



Early results of interspecific breeding

By Piet Theron

As I only started with my Clivia collection in 2002 only a few clivia plants were available locally. These were mostly F1 oranges. Yellow interspecifics were, as today, very sought after. The only plants that were in my possession were a *C. gardenii* x Yellow *C. miniata* (Fig 1) that I received from Ian Vermaak as a seedling and a *C. caulescens* x Chubb's peach (Fig 2). When the two plants flowered in 2004 Geraldine pollinated them and the seed were germinated in 2005.

My first aim was to breed my own yellow interspecific. The green stemmed seedlings were

religiously kept but as has been experienced often it was actually the pigmented stems that held some of the better results. Geraldene kindly assisted me with the cross pollination. She used a small brush which probably resulted in self pollination and cross pollination. In retrospect this was probably not so bad, as it lead to virtually 4 different crosses made at the same time.

I know that the really serious breeder will go to great length to guarantee a specific cross. The unknown surprise factor is however then largely eliminated. Lately I have been using a toothpick for ease of application.

First flowering was before 4 years. A multitude of characteristics were evident on growth form and pattern and flower shape and colour.

Results are shown here as they have flowered over the years.

The first to flower was (Fig 3) a Versicolor that reminded me of "Chanel" that was the best interspecific around for so many years. The second to flower (Fig 4) was an orange that



Figure 1. *C. gardenii* x Yellow *C. miniata*



Figure 2. *C. caulescens* x Chubb's peach



Figure 3. Red outside and Peach inside



Figure 4. Orange with ghosting



Figure 5. Yellow multipetal interspecific



Figure 6. Yellow interspecific



Figure 7. Yellow like small *C. miniata* interspecific



Figure 8. Pink Interspecific

somehow seemed a little odd. This manifested itself as ghosting on subsequent flowering on the inside of the petals. However this seems to be an attribute that get's lost on a narrow petal such as shown. The third one (Fig 5) flowered last year 2011 and surprised me with 40% multipetal yellow flowers. (Fig 6) 2011 has a better yellow flower with flaring although an untidy leaf distribution. (Fig 7) also a yellow 2012 is looking more like a small *C. miniata* especially the umbel arrangement.

(Fig 8) The Pink Interspecific is now flowering and is probably the pick of the lot. Two others have also flowered and are fairly good orange examples. I still have a number of them as they were mostly kept and the results are awaited with anticipation.

To me the big value in this breeding exercise, having the genes of three species thrown into the mix is that you only need to have two Interspecifics to start off. Eventually you may end up with a whole collection of varying nature and then decide what really works for you and what to continue with.

It would be worthwhile to repeat the whole process if you are one of our younger members. Initially select the the best examples of the different species that are available to you, in this instance it does not need to be a very expensive plant. Some of the more experienced members will gladly supply you with pollen if asked.

Up to now the initial parents have not been pollinated with any other pollen, thus I don't have results to compare. The first one flowered before 4 years and the last one now at 7 years. They had not been given the optimum amount of attention to promote quick flowering. On seeing the last one they were all promptly recovered from the garden and varying stages of neglect to be repotted and nurtured , maybe for flowering next year.

Recently Rouzell van Coller also showed breeding results on the forum that elicited the wide variety of results obtained from a specific cross. I hope this stimulates further interest in breeding for improved interspecifics and especially to show the variety that exists. We have to continue looking for the ultimate beauty.