



NZ ODONTOGLOSSUM ALLIANCE

NEWSLETTER

**Volume 9 Number 4
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From the Editor

Show season memories are starting to fade! I attended several as usual and found them all different. Most of them experienced a downturn in attendance which we have come to expect in recent years.

The NZOS 50th Anniversary Show at Ellerslie Racecourse had a disasterously poor attendance. They had spent a fortune on advertising with TV, roadside hoardings etc but I hear that they had fewer than 4000 attend the three days it was open to the public! Very disappointing for all the work the members put in to their extra special show! The various sales booths did a mixed trade but most of the non orchid vendors would have been lucky to get their stall fees back, let alone their expenses.

Good support was given from outlying and provincial societies who entered displays and an excellent show resulted. One of the two long narrow stable buildings which had been revamped and the roof installed with many clear panels made an acceptable area for displays. The adjoining stable where the sales booths were placed had no natural light and very poor illumination. I would say it was the darkest venue I have ever tried to sell plants in!

Thanks to Val Bayliss's excellent photography and generosity I am able to bring you several photos of award and prize winning Odont alliance plants from the NZOS 50th Show.

Another society which fared much better than normal however was the Taranaki Orchid Society. Their ex president works for a motor car dealers and secured the spacious premises free of charge for the weekend. Instead of charging it was free entry and people flocked in to see the beautiful display set amongst the shiny new model cars. Presumably with the big expense of the venue off their hands, the club would do rather well financially!

While we are mentioning the Taranaki Orchid Society I must remind you of their annual Summer Display where all keen orchid growers and hybridisers like to meet if they can get away from visitors and family in the New Year! This year promises to be quite a wild affair as we celebrate George Fuller's 70th birthday during the dinner! I wonder what stories he will recount on that occasion.

The Odont Alliance forum will be at 4pm on Saturday with Paphs 7.30pm Friday night, Disas 8am Saturday and Masdevallias 8am Sunday. The all popular Boot Sale is held between 1.30pm and 3pm officially but generally gets underway before lunch!! To interpret for those in the Northern Hemisphere - a boot sale is where anyone and everyone brings items for sale and sells from their car boot (or trunk!). A donation is made to help defray the weekend costs. The Saturday night meal, lunches and cuppas cost us \$30 for the weekend. Amazing value isn't it! See you there.

The La Nina is predicted to bring us in the north Wet, Warm and Windy weather this summer and some droughts further south. We shall see! Good growing.

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TOURING ABOUT IN SOUTH AMERICA

(with occasional glimpses of orchids)

VI: Mendoza, Argentina & Santiago, Chile

I much enjoyed our few days in Mendoza, which I thought a delightful place. It was a city of about 1.5 million people, fairly close to the Andes, something of an oasis in the middle of a desert. The streets were lined with trees, and the enormous ditches at the edges of the footpaths were not drains or gutters but irrigation channels. There were many public parks. The centre of the town had quite an air of reasonable prosperity, perhaps a reflection of all the vineyards around (yes, this is one of Argentina's main wine-growing areas). I understand it is also something of a ski-resort in the winter. When we were there in September, it was early Spring. Lots of sidewalk cafes all over the place. You could enjoy a very pleasant life-style here for many months of the year, if not indeed all year round. We made a visit to one vineyard, and even though the proprietor spoke in Spanish, there was no mistaking the meaning of what he was telling us about growing the grapes and producing the wines. A few bottles of his finest now lie, meditating, in my own small cellar.

>From Mendoza, we travelled by bus across the Andes, over into Chile, to Santiago. Up to the summit of the pass, on the Argentine side the road was generally long and straight, and only very gently, almost imperceptibly, climbing, until after several hours we reached the saddle at about 10,000 feet. Somewhere near here there was a sign at the road-side "Aconcagua, Alt 6,959 m", but that was the most we saw of South America's highest mountain. The last "civilisation" on the Argentine side of the frontier was a small outpost called Puente del Inca. We were surprised to find at this altitude a thermal spa, now-derelict, some of the waters running through it being quite warm. At the Argentine border post a few km away there was some delay while our exit papers were processed. Then our bus drove through a few more km of no-man's land until we came to the Chilean border post. More lengthy delays. There were extensive snowfields nearby, and while we waited we could only admire the freedom enjoyed by the skiers. After the paper work was eventually done, all the suitcases had to be off-loaded from the bus and barrowed into an inspection hall where they were all run one at a time through an x-ray machine. Then we had to take our hand luggage into the inspection hall. Eventually they decided they weren't too troubled about a bus-load of New Zealanders and allowed us to go on our way. And what a way! On the Chilean side, the road descended in a series of very tight hair-pin bends. I've forgotten how many, I think it was 14 or 18 of them, and on some turns part of the bus was overhanging empty space.

There was once an operating railway right across the mountains. Most of the tracks are still in place, but on the Chilean side especially the maintenance required to keep the line operational obviously became totally prohibitive, and now it has become derelict.

A rapid descent brought us to nearly level ground and straight roads, and then we arrived in Santiago. This I found a also most enjoyable city, one where (like Mendoza)

I could happily live, for a little while at least. Excursions included a visit to the Club Hipico de Santiago, a privately-owned racecourse, the ceremonial changing of the guard, a visit to a shop that sold jewellery and other things made with lapis lazuli, the port of Valparaiso. Thus far on our trip, in Argentina and Brazil, the local currency unit was roughly equal to the US\$. In Chile we had to get used to a rate of 400 pesos to the US\$. I had an interesting experience when I drew cash from an ATM, slightly misunderstood one of the buttons, and found I had drawn a bit more than I had intended: 100,000 pesos (but that eventually worked out at about NZ \$350)! Our return home started with wake-up call at 3 am (Santiago time, about 16 hours behind NZ), then a flight leaving Santiago at 8 am to Buenos Aires (about 2 hours), 2 hours on the ground, then about 4 hours flight to Rio Gallegos, another 2 hours on the ground, then about 11 hours to Auckland. From day-break in Santiago at about 6 am, we had daylight all the way, arriving home about 7 pm NZ time. It certainly made for a very long day indeed.

Postscript: Return to Argentina

The astute reader will have noticed that the heading to this series of articles has referred to "occasional glimpses of orchids", and indeed those glimpses have been few and far between ...

In December 1997 I returned to Argentina (en route to a tour to the Falkland Islands, South Georgia, Elephant Island and the Antarctic Peninsula), and taking the opportunity to see another bit of the country spent a week, straddling Christmas, in the northwest. I stayed at Salta for a few days, then went by road to Tucuman, overnighing Christmas Eve in a pleasant village called Tafi del Valle.

I had expected the northwest area to be quite arid, but found that it was generally quite lush and green. (I also found that their summer is the middle of the rainy season!) One outing from Salta should have gone through another city Jujuy, and on to the village of Humahuaca which had ancient Inca and Indian connections. Unfortunately, because of heavy rain, somewhere north of Jujuy the road had been cut by slips and we couldn't get through. After waiting a couple of hours, we turned around and returned to Jujuy and then by a different route back to Salta, passing through a small patch of "rain forest". The trees were thickly covered in epiphytes, mostly ferns and bromeliads. Near the end of this section we got out and walked on along the road for half a kilometre or so. I was looking up, goggling at the vegetation overhead, and suddenly thought something sticking out past the bend of a branch was a bit different from other plants. Its leaves seemed vaguely familiar, and then as my eyes glanced about I saw first one then several pendent sprays of a yellow and red oncidium species.

Two days later we drove south from Salta towards the city of Tucuman, by an interesting scenic route, through another rain forest ravine (lots of bromeliads, but no obvious orchids), then out onto a broad plain, 500 m above sea level, very hot and very humid. Shortly before reaching Tucuman we turned off and drove up what a sign called a "sinuous road" (camina sinuosa) about 2000 m higher where the temperature was much more comfortable. We enjoyed a very pleasant lunch at a villa on top of

the hill (baked trout in black butter sauce - it made an excellent Christmas dinner!) After our meal I went out on the terrace, looking at the view down toward the city. Very prominent in front was a tall tree, its trunk branchless for many metres up until it divided to form the canopy. There, hanging around and below the crotch was the most enormous and magnificent spray of yellow oncidiums, a delight to the eye, and truly a Kodak moment. I could not have had a better Christmas present!

And on that note, it's time to conclude this series.

Chris Hubbert Auckland

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Thank you Chris for an interesting series of articles now ended. They say ask a busy person to do a job if you want it done well and Chris is a good example! As well as editing the North Shore OS "Insigne" newsletter he is a partner in a city law firm and now a student judge! I haven't tracked him down to see his orchid collection yet but I am sure it is worth seeing. Unfortunately we probably can't justify getting Chris to write about his other non orchid trips to such interesting places as Antarctica and also to the sub Antarctic Islands on a Russian trawler but perhaps he will be off to orchid country again soon or to Vancouver and we might get another one of his stories from him. The Editor

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More Headaches!

I wrote in the last newsletter of the headaches orchid growers are having in importing flasks into New Zealand. This of course is being experienced not only us but by cactus, succulent, ,carnivorous, bulb and no doubt many other growers including commercial growers. It looks as though the madness is with us for a while yet!

I know one commercial grower who has to try and find old nursery catalogues to prove that what he is importing for resale was once available in this country. He goes to garage sales, second hand bookshops and libraries looking for old gardening magazines and old pricelists to photocopy to back his application to import seed and bulbs!

After the NZOS 50th Anniversary show Ross Tucker brought guest speaker Gerardus Staal from California to the local Tauranga OS to speak. A very interesting talk he gave too. Next day they dropped in and Gerardus related how he was delayed with his flasks for ages at Auckland Airport coming in. He had to write down all the species names of any hybrid parents in the hundred odd flasks he brought over! How he got his crosses with "species nova" through we don't know as he specialises in breeding with new and unusual species from South America.

I have also had seed temporarily confiscated but was able to advise that the seed also went under another name! Only recently a number of vials of protocorms for me were held for a week in Postal Customs. They were appropriately labelled "crispum "Blue", crispum "Yellow", crispum "Green" etc but they had no Health permit as the supplier was a hobbyist and couldn't be bothered going into the big city. Six days or so later after refering the officer to Michele Dickson they were released! So stick to your guns everyone!

Ron Maunder Tauranga

The Story of *Odontoglossum Harryanum*

by Frederick Boyle

Frederick Boyle was a writer of the late 1800's and early this century who I suppose could also be called a freelance writer of his day. He wrote articles to orchid and plant journals and several books about orchid discoveries and nurseries of his era. Today they give us a great insight into the fabulous orchid collections of the past. He had a way of making an interesting story from very few facts and some reviewers have castigated him for sensationalising his stories!

For all his presumed faults he certainly wrote an interesting story and made orchid growing and collecting sound interesting and even adventuresome. I have borrowed one of his old books called "The Woodlands Orchids" in which he writes about the huge collection and thirty one greenhouses in the private collection of a gentleman named Measures. A *Paph* and *Masdevallia* and other plants have been named after this wealthy man.

Amongst the chapters in his book describing the wonderfully stocked greenhouses each for different genera, are chapters on the collecting of a number of species by the early orchid collectors in South America, Central America, Burma and other outposts of the world.

A number of years ago I wrote about the collection of *Oncidium splendidum*. This time I have selected Frederick Boyle's story about the discovery of *Odm. harryanum* which of course was named for that famous English plant nurseryman Harry Veitch.

The story is written in a far more "flowery" style than today and is probably harder and slower reading than today's style but I have copied it word for word. I hope you enjoy it.

"Men supremely great in science have a quality beyond reason, such as we term instinct, enabling them to leap over the slow processes of demonstration, and announce a law or a result unexpected, which they cannot yet prove. The great Collector Benedict Roezl had this gift. Returning from the memorable expedition in which he discovered the *Miltonia* commonly called *Odontoglossum vexillarium*, he assured Mr Sander that in those parts would be found a true *Odontoglossum* of unusual colouring. When asked the grounds for his opinion he could only say he 'smelt it.' Mr Sander was not unused to this expression, and he knew by experience that Roezl's scientific nose might be trusted. It was something in the air, in the 'lie' of the country, in the type of vegetation, which guided him, no doubt. Other collectors born and bred have a like sense. Roezl showed his supremacy by the confident prediction that this new species would be darker than any known, and striking in the combination of its tints.

This was in 1875. Ten years later Professor Reichenbach wrote to Mr Sander of an astounding *Odontoglossum* he had seen - it may be necessary to tell the unlearned that Professor Reichenbach was the very genius of orchidology. Nothing in the least resembling it had been even rumoured hitherto. And then Reichenbach described *Odontoglossum harryanum*. The raptures of that enthusiast were wont to divert admiring friends, expressed with quaint vehemence, but always suggesting that he mocked himself the while. Never had he such a theme as this. Speaking with due thought and sufficient knowledge, I declare

that *Odontoglossum harryanum* is the most finished result of Nature's efforts to produce a flower which should startle and impress by its colours alone, without eccentricity of shape or giant size, or peculiarities of structure. Remembering that not all the world has seen this flower, I should give just a hint of the means employed. Fancy, then, eight or ten great blooms, dark chestnut in tone, barred with yellow, striped with mauve; the lip white, broadly edged with a network of bluish purple and intersected by a deep stain of that tint, beyond which is spread a sheet of snow; touch with gold here and there, and you have the scheme of colour.' Those who knew the great savant can imagine how he raved after giving, with luminous precision, his scientific report of the new orchid.

Reichenbach persuaded himself, by study of the flower, that it must be a native of Mexico. He was wrong for once, but people were so used to regard him as infallible that Mr Sander did not think of doubting the assertion. Presently, however, it became known that Messrs. Veitch had bought the plants, a dozen or so, from Messrs. Horsman. And then Mr Sander learned by accident that the latter firm received a small case of orchids from Barranquilla, twelve months before. While pondering this news, Roezl's unforgotten prophecy flashed into his mind. Barranquilla in the United States of Columbia, is the port of that district where *Odontoglossum vexillarium* is found! He had a collector not far away. Within an hour this gentleman, Kerbach, received a telegram short and imperative: 'Go Amalfi'. Not waiting an explanation Kerbach replied 'Gone!' - reached Amalfi in due course, and found another telegram containing a hint that sufficed, 'New *Odontoglossum*.'

Kerbach began to enquire the same day. It was hardly credible that an orchid of importance could have been overlooked in the neighbourhood of Amalfi, where collectors - French, Belgian and English - had been busy for years. A hunt there would be very unpromising. Kerbach wandered about, asking questions. Thus at Medellin he made acquaintance with a bank clerk. It may be noted, by the way, that the inhabitants of that busy and thriving town, the bulk of them, are descendants of Maranos - that is, Jews converted by process of the Inquisition. Doubtless there are records which explain why and how many thousands of those people assembled in a remote district of New Granada, but they themselves appear to have lost the tradition; they have lost their ancestral faith also, for there are no more devout Catholics. The religious instincts of the race assert themselves, however, for New Granadians in general are not more fervent than other creoles of South America, while the town of Medellin is an oasis of piety.

The bank clerk was questioned as usual, though not a likely person to take note of plants. "Why," said he, "there was a customer of ours at the bank yesterday, swearing like a wild Indian at orchids and everybody connected with them. I should advise you to keep out of his way."

"What have the orchids done to him?" asked Kerbach.

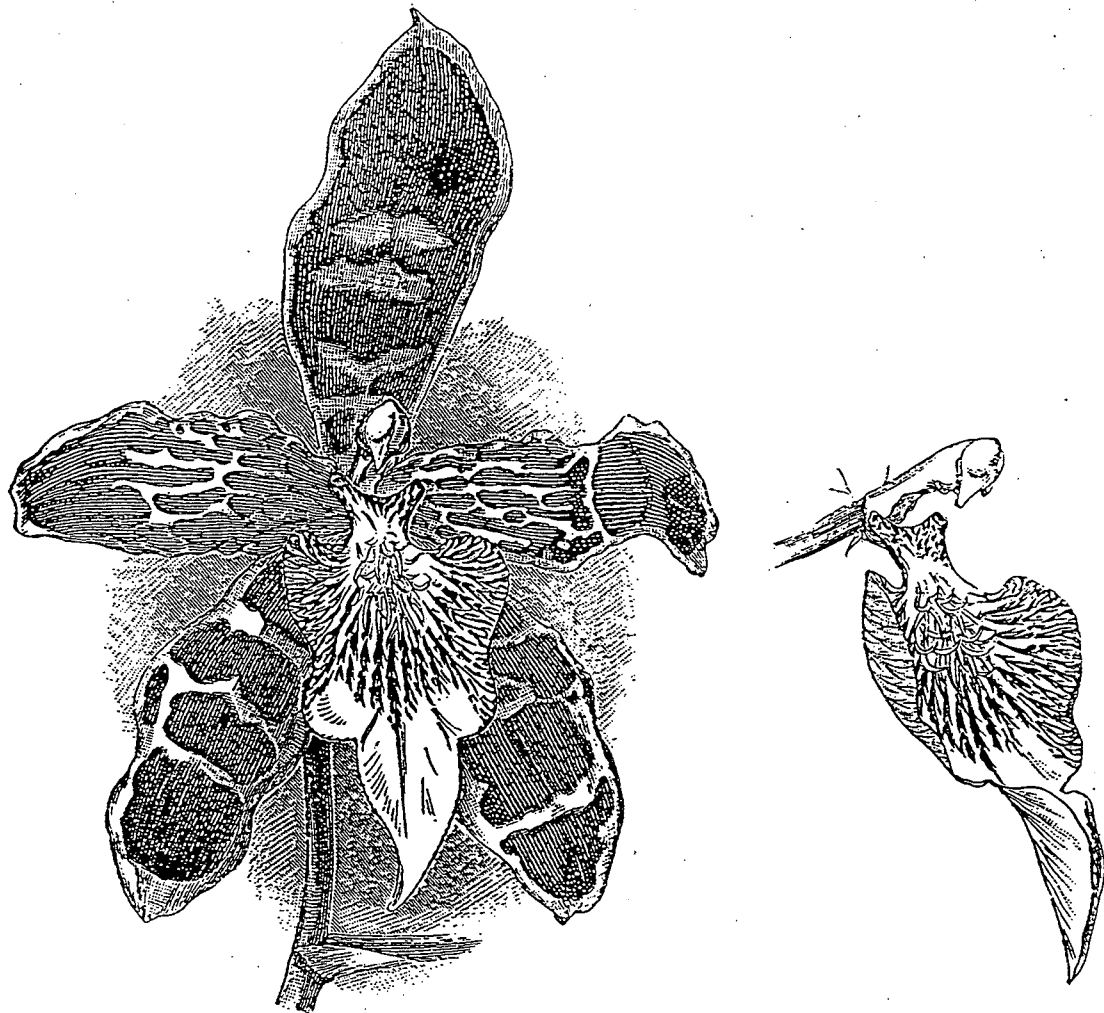
"I wasn't listening, but I'll enquire." And presently he brought the explanation. A young French collector had been in those parts before. He stayed a while at the planter's house, and there discovered an orchid which stirred him to enthusiasm. After gathering a quantity he made arrangements with his host for a shipment to follow next season, promising a sum which astonished the native. But this young man was drowned in the Couca. After a while Don Filipe resolved to despatch a few of the weeds on his own account to Europe, and he

consigned them to a friend at Barranquilla. But the friend never returned him a farthing. He had handed the case to someone else for shipment, and that someone, he said, could not get his money from England. It is pleasant to hear, however, that Don Felipe had implicit trust in British honesty. He proclaimed his friend a swindler, and doubtless he was right.

All the cash that this good man was out of pocket could not well have exceeded ten dollars, and his time did not count. Perhaps he would have been less furious had the loss been greater. Anyhow he nursed his wrath with Indian stubborn-ness - for Don Felipe was an Indian, though distinguishable from a white only in character, as are myriads at this day!

Kerbach did not doubt that he had found his *Odontoglossum* and gaily started for the hacienda. Some little diplomacy might be needed, and rather more cash than usual; but of course a sane man would come to terms at last!

extracted from "The Woodlands Orchids" by Frederick Boyle 1901 (to be continued)



Odontoglossum harryanum

from Veitch's Manual of Orchidaceous Plants - The Oncidiinae
published by James Veitch & Sons 1887 and reprinted by the
NZ *Odontoglossum* Alliance Group in A4 size. Copies available

Odontoglossum Alliance at the 16th WOC

For those travelling to the World Orchid Conference in Vancouver in late April 1999 and registering, the following is the latest information to hand.

Thursday 29th April is being known as International Odontoglossum Day. In the morning there will be five talks followed by the Odont lunch at noon. Here some donated odont alliance flasks etc will be auctioned off to raise funds. At 3pm the lectures will recommence with two more papers. That evening the Odontoglossum Alliance Dinner will be held in the Chinese Imperial restaurant - within walking distance of the venue. More material will be auctioned at the dinner.

Speakers are Juan Filipe Posada - Colombia, Alex Hirtz - Ecuador, Sandro Cusi - Mexico, Roberto Chavez - Bolivia, Bob Hamilton - California, Stig Dalstrom - Florida, and Mark Chase - Kew, England.

There will be Customs and Agriculture officers at the hotel to prepare permits etc for your return home or into the US if you are travelling home that way.

Contact the editor if you require more information.

Biological Root Rot Preventative

In the May issue of the US Odontoglossum Alliance newsletter Russ Vernon of New York relates his experiences over the last two years with a new biological product named Rootshield. He advises that it is ideal for use with peat based potting mixes where root rot is often a problem.

The product is an impregnated clay particle containing spores of a parasitic fungus. The fungus colonizes the roots of the plant and consumes pathogenic root rot fungi. Russ advocates its use for a wide range of warm and cool genera including Oncidiinae. When repotting he sprinkles a "pinch" on the roots before potting up. It is manufactured by a US firm in New York called BioWorks Inc.

This sounds a very worthwhile product to have on hand. If any NZ members know of it being available here would they please let the editor know.

Thanks

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The editor wishes to thank all those who contributed articles and photographs during 1998. Christmas greetings to all members here and overseas and best wishes for a prosperous New Year.

Illustrations

1 Yellow and Red Oncidium species, N.W. Argentina

An unidentified Oncidium species which Chris Hubbert spotted in dense rainforest on the road between Jujuy and Salta while travelling in North West Argentina.

2 Oncidium species near Tucuman, N.W. Argentina

While eating at a villa on a hilltop above the city of Tucuman at about 2,500 meters above sea level this large of Oncidium clump was photographed from the terrace by Chris.

3 Odcdm. Tiger Hambuhren x Odm. Goldrausch

A lovely bright specimen of this popular Geyserland hybrid won best Odontoglossum or Odontoglossum hybrid in the NZOS 50th Anniversary show for Jeanette Hewer of the Waikato OS. Surprisingly no award was given.

4 Odcdm. Tiger Hambuhren x Odm Goldrausch

Another in the display was this plant of the same popular yellow cross. It received an HCC / OCNZ and best Oncidium hybrid any colour for Trish Elms of Tudor Orchids, Bulls.

5 Odontioda Shelley Anne

A beautifully displayed spike of this attractive cross caught the public's and the photographer's eye. Bred from a line of spotted species - cirrhosum, and pescatorei (syn. nobile), this cross shows large, bright, sharp spots which are hard to achieve in many odontoglossum hybrids. Grower was Lee Ducker of Le Roy Orchids.

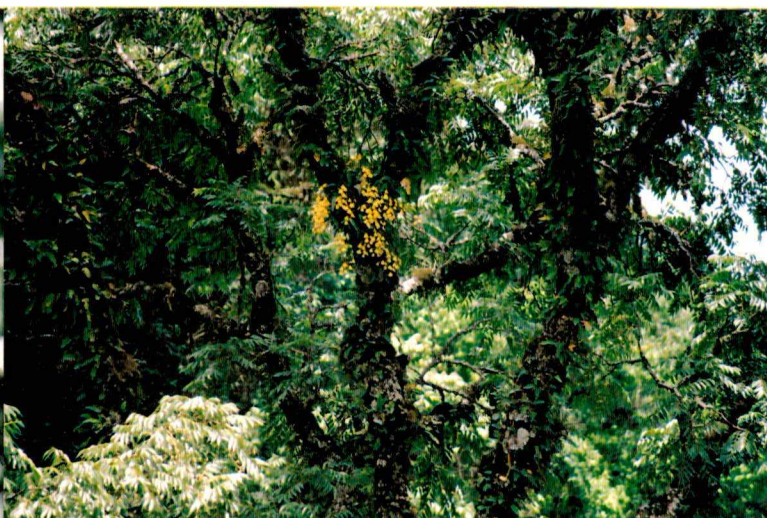
6 Wilsonara Tigerset 'Wyldcourt' HCC / OCNZ

An attractive intergeneric which is from the 1979 registered Mansell & Hatcher cross of Onc. tigrinum x Oda Carisette. It evidently received an AM/RHS a number of years ago. Grower Cathy Hines tells me it was originally a bonus plant she received from Tucker Orchids. She received an HCC / OCNZ for her plant.

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Photo Credits - 1 & 2 Chris Hubbert Auckland

3,4,5 & 6 Val Bayliss Auckland



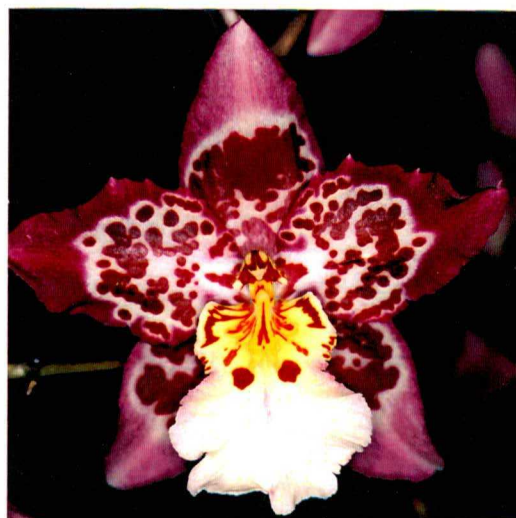
1 Yellow and Red Oncidium species 2 Oncidium species near Tucuman, N.W. Argentina



3 Odcdm. Tiger Hambuhren x Odm. Goldrausch 4 Odcdm. Tiger Hambuhren x Odm. Goldrausch



5 Odontioda Shelley Anne



6 Wils. Tigrissette 'Wyldcourt' HCC / OCNZ