

ONCIDIUM ALLIANCE

Everyone is probably familiar with the common yellow 'Dancing Lady' orchid that grows in your garden. The term 'oncidium alliance' refers to a large number of different genera all belonging to the subtribe Oncidiinae, such as *Brassia*, *Miltonia*, *Odontoglossums*, etc. By interbreeding different genera a great range of different shaped and coloured flowers has been produced. These intergeneric hybrids are quite easy to grow. As some are warm growing and some are cool growing it is a good idea for the grower to find out the growing requirements of the genera used as parents. Reference books such as 'What Orchid Is That' are very useful for this. You will of course need to be able to decipher the genera used to make the hybrid. Reference back to the Sanders 'List of Orchid Genera' is probably the easiest way to get a detailed list of intergeneric hybrids. Below is listed a few of the more common hybrids you will come across in the Oncidium Alliance:



- Aliceara (Alcra) = *Brassia* x *Miltonia* x *Oncidium*
Bakerara (Bak) = *Brassia* x *Miltonia* x *Odontoglossum* x *Oncidium*
Brassia (Brs) = Natural genus
Brassidium (Brsdm) = *Brassia* x *Oncidium*
Colmanara (Colm) = *Miltonia* x *Odontoglossum* x *Oncidium*
Degarmoara (Dgmra) = *Brassia* x *Miltonia* x *Odontoglossum*
- Hamelwellsara (Hmwsa) = *Aganisia* x *Batemannia* x *Otostylis* x
Zygopetelum x *Zygosepalum*
Maclellanara (Mclna) = *Brassia* x *Odontoglossum* x *Oncidium*
Miltassia (Mtssa) = *Brassia* x *Miltonia*
Oncidium (Onc) = Natural Genus
Vuylstekeara (Vuyl) = *Cochlioda* x *Miltonia* x *Odontoglossum*



Brassia lanceana

GROWING CONDITIONS

As a general rule most Oncidium Alliance require slightly cooler conditions than Cattleyas, Dendrobiums etc. Grow your plants in the shadier section of your greenhouse where they do not get the hot summer sun. If you do not have a shady spot then grow them lower to the ground where they will get any breeze blowing through the greenhouse. If you look at the leaves of your Oncidium type plants you will see that most have a soft type of leaf. As a guide usually plants with soft leaves like more shade, plants with hard thick leaves like more sun.



POTTING MIX

If you look at the roots on the Oncidiums you will see that they have a finer type of root. This indicates they like a bit more moisture than orchids with larger, fleshier roots like cattleyas and vandas. We find we have excellent results by using sphagnum as our potting media. If you do not like using sphag then use a bark mix a bit finer than you would use for potting cattleyas in the same size pot

POTTING IN SPAGNUM

Use only top grade sphagnum. We only use export grade 'Austmoss' brand sphag from Tasmania. It costs a little more but in the long term it is worth the expense. The pots you use should be the squat type with plenty of drainage holes. The 'Port Pot' brand pots are excellent for sphag use. Alternatively, the squat terra cotta pots can be used. These have the added advantage of keeping the plant cooler as the water leeches out through the terracotta. This is particularly useful for the real cool growing oncidium types. Some people mix crumbled polystyrene or perlite through their



sphag – we prefer to use straight sphag. A little bit of crumbled polystyrene in the bottom helps with drainage. When using sphag the pot must be fairly tightly packed with sphag – the looser the sphag the more water it holds. A layer of small stones or pebbles (or something similar) on the sphag will stop the green algae from growing over the top of the sphagnum. Do **not** let your sphagnum moss dry out as it is very difficult to rewet.

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