

Cattleya intermedia

This bifoliate Brazilian *Cattleya* species has broad distribution in coastal forest of South America, where it grows in southern Brazil, Uruguay & northern Argentina. In situ it occasionally grows in full sun (as on telephone poles!).

As is common in species with a large geographical distribution, there are many varieties/color forms of this species. The normal blooming season is March-May. There can be random flowers appearing as early as February, and continuing into the fall season.

The plants are small to mid size, with individual plants growing pseudobulbs ranging from 4-5" to perhaps as tall as 14-16". Most of the plants in cultivation today tend to be less than 10" in height.

While *C. intermedia* accepts a wide temperature range, it does demand a fair amount of water. Do not let it dry out while in active growth, and only barely so when it is not. I grow my plants:

- Young plants in plastic pots with a sphagnum mix, to ensure that they have continuous moisture around the roots.
- Mature plants in clay pots or baskets, with Aliflor clay nuggets & charcoal in 2:1 ratio. I water these plants heavily twice a week in winter, and three times a week from mid April through October.

The standard color form is a pink flower with a darker colored lip:



First forma alba; shown here is 'Penn Valley', which we now believe to be a hybrid (the lip is just too 'different').

I have very recently obtained a division of 'Lines' fma alba. This photo will be updated as soon as that plant blooms.



The second common color form is of course coerulea (often called a variety, but it is only a color form). This color form will sometimes bloom on PBs as short as 2-3".



There are semi-alba forms:



A more recently recognized color form is 'vinicolor', which has a bright red lip.

Notice that the bright color is restricted to the flat part of the lip. This compares with **variety orlata** (next column),



where the color encircles the labellum:



The most important variety of *C. intermedia*, is var. aquinii. In this variety, the petals mimick the lip (= it is a peloric flower). This occurs in no other *Cattleya* species, so all *Cattleya* hybrids with splash petals have *C. intermedia*, var. *aquinii* in the background.

Through line breeding, var. *aquinii* now exists in both the standard and the coerulea color forms of this species.



On the internet, I have found photos of *C. intermedia*, var. *aquinii* & *orlata*, fma. *coerulea*, but I have been unable to reach the photographer for permission to use the photo in this piece.



From Miranda I have obtained another variety/color form. It was labelled as *C. intermedia*, var. *suave*. Whether this is a legitimate variety, or simply another color form, I do not know yet. It is, however, not only a very attractive flower, it is also tetraploid, making it worthwhile for use in breeding.

To illustrate the effect of var. *aquinii*, first a complex hybrid:

C. Persian Glory 'Road to China' AM/AOS.

This plant has largely normal shape petals, but they mimic the colors from the lip.



Next, I have been blooming a seedling population of **C. Christina Mendoza** (*intermedia*, var. *aquinii* *coerulea* x *Floralia's Azul*). Of the 4 seedlings to bloom so far, only 1 expressed the splash feature:

