

Not All Pendulous Cymbidiums Are Created Equal

Text and Photos by HA BUI

During my ten years as a cymbidium hobbyist, my primary focus has been in the miniature and novelty pendulous types. In my opinion, *not* all pendulous cymbidium hybrids are created equal—even progeny from the same hybrid. For years, hobbyists have spent their money buying plants described as pendulous, only to realize years later that the plants did not meet expectations.

The term “pendulous” is so loosely used in the cymbidium world that I find it helpful to have a more detailed terminology for describing different types of spike formation. To eliminate confusion, this is the language I use to differentiate my plants.

- *Pendent/pendulous spike:*

An inflorescence with many miniature flowers (more than twenty) that are nicely carried in a cluster. Spikes drop straight down over the side of the pot.

- *Cascading spike:*

An inflorescence that has a reasonable number of novelty size flowers (more than eleven), with the first flower as much as a foot from the base of the spike. The inflorescence arches downward and away from the pot.

- *Arching spike:*

Miniature and novelty flowers on an inflorescence that grows

upward and eventually cascades or arches over at the point where the first flowers arise from the spike.

I have been asked if the interest in pendulous cymbidiums has decreased, and the answer is, “NO!” However, in my view, it can be compared to the housing market. After the run-up in prices that we’ve seen over the last few years, we are now experiencing considerable declines in value; the “bubble” has burst. The truth is that people are more cautious in what cymbidiums they are buying these days. Only the rare, one-of-a-kind and/or the well sought-after cymbidiums will get a high price.

Growing cymbidium hybrids is very addictive. One never seems to have enough! Now that many growers are into the hobby, I find myself searching for new hybrids in new colors, or for that uniquely shaped pendulous cymbidium to make my collection different from everyone else’s.

Here is a list of cymbidiums currently still in my collection that I have at one time considered my favorite pendulous/cascading plant. The list is mostly in alphabetical order.

Cym. Agnes DeGarmo
'Kishino' B/CSA,
HCC/AOS
(Sweetheart x Sabre
Dance)

This cross has been around since 1977 and this particular clone is probably the only one from the cross that was pendulous and is still in existence. It is one of the few pink pendulous cymbidiums with good flower shape and heavy substance from that era.



Cym. Agnes Degarmo 'Kishino' B/CSA, HCC/AOS



Cym. Devon Shell 'My Van' B/CSA

Cym. Devon Shell 'My Van' B/CSA
(Gladys Whitesell x *devonianum*)

Multiple, two foot long pendulous spikes and 15 to 20 well arranged cream colored flowers with a nice, contrasting burgundy lip makes this plant really stand out in a crowd. This plant is very dear to me because it was a gift from the president of the Torrance Cymbidium Society when I attended my very first meeting.



Cym. Doctor Len 'Geyserland' B/CSA, HCC/AOS

Cym. Doctor Len 'Geyserland' B/CSA,
HCC/AOS
(Len Southward x Dr. Baker)

This clone has all the characteristics described as ideal for a pendulous cymbidium. In addition, it also has unique markings and color—olive overlaid with a reddish stripe along the center of the petals and sepals. As a result, it is a highly sought-after pendulous cymbidium among collectors.



Cym. Dorothy Stockstill 'Ha Ha'

Cym. Dorothy Stockstill 'Ha Ha'
(Phar Lap x Miss Muffet)

Like the variety 'Forgotten Fruit', which has sold over five million meristems in the past 10 years, this clone has the same pendulous spike arrangement and is very floriferous. The flower color is similar, but not quite as dark. The flower size is a little smaller and more open between the petals and sepals, which makes it not awardable within the CSA judging criteria. Still, it has all of the desirable features that are required for a nice pendulous cymbidium. In addition, it can grow into a lovely specimen-sized plant in a short time. This plant won Grand Champion at the 2006 "Orchid-Stration Show" sponsored by the Newport Harbor Orchid Society and Roger's Garden in Newport Beach, California. It was featured in the February 2007 issue of the AOS *Orchids*.



Cym. Gunslinger 'Bui's Boy' B/CSA

Cym. Gunslinger 'Bui's Boy' B/CSA
(Bulbarrow x Mighty Mouse)

This is not a "typical" pendulous cymbidium. This particular clone has a unique dusty rose color and a very unusual

contrasting dark lip. For a pendent spike, it is not known as having a high flower count, only 7 to 11 flowers. But the intermediate flower size and heavy substance make up for the lack of numbers.



Cym. Heartbreak Doctor 'Lips of Wine' B/CSA, AM/AOS

Cym. Heartbreak Doctor 'Lips of Wine'
B/CSA, AM/AOS
(*Doctor Len* x *devonianum*)

The very attractive dark brown flowers have shapely petals and sepals to go with a dark, solid burgundy lip. This plant has everything that one might expect—an ideal pendulous cymbidium.

Cym. Itchycoo Park 'My Van' CM/CSA,
HCC/AOS, CCM/AOS
(*Phar Lap* x *devonianum*)

The majority of the progeny from this cross have turned out very consistent. The cross produced highly floriferous plants with dark, burgundy-red flowers on many long, pendent spikes. The shape and substance of the flowers are good for a *Cym. devonianum* hybrid and all the clones are showy and attractive. Variety 'Cole Stockstill' stands out in particular; this clone has exceptionally round shaped flowers and waxy, deep burgundy colored petals and sepals with a very dark, solid red lip. This hybrid will get more attention



Cym. Itchycoo Park 'My Van' CM/CSA, HCC/AOS, CCM/AOS



Cym. Itchycoo Park 'Cole Stockstill' S/CSA, HCC/AOS

if it ever blooms early enough to be used in a display at a major show. I displayed the clones 'My Van' and 'Ashley Bui' at the Newport Harbor Orchid Society shows in May of 2004 and 2005, respectively, and each won Grand Champion of Show.



Cym. Mary Green 'Ha Ha'

Cym. Mary Green 'Ha Ha'
(Sarah Jean x *devonianum*)

This is another hybrid that I consider to be a classic miniature pendulous cymbidium. A nice pinkish-peachy cluster of flowers is enhanced with contrasting, deep purple lips. It took me several years to obtain this cross; right after I found one, the

commercial vendors flooded the market with a similar type. This plant won Best Miniature Pot Plant at the 2005 Santa Barbara International Orchid Show.



Cym. Memoria Amelia Earhart 'Royale' B/CSA

Cym. Memoria Amelia Earhart 'Royale' B/CSA
(Hazel Tyers x *devonianum*)

Until this cross was introduced, there were very few nice orange pendulous cymbidiums. I consider it a cascading type, but due to the long spacing on the inflorescence before the first flower, it is better to stake the spike up to the first flower before allowing it to cascade naturally. For me, this particular clone probably is the best of the cross that I have seen to date. It has a nicely orange-toned color and beautifully contrasted solid, dark, velvety lips. The flowers also have that unique, frosted, splashed tip at the end of the sepals.



Cym. Nicole's Valentine 'Chika' S/CSA, HCC/AOS

Cym. Nicole's Valentine 'Chika' S/CSA, HCC/AOS

(Flame Hawk x Ruby Eyes)

This cymbidium is everything that one can expect from a *Cym. Ruby Eyes 'Red Baron' 4n* hybrid. It has lovely deep burgundy-red flowers with good flower shape and substance. A well grown plant can produce forty or more flowers on a spike.

Cym. Last Tango 'Etsuko' B/CSA

(Tropic Night x *devonianum*)

This is the one plant on my list that to this day I still do not know whether I should love it or hate it. One thing I do know is that this plant was the reason I got myself into pendulous cymbidiums—the “pendulous cymbidium sickness.” But because of this plant, I met “the” Everett Stockstill and in turn my wonderful orchid family known as the “Torrance Cymbidium Society Ohana.”



Cym. Last Tango 'Etsuko' B/CSA

There are many more new and upcoming cymbidium hybrids out there that will meet my criteria for an ideal pendulous cymbidium. The majority of these are now in private collections and ready to be shown. These nice plants will slowly make themselves known, either through a society's hobbyist table or at a show. As far as I know, the only way to get one-of-a-kind plants without spending a great deal of money is to purchase a large number of quality seedlings from known hybridizers and have the luck to find a good clone amongst the seedlings. It may seem like a lot of work, but the rewards are well worth the effort.