

Orchids Don't Do That!

Well, to quote John Sullivan, orchids do not read the books, so they don't always know what it is they are not supposed to do. When you see a lot of plants, invariably you come across plants doing something unusual.

First example is not so unusual. ***Epidendrum calanthum*** is a little odd, in that it has non-resupinate flowers (they are not 'upside down' like other reed stem Epis). My plant is forma album. It is fairly tall, so flowers are



4-5' above the bench. It also regularly self-pollinates, so it eventually distributes seed from on up high. Since *Epidendrum* seed is fairly easy to germinate, every so often seedlings appear in the pots of other nearby plants; here in a *Rhynchostylis gigantea* basket.

Oncidium hybrids have 2 or 3 layers of bracts cradling the base of their pseudobulbs. From each bract, it can produce either an inflorescence, or a new growth (= there is an 'eye' at the bottom of each bract).

The norm is 1 or 2 inflorescences first (I have seen as many as 4), and then 1 or 2 new growths later on. In very rare cases, it might do a belated inflorescence after the first one.

Some plants on occasion will do a smaller inflorescence from the very top of the pseudobulb, so apparently there is a normally dormant 'eye' at that point. This was also confirmed by a *Zygopetalum* backbulb division, which sprouted a new growth from the top of the pseudobulb (see photo).



In a different part of the orchid family, we know that *Vandas* have one 'eye' in each leaf axil, which can produce either an inflorescence, or later on a basal keiki (if the plant grows sufficiently tall). This is gospel, so imagine my surprise when I came across this:

This plant bloomed twice from the same leaf, and neither inflorescence came through the leaf from the axil below. I checked it VERY carefully.



I have come across another oddity in the *Vanda* family. When I bloomed ***Vanda (Ascocentrum) Motes Adorbs (= ampullacea x christensoniana)*** the 2nd or 3rd time (so it was a mature plant), I noticed that a few flowers were holding much longer than normal, maybe 2-3 months. When I took a closer look, I discovered that the inflorescence had formed a keiki at the tip.

It did not grow fast, but after about a year it was large enough, and had grown sufficient roots, that I could separate it and pot it up.

This plant produced keikis on two inflorescences that year, but has never repeated this trick.



I do have one other plant, which does this on a regular basis, on about every third inflorescence.



Holcoglossum Pink Dragonet

This is (*Holcoglossum flavescens* x *V. coerulescens*), which is quite floriferous. It is a somewhat sequential bloomer (forming more buds at the tip of the inflorescence), so it blooms over a long period of time. In the photo you can see a fresh inflorescence, plus the tip of an older one from the year before, with the start of a keiki at the tip.

Similar to *V. Motes Adorbs*, the keikis are slow to grow and set roots, but they get there eventually. This plant has produced some 6-8 offsets over the past 4 years.

The next example is also from the Vanda family: **V. Ambrosian Discovery 'Fair Orchids' AM/AOS** (*insignis* x *tricolor*).



- As the name implies, it is slightly fragrant, but that is not the greatest surprise.
- As can be seen in the 2nd photo, this barely blooming size plant is already starting basal keikis. With the *V. tricolor* parent, this is not a total



surprise either.

- Most Vandas this size will bloom once or twice a year. Very large plants perhaps 3-4 times.

Photo shows the plant the year it was awarded (2021), it had bloomed once the year before, and it bloomed twice more in 2021.

Since then, it has bloomed from **every single leaf** = 8-10 times annually.

I have other mature/specimen size Vandas, and they bloom well (3-4 times annually), but none that come anywhere near what this *V. Ambrosian Discovery* can do.

The last plant is a mature ***Chysis bractescens***, which I have grown from a tiny seedling in a 2" pot. It is currently in a 9" square basket, where it blooms with flowers of 2 different colors. Tracing the rhizome, it is clearly a single plant (99% certain); it is due for repotting, at which time I should be able to confirm this 100%.

