

## Interesting Orchid – Habenaria

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Habenaria orchids are terrestrial orchids which go completely dormant during the winter. There are 7,750 species in worldwide temperate areas. I have *Habenaria radiata* from Japan, *Habenaria medusa* from Southeast Asia, and *Habenaria rhodocheila* from Southeast Asia.

The *H. radiata* is the famous “Flying Egret” flower from Japan. Seeing one in person shows the similarity to a flying white egret. The long stems allows the flower to bounce with the slightest breeze enhancing the flying impression. They could be staked but I let mine wave in the breeze. Unfortunately the blooms are short lived lasting little more than a week. A stem with three flowers lasts about a month from start to finish. My two are just finishing.

The *H. medusa* has one of the most interesting flowers. They tend to bloom in the fall to winter. Steve Thimling has a nice big specimen which he has brought to some club meetings. It blooms a month or two earlier than mine does and is quite a bit larger. I give mine as much sun as possible in a south facing window. It just sent up a spike today, August 24th. At the Wisconsin

Orchid Society show in September you can see some huge specimens.

My third one is *H. rhodocheila*. I didn’t “need” any more *Habenarias* but once while walking around Orchids Ltd. it just called “Take me home”. It has a compact, bright yellow flower. It



came in sphagnum moss and rested there successfully all winter. I plan to leave it in the moss this winter and then re-pot it next spring.

In the fall or early winter all go completely dormant. Minimal watering and patience is required during this rest period. The first time I had two *Habenaria radiata* a few years ago I couldn’t resist giving them some water over the winter and only one came back. The other one rotted. Now I mist the top of the pot once a month during the rest period just so I feel they don’t get too dry.

The AOS has a webinar dedicated to *Habenaria*.

It suggests re-potting each year when the first green shoot is seen in the spring. The tubers usually grow straight down so tall and narrow pots are best. The media recommended is 50% long strand sphagnum moss chopped, 25% *Orchiata Power*, and 25% charcoal or perlite.

I have seen *Habenaria* for sale at Orchids Limited, Turkel Mostly Species, Andy’s Orchids, and Kusamono Gardens.



*Habenaria radiata* ‘Ginga’ on left and ‘Hisyo’



*Habenaria medusa*