

# The Development of Semi-albas

(White Colored Lip)

By LEO HOLGUIN

While there have been many improvements in our present-day cattleya hybrids, little has been done to improve the semi-albas until just recently. It may be that the cut flower trade has had little demand for this type of flower, consequently commercial growers have had less incentive to improve its quality. Basic, of course, has been a shortage of good parent stock with which to work.

In this article, no attempt will be made to trace the development of semi-albas strains from the species beginning to the present, but will mention some of the better hybrids that have appeared. You will note much line breeding has been done in an effort to develop future breeders.

The species on which the foundation was laid are:

*Cattleya mossiae* (Reineckiana)

*Cattleya dowiana aurea*

*L. purpurata alba*

*C. warscewiczii* (Gigas) "Fran Melanie Beyrodt"

*C. labiata alba*

*C. trianae alba*

Of these, *L. purpurata alba* gives a good, solid lavender lip, but a poor form. *C. mossiae* "Reineckiana" imparts the *mossiae* type lip with fairly good form. From the Gigas comes a solid lavender lip, along with good form and substance; however, the keeping qualities tend to be poor.

*C. dowiana aurea*, one of the much-used species in almost all lines of cattleya hybridizing, imparts a good lip color. To the semi-albas, it imparts poor form and light cream sepals and petals. However, form seems to be easier to breed out than in *L. purpurata alba*. *C. labiata alba* has not been used much, possibly because of poor lip color. *C. trianae* seems to have been used very little, even though most offspring have good form. Possibly the lip may be weak.

In recent years, some hybridizers have attempted to improve the semi-albas with good results. This has been done by finding some good, worthwhile tetraploids and diploids. There are appearing on the market today some very good semi-albas, and I believe we will continue to see improvements along this line.

One of the crosses most repeated is *C. enid alba* (*C. mossiae* "Reineckiana" × *C. gigas*). Here the *mossiae* type lip dominated and form was excellent. There were a few strains with a little darker lip but not solid color. Out of some of these *C. enid alba* strains some tetraploids appeared which proved very valuable for future breeding. One other worthwhile cross which was consistently good, but difficult to obtain seed from, was LC. Snowdrift (*C. Cynthia* × *C. Annetto*). LC. *Cynthia* "Model" was used with very good results.

Another good cross was LC. Jay Markel (LC. *Cynthia* × *C. May Markel*). Other crosses were (*C. enid* × *C. gigas*), *C. loranore* (Elenor × *C. lorna*), LC. *aconcagua* (LC. *schroderae alba* × *C. Maggie Raphael*). The F.C.C. variety of LC. *aconcagua* produced good hybrids. There are, of course, a number of others with fair form. With the exception of a few, the crosses were not consistently good, however.



It is interesting to note that most semi-albas with solid lavender lips have *C. dowiana aurea*, *L. purpurata alba* and *LC. schroderae* in the background. The dark, solid-colored lip of *L. purpurata* has come through in each generation, while the *Laelia* form has been a drawback. In some cases, selective breeding has improve shape in each successive generation.

Alberts and Merkel Bros. are having good results in their semi-alba program. We should see some very good hybrids in the near future. They have some fine hybrids of (*C. Loranore* × *LC. Bembridge alba*), *LC. endridge* (*LC. Bembridge* × *C. enid alba*), and *C. Loranore* (*C. Eleanor* × *C. Lorna*). In 1960, Beville registered a cross of *LC. mem. Maggie Hood* (*LC. aconcagua* × *C. enid alba*). I believe Alberts and Merkel repeated this cross using *LC. aconcagua* F.C.C. × a tetraploid *C. enid alba*. This has been very outstanding. For example, *LC. mem. Maggie Hood*, *Pride*, A.M. A.O.S.; *LC. mem. Maggie Hood*, *Brilliant*, A.M. A.O.S.; *LC. mem. Maggie Hood*, *Boynton*, A.M. A.O.S.; and a number of other good Maggie Hoods have been produced. Best of all, I understand they are all tetraploids and are being used for future semi-albas. Most all of the L.C. mem. Maggie Hoods I have seen have brilliant lavender lips—truly a beautiful flower.

John Lines of Oliver Lines Orchids is also having success in semi-albas. One of his favorite breeders is *LC. Peggi Mayne Lines* (*L.C. Eugene* × *C. May Markel*). Some of his semi-albas are *LC. Winter Snow* (*LC. Peggi Mayne* × *LC. Snow-drift*), *LC. Josephine Robinson* (*LC. Cynthia* × *LC. Peggi Mayne Lines*), *LC. Stephen Oliver Fouraker*, *Lines* A.M. A.O.S. (one of his best), and *LC. Stephen Oliver Fouraker Beauty* (*LC. Peggi Mayne Lines* × *C. enid alba*). I understand this is an outstanding cross.

Many more awarded and award quality flowers are *C. Bess Truman* (*C. clotho alba* × *C. ardmore alba*), *LC. Helen Powell* (*LC. schroderae* × *LC. Peggi Mayne Lines*). This has a very brilliant lavender lip — in fact, all these crosses have outstanding lip color.

At Armacost and Royston, we have had some luck in finding some good breeders. One lucky find was *C. Kittywake*, *Brilliance*, A.M. O.D.C. (*C. brussels* × *C. luegeae*.) Some Kittywakes have solid lip color but most have semi-solid, but not as mottled as the usual mossiae type. The clone called *Brilliance* has a solid purple lip with a thin white edge. Form is good and all desirable qualities appear to be passed on to the progeny. Lip color seems to be dominant, as well as the form. *C. Nevada* (*LC. peter the great* × *C. enid alba*) which has poor form,



Armacost and Royston

*C. Kittywake* "Brilliance"





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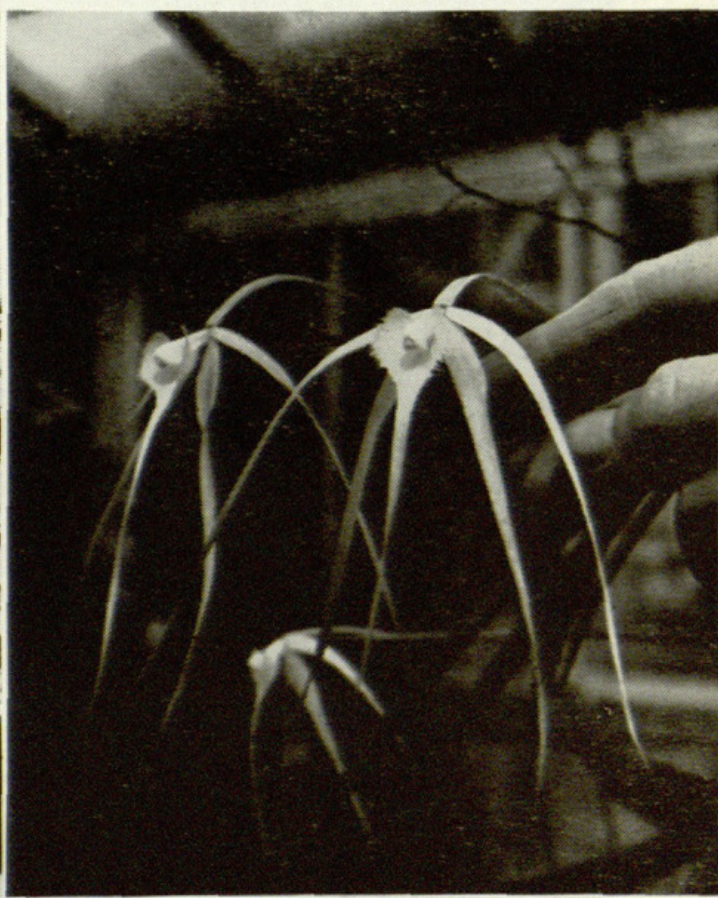
Miniature Orchids in the Arboretum Collection.



somewhat like *L. purpurata*, but a bright lavender lip, was used with *C. Kittywake*, *Brilliance*, to produce *C. Nevawake*—good forms and solid, bright lavender lips. *C. Kittywake* backcrossed to *C. Brussels* produced *C. Lindo Mar*. These also have good form and solid lip color. *C. Kittywake* crossed onto *C. Huron* produced *C. Margaret Link*, which is probably the best of these crosses. All are uniformly good with brilliant lips. This cross was remade to prove a point, using *C. Kittywake*, *Brunette*. This does not have a solid lavender lip but is similar to a good *C. enid alba*. Some of this progeny is flowering now and few have solid lip color, and the form is fair. *C. Jean Haddon* is another *C. Kittywake*, *Brunette*, cross. Good form from *C. alwynii* but few solid lips.

You can see from this that it will not be long before you will see the Bow Bells type of flowers in the semi-albas. Some are that way now. It is just a matter of time.

This article has been written about the crosses with which I am most familiar and it has not been my intention to slight anyone, or any cross. I know there must be other crosses equally as good, or better, and other hybridizers having good results in other parts of the country. I would appreciate hearing about them for future articles or lectures, and credit will be given to the proper parties.



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