

Odontoglossum Alliance

Odontoglossum Quisto 'D&B Awarded AM/AOS

Editors Comments:

Odontoglossum Quisto 'D&B, AM/AOS (Opheon x Quistrum) was awarded with 81 points at the Southwest Regional Supplemental Monthly Judging, Dallas, TX, February 1991. The plant was grown and exhibited by Mr. Berry Woodson of Fort Worth, TX. The climate in Fort Worth is not conducive to the growing of odontoglossums. Therefore the receiving of an award is a *'tour de force'* for Berry. He has contributed to the Odontoglossum Alliance book with material on his cultural practices in Texas and his article follows.

Cool growing in the Southwest United States

Berry Woodson

Growing high elevation orchids in the Southwestern United States requires herculean and promethean efforts. The weather in the Southwest is marked by extremes. In winter, freezing conditions are common while in the summer hot weather is the norm. Hobbyists must create an environment similar to that where species grow in nature. At eight to ten thousand feet in the Andes, weather is cool and humid.

Alliance Meeting

EASTERN ORCHID CONGRESS

Boston, Massachusetts

ODONTOGLOSSUM ALLIANCE

23 OCTOBER 1992

Luncheon 12 O'clock, Park Plaza Hotel,
Odontoglossum Alliance Business Meeting.

1:30 pm Program Mr. Robert Dugger, Session
Chairman and Moderator

1. The Genus Odontoglossum
by Dr. Richard Kaufman

There have been some 300 described species of odontoglossum. Approximately 60 of these are legitimate species, more than half either being consigned to other genera or synonyms. This talk will try to clarify some of these taxonomic dilemmas and confusions. We will also look at the species that have come to make up some of the brilliant hybrids currently being grown and created.

Richard Kaufman is a physician who has been growing orchids for more than 16 years. He is an accredited American Orchid Society judge. His major interest in orchids are the cool growing genera particularly miltonias, odontoglossums, and masdevallias. In addition to this he grows assorted species including numerous lycastes and phrags.

(Southwest growing continued)

Special efforts must be made to heat and cool our greenhouses to duplicate conditions of high Andean cloud forests. In our region, traditional attempts to grow these species and hybrids succeed in the winter, fall and spring, but fail in the summer unless extraordinary efforts are taken to cool these orchids. The purpose of this essay is to relate culture of *Oncidium* alliance orchid with particular emphasis on cooling these plants in summer.

There are several ways to cool a greenhouse. Windows and vents can be opened in times of warm weather. The hobbyist can also cool by frequent misting of plants and wetting the walkways in the greenhouse. Abundant air circulation should be used to cool and dry plants by nightfall. This method is often the only method used to cool this alliance in the Northwest and Northeast. In these regions, some hobbyists also employ evaporative coolers to cool plants by humidifying the air in the greenhouse. Such methods in the Southwest will keep inside temperature slightly lower than outside temperature. This means that the temperature in the greenhouse will be from 90-100 F. This is too hot for high elevation species. *Oncidium* alliance plants from the Andes cannot sustain such hot temperatures for a period of time which in the Southwest can be from three to five months. Each new growth on these plants will be successively smaller. These plants will enter a period of decline and die in several years. The only alternative to growers in the Southwest who want to grow this alliance successfully is to employ air conditioning to keep temperatures cool. Beyond the increased utility costs for electricity, the problem with cooling with air conditioning is that such cooling rapidly dehumidifies the air. In the summer, air conditioning dries the air as much as forced air heating does in the winter.

We built a small 16 x 20 foot greenhouse. We initially installed a 24,000 b.t.u. or 2 ton window air conditioner. With summer outside conditions being 95-100 F with 25% relative humidity. We kept our cool house 82-84 F maximum temperature and minimum temperature under

(Alliance meeting continued)

2. *Odontoglossums* from the John Day Scrapbooks by Mr. Michael Tibbs

The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew have recently been bequeathed the orchid scrapbooks of John Day, an orchid grower who lived in the late Victorian era, in Tottenham, North London. Day was also an artist who was able, in the years between 1865 and the late 1880's to visit the nurseries of James Veitch & Sons, Sanders of St. Albans and Kew Gardens where he was permitted to paint not only the species but also the first hybrids ever made.

Odontoglossums featured numerously in his works, with the earliest hybrids, that we only read about and more often than not only see as black and white line drawings. These early hybrids, many now lost in cultivation, and the progeny of the beautiful modern hybrids for which the early ones were responsible will be featured.

Michael Tibbs recently became co-owner and manager of the Stonehurst Nurseries in Ardingly, West Sussex, England. He has experienced working in nurseries in Japan and the far East. He was recently commissioned by Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew to co-ordinate and manage a large exhibition in Tokyo later this year. Prior to coming to Stonehurst he was marketing manager at McBeans Orchids.

3. A Decade of Albino *Odontoglossum* Breeding at the Foundation and the Aims for the Future by Alan Moon

Odontoglossums, in common with many other types of orchid species, will show a proportion of pure albino varieties. *Crispum xanthotes* excited the superb hybridizing mind of Joseph Charlesworth at the turn of the Century, and by the time of his death in 1922, many crosses had been made. Unfortunately, in retrospect, this was to be virtually the end of this type of albino *odontoglossum* until around 1970 when, using some of his seedlings, a whole cavalcade of pure

(Southwest growing continued)

benches. Window air-conditioners have an internal thermostat which enables the condenser to cycle off so the coils will not freeze. We removed this internal thermostat to get cooler night time minimum temperature. The coils on this unit were completely frozen by morning; although the minimum night time temperature was 65 F. A second 24,000 b.t.u. air-conditioner was added. Both internal thermostats were replaced by manual thermostats. With this added cooling, the day high was 80 F and the night low was 60 F. Any attempts to set these external thermostats below 50 F resulted in the coils freezing by night. An additional 12,000 b.t.u. unit was added with an external thermostat. The day high became 75 F and the night low became 55 F. A clock thermostat was added so the 55 F night temperature and the day 75 F temperature could be set permanently for summer use. We employ this system in the summer while using evaporative coolers the rest of the year. The temperature range is 50-75 F throughout the year except in the summer where it is 55-75 F. Maintaining high humidity in an air conditioned greenhouse is difficult, because air conditioning cools by dehumidifying the air. We use misters below benches. They are connected to a solenoid valve which is controlled by a humidistat at 60%-70% relative humidity.

We recently doubled the size of our cool house. We decided to keep it separate from the other cool house. We installed a 30,000 b.t.u. refrigerated air unit. Such a system is used in refrigerators for food and trucks for frozen food. Such cooling does not dehumidify the air as much as air conditioning. This type unit is more efficient than air conditioning. Such a smaller unit is sufficient to cool to 45 F as a night time low. We keep this cool house 50-7- F throughout the year.

In the winter, we use a forced air heater to keep our cool houses 50-70 F in the winter. This type of heating dehumidifies the air as much as air conditioning. We employ misters to ameliorate humidity problems and aim for 60 to 70% relative humidity.

We grow under 73% saran shade cloth in our

(Alliance meeting continued)

yellow and white odontoglossums were produced, which surely could only have been a figment of Charlesworth's imagination.

Alan Moon has been involved with orchids all his life. He started work at McBeans Orchids in Cooksbridge and moved to Jersey in the early 1960's to look after Eric Young's Cymbidiums. Now the Curator of the Eric Young Orchid Foundation and he lectures all around the World. He is a member of the Orchid Committee of the Royal Horticultural Society.

4. The Odontoglossum Pipeline - Crossing, Flasking and Seed Culture by Robert Hamilton

Within the Oncidinae, Odontoglossums rank among the largest, most dramatic and showiest flowers. Hybrids within this group can be produced with consistent quality. The last decade has seen a world wide resurgence of interest in odontoglossums and improvements in size and color have followed. This talk deals with hybridizing and the route to better plants utilizing a selection process based on vigor from the initial sowing through blooming. Special emphasis is given to successfully removing plants from the flask and growing them in the community pot.

Robert Hamilton has been growing orchids since 1976. In 1981 after hearing a talk by Robert Dugger he converted to an odontoglossum grower. He bought flasks and commenced building a stud collection, enhancing the collection from odontoglossum sources world-wide. In 1985 he initiated his own breeding program; doing his own sowing, flasking and raising of hybrids.

Following the speaking program there will be an auction by the Odontoglossum Alliance of select odontoglossum contributed flasks, seedlings, mature plants, and historic odontoglossum memorabilia.

(Southwest growing continued)

cool house from April until October . We remove the shade cloth in October and the greenhouses receive full sun for half a day. Trees shade our greenhouse the remainder of the day. We repot throughout the year although the bulk of this laborious task is done during the cooler months to accommodate our repotting schedule in the Oncidium alliance, we like to repot when a new growth is three to four inches. We use a seedling grade douglas fir bark and coarse perlite as a potting medium in a ratio of five to one. We pot in plastic pots with styrofoam peanuts in the bottom of the pot. We fertilize bimonthly with 30-10-10 fertilizer with trace elements. We use citric acid to lower the ph of the water to neutral. In the short days of winter, we fertilize less often depending on the amount of sunny days in the cycle. During the cloudy phase of our winter weather we might fertilize once a month. This type of growing allows us to grow high elevation Oncidium and Pleurotalliad alliance plants in a climate of extremes in both summer and winter.

Dallas, Texas

Heaven On Earth

Jack Halpern

Our odonts are now flourishing as never before, and are in exuberant growth and bloom. I attribute the prodigious improvement to a change in culture which I initiated early in 1991: food was introduced into the H₂O (water) system regularly, in every single watering. That food is Miracle-Gro 15-30-15, composed of water-soluble salts.

I grow approximately 300 plants, nearly all multigeneric hybrids. All are potted in firbark, with perlite added. Here, in cool San Francisco, once a week irrigation produces good results. The nutrition I now provide is very dilute, but very dependable and regular. 1/4 cup of Miracle-Gro 15-30-15 is added to the water in a

full 3-gallon bucket. A Hozon 15:1 proportioner is used to syphon one part of the concentrate fertilizer solution into every fifteen parts of water flowing through the hose. The output is thus very dilute, but, as indicated, is provided with regularity.

Prior to instituting this nutrition program, results were decidedly ordinary, far from prideworthy. Afterward, they improved to a high degree of excellence and provide a major flowering reward. Growth is lusty, spikes are long, bud count is high and bloom is vibrant. Heaven On Earth.

San Francisco

Odontoglossum Compactum

Observations on odontoglossum compactum in Ecuador

Carl L. Withner

Driving outside Cuenca, Ecuador into the mountains and on up until we reached 8000 to 9000 feet altitude, we found the scrubby vegetation and small trees mostly in the ravines, and it began to be periodically misty and cold when a cloud blew in. The steep mountainsides with many rock outcrops were chiefly covered with grassy patches and a few low wild flowers. Some of the ravine areas were extensive, sunchy-wet and thickly covered with reedy grasses with leaves about three or four feet high--mountainside swamps bordered with the mossy scrub. The coarse plants of the odontoglossums were immediately spotted from the cars. They appeared as scattered, large, compact masses of bright yellow flowers protruding above the surrounding reeds. Reaching them was another matter.

Our more vigorous tour mates dived into the reeds and brush, only their head and shoulders

visible, to reach a plant or two. The plants were massive and well anchored into the sopping swamp debris underfoot, and they required considerable work to remove any roots intact. The individual growths were about six inches apart on stiff, thumb-thick scaly rhizomes, and the leaves and bracts of each growth were up to two feet in length. The stiff stalks and flowers were twice that in their growth to the open air and pollination. The lips and bases of the sepals and petals were beautifully spotted with red-purple, and we counted as many as 30-40 flowers in a head.

This is hardly a species that will take lightly to cultivation, though we read in the Bockemuhl book that there are also more compact, smaller types to be found. The plants we saw were definitely not those. Bockemuhl also mentions xanthotic color forms. Although the pointy flower parts might not currently appeal to some growers, one wonders what new color combinations, vigor, influence on stalk stiffness and numbers of flowers, or ease of growing might accrue if this specie could be used for hybridizing. We have so many new colors and shapes to look forward to when we escape the dominating influence of *crispum* hybrids that have held us enthralled for so many years.

Bellingham, Washington

Editors Comments

John E. Miller

I have undertaken to breath life into the Odontoglossum Alliance by the publishing of the newsletter. Since the founding of the Alliance there have been , up until now, two newsletters. The last one was in 1989. It is my intention to see that they come at regular intervals. I plan to issue them on a quarterly basis. If my skills with word processing and publishing increase, and I have sufficient material, I may increase the frequency of publication.

The membership of the Alliance is small, about 40 members from the 1989 count. I have sent a

letter to all those on that mailing list telling them I have re-instituted the newsletter and asked each to renew dues paying. I have had a good response. I shall send out this newsletter and the next one to all those on the old list. Following that I shall be mailing it only to those who have paid the modest dues. Dues are \$10.00 for US mailing and \$15.00 for mailing outside the US. Please send your dues to me. In the April 1992 AOS Bulletin there was a notice to send the dues to Fred Schull. If you have done that don't worry, Fred will send them on to me.

Publishing a newsletter requires material. I can only create a certain amount. I will depend upon members to submit to me articles, notices, comments, and contributions to be included in issues. I have already received material from Jack Halpern and Carl Withner which is included in this issue. I had solicited a number of people for material to be included in a book "Culture of The Odontoglossum Alliance". I have now received 95% of the requested material. I have been in contact with Timber Press to publish the book. There is a large amount of editing to be accomplished before I could say we will have a book. I intend to use this newsletter as vehicle to pre-publish much of the material. I will to pick and choose my way through the submissions. I solicit your comments on any of this material. In this issue I have included Berry Woodson's material on growing in the Southwest. There is enough 'book submitted' material to use in the newsletter for several issues.

The growing of odontoglossums is not wide spread, especially when compared to that for phalaenopsis or paphiopedilum growers. Certainly the culture requirements limit the areas where they can be grown easily. However I feel that there are other reasons more orchid growers have not taken up the odont habit. There is not a good source and/or reference list on the culture. I would request our readers to send me any references they believe are useful to the alliance grower. I shall collect these and publish them in a future newsletter along with articles in the various orchid publications.

I hope the proposed book will help to solve the reference situation.

Sources of supply of the plant are limited, none existent or unknown to orchid readers of the society bulletins. In the past twelve months there have been only two ads in the AOS Bulletin with odontoglossums. I have often been asked: "Where do I get plants?" I intend to publish in the newsletter a list of sources. I shall include all those that I am aware of. If you would like to be in that list please send me the information that is requested with this news letter.

The next meeting of the Odontoglossum Alliance is scheduled for 23 October 1992 in Boston, Massachusetts. This is conjunction with the Eastern Orchid Congress. The program for the meeting is included in this newsletter. October is a fine time to visit New England. Lobsters are plentiful and the leaves are beautiful. You will be getting a separate mailing from the Eastern Orchid Congress with the entire program. It is not a great time for odontoglossum flowers in the northern hemisphere. I am hopeful that several suppliers of odont material shall be participating in the show. My greenhouse is about an hour and half drive from Boston. I shall make it available for alliance members to visit should they care to make the drive. I hope to see many of you here this fall.

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Recent News

We have scheduled an Odontoglossum Alliance meeting at the 14th World Orchid Congress on Thursday 29 April 1993. I shall be taking the lead in organizing this session. I shall need a good deal of help. If you would like to participate in organizing the session please get in touch with me, John E. Miller

Source List Information

If you would like to be included in a list of sources for Odontoglossum Alliance material that would be published in a subsequent newsletter please provide the following information:

Name

Address

Phone Numbers (including fax number)
(Sources continued)

A short paragraph of your products or services.

References:

If you have any suggested material that would go into a reference list for the growing of the odontoglossum alliance, understanding the species and hybrids, or general information on the alliance:

Please provide the following:

Name of the article or publication

Author

Publisher

Date of publication

A sentence or short paragraph on the material.