

Bifoliate Cattleya Orchids

Very few orchids are more beautiful than a well grown bifoliate Cattleya species. *C. bicolor* is probably the most popular of the bifoliate, the colour range is so wide that very few cultivars of this species are alike. Although some of the most beautiful bifoliate hybrids have *C. bicolor* in their ancestry the species exhibits a beauty all its own. It is recommended using a very loose potting medium for bifoliate. One which allows the roots to be exposed to the air at all times, even immediately after watering. A mixture of coarse grade charcoal and bark chunks in even proportions, provides excellent aeration.

When repotting bifoliate Cattleyas, it is crucial that the grower wait until the roots have initiated on the new growth, otherwise, the entire plant can be lost. Root initiation on a developing pseudobulb is especially late in the case of bifoliate Cattleyas, often not occurring until 4 or 5 months after the new growth has begun. By that point the new growth is usually quite tall. When dividing bifoliate plants, each division should have a minimum of 5 pseudobulbs.

Another important thing to remember is not to over water bifoliate plants. Over watering can quickly lead to root loss and rot. This is another very good reason for using a very open potting medium, as it greatly reduces the risks of over watering. The amount of water the roots of a bifoliate plant can absorb is directly proportional to the intensity of light & the amount of air movement.

All told bifoliate Cattleyas are among the most beautiful & durable of orchids. They need not, and should not be pampered.

C. bowringiana

This orchid is popular because of its highly attractive floral display, with up to 15 colourful flowers being crowded into each inflorescence. A number of excellent selections based on flower have been made, with some having dark purple flowers. Large specimen plants produce a most impressive appearance.



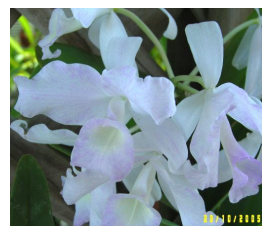
C. bicolor

The pseudobulbs are cylindrical. The inflorescence is short with between 2 and 5 flowers, each to 10cms in diameter. The sepals and petals are green flushed with red brown, of very heavy substance and long lasting. The lip has a long narrow claw at the base, expanding to an ovate, rich purple red apex, with lateral lobes.



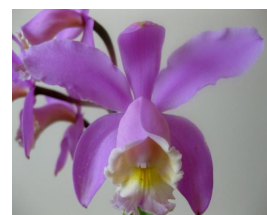
C. skinneri

The pseudobulbs are club shaped, to 40cms tall. The inflorescence has 2 to 12 flowers and is surrounded at the base with a small sheath. The flowers are small to 9cms in diameter. The sepals and petals & lip are a dark rose purple with a white spot at the disc of the lip.



C. loddigesii

This species has achieved immense popularity and is firmly entrenched in cultivation. In nature it grows on trees and rocks from the lowlands to the mountains, in situations ranging from shade to nearly full exposure.



These notes have been used at our Cultural and New Grower's Meetings. They are from various sources and we thank the authors. All articles are supplied in good faith and the Bribie Island Orchid Society and its members will not be held responsible for any loss or damage.