



St. Augustine Orchid Society

www.staugorchidsociety.org

My Favorite Orchid

December 2012

by Sue Bottom, sbottom15@bellsouth.net



Ctsm. pileatum

HaHaHa! It's like asking which is your favorite child. Cattleyas are my overall favorite for their showy and fragrant blooms. Every month brings new and different cattleyas into bloom and each month I'd tell you a different cattleya is my favorite.

I grow and love other types of orchids. In the early spring, I am partial to the spring blooming dendrobiums. Then the phalaenopsis put on their 3 month show of cascading flowers. The multifloral paphiopedilums also start to bloom about that time. Summer brings the stanhopeas with their 3 day wonder flowers and the vandas in all their colors and sizes. Summer through winter the various catasetinae put on their show. So let's talk about my favorite Catasetinae.

Culture. The Catasetinae, consisting of the Catasetums, Clowesias, Cycnoches, Mormodes and their hybrids, are a great group of orchids to grow. They are easy to grow and bloom once you understand their cultural needs. They explode with new growth during the summer growing season requiring copious amounts of water and fertilizer and go dormant during the winter when they are kept dry. If you are an outdoor grower, you can just put them in the garage or a closet and not worry about them at all during the winter. They are repotted in the spring as new growth emerges but not watered until that new growth is 4 or 5 inches tall. Simple!

Catasetums. One of the most beautiful Catasetums is the species *Ctsm. pileatum* with its wide lip. Usually it is white but there are different color varieties including yellow, green and red. The *pileatum* hybrids are also gorgeous, like *Ctsm. Portagee Star* (*Ctsm. pileatum* x *Ctsm. Black Knight*). Catasetums are the most easily grown of all the Catasetinae. They are vigorous growers and are less sensitive to cultural mistakes than the other Catasetinae.



Ctsm. Portagee Star 'Brian Lawson's Sunrise'
HCC/AOS



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Cl. Grace Dunn 'Live Oak' HCC/AOS

Clowesias. Clowesias are strong growers that are very resistant to rot. They are similar to Catasetums in cultivation though the blooming cycle is very different. Clowesias will throw off multiple flower spikes in the winter to early spring time frame. The hybrid Cl. Grace Dunn (Cl. warczewitzii x Cl. rosea) is easy to fall in love with.



Clo. Jumbo Circle

The intergeneric Clowesetum is formed when Catasetum and Clowesia are combined. The Catasetum gives flower color and size while the Clowesia adds flower life and multiple inflorescences. My Clo. Jumbo Circle (Cl. Jumbo Grace x Ctsm. cirrhaeoides) has 6 spikes this year.



Cyc. cooperi (green form)

Cycnoches. The Swan Orchids are beautiful if temperamental because they are so susceptible to rot. Cyc. cooperi is stunning, with its greenish to bronze pendant display of flowers. Cycnoches hybrids are beautiful like Cyc. Swan Cascade (Cyc. Cooperi x Cyc. Jean. E. Monnier). You would think that breeding with the hardier Catasetums (to form the intergeneric Catanoches) or Clowesia (to form the intergeneric Clowenoches) would increase plant vigor but the hybridizers have not pursued this, presumably due to disappointing results.



Cyc. Swan Cascade



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Morm. sinuata 'SVO' HCC/AOS

Mormodes. The Goblin Orchids have vibrantly colored if somewhat bizarrely shaped flowers, like Morm. sinuata. They have a reputation for being more difficult to grow because they are the most susceptible to rot.

When Mormodes are combined with Clowesia, the easy growing intergeneric Mormodias are created, like Mo. Lime Tiger (Cl. Grace Dunn x Morm. elegans).



Mo. Lime Tiger 'St. Augustine' AMA/AOS



Cygd. Wine Delight 'JEM' AM/AOS

The intergeneric Cyncnodes (Cynoches and Mormodes) are easier to grow than either of the individual genera. Cyncnodes primary hybrids get the best qualities of both parents, the Mormodes is dominant for color and recessive for form and the Cynoches is dominant for form and recessive for color. Cygd. Wine Delight (Cyc. lehmannii x Morm. sinuata) is a personal favorite. The intergeneric Catamodes (Catasetum and Mormodes) are not widely available.



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Fdk. After Dark 'Black Diamond' FCC/AOS

Complex Intergenerics. Complex intergenerics are formed when 3 or more catasetinae genera are combined. The most well known of these are the Fredclarkearas (Catasetum, Clowesia and Mormodes), particularly the black orchid Fdk. After Dark (Mo. Painted Desert x Ctsm. Donna Wise). The Fredclarkeara breeding produces flowers that are fragrant, of excellent shape, have amazing color and produce blooms that are long lasting.

There are other complex intergenerics including Cloughara, Cyclodes, Monnierara and Georgecarrara though they are not too widely available.

Sources of Plants. If you are interested in growing these great plants, check out the website I put together with friend Stephen Moffitt over in Houston at www.catasetinae.com. There is a lot of information on how to grow these plants along with plenty of enticing photographs. Stephen offers backbulbs of his and my beauties for sale on the website. Fred Clarke of Sunset Valley Orchids at www.sunsetvalleyorchids.com is probably the preeminent hybridizer of the catesetinae and his website includes many photographs and catasetinae offerings. Other sources are Ebay, orchid society shows and orchid society meetings.



Fdk. After Dark 'Crazy Good'