

What's in a Name?

The Hybrid Genus *Fredclarkeara*
(*Catasetum* × *Clowesia* × *Mormodes*)

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MANY ORCHID HOBBYISTS are aware of the plant *Fredclarkeara* After Dark 'SVO Black Pearl' FCC/AOS. How did the hybrid genus (nothogenus) *Fredclarkeara* get its name? It all started on December 16, 1999 when *Mormodia* Painted Desert (*Clowesia* Rebecca Northen x *Mormodes sinuata*) and *Catasetum* Donna Wise (*tenebrosum* x *Orchidglade*) were crossed together. At that time, *Mo.* Painted Desert was called a *Catamodes*, the hybrid genus between *Catasetum* and *Mormodes*. Shortly thereafter, the accomplished *Catasetinae* taxonomist George Carr noted that some *Catasetum* species are sexually dimorphic, with separate and distinctive male and female flowers, while others have perfect flowers with both male and female reproductive parts in each individual bloom. George's work led to the shifting of this latter group of species from *Catasetum* into *Clowesia*, a genus first described by John Lindley in 1843. These species include *Clowesia amazonica*, *Clowesia dodsoniana*, *Clowesia glaucoglossa*, *Clowesia rosea*, *Clowesia russelliana*, *Clowesia thylacochila* and *Clowesia warczewitzii*.

At that time, I had the cross (*Ctmds.* Painted Desert x *Ctsm.* Donna Wise) listed on the Sunset Valley Orchids website. George, who was also an avid collector and grower of *Catasetinae*, informed me of this change in a number of species from *Catasetum* to *Clowesia*. One result of this transition was renaming of hybrids with ancestors whose genus had changed. This meant that *Ctsm.* Rebecca Northen was now *Cl.* Rebecca Northen, and *Ctmds.* Painted Desert became *Mo.* Painted Desert. He also suggested that the progeny of this cross involving *Catasetum*, *Clowesia* and *Mormodes* would be eligible for a new hybrid genus name, once the first plant flowered.

Prior to that moment I had not considered the possibility of creating a new hybrid genus. I selected five plants equal in size to the best ones I was keeping and sent them to George for a gentleman's competition, stating: "The first person to bloom this new cross will have the naming rights to this genus and grex." The race was on! A year later, the first plant bloomed at Sunset Valley Orchids. It had spotted flowers and was later given the cultivar name 'Sunset Valley Orchids' FCC/AOS. I have always liked dark and mysterious names for *Catasetinae*, so After Dark seemed appropriate for this new grex. I had no idea at the time that some would bloom with black flowers. I submitted the registration with the genus



name as *Fredclarkeara* and grex name as After Dark, and a few weeks later the Royal Horticultural Society confirmed the registration. I was elated! I called George to let him know. Several years later, he was honored with a new hybrid genus, *Georgecarrara*, which is comprised of four natural genera: *Catasetum*, *Clowesia*, *Cynoches* and *Mormodes*.

The original cross of *Fdk.* After Dark was made by placing the pollen from *Ctsm.* Donna Wise 'Kathleen' AM/AOS onto the

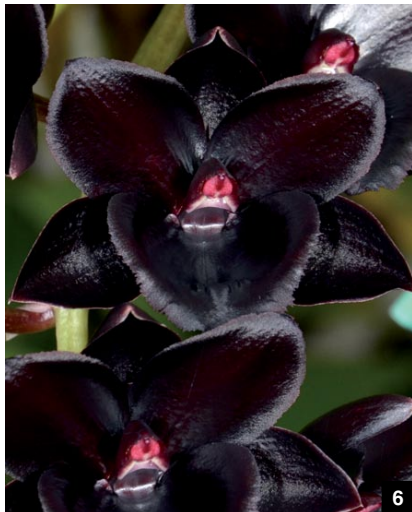
- [1] *Fdk.* After Dark 'Sunset Valley Orchids' FCC/AOS (*Mo.* Painted Desert x *Ctsm.* Donna Wise). Photograph by Charles Rowden.
- [2] *Ctsm.* Donna Wise 'Kathleen' AM/AOS (*tenebrosum* x *Orchidglade*); inset photograph *Mo.* Painted Desert 'Sunset Valley Orchids' HCC/AOS (*Cl.* Rebecca Northen x *Morm. sinuata*).
- [3] *Fdk.* After Dark 'Black Diamond' FCC/AOS (*Mo.* Painted Desert x *Ctsm.* Donna Wise)
- [4] *Fdk.* After Dark 'Crazy Good' AM/AOS (*Mo.* Painted Desert x *Ctsm.* Donna Wise)
- [5] Andy Braun sent this photo of his beautifully grown *Fdk.* After Dark 'SVO Black Pearl', that received a 97 point CCE. The awards descriptions states "a magnificent display of a highly awarded grex with 147 cupped flowers and nine buds on nine inflorescences to 30 cm on a 64 cm wide by 50 cm tall plant in sphagnum moss in a 24 cm round plastic pot; all flower segments saturated black-red; column black on superior surface, cream on inferior surface; anther cap magenta; substance firm; texture waxy."

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stigmatic surface of *Mo.* Painted Desert 'Sunset Valley Orchids' FCC/AOS. The seed capsule developed normally, as did the seedlings and the first plant bloomed in 2002, only three years after pollination. The first flowers were darkly spotted, had good form and exhibited lasting qualities. A year later, to my surprise and delight, the next two plants bloomed with solid black flowers. Wow! Until then, black orchid flowers were just a myth. Each plant had two inflorescences with 18-plus flowers apiece. I was anxious to exhibit these, but it was not to be. Rats, those no-good vermin, got the award for being the hungriest. They ate the pollen and nibbled the buds on both plants, seriously damaging the flowers. The following year, with plenty of rat bait in place, the two plants flowered again, and were awarded as 'Black is Black' AM/AOS and 'SVO Black Pearl' FCC/AOS.

The first *Fredclarkeara* grex, After Dark, was a significant breakthrough, setting a new standard for quality in *Catasetinae* breeding. The best qualities from the three genera were incorporated in its makeup. *Mormodes* is dominant for color and a strong inflorescence; *Clowesia* is dominant for shape, multiple inflorescences and flower longevity; *Catasetum* is dominant for flower size and lip shape and is known to complement or intensify bloom color. Plants of *Fdk.* After Dark have flowers with beautiful color, some as black as any orchid flower ever seen, with full shape and amazing fragrance. Plants are easy to grow and produce a high flower count with nearly unbelievable flower longevity of up to six weeks, far longer than any other *Catasetinae* species or hybrid. The origins of this remarkable characteristic are still unclear. *Catasetum* flowers last a week, *Mormodes* flowers last two to three weeks, and *Clowesia* flowers three to four weeks. At best, we would expect flower longevity to be around three weeks. Why are the flowers so long-lived? We do not know, but this trait is surely appreciated.

The flower color of the first *Fdk.* After Dark captured the most attention. Some of the first cultivars awarded were: 'Black is Black', 'SVO Black Pearl', 'SVO Black Knight', 'Ursa Negra', 'SVO Black Diamond' and 'Black Ice'. Some excerpts from the flower descriptions read: "sepals and petals black-burgundy; lip jet-black" and "entire flower very dark burgundy, appearing black." The exceptional cultivar, 'SVO Black Pearl' FCC/AOS, was cloned and distributed to hobbyists around the world. Not all the cultivars were



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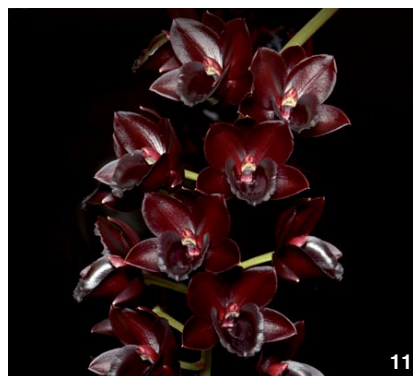
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- [6] *Fdk.* Midnight Sky 'Dark Perfection' (*Mo.* Painted Desert × *Ctsm.* Mark Dimmitt)
- [7] *Fdk.* Desert Tenor 'Sunset Valley Orchids' FCC/AOS (*Mo.* Painted Desert × *Ctsm. tenebrosus*)
- [8] *Fdk.* No Doubt 'Summer Wine' (*Mo.* Painted Desert × *Ctsm.* Susan Fuchs)
- [9] *Fdk.* Frank Smith 'Sunset Valley Orchids' FCC/AOS (*Mo.* Painted Desert × *Ctsm.* John C. Burchett)
- [10] *Fdk.* Gemstones 'SVO Amazing' AM/AOS (*Mo.* Painted Desert × *Ctsm.* Orchidglade)
- [11] *Fdk.* Alexa's Raspberries 'SVO' (*Mo.* Painted Desert × *Ctsm. expansum*).
- [12] Here is a good comparison of the improvements in overall size, lip shape and color. On the left is *Fdk.* After Dark and on the right (Midnight Sky × *Ctsm.* John C. Burchett).
- [13] *Fdk.* Dark There After 'SVO Winter's Night' FCC/AOS (After Dark × *Ctsm.* Donna Wise)

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black. Some were boldly spotted deep burgundy, others a deep cherry red, and a couple were even green. The first clone of *Fdk*. After Dark was awarded in 2004, and awards are still being given 14 years later, most recently in January 2020, when Andy Braun received a Certificate of Cultural Excellence (CCE) at the Mid-Atlantic judging center for his spectacular 'SVO Black Pearl' FCC/AOS. On an interesting side note, these flowers and the fragrance inspired the development of a perfume called Tom Ford Black Orchid!

Fredclarkeara After Dark was a very successful hybrid, but *Fredclarkeara* breeding did not stop there. The superior qualities of this hybrid genus were so significant that more hybrids had to be made. There are now 54 registered *Fredclarkeara* hybrids, and the success of this breeding direction can be measured by the number of America Orchid Society awards received. To date, *fredclarkearas* have received 103 awards, including 17 First Class Certificates (FCC/AOS) and 62 Awards of Merit (AM/AOS). Outside the boundaries of the AOS judging system, *fredclarkearas* have earned an additional 52 awards worldwide. This is remarkable productivity for a recent hybrid genus.

The first generation *Fredclarkeara* hybrids were crosses made with *Mo*. Painted Desert 'Sunset Valley Orchids' HCC/AOS (*Cl*. Rebecca Northen × *Morm*. *sinuata*) as the capsule parent and a *Catasetum* as the pollen parent. Using *Mo*. Painted Desert as a parent resulted in many excellent offspring and awards.

Second-generation breeding strives to improve flower size, enlarge and flatten the lips and develop new flower colors, with a particular focus on flattening the cupped lip shape imparted by *Mo*. Painted Desert. The new hybrids were all made using *catasetums* with large flat lips as the pollen parent and a *Fredclarkeara* as the capsule parent. The improvements have been substantial, and second-generation *fredclarkearas* are even more impressive than their capsule parents.

The development of *fredclarkearas* in new colors required some new *Mormodia* (*Clowesia* × *Mormodes*) hybrids to be made. Thus far, two *Mormodia* hybrids have been fertile and shown promise as parents: *Mormodia* Lime Tiger (*Clowesia* Grace Dunn × *Mormodes elegans*) and *Mormodia* Jumbo World (*Cl*. Grace Dunn × *Mormodes buccinator*).

What does the future hold for *Fredclarkeara* breeding? How about flowers in orange and pink tones? This may be easier said than done, but we are



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ARNOLD GUM



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HISAKAZU SUGIYAMA



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FRED CLARKE



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TERRY BOTTOM



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- [14] *Fdk.* After Midnight 'Sunset Valley Orchids' AM/AOS (After Dark × *Ctsm.* Mark Dimmitt)
- [15] *Fdk.* Enter Light 'SVO Grasshopper' AM/AOS (After Dark × *Ctsm. pileatum*)
- [16] *Fdk.* Enter Light 'SVO Dark Beauty' FCC/AOS (After Dark × *Ctsm. pileatum*)
- [17] *Fdk.* Doubtless 'Sunset Valley Orchids' (No Doubt × *Ctsm.* Orchidglade)
- [18] *Fdk.* Beverly Danielson 'Midnight' GM/JOGA (After Midnight × *Ctsm.* Orchidglade)
- [19] *Mormodia* Lime Tiger 'St. Augustine' AM/AOS (*Cl.* Grace Dunn × *Morm. elegans*)
- [20] *Fdk.* Majestic Orchids Shopper (After Midnight × *Ctsm.* John C. Burchett)
- [21] *Fdk.* Providence (Mo. Jumbo World × *Ctsm. pileatum*)
- [22] *Mormodia* Jumbo World 'Olympic Gold' (*Cl.* Grace Dunn × *Morm. buccinator*)
- [23] *Fdk.* Turning Point (Mo. Lime Tiger × *Ctsm. expansum*)
- [24] *Fdk.* Upgrade (Mo. Jumbo World × *Ctsm. spitzii*)

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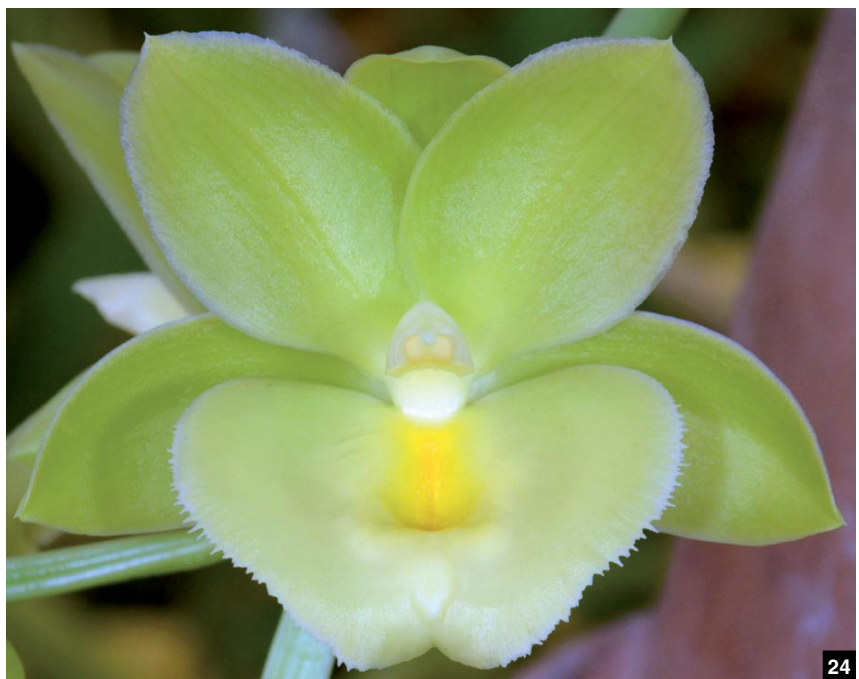
making new *Mormodia* hybrids with the appropriately colored *Mormodes* for use in future breeding. It may take a while to achieve this goal, but I am sure it will be a fascinating journey!

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am greatly honored and indebted to have Ron Kaufmann and Sue Bottom as my editors; their combined insights and wisdom are truly beneficial.

— Fred Clarke owns and operates Sunset Valley Orchids, located near San Diego, California, USA. His interest in *Catasetinae* spans over 30 years, and he is recognized as the foremost breeder of plants in this group. His hybridization efforts and commitment to the worldwide education of hobbyists in the culture of *Catasetinae* has created renewed interest in this amazing group and helped to establish *Catasetinae* as ideal plants for growers of all types (email: fred.clarke@att.net; website: www.sunsetvalleyorchids.com).

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