



# The Gardens at Post Hill

## Winter 2009 Newsletter

December 2009, copyright Gardens at Post Hill LLC

2009 has been a challenging year with the economy always in the background and sometimes right up front! We accomplished a number of good things - we registered our first hybrids, we expanded our growing beds and we have begun to propagate other terrestrial orchid genera. In this newsletter we will review some of our activities of 2009.

### 2009, A Milestone Year

We have been propagating *Cypripedium* from seed since 2004, and have been making hybrids since 2005, many with Paul Perakos. Our first seed-propagated Showy Ladyslipper bloomed in 2008, and this year, our first hybrids bloomed.

Paul's breeding program is aimed at the production of the perfect white flower. One of Paul's first hybrids, *Cyp Marika*, bloomed with lovely, white flowers, some a completely pure, snow white. Marika is Paul's mother, who has grown ladyslippers in her garden since the 1970s and who has always admired pure white hybrids. Marika resulted from pollinating *Cyp Aki* with pollen from the small, white-flowered *Cyp candidum*. Marika's flower is intermediate in size between its parents.

*Cyp* GPH Anna Marie resulted from pollinating *Cyp henryi* with *Cyp flavum*. *Cyp flavum* often has bright yellow flowers but does not do well for us here - we think it is too warm most summers. Anna Marie, named for my mother, has *flavum*-sized flowers that are a light green, reminiscent of *Cyp henryi*, when they open. After two-three days, the flowers become yellow, although lighter than the *flavum* pollen donor. Several



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**Cyp Marika**

Anna Marie bloomed this season and surprisingly, all had identical monochromatic flowers. Several of the plants had multiple blooming stems their first blooming season, their fourth year out of flask - this may be a rapid clumping hybrid.



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**Cyp GPH Anna Marie**

*Cyp* GPH Barbara is a large plant with large flowers inherited from its *Cyp fasciolatum* parent. The flower color is a light yellow, intermediate between *Cyp fasciolatum* and its other parent *Cyp Favillianum*. GPH Barbara is named after Garden at Post Hill's



**Cyp Carla**



**Cyp Sam Saulys**

Barbara Burch. Another hybrid with Favillianum as a parent is *Cyp* Carla, whose other parent is *Cyp macranthos* var *alba*. A close hybrid of Favillianum is *Cyp xandrewsii*, Favillianum having *Cyp parviflorum* var *pubescens* as a parent whereas *Cyp xandrewsii* has *Cyp parviflorum* var *parviflorum* as a parent. *Cyp* Sam Saulys is a hybrid of *Cyp* Gisela x *Cyp xandrewsii*. Eleanor (Sam) Saulys has been a prominent documenter of native orchids in Connecticut and New England and a friend of Paul and me.

are trying to establish plants with *montanum*-like flowers that grow well in our climate. The first specimen of GPH Charles to bloom shows promise although the flower colors are not as crisp as *montanum*. We look forward to the blooming of additional specimens.

*Cyp* Aki Pastel is a very light form of Aki. We tried to mimic the robust, large-flowered Aki Pastel, with perhaps even lighter flowers, by crossing *Cyp pubescens* with *Cyp macranthos* var *alba*. The result is *Cyp* GPH Memoria Charles Frail Jr, named after Barbara's father, who passed away while the first plant of this hybrid was in bloom. GPH Memoria Charles Frail Jr has proven to be a quite variable hybrid with the flowers of each plant having a different appearance from other plants.

We also registered a *Phalaenopsis* hybrid this year. A few years back, I crossed two *Phalaenopsis* to practice germinating the seed of this genus. Once the seed had germinated and grown into tiny plants, I intended to throw them away but Barbara insisted on nurturing them and grew a number to adulthood. I registered the hybrid as *Phal* GPH Barbara's Obsession.

Our final *Cypripedium* hybrid registered this year is *Cyp* GPH Charles, a hybrid of *Cyp candidum* and *Cyp montanum*. We have grown a number of specimens of *Cyp montanum* but they do not persist for us, presumably because of our too-warm climate. We



**Cyp GPH Barbara**



© RM Burch  
Cypripedium GPH Memoria Charles Frail Jr  
**Cyp GPH Memoria Charles Frail**



© RM Burch  
Cypripedium GPH Charles  
**Cyp GPH Charles**



**Phal GPH Barbara's Obsession**

## *Bletilla*, the Chinese Ground Orchid, in Your Garden

*Bletilla* is an Asian genus of terrestrial orchids comprised of about 8 species that occur throughout China into Tibet in the west, Myanmar in the south, and Japan, Korea and Taiwan in the east. Some species are not hardy in our zone 5 garden but we grow one of them, *Bl ochracea* in the garden during the summer and dig the pseudobulbs in the fall and store them inside. *Bl striata* and several hybrids live happily outside all year round. In addition to the 8 or so species, there are about 30 reported hybrids, nearly all registered by Richard Evenden in England, and many named cultivars, especially of *Bl striata*.

We grow our *Bletilla* in a mixture of Soil Perfector (keeps the voles at bay) and well-composted pine bark mulch. We plant the compressed pseudobulbs about 4 inches deep in areas which provide direct sun nearly all day (more southern growers should allow for 3-4 hours of sun with dappled shade the remainder of the day). Plants begin growing in May and bloom in late June. Most *Bletilla* are 20-24 inches in height and have spikes that have 10-15 sequentially blooming flowers. We make sure to provide a thick layer of leaves in the fall to assure survival of the plants.

A single *Bletilla* pseudobulb will pro-

duce 2-6 new pseudobulbs each growing season. Plants may be multiplied simply by breaking apart the pseudobulbs. If the plants are left undisturbed for several years, very large clumps can develop.

Most wild *Bl striata* are a rich, dark lavender in color. Line breeding and hybridization has led to the availability of various shades from lavender to pink to white, and even light green and red. *Bl ochracea* adds yellow to the range of colors.

We are propagating several *Bl striata* cultivars and hybrids and look forward to making more of them available each year. Currently we offer lavender, light pink and blue *Bl striata* as well as *Bl ochracea*.



© Tom Velardi  
*Bletilla striata* Murosake Shikibu

***Bletilla striata* Murosaki Shikibu growing in Tom Velardi's garden in Japan.**

## Short Takes

**Calopogon.** Calopogon's are native to North America from the south to the north. There are several species and a few hybrids. Calopogon flowers tend to be light lavender but vary to pink and even white.

Calopogon are unusual among orchids in that the flowers appear to be upside-down. In fact, nearly all orchid flowers rotate around the ovary 180 degrees during development, but Calopogon does not.

Calopogon in the garden require bog conditions and grow well with cranberries, pitcher plants and sundews, as well as Lobelia.

We are growing lavender and white *Calopogon tuberosus* and will offer them as soon as our seedlings reach blooming size.

**Hosta.** We enjoy hostas almost as much as the deer do. We have found it relatively difficult to obtain dwarf Hosta species so we have begun experimental meristem culture of dwarf hosta cultivars. We will begin to add new varieties to our sales list.

**Daylilies.** During the summer months we enjoy daylily flowers and have become quite enamored with spider and cascading varieties. We have begun to hybridize and look forward to sharing images of our flowering seedlings.

**Flasking service.** We have offered a flasking service for several years now. We are pleased that seedlings we have raised are reaching blooming size. During this year we have blooms of *Cypripedium*, *Epidendrum*, *Cattleya*, *Phalaenopsis*, *Spiranthes*, and *Calopogon*. It is quite a thrill to make a cross, shepherd the pod and watch seedlings reach maturity and flower. All orchid growers should make at least one cross and grow a few seedlings to flower. Waiting for flowering is exciting and you may obtain something very special.



**Calopogon tuberosus**



**Calopogon seedlings in flask**

Our Spring list will be posted to the website in February 2010

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