

# Grammatophyllum scriptum var. leopard 'nn'

By Terri Jozwiak

I remember seeing a Gram [Gram. is short for Grammatophyllum] at a greenhouse in Hawaii over a year ago. I didn't see it in bloom but I remember the distinctive roots growing upward out of the pot. (They would not sell me one, they said it couldn't grow in Wisconsin). I bought this one at the Neenah show in late February of this year. It was not in bloom but I recognized the upward-growing roots. The largest pseudobulb was 8" and the longest leaf 25" so it was a big plant.

When I got it home I tried to repot it but couldn't get it out of the pot it was so pot-bound. As I was pounding on the pot, I finally noticed a small growth at the base of the leaves about one inch in length. I realized it was the start of a flower spike. So I quit pounding on it and just put the plant, without repotting, into a clay pot for stability because it was very top-heavy.

The flower spike grew and then it sprouted a second one!



How the flowers look when they are fully open.



Terri at Paradigm in April

I brought this plant to the April OGG meeting at Paradigm where members might have seen it. At the time it had half of one flower spike open with flowers and the other stem with tight buds. It is now has both spikes fully open and hasn't lost any flowers yet! It has 68 individual flowers on the first spike [which I now have learned is called a raceme\*] and 60 on the second. It is quite the showy plant! I learned it comes from South East Asia, New Guinea and some islands of the Pacific Ocean and the genera includes some of the world's largest orchid plants. In their natural habitat, they often grow to several meters in diameter, and can have hundreds if not thousands of flower

racemes. A plant of *Grammatophyllum speciosum* reportedly weighing two tons was one of the highlights in the 1851 exhibition at the Crystal Palace in London. Another unusual characteristic of this plant are their pseudobulbs. This orchid discards its center bulbs by rapidly rotting and eventually turning into a dry shell.

From [www.OrchidsAmore.com](http://www.OrchidsAmore.com): These are easy to grow if given enough water and fertilizer. They increase in size rapidly if re-potted into larger containers. Be aware, that like all orchids they only have so much strength per year for growing and flowers. Re-potting rapidly will make larger plants faster but possibly will cause the plant to skip flowering for a year. They have a tendency to drop leaves if grown too cool over the winter, but recover rapidly when growing season starts. They like high sunlight to set flowers. Flower inflorescences will normally have 80-100 flowers from 3-4 inches each. One AOS awarded plant had 32 inflorescences and 3670 flowers.

They are unique in that they have two distinct types of roots for different purposes. The thick normal roots grow down into the medium and function like any other orchids' roots. The thinner hairy roots that grow up should never be forced into the medium. In the wild their purpose is to catch debris such as leaves and as the debris decomposes it feeds the plant.

From [www.aos.org](http://www.aos.org): According to AOS, this orchid likes warm temperatures and bright light. I have observed *Gram. speciosum*, and *Gram. scriptum* growing in full sun. All species come from distinct wet/dry habitats, thus they require plenty of water and high humidity during the growing season, but less water is required during the cooler months. Fertilize with half-strength balanced fertilizer weekly during the growing season and twice a week during the cooler months. Pot in medium grade



What it looked like at the end of May

bark in terracotta or plastic pots. The mix should retain moisture.

\* raceme noun BOTANY A flower cluster with the separate flowers attached by short equal stalks at equal distances along a central stem. The flowers at the base of the central stem develop first.