all the information is present. Please note that there are two different CD's available. One has the order form and the other requires a draft in pounds.

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**Initially, meetings would be held fortnightly in The Coal Exchange Manchester. when enthusiastic members from many parts of England would bring their plants to be admired and judged.**

**On December 18th 1913 over 1000 plants were displayed at such an event.  
Apart from the odd brief interlude during both World Wars, the Society has been meeting regularly since its inception.**

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**It was the practice of the society to have painted any orchids upon which our own awards were bestowed, and we still have some 700 or so paintings which date from around the turn of the century up to the second world war, we presently show on this website around 30 examples of them.**

**Today, the society still awards First Class Certificates, Awards of Merit, and Cultural Commendations to plants presented at our monthly shows for judging accordingly.**

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# IN ORCHID HYBRIDIZING “IT IS THE JOURNEY AND NOT THE ARRIVAL THAT MATTERS”

## An adventure in cyrtorchilum hybridizing

By Dr. Howard Liebman

It was nearly 34 years ago that I made my first hybrid in the odontoglossum alliance, Oda Harry Seigel. Over the ensuing years I have experimented in nearly every genus and hybrid genus in the alliance having bred *Odontoglossums*, *Odontiodas*, *Odontocidium*s, *Wilsonaras*, *Miltonopsis*, *Miltonidium*s, *Odontonias*, *Vuykstekearas*, *Oncidioidas*, *Beallaras*, *Degarmoaras*, *Blackaras*, *Aspoglossums*, *Lageraras* and even one called *Liebmanara*. Some crosses have been disasters, but for any hybridizer this is part of the learning process. However, there have been enough hybrids of quality to encourage me to keep at it, since orchid hybridizing is an ongoing process in which each hybrid is not an end in itself, but a stepping-stone to future creations.

During the last 10 years I have turned my attention to the *cyrtorchilum* oncidiums. There are several reasons for this, but probably most important is that I can grow the various species and hybrids easily outdoors at my home, which is located in a protected canyon near the ocean in Pacific Palisades, a suburb of Los Angeles. Now having seen the first generation of hybrids bloom I believe that I can comment on their characteristics, strengths and weaknesses. First of all, I can state that *cyrtorchilum* species raised from seed are far superior and easier to grow than imported collected plants. Excellent examples are the *Oncidium Macranthum* seedling that I have raised and the similarly excellent *Macranthum* sibling crosses raised by Tom Perlite of Golden Gate Orchids. I have selected at least 7 superior cultivars from my early crosses for future breeding and obtained an AOS award on one. Tom's *Macranthum* seedlings have been exceptional with several earning AOS awards and one that I recently saw at his greenhouse in Pacifica is probably the finest formed *macranthum* I have ever seen (Pictured). Another example has been my outcross of *Oncidium Pastasae* (pictured). Tom raised a number of these seedlings and they have been uniformly excellent. It is notable that I attempted to grow nearly 20 different imported cultivars of *Pastasae*, but lost all but three and only two bloomed for me. These were the parents of the cross and although they remain poor growers, their seedlings grow exceptionally well for me (although not nearly as well as they grow for Tom Perlite, but few people grow as well as Tom).

The building blocks for my present hybridizing program include a number of older registered *cyrtorchilum* hybrids. *Oncidium Sylvia Budd* is a cross of *Onc. Macranthum* X *Onc. Falcipetalum*. My plant came from a cross made at the Santa Barbara Orchid Estate and is a small (5cm) flower, but flat and dark brown with a bright yellow edge to the petals. It is notable that *cyrtorchilum* species whose flower have petals that lock in a forward manner will produce flat flowers when crossed with *Onc. Macranthum* or *Macranthum* hybrids. Apparently this petal trait is recessive. I also have frequently used the beautiful *Onc. Santa Barbara Gold* “Geyserland” AM/AOS (pictured) which is a cultivar that resulted from a cross of *Onc. Macranthum* X *Onc. Chysodipterum* (Most likely the true parent is *Onc. Ionodon*), also made at Santa Barbara Orchid Estate and raised by Andy Easton. Andy used this plant of *Onc. Santa Barbara Gold*, crossing it with his own clone of *Sylvia Budd*, to make *Onc. Geyser Goldmine*. I was fortunate enough to acquire 7 large seedlings of this cross and have used them extensively in my hybridizing program. Two of the seedlings have earned AOS awards, variety “Rustic Glory” HCC (pictured) and “Rustic Canyon” HCC. However, all the flowers of *Onc.*



Geyser Goldmine that I have seen are all significantly larger than the Sylvia Budd and have exceptional color and texture. Other older hybrids that I have incorporated into my hybridizing program include Oncidioda Crowborough "Chelsea" AM/ AOS, RHS (a difficult parent), Wilsonara Lyoth "Ruby" AM/RHS, Burrageara Lyoth AM/RHS, Wilsonara Rock Island "Rustic Canyon" HCC (pictured) and Odontonia Bragelonne "Plush"(The odontoglossum in this hybrid is Odm Edwardii which is now known to be a cyrtochilum).

One of my hybrids to bloom was a cross of Onc. Microxiphium (now known as Onc. Tucumanense) X Onc. Orgyale (now known as Onc Undulatum) registered as Oncidium Rustic Coppertone (pictured). The compact growing Tucumanenese was the pod parent and tamed the rambling growth of the Onc Undulatum. The hybrid was true to its name being a glowing copper color occasionally flushed with purple. Another interesting cross was Onc Rustic Surprise (Onc Macranthum X Onc Serratum). The cultivar "Rustic Canyon" HCC/AOS has an interesting pattern of chocolate brown on bright yellow petals and sepals. I would love to remake this cross with pollen from the beautiful Onc. Macranthum I saw at Tom Perlite's with an exceptional Onc. Serratum, I obtained from an outcross made by Robert Hamilton.

Somewhat following the example of Andy Easton, I crossed Onc. Santa Barbara Gold " Geyserland" with Onc Falcipetalum, a cross that I registered as Onc. Kathryn Rickles. The cultivar, "Rustic Canyon" HCC/ AOS (pictured) was not a full as Onc. Geyser Goldmine, but had a strong color and a lovely yellow picotee on the dorsal sepal. I have crossed this clone with one of my awarded Onc. Macranthum. A cross I made between Oncidium Geyser Goldmine "Rustic Glory" with two exceptional cultivars of Onc. Macranthum, named "Superb" and "Cuenca", produced some exceptional full Macranthum-type flowers with a number having rich brown or copper markings on full bright yellow-based petals. One awarded clone, "Rustic Canyon" HCC (pictured), had solid yellow petals, but represented a minority of the cross. When Onc Pastasae was crossed with Onc. Geyser Goldmine variety Gold Tips, the resulting plants had the rambling growth of Onc. Pastasae with 2 to 3 feet between pseudobulbs, but fascinating flowers of mustard yellow with purple-brown spots on the petals. None of the plants that I have bloomed would be considered awardable, but the flower color was somewhat unusual and I have used their pollen back onto selected Geyser Goldmines.

(To be continued)



*Odontoglossum crinitum*



*Odontoglossum crinitum*

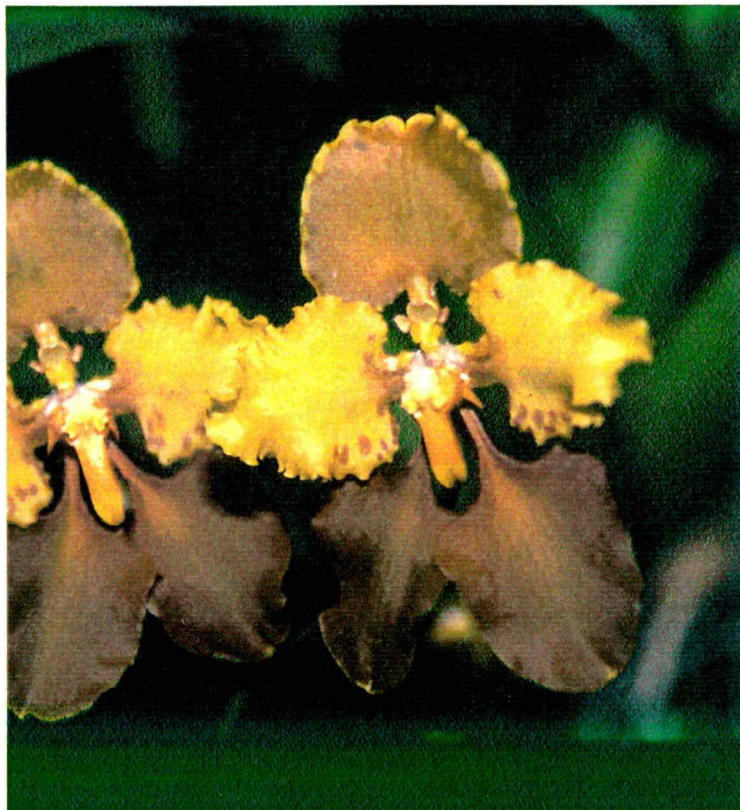


*Oncidium Geyserland* AM/AOS





Oncidium Geyserland 'Rustic Glory' HCC/AOS



Wilsonara Rock Island  
'Rustic Canyon' HCC/AOS