

Guarianthes are Cattleyas too!

Back in 2003, the multifloral bifoliate Cattleyas from **Central America** were banished from the Cattleya genus, when they were renamed Guarianthe. I do not recall whether this was a previously published name, or whether it was a new designation due to taxonomic nitpicking.

More recently, Sophronitis and many of the larger Laelias were transferred into the Cattleya genus. However, when that 'lumping' of species took place, it did not extend to those hidden away in the Guarianthe genus.

Currently there are 3, 4 or 5 species in this genus (depending upon which taxonomist you consult), plus one natural hybrid:

Gur. aurantiaca - a relatively small plant with orange to red flowers, some with spots. 20 years ago many plants self-pollinated without ever opening the flowers, but this trait has been eliminated through line breeding.



Gur. bowringiana - a large plant with clusters of pink flowers in the fall. Coerulea, alba & semi-alba color forms are known.

Gur. deckeri - used to be known as a fall blooming variety of skinneri (skinneri-autumnalis). Some taxonomists still consider it to be a skinneri, despite differences in flower structure, flatter pseudo-bulbs and the different blooming season.

Gur. skinneri - a fairly large plant with clusters of pink flowers in the spring ('Waldor' AM/AOS shown). Coerulea and alba forms are known in this species.



Gur. patinii - considered same as skinneri-autumnalis by most taxonomists?

Gur. x guatemalensis - this is a natural hybrid between aurantiaca & skinneri. These often self-pollinate, so the flowers barely open.

Most wild collected plants were originally quite tall (2+ feet), but through line breeding most plants are now more manageable (in 12-18" range). My spotted aurantiaca only grows 8-10" tall.

These plants do well under typical Cattleya conditions, and can tolerate considerable neglect. At the old Tewkesbury Orchids, we had one *Gur. bowringiana*, which had not been repotted for some +/- 8 years. Yet, it was still growing full size pseudobulbs and blooming well.



The following photos are all of different color forms of *Gur. bowringiana*.

First up is the extremely dark 'Summit' from

the defunct Lager & Hurrell nursery.

'Black Prince'

This is one of the best of the standard color form. This plant is used extensively in line breeding.



The pure alba forms have not yet acquired the same full flowers we can find in the colored form, but continued line breeding will hopefully improve on this in the future.

An unusual semi-alba form ('One In A Million' JC/AOS) was discovered a few years ago.

When propagated by seed (selfing), most plants produced flowers with very pale color.



'One In A Million' JC/AOS



'OIAM' x self

Here an unusual all pink flower, lacking the dark spot in the lip normally seen in this species. With a line breeding program, it should be possible to improve on the flower shape.



Finally the coerulea color form, which is available with very good flower shape.

Most of these photos are of very young plants, blooming only for the first or second time. The 'Summit' photo shows the blooming of a mature plant.

Guarianthes are extremely vigorous, and will rapidly grow into specimen size plants. If you have the room, you should give them a try.