

Orchid Labels 101

By Sandra Simpson, Tauranga Orchid Society

At our August meeting we had a run-through on how to read (and write) an orchid name label. Here is a brief precis as a permanent reminder to come back and check. Use a white label. The best semi-permanent marker is still probably a China graph pencil.

Why is knowing an orchid's name important? After all, a plant is likely to still flower without a name! Knowing at least which family of orchids your plant belongs to will help you grow it for best results – hot/cold, light/shade, how much water/food and when, better in a pot or on a mount, inside/outside, how big it will get.

Abbreviations are used to save space on the label. There are several good lists available on the internet when you run across something you don't understand. Try Britain's [Royal Horticultural Society](#) (2017 pdf) or the [Ravenvision website](#). Examples – note they are written with a full stop at the end of the abbreviation:

Blc.= Brassolaeliocattleya

Cym.= Cymbidium
Epi. = Epidendrum
Odm. = Odontoglossum
Phrag.= Phragmepedium

The first name on a label is the Genus, ie, which family of orchids this plant belongs to. For instance, Cattleya, Cymbidium, Masdevallia, Maxillaria, Paphiopedilum, Phalaenopsis. All these family names are generally written as an abbreviation.

The second name on a label is the specific epithet or species name and can contain a little story in itself. For example, **Dendrobium lindleyi** was named for 19th century English botanist [John Lindley](#); while **Den.**

loddigesii was named for the [Loddiges family](#) of nurserymen.

Paphiopedilum philippinense was named after The Philippines where it was found, while **Paph. insigne** was named for its striking flower (think of insignia on a military uniform).

The third name on a label shows additional variations within a single plant and is a subspecies, varietal or

form name. For example, **Phalaenopsis amabilis subsp. rosenstromii**; **Coelogyne cristata var. lemoniana**; **Paph. venustum fma. alba** (alba = white form).

Hybrid name: The breeder of the plant gives it a name when registering it. For example, Cattleya Angel's Fantasy; Cymbidium Cricket; Sarcochilus Toowoomba Magic. This is also known as the **Grex name**.

Cultivar name: This is given to a superior plant. The cultivar name is written in single quote marks. For example, **Cym. Cricket 'Libby'**. This plant was Grand Champion at the 2013 National Orchid Expo – it was entered as Cym. Cricket and, once awarded by the OCNZ Committee on Awards, was able to be given a cultivar name by its owner. The name is now applied to all divisions of that one plant.

Natural hybrids: These are hybrids that occur in nature. The name is written with an 'x' before the Grex/Epithet name to distinguish from

species plants. For example, **Den. x superbians** (a natural hybrid of Den. bigibbum x Den. discolor).

Award abbreviations: The last thing written on a label. Anyone who has a plant win a national-level award, should enter that information on the label. If you own a plant with this information on the label, you should retain it when a label is rewritten or the plant sold. Ones that you may see include **AM/AOS** (Award of Merit, American Orchid Society); **CCC/OCNZ** (Certificate of Cultural Commendation, Orchid Council of NZ); **ACE/AOC** (Award of Cultural Excellence, Australian Orchid Council).

Back of the label: Can be used as a recording device for month/year of repotting = 10/20; month/year of flowering = 1/21.

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