

## Oncidium Orchid Growing



This data will mainly be looking at intergeneric's that is crosses between more than one genera.

Oncidium spatulata

The Oncidium & Odontoglossum Tribes cover a very large group of orchids mostly from South America.

The main genera include -

- Oncidium – over 600 species being wide ranging over South & Central America
- Miltonia – about 10 species mainly from Brazil
- Brassia – over 30 species – from tropical America
- Odontoglossum – about 175 species from altitude mostly wet cloud forests above 1500m
- Miltoniopsis – 6 species from similar areas to above
- Cochlioda – 5 species from Andes – important in breeding for red colour in hybrids

There are other genera included in the group including (Ada, Aspasium, Trichocentrum , Compantia) however the above are the most important in getting many of today's intergeneric hybrids. This group is mainly from South America being wide ranging from Sea Level to high altitude and from hot humid lowlands to cool wet cloud forests.

It is important to remember they are not Cattleyas and cannot be treated that way. Too many orchid growers try to treat all orchids the same and this is where they run into problems.

Due to the different genera involved in the hybrids there is no one set of cultural rules will apply to all of the hybrids.

**The following are basic cultural tips.**

### Light

Seedling like low light levels about 70% - getting a little brighter as they grow to adults . Leaf colour for most should be dark green – and they need to grow lush. The hybrids with a lot of Brassia will need more light .

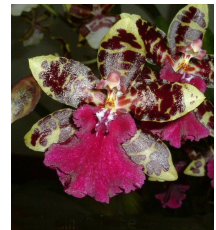
Reddish foliage indicates too much light .

### Temperature

My range is 0C to about 43C so in general they will handle the full range of temperatures likely to be encountered in the area.

It is important to remember that as these plants like to grow lush you must keep humidity up in high temperates or you run the risk of stressing the plant.

I would prefer people to look at more warm tolerant types for our local conditions – ones with a lot of Brassia and ones without much Miltonopsis and Odontoglossum crispin in there backgrounds.



Onc Bittersweet

### Humidity

It is critical to keep humidity at mid to high levels for these plants – they do not like to dry out and if they do they will stress

As with most orchids, humidity needs to be increased as temperate does, further humidity needs to increase with light levels

It is important to remember that as you increase humidity you must ensure good air flow.

To achieve humidity I look to damp down floors in the bush house and also have a fogging/misting system in my bush houses – this can increase humidity by 40 – 50 % and drop temp by 5C just by being turned on for 3 – 5 min and it used very little water

## Air Movement

All orchids need good air movement for plant health

Airflow can prevent disease/ fungal problems and also with good humidity aids in cooling the plants and thus allows plants to tolerate higher temperatures and higher light levels



## Water

It is important to ensure that when in growth the plants are always moist – they should never be allowed to dry out

They need very good drainage as you do need to keep the water up to these plants

Ensure that you keep the water up when they are making new growths and reduce it a little when the bulb is mature

## Potting

They like fresh feet so I like to repot every 2 years

Keep plants in as small a pot as possible

Clay pots have an advantage as they breathe especially with some of the cooler growing types

Pot & divide when the new growths are 5 – 10 cm tall – when they should be just starting root growth. However as many of the newer types flower twice a year they are in active growth the whole year and thus can be repotted when you get to them.

Also ensure you have at least 3 bulbs to a division

I have used small grade bark & perlite about 50:50 with success however at present I am trying Coco Husks and it appears to work very well

Remember the old rule the finer the roots the finer the potting material should be – this is true of oncidiums as they like to remain moist

Given the above however (small bark, mass of small roots & moist conditions) it is possible for the mix to go stale and you can quickly lose the root system – hence why I recommend repotting every 2 years

## Why grow them?

They are easy to grow!

Many flower twice a year and the flowers are often long lasting up to 10 weeks plus – thus great for shows. 3 years ago I had one Odcdm Wildcat that went to 4 shows over a 7 week period and won 3 firsts & a second and got on the champion table twice – not bad for one plant.

Many will have tall branching spikes of many flowers from small to medium size plants – so they are excellent in temps of flowers for space they take up.

Across the range of hybrids that grow here there is a huge variety of flower sizes, shapes and colours

Often people claim these are difficult to grow or a more suited to my conditions (Montville) however in the local area 3 growers grow this group well (in particular Odcdm Wildcat) these are John Green (Gympie), Noela Frizzo (Glasshouse) and myself (Montville). These 3 growers have very different conditions throughout the year, yet all grow these plants well.

## Some Common Intergeneric – and what Genera makes them

Aliceara(Alcra)	Brassia x Miltonia x Oncidium
Bakerara(Bak)	Brassia x Miltonia x Oncidium x Odontoglossum
Beallara(Bllra)	Brassia x Cochlioda x Miltonia x Odontoglossum
Colmanara(Colm)	Miltonia x Oncidium x Odontoglossum
Degarmoara(Dgmra)	Brassia x Miltonia x Odontoglossum
Burrageara (Burr)	Cochlioda x Miltonia x Oncidium X Odontoglossum
Goodaleara(Gdlra)	Brassia x Cochlioda x Miltonia x Oncidium x Odontoglossum
Maclellanara(Mclna)	Brassia x Oncidium x Odontoglossum
Miltassia(Mtssa)	Brassia x Miltonia
Brassidium(Brsdm)	Brassia x Oncidium
Odontobrassia(Odbrs)	Brassia x Odontoglossum
Vuyllstekeara(Vuyl)	Cochlioda x Miltonia x Odontoglossum
Wilsonara(Wil)	Cochlioda x Oncidium x Odontoglossum
Withnerara(With)	Aspasia x Miltonia x Oncidium x Odontoglossum

## 10 Hybrids you should have



Odcdm Wildcat- clones Bloodshot, Carmela & Formosa Yellow are the ones you should have (however many are very good)  
These flower twice a year and are long lasting (red, yellows, white)  
Everyone should have a couple of these- if for no other reason than they flower and last so long – gives you something to put in a show and table at a meeting.



Colm Jungle Monarch- flowers twice a year , flowers long lasting (olive, yellow, white & red)



Bllra Tahoma Glacier – stunning up to 15 150mm flowers on 1.2m spikes (white/cream & pale red)



Vuy Cambria - still the most popular orchid in the world – 10 – 15 100mm plus full shaped red & white flowers



Onc Sharry Baby - flowers twice a year, long lasting and perfumed



Dgmra Skywalker - 4 -6 large red star shaped flowers with darker mottles



Maclellanara Pagan Lovesong- larger flowers up to 150mm plus on tall (up to 1.5m) spikes (green, white & black)



Brs Mem Fritz Boedeker – still one of the best brassia – up to 450mm flowers (orange tans)



Dgmra Flying High - flowers twice a year, long lasting, up to 15 100mm plus flowers on up to 1m spikes (yellow & browns)



Odbrs Kenneth Biven – stunning spikes to 1.5m tall with up to 15 200mm black, white & yellow flowers

There are many other hybrids that I recommend but the above list are easy to grow, easy and cheap to buy (expect to pay \$6 -10 for a small tube and \$20 for a larger flowering size plant) and very rewarding to flower.

Please in most parts of Queensland be careful of -  
Odontonia hybrids - Hybrids with a lot of Odontoglossum crispin in background, Miltopsis and many of the Wilsonara's. These plants are very beautiful but our climate here can be too hot and dry in summer.

By Darryl Banks

These notes have been used at our Cultural and New Grower's Meetings. The notes and images 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.