

WHY AREN'T MORE CYMBIDIUM SEEDLINGS BEING INTRODUCED?

FRANK FORDYCE

During the late 1940's and through the 1950's a great amount of cymbidium seedlings came upon the scene. This, for good reason, was the heyday of cymbidium hybridizing. Previous to that date most hybridizing had been done in relatively small quantities by the English growers or in limited quantities by wealthy estates in the U.S.A. The second world war forced the English growers to export cymbidiums in quantity and at the end of the war Americans began to be intrigued with the hobby of growing cymbidiums. *Cym. Alexanderi* 'Westonbirt' FCC/RHS was emerging as the quality parent among cymbidiums, followed closely by *Cym. Babylon* 'Castle Hill' FCC/RHS and *Cym. Pauwelsii* 'Compte de Hemptine' FCC/RHS. It wasn't long until the enterprising Americans found that *Cym. Balkis* was indeed a fine parent itself and a tremendous amount of hybridizing appeared on the American continent. Records show that hybridizing suddenly jumped into popularity as certain breeding clones established a name for themselves. *Cym. Balkis* 'Silver Orb' AM/AOS (see color illustration Sept. 1968 cover) would appear to have been our most recent popular parent, producing quantities of hybrids superior to anything produced by previous parents.

We are now searching for that elusive new parent that will surpass *Cym. Balkis* 'Silver Orb.' Where will it be found? My guess would be that our next great breeder will be a clone that will give rise to hybrids possessing a brilliance of color along with exhibition quality blooms that will surpass the pastel *Balkis* hybrid colors. Hobbyist and commercial collections are basically filled with *Balkis* hybrids and their owners are asking themselves, "Why add more of the same?" Americans, who do the majority of cymbidium breeding in the world today, seem to be content with the same "look" of the modern hybrids. An Australian cymbidium grower recently pointed out the need for a neutral colored column instead of the normal deeply colored one, and a need for a clean-cut look at the basal section of the lip area that is so frequently unattractive due to excessive striping or dotting.



Cym. Lillian Stewart 'St. Irene'
(*Cymb. Balkis* x *Cymb. Carisona*)

Mericlones have undoubtedly taken a toll in the field of hybridization but I feel this is but a temporary circumstance. Mericlones, once their newness has worn away, will force growers to breed for new varieties from which they can meristem choice clones controlled completely by the owner.

Color, scent and size will be the "new look" in cymbidium hybridizing — and not in the too distant future!

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