

'Cymbidium Chatter'

Edition 3a April 2020



Cym Albryant 'Superstar' - the name says it all!



Early on Saturday morning Alvin Bryant passed away, he was in his 94th year. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family at this sad time!

Alvin will long be remembered and his legacy will live on, seen in the many wonderful Cymbidiums he created. Alvin was at one time a science teacher but he will best be remembered for his pioneering work in the growth and development of the Cymbidium Industry here in Australia and overseas, he was a trailblazer, and his creations can be found in nurseries throughout the world. The flower featured here, Joan's Charisma 'Vanity', revolutionised the breeding of non-staining, pristine white flowers. Even to this day, it remains the go-to mid-season, white tetraploid parent.

On a personal note, I will be forever eternally grateful to Alvin. Although I never met him face-to-face, we had many long telephone conversations and chats via Facebook. He was a wonderful supporter of mine when I was producing the Australian Cymbidium Scene magazine. He was a fountain of knowledge and never had a bad word to say about anyone. He was a very genuine, gentle and generous soul - one of nature's true gentlemen!

Rest peacefully Alvin!

— A Case of Mistaken Identity —

By Joshua White

Like any Orchid genus, *Cymbidiums* suffer their share of mislabelling. Sometimes this is just a slight misspelling, or a mix-up between the grex and varietal names. Occasionally the label doesn't match anything in the RHS register at all.

However, there are a couple of species and primary hybrids that are often confused. Once you know what to look for, they are easy to distinguish between. This short article looks at some of the most commonly mislabelled primary hybrids in Victoria. It is my hope that the reader will then be able to correctly identify these hybrids and the related species in their own collection.

Cym. Lowio-grandiflorum

This primary hybrid is the cross of *Cym. lowianum* and *Cym. hookerianum* (also known as *Cym. grandiflorum*) and unfortunately it is often mislabelled as *Cym. lowianum*.



Cym. lowianum



Cym. hookerianum

Above are examples of the two parent species. As you can see, *Cym. lowianum* tends to have a wide, rectangular shape with thin tepals. Its standout feature is the blood-red “v” on the lip. *Cym. hookerianum*, on the other hand, has a more regular shape with a finely-spotted lip, which includes a green-yellow picotee and a ruffled edge.

The hybrid of the two differs from both parents in a few recognisable ways:

- The shade of green is typically apple green, much like *hookerianum*. The bronze or russet overlay that sometimes appears in *lowianum* is gone, courtesy of *hookerianum*'s tendency to reduce or block the anthocyanin layer that exhibits the spots and stripes. *Cym. lowianum*, on the other hand, picks up spots and stripes quite well. This effect can be most obviously seen in the two hybrids with *Cym. tracyanum* — Gattonense (*lowianum* x *tracyanum*) is heavily spotted/striped, whereas Rosefieldense (*hookerianum* x *tracyanum*) only has a small amount of fine spotting.
- The lip usually exhibits a ruffled edge, although it is not as pronounced as that of *Cym. hookerianum*. *Cym. lowianum* has a very clean, flat edge to its lip.
- The “v” on the lip is partially spotted. The *lowianum* lip tends to dominate, but there are always some spots due to *hookerianum*'s influence.



Cym. Lowio-grandiflorum



Cym. Lowio-grandiflorum

Two different examples of Cym. Lowio-grandiflorum are shown above. They show the variation possible in the hybrid; in the case of the left photo, *hookerianum*'s wider tepals have been inherited, whilst the right photo exhibits a strong *lowianum* shape. Note that both are the cleaner green of *hookerianum*, feature spotting around the "v" marking and have a ruffled edge to the lip.

Cym. Doris

There is a joke that any unknown hybrid must be Cym. Doris, so pervasive the hybrid was! Doris is the cross of *insigne* and *tracyanum*. Unfortunately, it frequently gets mixed up with *Cym. tracyanum*. The most obvious way to identify the difference is the colour – *tracyanum* cannot be pink. Other visible differences include a reduction in the hairs on the labellum and callous ridges, as well as the shape of the lip. Doris also tends to flower slightly later than *tracyanum* due to the influence of *insigne*.



Cym. tracyan

um



Cym. Doris

Cym. Bennett-Poei and Toni Benton

These last two hybrids are both hybrids of *Cym. iridioides* and unfortunately are often confused with this parent. *Cym. Bennett-Poei* (*tracyanum* X *iridioides*) is more commonly seen and has even been mislabelled as *iridioides* in OrchidWiz.

Toni Benton (*erythraeum* X *iridioides*) is less often seen. It has been made with both forms of *erythraeum*, although to my knowledge, only the version made with *erythraeum* var. *erythraeum* has been confused with *iridioides*.

Cym. iridioides features a yellow labellum overlaid with medium to large red spots (notably larger and richer than those of *tracyanum*). The lip is narrower than that of *tracyanum*, typically pointed like *lowianum*. The tepals do not curve downwards and feature red-brown stripes as opposed to spots.



Cym. iridioides



Cym. Bennett-Poei (photo courtesy Andy Easton)



Cym. Toni Benton (made with *Cym. erythraeum* var. *erythraeum*)



Cym. erythraeum var. *flavum* X *Cym. erythraeum* var. *erythraeum*

Bennett-Poei consistently has a near-white labellum (with only a pale yellow/cream cast) and often the broader, rounded shape of *tracyanum*. The downwards curve of the tepals may or may not be inherited, whilst the spotting of *Bennett-Poei* is greater than that of *iridioides*.

Toni Benton (made with *erythraeum* var. *erythraeum*) will tend to look like a smaller *iridioides* except that its lip is also typically a dirty white and features far less spotting than *iridioides*.