



The Gardens at Post Hill

Winter 2011 Newsletter

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THE WEATHER was wild for everyone in the U.S. at some point during the year. We were fortunate here to not suffer any of the disasters that were common throughout the country. Hurricane Irene pooped out at the time it reached the northern part of Connecticut although the coast was hard-hit. Here in the Litchfield Hills we had 18 inches of snow at the end of October while the leaves were still on the trees. We suffered a few downed trees but none hit the house and we still have branches to chip next Spring. We were without electricity for 3 days (we have a generator) but did not

have the prolonged outage or property damage that was suffered by so many in New England.

We did have issues in the Spring though with prolonged cold and wet conditions that caused many of our attempted *Cypripedium* crosses to not take and we lost many pods to rot so we were successful with fewer crosses than we would have liked. This was the second cold, wet Spring in succession so we are short of seedlings of new hybrids to grow to blooming size. Ah well, here is looking forward to Spring 2012 for setting new pods!

New Cypripedium Registrations

WE WERE dissatisfied to only have one new cross registered this year. *Cyp Sarah Louise gx Vallonia Group* is *Cyp Ulla Silkens x Cyp reginae* var. *album*. The term 'gx' means 'grex' and indicates that this new hybrid is considered the same grex (hybrid) as Sarah Louise but using the taxonomically unrecognized *Cyp reginae* var. *album* instead of the typical pink-pouched *Cyp reginae*. One might be surprised that the album variety is not taxonomically recognized - I was - but it has not been in some of the major works like Cribb and specifically not by the Kew Monocots Checklist



Cyp Sarah Louise gx Vallonia Group

or the RHS Subcommittee on Orchid Hybrid Registration (AsCOHR). In the past, *Cypripedium* hybrid registration has been given wide latitude, e.g. there are five *Cyp macranthos* varieties (few if any recognized taxonomically) which could be used for registration of new hybrids. This has not been the case for most orchid genera and the popularity of Cyp's and the explosion in registrations is catching up to us in terms of a move to bring us into common ground with other genera. Julian Shaw, the RHS registrar, patiently talked me through the thinking on the subject. We chose *Vallonia* as a Swedish name with the connotations 'power and peace' to complement the parental *Ulla* which in Swedish has the connotation of 'powerful.' *Vallonia* certainly has a beautiful flower.

Which are the Easiest *Cypripedium* for a New Gardener?

WE ARE often asked by gardeners who would like to try their first *Cypripedium* which are the easiest. We have compiled a list of those Cyps we find easiest. While we were at it, we also listed those most difficult for us - some of these are difficult for nearly everyone who tries them and some are difficult to grow in Connecticut (because it is too hot in the summer).

The very easiest Cyps we have grown include the species *Cyp reginae* and *parviflorum*. *Cyp reginae* is usually tolerant of too many hours of sunlight (after it has become established) and *Cyp parviflorum* - each of the varieties *parviflorum*, *pubescens* and *makasin* - tolerates deep shade and some forms even tolerate a good bit of sun. Amongst hybrids, several are quite easy. Perhaps easiest is the Gisela/Maria group, which grow rapidly and look great no matter the conditions. It is possible that Lothar Pinkepank is just as easy - we are guilty of keeping a specimen in far too sunny a location and it keeps flowering nicely for us.

Amongst hybrids, Favillianum is as tolerant of conditions as *reginae*. It grows in shade or several hours of sun each day. Aki, Michael, Sabine and Ulla Silkens are also very easy, although they should not be placed in excessive sun.

Cyp japonicum is placed between Very Easy and



Cyp Gisela

Ease of Culture of *Cypripediums*

Very Easy

reginae
parviflorum
 Aki
 Favillianum
 Gisela/Maria
 GPH Anna Marie
 GPH Memoria Charles
 Frail Jr
 Inge
 Lothar Pinkepank
 Michael
 Sabine
 Ulla Silkens

japonicum

Fairly Easy

andrewsii
candidum
kentuckiense
 Hank Small
 Lucy Pinkepank
 Philipp

formosanum
macranthos

Difficult (for New England)

acaule
flavum
franchetti
henryi
lichiangense
montanum
tibeticum
 Peter
 Sebastian



Cyp GPH Memoria Charles Frail Jr

Fairly Easy because many specimens can be troublesome whereas others can be placed in highly organic mulch and rapidly expand to fill all available space.

Fairly Easy Cyp's are those that do very well if their conditions are met. Cyp's *andrewsii* and *candidum* need three-four hours of sun each day and plenty of calcium - we lime each Fall. *Cyp kentuckiense* likes a very sandy medium - our best ones grow in 100% yellowish Quikcrete playbox sand - *do not* use highly alkaline white playbox sand. Philipp and Lucy Pinkepank, due to their parent *kentuckiense*, like a sandy medium. Hank Small is much like its *parviflorum* parent in habit but needs to be kept very well drained and in bright shade, but not more than two hours of sun (like its *henryi* parent).

Between Fairly Easy and Difficult are Cyp's *macranthos* and *formosanum*. *Cyp formosanum* often breaks dormancy during our winter thaw and then freezes, so protect them under a thick layer of mulch to minimize temperature fluctuations. *Cyp macranthos* grows over an enormous geographic area from Japan, which has a climate similar to ours, to Siberia and northern Eurasia. Thus, some specimens do very well whereas others do not tolerate any winter moisture.

The Difficult group contains plants that we cannot keep alive for as long as a year as well as "less difficult" plants that last as long as two years. *Cyp acaule* grows rampantly in New England woods. However, it requires very acidic growth conditions



Cyp Lothar Pinkepank



Cyp Sabine



Cyp franchetti

and doesn't last long in culture unless planted in deep white pine duff, in which it sometimes survives. *Cyp's flavum* and *montanum* do not tolerate our warm summers and *montanum* hybrids like Sebastian also do not last long. Curiously, *Cyp flavum* hybrids like Ulla Silkens and GPH Anna Marie are very easy to grow, tolerating heat and light. The remainder of the plants on this list require winters with and without moisture. We keep ours in pots.

Short Takes

Botany Boy. Please go to our **Links** webpage and visit the Botany Boy website maintained by our good friend Tom Velardi. Tom covers many terrestrial orchids and his photography is stunning.

Great Lakes Orchids. Another good friend, Ray Price, will be launching the Great Lakes Orchids website by Spring to offer his excellent terrestrial orchids. Ray is the go to guy for *Platanthera* and grows many *Cypripedium* and *Dactylorhiza* as well. We look forward to obtaining many great *Platanthera*'s from him.

Publications. We are adding a new webpage called **Articles**. It contains several helpful articles about maintaining adult and seedling Cyp's and others will be added during the upcoming year. We have also added our *Orchid Digest* article about the history of *Cypripedium* hybridization. *Orchid Digest* is an excellent source of detailed information about orchids - you will find a link to it on our **Links** webpage.

Rosie and Otto, and Florence. Our great friends Rosie and Otto both passed away this year. They were half siblings sharing the same father - Rosie was a year older. Otto was my best friend, going with me nearly everywhere and Rosie accompanied Barbara everywhere. They are both sorely missed. Barbara's mother, Florence, passed away later at age 84. She told great stories about being a teenager in wartime Gourick, Scotland where many warships were launched.

Spring Plant List. Our Spring list will be up in January with additional seedlings and perhaps adult plants being added through April.



Platanthera blephariglottis



Rosie and Otto

**Our Spring list will be posted
to the website on
January 1, 2012**

www.gardensatposthill.com