

NZ Odontoglossum Alliance Growers Newsletter



Group Facilitator: Allan Watson,
aj.watson@xtra.co.nz

Newsletter Editor: Alan Locke
lochaven999@gmail.com

Content of this Newsletter is published around the principal of "Best Endeavours" The Newsletter Editor has the right to fact check as and when necessary to withhold non relevant information from publication.

Vol 1 # 4, October 2021

Message from the Group Facilitator: Allan Watson

Well another Winter is behind us with Daylight saving now here we need to revisit our orchids in so far as; Do they need to be re-potted . What fertilizer do I need to apply, Do I increase my watering program. All these things help with the spring flowering or set your plants up for the next growing season.

Despite Covid preventing us from having public shows lets display our plants on the various social media platforms.

Remember if you have a plant you may think is worthy of an award, contact your local Judging Group to get them to view it. You don't have to wait for a show just level 2 under the covid restriction guidelines. In the next edition lets see if we can get some photos of plants awarded so far this year.

Keep smiling and enjoying those orchids remember water and fertilizer are your orchids vaccination Have you had your Covid one yet.

Stay well

Allan Watson

Editor's Ramble

Well, once again , we are locked down by covid but at least we have our orchids, imagine what it would be like living in an apartment , you would be bouncing off the walls by now.

My breeding program is showing results, 6 of my pods that have gone to the lab have germinated and I have at least another 7 that look as though they have set. There are also crosses growing that have come from other people.

When should you harvest the pods? For crispum type Odonts. I suppose it should be alexandrae types now, I try to leave the pod between 270 to 300 days. Doing this gives me good germination—harvesting at 200 days gives no viable seed.

The second picture on page 4 is one of my crosses and is Wils. Hida Plumtree x Oda. Arohena 'Dark Side'



*Wils. Hida Plumtree
(left)*

*Oda. Arohena 'Dark
Side' (right)*



This cross should a wide range of colours in the darker shades, some with patters.

I am looking for pollen because, although I have a lot of plants, they are fairly closely related and I need to widen the gene pool, so if you have crispum type Odonts, please can you send me some pollen or better still, set some pods of your own.

If you are wanting to have a go at hybridizing, you need to select plants that are strong growing (weak plants will produce weak seedlings that will be a challenge to grow). When selecting the pod parent make sure that it is growing strongly and will not need repotting in the next 9 months –carrying a pod takes a lot out of the plant. The pollen parent should also be a strong grower and the flower and stem's good points should complement any weaknesses in the pod parent's flower and stem. Some plants tend to to dominate the cross, Brsdm. Pagan LoveSong is one of these, no matter what you cross it with, the results will most likely look just like Pagan Lovesong .

An extract from **Odontoglossum Pods** by Ron Maunder September 1991

If the bulb carrying the spike starts to shrivel excessively, you can remove the spike after 4 to 5 months and put it in a pint of water to which 1 teaspoon of bleach and 2 teaspoons of sugar has been add. This will feed the pod and keep water molds at bay. Change the water every 10 days and cut 5 mm off the stem After another 3 to 4 months the pods start to yellow and are ready to be sent to the Lab. Usually good germination occurs. You can wrap sticky tape around the tip if it looks like splitting.

(I was lucky enough to get all the issues of 'NZ Ogontoglossum Alliance' from Alf Day's estate)

From Tooth Pick to Flower

Have you been in the room when someone asks how long from seed till you get a flower?

My stock answer has always tended to be “How long is a piece of string?”

But now with history behind us we can be a little more accurate. So in an attempt to simplify the journey I will obviously focus on the Odontoglossum Alliance.

I have heard comment that some take years to flower others can flower within a year of being de-flasked.

So let the journey begin: For the purpose of this exercise I have Chosen Odontoglossum as the Genera as most species have a pod maturity date within the same timeline.

The Odontoglossum plants required for the hybridization process are selected. This would normally be two strong flowering plants and they are at the ready stage can be when the first flower (s) are fully open. The toothpick strikes by removing the pollen caps and transferring the pollen. The clock now starts.

In general most Odontoglossum unless there is some unusual species in the background (List of these is available under the seed pod menu in Orchid Wiz) will take around 100 days to mature (Ready to be harvested and sent to a lab) there are some exceptions the longest maturity timeline going to any hybrid with *Odontoglossum insleayi* in the background. This pod could take around 330 days to mature. Rule of thumb watch pod change colour when yellowing harvest

Once the pod starts to present a change in colour from green to yellow you need to watch it carefully as it could burst open if near the maturity date. The pod can be removed and placed in an envelope and put in the fridge conditioner till ready for flasking or you can start the flasking process if you have the required skill and equipment



Once the seed pod has been opened in a sterile environment and the seeds placed on the agar solution the flasking timeline starts. This process goes through a number of phases.

The first phase creates the opportunity for the protocorms to develop. A green mat will start to appear over the agar solution over the following six months.

At around six months plus or when there is a healthy green growth the protocorms are re-plated in to flasks to allow for expanded growth to occur. Dependent of the successful strike rate this flask may or may not become a mother flask with several hundred plants for re-plating into managea-



ble size flasks of around 25 plants may occur. If the stock is good these flasks may need to be re-plated for a second time.

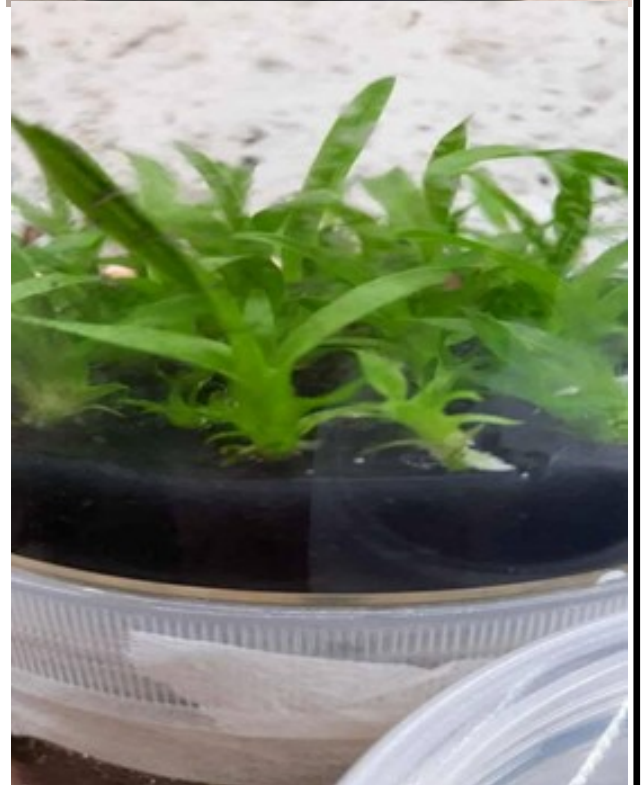
At around 6 to 8 months after re-plate the protocorms take on the appearance of a seedling. These may stay in the flask for a further 6 months or be de-flasked when they look strong enough. So now we are around a year and a bit from flask to de-flask.

Now the transfer from agar medium environment into a suitable seedling mix occurs. I suspect those that have done this in the past have their own recipe as do I. I have found that placing into a fine moist fibre has produced the best results for me. Once de-flasked I place the 2inch tubes onto a hot bed at around 15 degrees C and they remain there for about 3 months being watered and lightly fertilized. After 3 months I have found that I can transfer the seedlings into a larger pot with the same mix. At this stage I increase the fertilizer strength and place in general population with the other orchids. I have noted some of the stronger seedlings at around 10 months have started to spike and flower. (One also needs to understand the spikes in this instance are not strong and only one or two flowers may be produced) My suggestion being to view the flower then cut the spike off reducing stress on the new plant.

So to answer in part for the average *Odontoglossum* if all things are in your favour 600 days from tooth pick to flower. More often than not a more realistic time time is around 800 days.

I have heard stories indicating 5 plus years.

The shorter timeframe is very reliant on controlled conditions and your orchid culture.



The confusion between *Odm. harryanum* and *Odm. wyattianum*.

These 2 species are very similar and have been confused over the years to the point that they may have each been wrongly credited as being one parent in a number of crosses. This is coming to light when some of these crosses are remade and the results are some what different to what was expected.

The problem was that I couldn't find anywhere that gave a description of *Odm. wyattianum* until I consulted the book 'Odontoglossum' by Lenore Bochlmuhl which shed some light on the subject, but more on that later.

OrchidWiz shows that *Odm. harryanum* has been used as a parent 135 times and *Odm. wyattianum* 27 times but when you look at the photos of *Odm. harryanum* in OrchidWiz some are obviously *Odm. wyattianum*.

Discovery history

Odm. harryanum was introduced from Colombia and first flowered in August 1886. It was described by Reichenbach and dedicated to Mr. Harry Veitch. The location of the species was a fairly small area and consequently, was striped out and no further plants were found until 1973.

Odm. wyattianum was sent to the Rev. Paul Wyatt of Bradford, England by a friend in Peru. The location of the find is not known, but it is reasonable to assume that it was in Peru. It was shown at a meeting of the Royal Horticultural Society in London during January 1928. It was described by Wilson who compared it to *Odm. harryanum*.

It wasn't until 1973 when *Odm. harryanum* was rediscovered, that J.A. Fowlie with the help of L.E. Gray, were able to clearly distinguish between them. In recent years *Odm. wyattianum* has been found at two locations in Southern Peru and at two locations in Southern Ecuador.

To give some idea of the rarity of these two species the distance between the most northern and the most southern of the four locations for *Odm. wyattianum* is approximately 1400 kms. with a gap of about 1100 kms. between the most northern Peru location and the most southern Ecuador location. *Odm. harryanum*'s only known location is in Columbia approximately 1200 kms. north of the most northerly location for *Odm. wyattianum*. (By comparison New Zealand is about 1600 kms. Long)

So – how can the average orchid grower tell the difference between these two species. Firstly, they are closely related, they belong to the same *Odontoglossum* Subgenus 'Nevadensia', so they look similar. The most obvious differences are :-

Odm. harryanum has yellow-green sepals densely spotted with bands of chestnut brown. The petals are similar but with oblong carmine-red spots at the base. The petals also extend noticeably forward. The wings on the column are insignificant.

Odm. wyattianum has light bronze-yellow sepals and petals with violet-red spots on the base of the petals. There are no bands and although the petals do extend forward, it is not as extreme as *Odm. harryanum*. The column has wings that are quite noticeable.

The flowers of the two species, while of similar shape, are quite obviously different in colour so that there should be no difficulty in telling them apart. The problem is that some books over the years have used the *Odm. wyattianum* description for *Odm. harryanum*. A look at four books listed below will show what I mean:-

The first two agree with the description of *Odm. harryanum* given by Lenore Bocklemuhl, and they are 'Encyclopedia of Cultivated Orchid' by A.D. Hawkes (page 321 – although the black and white photo appears to be of *Odm. wyattianum*) and the 'Manual of Cultivated Orchid Species' by Bechtel, Cribb & Launert (page 321 – black and white drawing that does not resemble either of them).

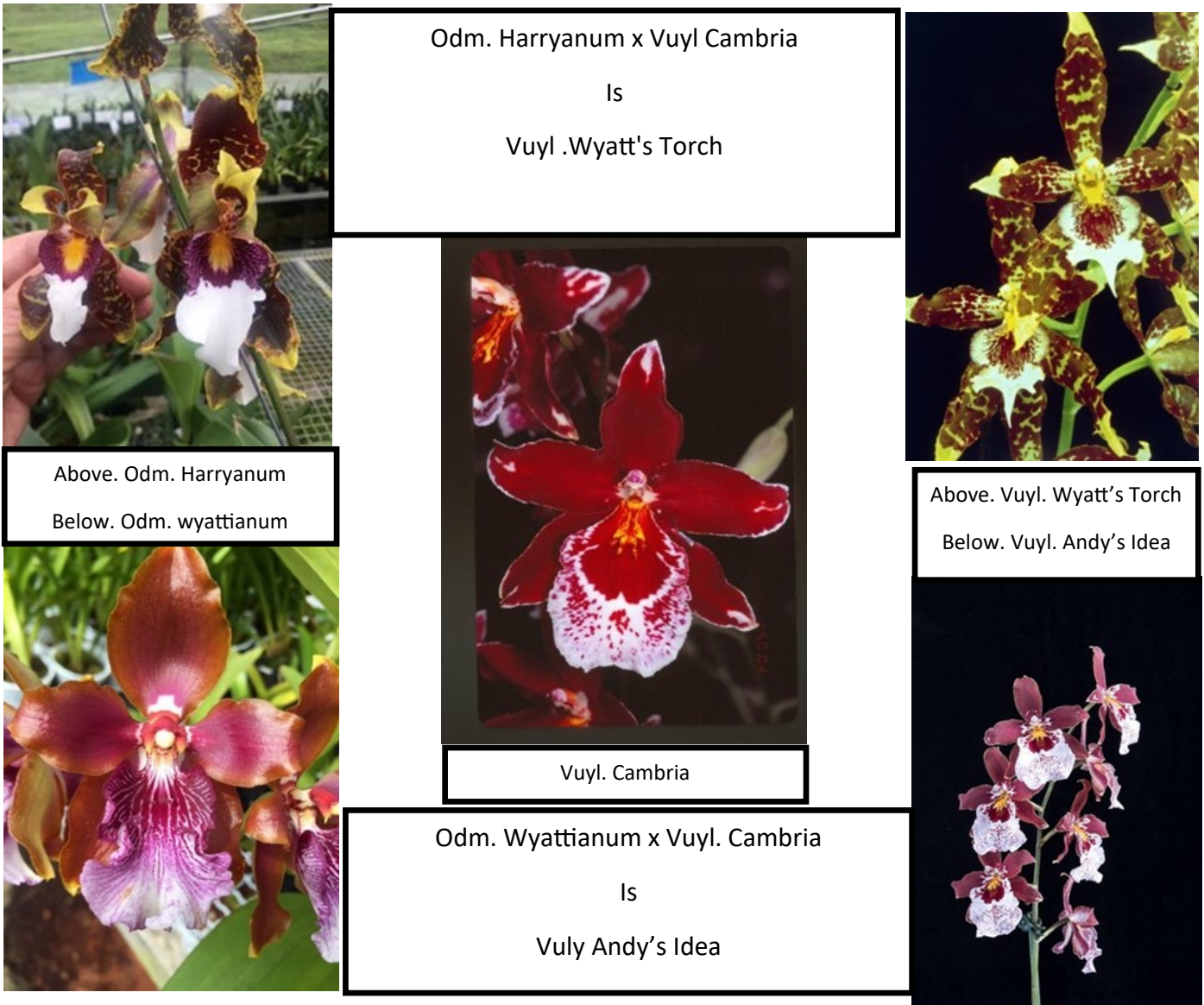
However, 'Orchids in Colour' by Brian and Wilma Ritterhausen (page 54 & 55) colour picture and description fits *Odm. harryanum* but they claim that *Odm. wyattianum* is a variety of *Odm. harryanum*. While in

'Orchids for Everybody' by Brian Williams (page 140) the colour picture and description of Odm. harryanum fits that of Odm. wyattianum as given by Lenore Bocklemuhl.S

I have a plant named harryanum 'Jungle' x harryanum 'Copper' AM/RHS – in theory this should be pure harryanum. But I also have a plant of harryanum 'Copper' AM/RHS which is obviously wyattianum and has masqueraded as harryanum since the 1970's and maybe well before that. So my harryanum is a hybrid between it and wyattianum. There is Odm. deburghgraeveanum which is believed by some to be a natural hybrid of harryanum and wyattianum.

When we look at OrchidWiz, we find that some of the images credited to harryanum are clearly wyattianum which calls into doubt the accuracy of the claimed parents of some of the harryanum hybrids.

While the two species look very similar, the differences are very noticeable when they are each crossed with the same parent



Note. This article has been taken in part from one that I wrote in 1990 so some of the facts concerning location etc. my now be out of date. Alan Locke

Photos from OrchidWiz

Oncidium tigrinum and its hybrids

By Ross & Susan Tucker

First printed in the OCNZ year book 'Orchids 2021'

This is far more complex than just one short article about this very interesting species and its progeny. *Oncidium tigrinum* is only found in Mexico, on Pacific facing slopes between 1600m-2500m. A cool to cold growing epiphyte. Flowers are loosely branched on 90cm long spikes with long lasting flowers. Petal and sepals yellow with brown/red bars and a dominate shovel shaped yellow lip.

There are several similar species, e.g. *Oncidium unguiculatum*. However what sets it apart is its vanilla scented flowers and pure yellow green colour. It can often be confused due to the numerous name changes.

Currently there are over 170 F1 hybrids with over 57 of these hybrids awarded – a very impressive result at a parent.

The influence and progeny extend far beyond this article and interestingly will be still an influence in the years to come of growing *Oncidiums* in NZ.

When growing orchids you choose a type of orchid which you can grow well in your conditions. *Odontoglossum/Oncidium* were one of my favourite because they grew easily produced magnificent flowers in an amazing range of colours all year round - what more do you want from an orchid?

Like many growers, when I started there were very few of these types available and those who had them had a waiting list for divisions (usually marked on the back up the label). Often you could see 5-6 names ahead of you so that would be a minimum of 5-10 years before your name came to the top and your piece of plant arrived.

So I looked for alternatives to acquire this type of orchid - it was much easier to import plants from England back then than it is today.

So we imported shipments of 500 plants at a time and a few hundred flasks for many years to acquire the *Odontos*.

In these shipments there were always a few hybrids of *Onc. tigrinum*. Some of the early varieties that even today would command attention are *Wilsonara* (*Oncidium* x *Odontioda* x *Odontoglossum*) (now *Oncidium*) *Nicola Jane* and *Wils. (Onc) Bardot*. Both early hybrids and have had multiple awarded clones.



Oncidium tigrinum



Wilsonara Nicola Jane 'Pupuke' HCC/OCNZ

Wils Bardot 'Charles' should have been granted a First Class Certificate (would have been in any other country but NZ), still one of the best hybrids of *Onc. tigrinum* var. *unguiculatum* or

Onc. unguiculatum today that I have seen to date.

The next sightings of Onc. tigrinum hybrids were 1980/1990's produced mainly from Golden Gate Orchids USA and Geyser Land (NZ). These predominately were coloured yellow and brown bars petals and sepals.

There was an amazing variety of crosses made Onc. Of the most spectacular was Onc. Golden Trident (Odm. bictoniense and Onc. Tiger Hambühren). Even today we are able to flower it with a 2 metre spike and hundreds of flowers.

As a parent Onc. Tiger Hambühren was used extensively by Geyserland both clones of Tiger Hambühren 'Micky' and 'Minnie' we now have acquired to keep some of this parent material alive. These produced very dominant colour ranges of yellow/brown heavily blotched flowers with usually strong large lips witch grew into rather large plants with strong multi spiking bulbs and usually long (15-20 flowers) flower spikes.



Wilsonara Bardot 'Charles' AM/OCNZ



Odontocidium Tiger Hambühren

Some of the other progeny of Onc. tigrinum we have seen are Onc. Tigersetze (Onc. tigrinum x Onc. Carisette) Onc. Purbeck Gold (Onc. tigrinum x Gold Cup). Along with now over 1000 offspring including some % of Onc. Tigrinum. Many we have not yet seen.

Moving forward to more modern hybrids from Onc. tigrinum, of late has been Onc. Carolyn Woolf, which originated from John Woolf Orchids Australia, and one of his many trips to NZ as a couple of flasks were left behind. These again have the usual colour range of Onc. tigrinum - yellow/red banded flowers large spikes but with impressive shape and flower count. Currently we have had several of this hybrid awarded over the last few years.



Odontocidium Golden Trident 'Emily' HCC/
NZOS



Wilsonara Carolyn Woolf 'Susan' AM/OCNZ

Although we have grown many *Onc. tigrinum* hybrids over the years, I always look for variations in colour from its progeny.

One result has been near black coloured flowers with two standouts. One has been Odcdm. Tiger Mac (Odcdm. Tiger Butter x Odm. maculatum) with the clone Odcdm. Tiger Mac 'Mona' AM/NZOS should probably be given a higher award to recognise its shape and colour. The most interesting hybrid, although not an F1 hybrid, is Alexanderara Heck Hazelwood quite a complex hybrid but with *Onc. tigrinum* featuring in the recent background and producing another red-black orchid.



Odontocidium Tiger Mac 'Mona' AM/NZOS



Alexanderara Heck Hazelwood 'Bayswater'
HCC/OCNZ

I recently reacquired these to continue these lines of breeding and produce more interesting results. Looking to the future for *Onc. tigrinum*, I believe the dominance of red and brown bared petals and sepals with a yellow lip will remain for many progeny but like illusive change of colour for many new hybrids will give *Onc. tigrinum* a new lease of life and something further to look forward to.

We grow our *Onc. tigrinum* and hybrids in a purpose built area in Auckland. The location is frost free although we can get down to 0-1°C. We have both 50% and 30% shade cloth over the plants as we found the light levels too high and creating red pigment in the leaves. We constantly feed our Flowering Orchid Tucker (high potassium mix) to our plants as they are mature enough to flower. It also helps them to flower all throughout the year.

The most worthwhile device we have in use with our Oncidiinae is a balance arm water sensor system designed to tell the watering system to turn on and off automatically. We use very fine mist spray nozzles to apply our water/fertilizer mixture as required 24 hours a day, 7 days a week all year round. It has helped created some very large, well-grown mature *Onc. tigrinum* and its hybrids.

All of our Oncidiinae are deflasked into NZ sphagnum moss and after about 6 months are transferred into #2 Kiwi orchid bark. About one year later they are then planted up into their final pot (using #3 Kiwi orchid bark) to flower out leading us to evaluate the results of the crossings.

Due to an upsurge of demand for orchids (including Oncidiinae), we have recently imported over 20,000 Oncidiinae orchids. These are to be released later this year and include many *Onc. tigrinum* hybrids that we will see flower in the next 2 – 3 years. So the *Onc. tigrinum* story never ends...

Compact Oncidium Breeding

By Ross Tucker

One of my interests in *Odontoglossums* is the breeding and creation of new colours, shapes and forms of this genera.

I have always been fascinated and infatuated with the patterns that occur on this type of orchid. I don't believe there are any other genera that can match this in the large commercial or widely grown genera yet! Compare this to *Cattleya* with its spots and blushes, *Phalaenopsis* with its spots, stripes and blushes, *Dendrobium* with its blushes, markings and spots, and *Cymbidium* with its spots, stripes and some blushes. The *Oncidiums* that I am most fascinated with have a distinct and even pattern on both the petals and the sepals and even spreading onto the lip, usually in many colour combinations creating a balance to the pattern. So began my quest for a patterned pot plant, compact and easily grown in the cooler conditions. I recognised the pathway I needed to follow and began hybridising many years ago. For those who have read my article 'Oncidium tigrinum and its hybrids' in this year's *Orchids 2021*.

I have always wanted an *Oncidium* that had a compact spike with lots of flowers which, from a distance, looks a mass of colour with no individual flower shape or outline but with eye-catching and interesting attractive colour combinations. Traditionally *Odontoglossums/Oncidiums* have had a tall single spike with the flowers well separated. Nice but still needs to compete for that instant glance and 'Buy me, buy me' attraction.

Oncidium varicosum and its subsequent hybrids made me more aware of the impact of mass colour, usually bright golden yellow. When grown to perfection all you see is the yellow flowers in the distance which makes you move towards it to have a look.

Other *Oncidiums* gave me the impact of branched spikes such as *Onc. Aka Baby* with the larger plants branching profusely and, if grown well, often are multi-spiking. This one with its nice warm chocolate colour and contrasting white lip and the addition of a lovely sweet scent made it a quick selling plant but not quite the final article.

Oncidium tigrinum hybrids gave me the impact of large, strong spikes, easy growth and easy, reliable flowering. Tied together with growing it to perfection, and multi-spiking, the record for me was flower spikes reaching at least 2 metres tall with over 200+ flowers per stem, double spikes per bulb. This is not unusual with many of these large *tigrinum* hybrids, a little too large for sitting on the dining room table. And finally the pattern from *Odontoglossum* hybrids – I like clear, distinct and eye-catching patterns. Over the years I have made many hundreds of *Odontoglossum* hybrids, many successful, many forgotten or just another step along the way. One step I would like to talk about today is what I consider a small step forward into my ideal compact *oncidium* breeding.

This *Oncidium/Odontoglossum* hybrid has flowered with;

- a spike height of 40cm

- a floral display width of 25cm

- 6 branches off the stem plus 10 top flowers

- a total flower count of 32 flowers on the stem

- 6cm wide flowers

- Colour is patterned with light yellow base turning lilac with age and brown blotches

- This single spike is followed by another still yet to flower

The cross is *Onc. (Odcdm.) Hello Tiger (Onc. (Odcdm.) Tigersun x Onc. (Odm.) Hallio-crispum)* made by me

and registered by G. (Alf) Day.

Of course, this has already been hybridised with and will be producing many new hybrids developing this new compact Oncidium breeding programme – maybe a few with scent as well.

Onc varicosum hybrid



Onc Aka Baby



Onc Tiger Glow
Tall spike



Onc Hello Tiger

