

Dendrobium Bigibbum Orchids

There are 3 varieties of *Dendrobium bigibbum*, var. *superbum*, var. *bigibbum* and var. *compactum*. These varieties are found only from just north of Cairns to the tip of Cape York and some Torres Strait islands. We understand that the ranges upon which it grows are mainly close to the coast but have heard stories of finds on mountains some distance inland. It is a short form with pseudobulbs up to 250mms tall with normally open flowers, variable in size, shape and colour but resembling var. *superbum*.



Den. *bigibbum* var. *superbum* also has tall, more robust pseudobulbs up to 1 metre in length also with multiple racemes but with flowers generally much larger than var. *bigibbum* (up to 70 mms across).



Den. *bigibbum* var. *bigibbum* is a plant with tall thin pseudobulbs up to 1 metre in length carrying multiple flower racemes of up to 20 pansy like flowers normally 25-35 mms with reflexed petals.



Den. *bigibbum* var. *compactum* is a plant that grows on rocks and exposed cliff faces at low elevation (around 300 metres) from just north of Cairns to the Windsor Tableland west of Daintree.

The distribution of these varieties seems unclear so we suggest that they occur on both the east and west sides of the cape from sea level (sometimes hanging over salt water) to low elevation inland dry scrub. The important aspect of their distribution is that the areas in which they grow have 2 seasons, wet and dry – dry meaning no rain for 2-3 months with minimum temperatures seldom below 10° C. for long periods. We believe that understanding this point is beneficial in the cultivation of the plants.

Part of an article by Ross & Rhonda Harvey in the Kabi bulletin, Kalhari for March, 2006.

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