Following on from May, *C. gardenii* (Figs. 1-2) continued to flower in Melbourne during the month of June, alongside the less commonly found *C. robusta*. Occasionally, a plant produced two flowering stems, one in May, followed by another in June, as did *C. gardenii*, ‘Malachite’. Intraspecific as well as interspecific hybrids of the pendulous flowers also expand our collections these days.

From early to mid-winter, *C. miniata x C. gardenii* interspecific hybrids began to demand attention. For instance, two siblings from the late Mick Dower’s cross of ‘Goblin’/‘Green Goblin’ x Hirao just overlapped in their blooming time and
showed slightly different flower shapes, one possessing more rounded inner tepals than the other (Fig. 3). John Winter’s interspecific hybrid of ‘Kirstenbosch Yellow’ x ‘Ngome Yellow’ flowered impressively, with 26 flowers on this occasion (Fig. 4).

Also valuable for breeding purposes are the multitepal x interspecific hybrids emanating from Japan which flowered during this winter period. Showing much potential is Shigetaka Sasaki’s multitepal x ‘Day Tripper’, a C. miniata x C. caulescens interspecific hybrid (Fig. 5). Similarly, his multitepal x C. gardenii also exhibits a multitepal tendency in its first F1 flowering (Fig. 6) and is thus a positive sign of its breeding potential. Even with the multitepal used as the pollen parent, the multitepal characteristic is already visible in the F1 shown in Fig. 7 of (C. miniata x C. caulescens) x ‘Nakamura’s Super Multipetal’, though admittedly this multitepal is known as a strong parent for inheritance of that gene.

These three months have seen a continuation of C. miniata x C. caulescens as well as C. miniata x C. nobilis interspecific hybrids (Figs. 8-10), and, of course, further interspecific hybrids based on the Australian forms of C. x cyrtanthiflora. Quite a few Australians are using this group of plants in their own breeding. Recently, one cross of C. x cyrtanthiflora x ‘Aurea’ produced an attractive fawn-coloured flower (Fig. 11) and another plant, when crossed with an orange pollen parent, produced a flower with contrasting colours on the inner and outer tepals (Fig. 12).

Interspecifics which are crossed again to C. miniata are increasing in number in many places, further expanding the range of these hybrids. Figs. 13-14 show one kind of bi-colour pattern found in ‘Juliet’, a (C. miniata x C. caulescens) x yellow C. miniata interspecific hybrid. Here we can imagine that the C. miniata used in the primary cross was also yellow. Bred in Melbourne by Laurens Rijke is ‘Madeline Rose’, a multi-coloured flower which is also derived from (C. miniata x C. caulescens) x ‘Aurea’ (Figs. 15-16). In this case, the two umbels which flowered in consecutive months on the same rhizome displayed rather different colouration patterns, not unsurprisingly because
Fig. 4 ‘Gypsy Queen’ (‘Kirstenbosch Yellow’ x ‘Ngome Yellow’)

Fig. 5 Multitepal x ‘Day Tripper’

Fig. 6 Multitepal x C. gardenii
Fig. 7 (C. miniata x C. caulescens) x ‘Nakamura’s Super mult tepal’

Fig. 8 C. miniata x C. caulescens
Fig. 9 C. miniata x C. nobilis

Fig. 10 C. miniata x C. nobilis
Fig. 11 C. x cyrtanthiflora x ‘Aurea’

Fig. 12 C. x cyrtanthiflora x C. miniata orange
Fig. 13 (left) ‘Juliet’ 2013

Fig. 14 ‘Juliet’

Fig. 15 ‘Madeline Rose’

Fig. 16 ‘Madeline Rose’
Fig. 17 (C. miniata orange x yellow) x ‘Day Dream’

Fig. 19 Variegated C. miniata x C. gardenii
the second flower developed and bloomed inside, but also quite different flower sizes and shapes. Since there was only a relatively small difference in the number of flowers in the two umbels (23 and 20 flowers respectively), this was rather unexpected.

Winter is the main flowering period for interspecifics and some of them certainly take centre stage. A pot of Yoshikazu Nakamura’s (C. miniata orange x yellow) x ‘Day Dream’, which now has seven rhizomes, each produced a flowering umbel this year (Fig. 17). On the other hand, there are also special flowers from recalcitrant plants which never seem to produce offsets, have few flowers, are not good seed setters and do not provide much, if any, viable pollen. I consider this greeny (C. miniata x C. caulescens) x self as one such example (Fig. 18), though it does produce a little pollen.

Interspecifics with variegated foliage add further interest. Fig. 19 shows an extremely vigorous C. miniata x C. gardenii which frequently produces new offsets. Since interspecifics with other than striata variegation remain unusual, deserving special attention was a first flower on Nakamura’s Light of Buddha x (C. miniata x C. caulescens) hybrid (Figs. 20-21).

While winter is the prime time for seed preparation, it also provides an opportunity for the enjoyment and close observation of berries, particularly their colours, shapes and sizes. This year I have become more aware of the range of
variation in berry colour among the “European Peaches” and even among orange-flowering C. miniata. Berries from five different plants are found in the vase arrangement shown in Fig. 22, and all of them have some ‘Vico Yellow’ in their heritage. For example, the darkish brown berries on the right come from an orange-flowering plant derived from ‘Vico Yellow’ as one of its parents. The pastel/green berries on the bottom left also followed an orange flower, similarly thought to include ‘Vico Yellow’ in its parentage.

Australia has just experienced the warmest 12 months since climate records commenced 150 years ago and furthermore, this winter has been the warmest one on record for the state of Victoria. This warmth seems to have promoted the rapid growth of buds on C. miniata as August progressed and, like other members of the Melbourne Clivia Group, I started to wonder which plants would be at their peak – if not passed their peak – on 21 September for our CLIVIA EXPO. As the official start of spring approached, a few C. miniata engaged in battle with the interspecifics for space inside the house and these included several Gladys Blackbeard hybrids, ‘Original Green Girl’ with its delicate first flower, and even a multitepal (Figs. 23-24), among others. Unexpected were two umbels on C. nobilis which flowered in late August, somewhat earlier than usual (Fig. 25).

As one’s plants increase in size and require bigger pots and as new Clivia come into flower,
the problem of space is exacerbated for some of us “backyard hobbyists”. Nakamura’s recent advice was as follows: “In order to progress (in our breeding), we need to reduce, rather than increase the number of Clivia we grow. To make space, it’s better to dispose of mature plants rather than seedlings”. This advice seems easier said than done! ▼