

RHS Orchid Awards

CLARE and JOHAN HERMANS describe the best plants submitted to the RHS Orchid Committee for judging



Dendrobium
Rainbow Dance
'Akazu Kinchan',
Award of Merit

Sarah Brooks

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RHS Awards

15 April 2008 The RHS Orchid Committee met at the RHS Lawrence Hall, London. Three plants were submitted for judging; no Awards of Merit were recommended.

However, one plant was of particular interest, *Ansellia africana* 'Mont Millais', exhibited by the Eric Young Orchid Foundation. This plant is discussed on page 238 by Chris Purver, the Curator of the Eric Young Orchid Foundation.

RHS Awards

19 May 2008 The RHS Orchid Committee met at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show, London. Seven plants were submitted for judging; four Awards of Merit, and one Botanical Certificate were recommended.

■ Award of Merit

Dendrobium Rainbow Dance 'Akazu Kinchan', exhibited by Harry Nagata, Aichi, Japan **1**. The cross was registered in 1988 by Takai Orchid Nursery, Japan; the parents were *Dendrobium* Kurenai and *D. unicum*. The compact plant had eye-catching bright pink flowers with a contrasting white, striped pale pink lip and was exceedingly floriferous.

The plant exhibited had 12 mature flowering canes and an additional six new growths. Each cane had on average 18 open flowers and two buds. The overall flower size was 42 x 45mm. Dorsal sepal 25 x 6mm; lateral sepals 22 x 6mm; petals 25 x 10mm; lip 20 x 15mm; column white, 3mm long.

■ Award of Merit

Lycaste Astra 'Hatsune', exhibited by Harry Nagata, Aichi, Japan **2**. The cross was registered in 1999 by T Goshima, Japan; the parents were *Lycaste tricolor* and *L. brevispatha*. The flowers were a strong pink-green colour with contrasting paler pink, speckled petals and lip. The slight



Lycaste Astra 'Hatsune'
Award of Merit

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reflexing of the petals and sepals added to the attraction of this floriferous hybrid.

The plant exhibited had 13 open flowers on 50mm tall spikes. Overall flower size 65 x 80mm. Dorsal sepal 40 x 18mm; lateral sepals 40 x 18mm; petals 30 x 20mm; lip 30 x 12mm; column pinkish-white, 10mm long.

■ Award of Merit

Odontoglossum Les Niemes 'Jersey', raised and exhibited by the Eric Young Orchid Foundation, Jersey **3** and **4**. The cross was first made in 1993; the parents were *Odontoglossum cirrhosum* and *Odontoglossum* Panise. *Odontoglossum* Panise, which is behind the interesting colour of this hybrid,

was originally made by Charlesworth in 1946. The well-spaced and striking yellow-white, red-spotted flowers appeared to be dancing along the branching spike.

The cut spike exhibited had 36 open flowers. Overall flower size was 130 x 105mm. Dorsal sepal 65 x 18mm; lateral sepals 65 x 14mm; petals white spotted with deep maroon red, 55 x 22mm; lip 35 x 20mm, yellow-white spotted with deep maroon-red, callus yellow; column white, 12mm long.

Award of Merit

Angulocaste Noirmont 'Isle of Jersey', raised and exhibited by the Eric Young Orchid Foundation,



Sarah Brooks

(Above and below) *Odontoglossum* Les Niemes 'Jersey', Award of Merit

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Jersey **5**. The parents were *Anguloa* Victoire and *Lycaste* Bouley Bay. The milk-white flowers were large and had a good, open shape with nice broad sepals.

The cut spike exhibited had one open flower. Overall flower size was 115 x 135mm. Dorsal sepal 65 x 62mm; lateral sepals 80 x 65mm; petals 50 x 45mm; lip 40 x 20mm; column white, 40mm long.

■ Botanical Certificate

Cynorkis guttata 'Clare', exhibited by Johan Hermans, Enfield **6** and **7**. This species comes from the highlands of Madagascar and was only recently described in *The Orchid Review*, September/October 2007 pp248–255. This very attractive species is not uncommon in cultivation but is often found under the incorrect name of *C. uncinata*; it is fairly easy to grow and propagate from seed.

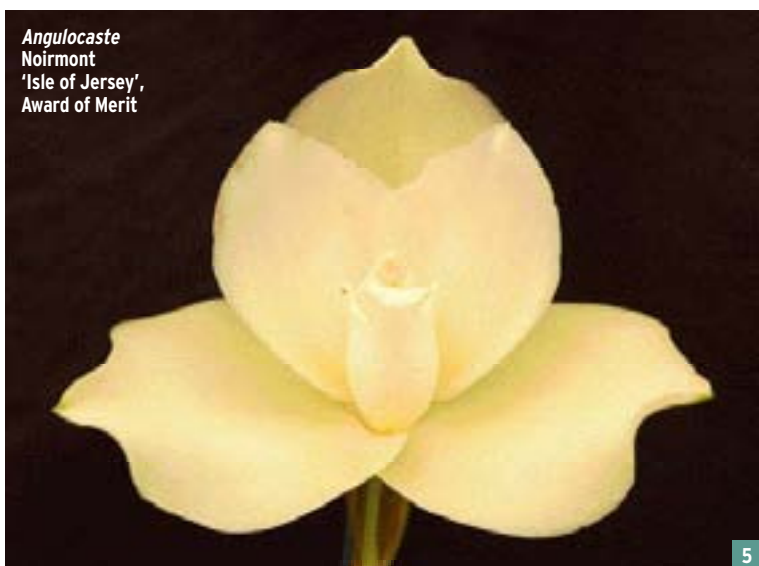
The plant exhibited had four growths with five, five, four and three open flowers respectively. The flowers were creamy-white suffused with purple, the dorsal sepal was more strongly coloured. The overall flower



David Ridgeway

Angulocaste Noirmont 'Isle of Jersey', Award of Merit

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David Ridgeway

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size was 25 x 25mm. Dorsal sepal 10 x 5mm; lateral sepals darker purple, slightly spotted with carmine red,

CLARE HERMANS is an orchid grower, author and member of the RHS Orchid Committee

10 x 3.5mm; petals 9 x 3mm; lip with a central carmine red blotch, becoming spotted in the throat, 18 x 23mm.

JOHAN HERMANS is an orchid grower, photographer, author and Chairman of the RHS Orchid Committee

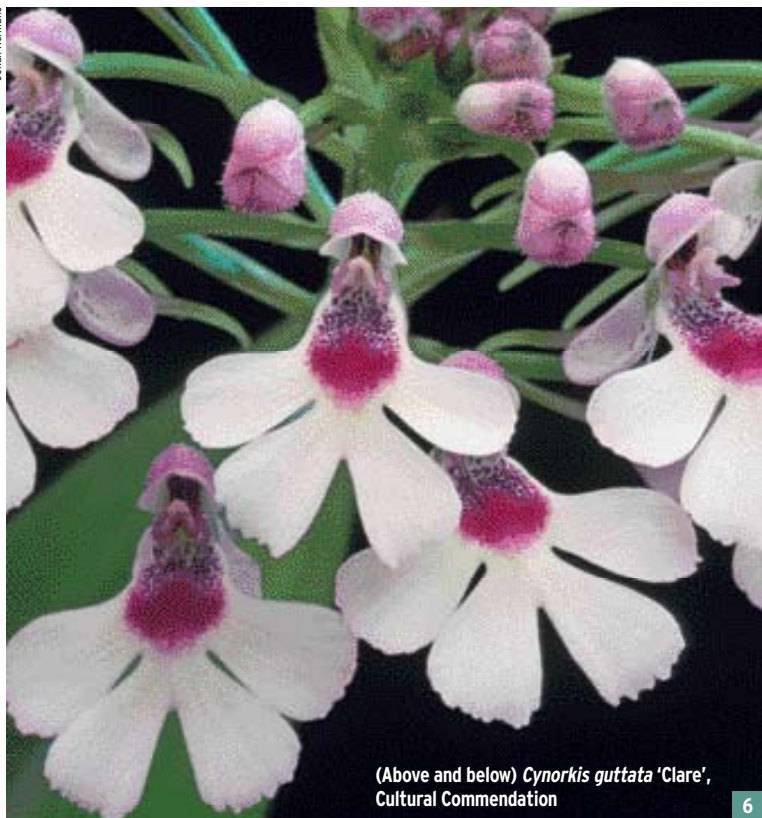
Investigating *Ansellia* 'Mont Millais'

Ansellia africana 'Mont Millais' was awarded an AM/RHS in 1975. At the time it was noted for its particularly good form, colour and the size of its flowers. The plant was in the private collection of Eric Young at that time, and it is recorded as originating from Sierra Leone, West Africa. The species is extremely variable depending on its geographical location in Africa, and has through the years been considered to be several distinct species. It is now thought however, to comprise just a single variable species, and no genetic difference has yet been found.

There is some speculation that this plant of 'Mont Millais' originated from the Sander's collection, and that Eric Young bought it from the dispersal sale of the famous nursery. Some believe it may in fact be the same plant that gained Sander an Award of Merit in 1933, exhibited under the name *Ansellia nilotica*. This is pure conjecture, and examination of the paintings is at best inconclusive. At the meeting, one Committee member recalled seeing the plant in bloom in the late 1970s, but that the flowers were not as clearly marked, or as yellow as on this occasion. This was put down to light levels due both to its position in the glasshouse and the time of year it flowered. This demonstrates how the same plant can often present differently depending on its cultural conditions, so a single painting from 75 years ago may only suggest a likeness.

Although it would be nice to think this may be the Sander's plant, with no firm evidence, the best we can possibly say is that it could be. However, according to Alan Moon, former Curator of the Eric Young Orchid Foundation, Eric acquired the plant from a market in Thailand in

Johan Hermans



(Above and below) *Cynorkis guttata* 'Clare', Cultural Commendation

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David Ridgeway



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the very early 1970s. How this plant came to be there is a mystery, but it does virtually rule out the possibility of this being the Sander's plant. Certainly the plant was not in cultivation in the Eric Young collection prior to this.

What we can say with certainty is that this plant has been flowering in cultivation for almost 40 years, itself an amazing fact. In his lifetime Eric Young gave divisions of this desirable variety to orchid friends in South Africa, and also to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, and it would be interesting to see how these plants are growing today. By sharing this plant Eric Young not only showed enormous generosity, but also greatly increased the chances of the long-term survival of this wonderful specimen.

Cultivation

We grow this plant in a coarse bark and perlite mix. It is happiest in very warm temperatures; we currently grow at a minimum of 20°C, venting at 27°C. The plant is positioned high in the glasshouse, so the actual daytime temperature is significantly higher; approaching 30°C on a bright summer day. Humidity levels need to be high, and our aim is to maintain a minimum of 65 percent. As well as damping down the floor, we spray the plant frequently in the day. It is grown in a mixed genera house so shade is provided for the other orchids, but I believe this plant will tolerate very bright conditions.

When we feed, we measure the salts and nutrients as a unit of electrical conductivity, called microSiemens (μS). We feed at a rate of 500 μS in winter, and 700 μS in summer, with an occasional 1000 μS during prolonged bright spells. Thorough flushing must be carried out regularly to prevent salts building up. Liberal watering can be undertaken in summer, but great care must be exercised in winter. We are currently experimenting with a



(This picture and below) *Ansellia africana* 'Mont Millais'

Chris Purver



Chris Purver

new type of pot which has drainage holes over its entire surface. This may make over-watering in winter less problematic, and could be useful for other specimen plants where this is an issue.

Chris Purver

RHS AWARDS

For details about future meetings of the RHS Orchid Committee and entering plants for awards, see Forthcoming events on p240.