

Gongora Orchids



There are about 20 species in this genus. This orchid has been named after the Spanish Bishop of New Granada. Don Antonio Caballero Gongora - discovered in 1798. Their distribution area is tropical Central and South America. They are some times known as Punch and Judy Orchids.

In the period of 1825 to 1830 a consignment came into the hands of G. W. Schiller in Hamburg. Schiller had an extraordinary collection of glass-houses. In all he had a collection of 156 genera and this comprised of no fewer than 1268 species of which he had 2 or 3 of each species. It will be noted in passing that several orchids were named in his honor; such as *Lycaste schillerana*. On his death; Schiller's collection passed to the Hamburg Botanic Gardens, where it was totally destroyed in the Second World War.

Gongora is related to *Stanhopeas* and *Coryanthes* mainly through the general shape of their flowers.

Gongoras have in common with some other orchids; such as *Dendrobium speciosum* and *Catasetums*, the habit of producing masses of vertical roots which may reach a height of 10 to 15cm. above the crown of the plant. In the growing season these roots are tipped with a green point. As some observers have remarked, at times these tips glisten with drops of condensation or dew. When these plants approach dormancy the tips seal off and turn white; a sure indicator that the plant requires less moisture until they again become green in the growing season. It is quite obvious if the plants are grown as epiphytes that they develop this system and it becomes a food trap. In the dormant season, they also turn white and seem inactive returning to a green tip again in the growing period.

Gongoras should be grown in the same way and in similar temperatures as *Stanhopeas* and *Coryanthes*. Gongoras, however, may be pot grown, as their spikes, even though pendulous, do not force their way downward into the potting material. They travel horizontally until they reach the edge of the pot or container then hang.

All of these orchids are hungry feeders and should be fed with nutrient liquids in a weak form. Mostly the flowers appear on new growth and it is unlikely that they will come from the older parts of the plant.



Stanhopea nigroviolacea

The usual pests, such as scale, aphids and red spider will attack the young growths and they should be kept under control by your usual methods. From time to time the leaves should be turned and examined underneath to see that pests do not get a foothold.

Some of the species will bear up to 30 flowers about 2 inches across. *G. armeniaca* and *G. truncata*, all Gongora flowers have a pleasant perfume and some have an apricot scent. Generally the flowering season is spring to autumn. When in bud, provide a brief rest by withholding water and relocating to a cooler, shadier spot.

These notes have been used at our Cultural and New Grower's Meetings. They are from various sources and we thank the authors. All articles are supplied in good faith and the Bribie Island Orchid Society and its members will not be held responsible for any loss or damage.