What is the Difference Between Guarianthe *bowringiana* and Guarianthe *skinneri*?

N. Dusdieker in his article, The Guarianthe shares both species are bifoliate sometimes trifoliate epiphytes or lithophytes with sympodial growth habit and produce from relatively small to large sheaths, terminal racemose inflorescences of multiple flowers

James O’Brien described Guarianthe *bowringiana* November 28, 1885, in The Gardeners’ Chronicle as Cattleya *bowringiana*. O’Brien describes examples of the species as seen in Messrs. James Veitch and Son, who imported the species. O’Brien notes Guarianthe *bowringiana* might be taken for an autumn-flowering Cattleya skinneri, but examination reveals peculiarities which render it distinct from Cattleya *skinneri*. O’Brien notes a peculiarity in that each of the pseudobulbs have an enlarged and flattened base. Furthermore, he describes the pseudobulbs are clad with sheaths of very peculiar structure, and the leaves have a glaucous tint, which make them resemble a tall form of Epidendrum *ciliare* more than Cattleya *skinneri*. Lastly, O’Brien shares, flowering as it does in the very dullest season, C. *bowringiana* will be a great acquisition.

Marie Selby Botanical Gardens discloses in its on-line platform, an article, Botanical Spotlight: The Autumn Pixie- September, in 2003, Robert Dressler and Wesley Higgins, described Cattleya *bowringiana* as Guarianthe *bowringiana*.

James Bateman described Cattleya skinneri as a new species in 1837, The American Orchid Society website discloses in an article, Guarianthe skinneri (Bateman) Dressler and W. E. Higgins reports James Bateman in 1839 in Orchids of Mexico and Guatemala, in a rather lengthy dedication to the honoree, George Ure Skinner, Bateman closes by saying, "…we can therefore do no more than select some species which may not do discredit to his name, and we confess we are unable to conceive one better fitted for our purpose than the magnificent Cattleya represented in the accompanying plate." Skinner ran a mercantile business in Guatemala and had been asked by Bateman to send plant samples of Cattleya (Guarianthe) *skinneri* to England for identification.

After the review of multiple article sources about Guarianthe and specifically differences between Guarianthe *skinneri* and Guarianthe *bowringiana*, there are morphological differences, vague characteristic differences noted with conflicting information presented. As noted in the table below, Gur. *bowringiana* is reported to have smaller flowers than Gur. *skinneri*. Gur. *bowringiana* is reported not to be fragrant, while Gur. *skinneri* is reported to be fragrant. Gur. *bowringiana* is reported to flower in the Fall and Gur. *skinneri* is reported to flower in the Spring; however, multiple articles suggest both are free flowering. It was noted that Gur. bowringiana has longer and more slender stems, leave with small pseudobulb-like joint between its leaves and pseudobulbs are enlarged and flattened at the base. One article describes Gur. skinneri as having the presence of a characteristic white band in its lip. Geographic distribution of each species does not play a significant role in distinction between the species as there is overlapping distribution areas. Even with contradicting information about each species, taxonomist have found enough evidence to keep each species distinct.

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|  | Guarianthe *bowringiana* | Guarianthe skinneri |
| Factor |  |  |
| Characteristics | 1. Small flowers, 2 to 3 inches across. 2. Longer and more slender stems and leaves. 3. Not fragrant. 4. Small pseudobulb-like joint between the leaves. 5. Pseudobulbs have an enlarged and flattened base. Pseudobulbs are tightly packed and bulbous at their base. 6. Difference in the flowers. (Not certain what the differences are as I have not found specifics.) 7. Free flowering characteristic. | 1. Large flowers, 4 to 5 inches across. 2. Fragrant 3. Vigorous grower. 4. Free flowering characteristic. 5. Club shape stems are about a foot tall. 6. Flowering in the spring. 7. The presence of the characteristic white band in the lip. 8. Flowers tend to be delicate and short lived. |
| Flowering period | Fall | Spring |
| Geographic distribution | Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico Southeast | Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico Southeast, Mexico Southwest, Nicaragua |

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