

An overview of Orchid Names on Tags

By Irene Bodell

Names on Orchid tags can be confusing. A little explanation of Orchid nomenclature will help.

Naming of Orchids is similar to our names. We have a Family name and a specific name for our self. My Family name is Bodell and my specific name is Irene e.g. Irene Bodell. Orchids always state their Family name first and the specific name second, e.g. If I was an orchid I would be called Bodell Irene.

There are many families of orchids that you are familiar with e.g. Dendrobium, Cattleya, Vanda, Paphiopedilum, Cymbidium and Oncidium to name a few. Sometimes these names are shortened on tags to read e.g. Den., Cat., V., Paph., Cym. and Oncid.

Species Orchids are named in Latin; this makes it somewhat easier to identify them from Hybrids.

Using the family name Dendrobium and the species/specific name densiflorum, we see the name Dendrobium densiflorum. The Latin name densiflorum refers to its dense flowers.

1. When writing the tag for Dendrobium densiflorum only the Dendrobium starts with a capital.
2. The word densiflorum is not a common English word
3. The two words have the same ending Dendrobium densiflorum

Many species within the Orchid Family have the same ending to the Family name and the Species name, e.g. Vanda coerulea, Paphiopedilum hirsutissimum, Cattleya dowiana, Oncidium crispum, Cymbidium pumilum. There are some exceptions to this rule; when an Orchid species is named after a person, then the species name ends in ii e.g. Sarcophilus hartmannii, named after Mr Hartman.

When two species are crossed, pollen from one plant is placed onto the stigmatic surface of the other plant, e.g. Cymbidium pumilum X Cymbidium devonianum then the **resulting seedlings are Hybrids**

This cross is written on the tag as Cymbidium pumilum X Cymbidium devonianum. After it flowers the person who made the cross names the hybrid and registers it.

Hybrids are also written with the family name first and with the second a common name, **not Latin**. When writing a tag for a hybrid all the words have a capital first letter. A Hybrid can be named after a person, for a colour or anything in common language.

Our hybrid for the Cymbidium pumilum X Cymbidium devonianum cross, made by Nester Tzelis could be named Cymbidium Five Dock.

When a seedling of this is given to each member as a growing competition and one flowers with a good colour and is owned by Peter D'Olier he calls it seedling **Cymbidium Five Dock 'Peter'**. When another seedling flowers, owned by Bob Prentice he calls his **Cymbidium Five Dock 'Prentice'**.

The person that owns the plant decides on the clonal name for that plant. Each clonal name ('Prentice' or 'Peter') identifies one plant. Both species and hybrids can have clonal names.

Mericlones. Both species and hybrids can be mericloned. To date the only family not to be cloned are the Paphiopedilums.

When a really good orchid is awarded by the Judging Panel, say, a First Class Certificate, then it might be decided that it should be mericloned; this will make more plants exactly the same as the awarded plant. It is sent to a Lab and a piece of the root tip is taken and tumbled into individual cells. These cells grow into new plants and as the material that made these new plants came from **Cymbidium Five Dock 'Peter'**, then all the plants are called **Cymbidium Five Dock 'Peter'** and have tags with **Cymbidium Five Dock 'Peter'**

We know that only plants that have flowered have clonal names, then this unflowered orchid with the tag **Cymbidium Five Dock 'Peter'** must be a mericlone. Therefore, if the plant is flowering for the first time but has a tag such as **Cymbidium Five Dock 'Peter'** it is a mericlone.