

Leptotes

Depending upon which authority you listen to, this genus of small *Cattleya* relatives consists of 9-12 species. *Leptotes* are primarily found in Brazil, with secondary distribution in Paraguay (*L. bicolor*) and Argentina (*L. unicolor*).

These small plants are easy to overlook, as evidenced by half (5) of these species being described only recently, since 2004. There could easily be more still waiting to be discovered.

These plants superficially look somewhat similar to *Brasavola nodosa* in that they have fleshy terete leaves, but upon closer inspection we find that they have no pseudobulbs. They

tend to grow with the slightly curved leaves hanging downwards.

The best known species is *L. bicolor*, which has white flowers with a strikingly dark cerise lip. Like most other *Cattleya* family species, it has also been found in a true alba form (below).



grown from a single lead seedling in 3 years.

I grow *Leptotes* under intermediate conditions, down to 55°F at night in winter, and the ventilation comes on in the greenhouse at 80°F.

I do hang them in spots, where they are shaded just slightly more than my mature *Cattleyas*.

Some nurseries supply *Leptotes* plants in pots. Under the conditions in my greenhouse, my experience is that the plants at best hold on when grown in pots.

They really take off when grown mounted on cork or bark with a little sphagnum tied around the roots. This allows the plants to dry out between waterings (like their *Cattleya* relatives). The *L. pohlitinocoi* shown in the next column was

Being a small stature plant, *Leptotes* can grow several new growths each year, and readily bloom twice a year. The main blooming time is in February-March.

One of the recent discoveries is a species with the tongue twisting name of *L. pohlitinocoi*, which is a contraction of the first names of the two discoverers. It is very similar to *L. bicolor*, but it has a pink flush in both petals & sepals, and a paler pink lip. The flowers are slightly smaller than those of *L. bicolor*.



Finally, through 7 generations of line breeding, Alan Koch of **Gold Coast Orchids** has produced some vastly improved 4N (tetraploid) *L. bicolor*, with larger foliage and flowers.

These plants produce flowers, that have reached 2.1/2" vertical spread, and 2" horizontal spread.

