

# *Cattleya lawrenceana* Rchb.f., Gard. Chron., n.s., 23: 338 (1885).

SUBGENUS *Cattleya* SECTION *Cattleya* - Lindley

Common Name: Sir Trevor Lawrence's Cattleya



## Synonyms

*Cattleya lawrenceana* var. *concolor* Rchb.f. 1886; *Cattleya lawrenceana* var. *rosea-superba* A.H.Kent 1887

## Description

This is a Venezuelan and Guyanan species found especially atop Mount Roraima at elevations around 250 to 1200 meters as a medium sized, hot to cool growing epiphyte with erect, clavate, sulcate, compressed, green to purplish green pseudobulbs subtended by several persistent white sheaths and carrying a single, apical, oblong-ligulate, thick, rigid, obtuse, green with purple spotting leaf that blooms in the spring and early summer on a usually erect, 4" [10 cm] long, terminal, racemose, few to several [5 to 8] flowered inflorescence subtended by a broad brownish-purple spathe.<sup>3</sup>

Plants of *C. lawrenceana* are easily grown, bearing stems up to 1 5 in. (39 cm.) tall with one narrow leaf. The spikes are five to seven flowered from a brownish purple sheath. The flowers are 4-5 in. (10-13 cm.) across and are pale rose-purple to almost white. The petals are darker than the sepals, their edges often wavy and curled.

The tube-like lip is colored like the petals at the base, but the expanded portion is rose-purple with a maroon blotch. The throat is white with central purple veins. The plants bloom in April and May. This species was first found by Sir Robert Schomburgk during his 1840-44 explorations in the sandstone regions of the Roraima Mountains of Venezuela. It was mistaken by him for *C. mossiae*. It was rediscovered in 1884 by Seids while collecting for Messrs. Sander and Co. and was dedicated to Sir Trevor Lawrence who was president of the Royal Horticultural Society, London, England. *C. lawrenceana* is a variable species, a member of the labiata group, and good forms, by modern standards, are difficult to find in collections today. In nature it grows on trees in the jungle at elevations of 6 000-8000 ft. (250-3000 in.) and requires moisture and warmth, especially in the summer.

The variety 'Rosea Superba' was more robust with larger flowers of rose-purple striated with white. Also, there is a rare 'Concolor' that is nearly all white showing just a touch of pale pink when grown in full light. I must wonder, as I read some of the old varietal descriptions, especially those called 'Marmorata' whether the plants may have been infected with tobacco mosaic color break virus. There is no way to know now, but the descriptions sound very suspicious. It has not been a popular or common species in cultivation. <sup>2</sup>

## Habitat

Venezuela. This species was originally reported to have come from Guyana, but we have seen no recent reports of it occurring there. In Venezuela, it is found in the central and southern highlands in the States of Bolivar and Amazonas, especially in the vicinity of Mt. Roraima, along the Río Carrao, and around Auyán-tepuí. Plants are usually found at 1300–1950 ft. (400–600 m), but they are also reported as high as 3600–6050 ft. (1100–1850 m). Most recent collections have been from lower elevations. Plants grow at the edge of forests, almost always near rivers or streams. Unconfirmed reports indicate that *Cattleya lawrenceana* also grows in northern Brazil, but those reports may be the result of misidentification and should actually refer to a different species. --

Source: Charles Baker<sup>4</sup>

## Awards

Org.	Award	Points	Genus	Name	Cultivar	Flwrs	Buds	Infl.	Avg.	P	Year
AOS	 CCM	84	C	lawrenceana	Memoria Augusto Silva	24	9	5	6.6		2005
AOS	 CCM	84	C	lawrenceana	Kathleen	36		5	7.2		2014
AOS	 CCM	89	C	lawrenceana	Aida Silva	57	14	14	5.1		2009
AOS	 CCM	81	C	lawrenceana	Alexis	33	16	6	8.2		1991
AOS	 HCC	79	C	lawrenceana	Kathleen 	36		5	7.2		2014
AOS	 JC		C	lawrenceana	R. Pinto	5		1	5.0		1992
AOS	 JC		C	lawrenceana	Aulisi	5		1	5.0		1991

## F-1 Hybrids and Progeny

*Cattleya lawrenceana* has been used in 53 F-1 crosses since 1893. The grex with the most offspring is *Cattleya Hyeana*, registered in 1897 with *C. purpurata* as the pollen parent. *C. Hyeana* has 22 F-1 and 33 total progeny. It was awarded a CC in 1935.



*Cattleya Hyeana*

*Cattleya lawrenceana* x *C. purpurata*

Another old cross is *Cattleya Highburiensis* made with *Cattleya cinnabarina* in 1896. It produced 13 F-1's and has a total progeny of 19. Its only award is a HCC in 1983.



*Cattleya Highburiensis* HCC/AOS

There may be other *Cattleya lawrenceana* crosses out there that are not recognized because, from 1946 until 1984, it was considered synonymous with *Cattleya labiata*..

## Breeding Strengths and Weaknesses

According to A. A. Chadwick, *Cattleya lawrenceana* “seems to intensify the purple coloring of its hybrids, the end result does not seem to recapture the tantalizing charm of the original.”<sup>6</sup>

## Culture

### How to Grow *Cattleya lawrenceana*

I have found *Cattleya lawrenceana* is one of the more difficult of the *Cattleya* species to grow well. It should not be given too much water during the winter months, when it is dormant, but should be watered with care at this time of year. It responds well to light sprays when it begins to grow, and can be watered heavily when night temperatures are warm in the summertime.

*Cattleya lawrenceana* benefits from as much sun and moving air as *Cattleya warscewiczii*, which may account for the reddish color of the leaves and pseudobulbs on most plants. I find it grows best when slightly under-potted, much as you would with *Cattleya dowiamz*. Because of its small size, a 5-inch clay pot is large for this plant.

*Cattleya lawrenceana* will normally begin growing during the summer in the United States, and complete its growth during October or November, then rest until it begins flowering in early spring. It does not respond well to repotting and I recommend just moving it on into the next larger pot whenever possible. *Cattleya lawrenceana* requires a night temperature of 65 F, which is higher than most other *Cattleya* species, but will tolerate cooler temperatures down to 60 F if you cannot provide the higher temperature.

—A.A. Chadwick.<sup>6</sup>

## References

**Aldridge, Peggy. 2008.** *An Illustrated Dictionary of Orchid Genera*. Selby Botanical Garden Press.

<sup>1</sup>**la Croix, Isobyl. 2008.** *The New Encyclopedia of Orchids*. Timber Press

**Meisel, Kaufmann, Pupulin 2014.** *Orchids of Tropical America*. Cornell University Press

<sup>2</sup>**Withner, Carl L. 1988.** *The Cattleyas and Their Relatives: Volume I* Timber Press

<sup>3</sup>www.orchidspecies.com

<sup>4</sup>OrchidWiz.Database X4.2

<sup>6</sup>Chadwick, A. A. .2002. *Cattleya lawrenceana*, The Little Charmer. Orchids. March 2002