

# *Odontoglossum crispum*

*Odontoglossum crispum* syn. *Odontoglossum alexandrae* has had a major influence on the breeding of *Odontoglossum* hybrids. This species is native to Columbia in South America, coming from high up in the Andes. It was first 'discovered' by Theodore Hartweg in 1841 whilst he was collecting for the Horticultural Society of London. John Lindley, the eminent English botanist and orchidologist described Hartweg's specimen in 1852, however, it was not introduced into cultivation until 1863. In 1898 it was noted that on several occasions 6,000 to 15,000 plants of *crispum*, mostly from the Bogota region in Columbia, were sold in the auction rooms. By 1900 the 'better' varieties of this much-sort-after species were bringing up to \$1600, although not many of the plants actually survived.

Odontoglossums (the name referring to the toothed crest of the lip of most species) are generally described as having arching racemes that grow from the base of pseudobulbs. The flowers are usually round and white, cream to yellow, with dark spots or blotches. This also describes *Odontoglossum crispum*. Charles Marden Fitch in the book All About Orchids says that 'crispum is the foundation for large modern hybrids.' There are many varieties and colour forms but usually *crispum* flowers are between 6 - 10cm across, with frilled

edges of the petals, very showy, round, white, (may be flushed pink) with 1 or more spots or blotches of red or purple but all endowed with a golden-yellow crest on the lip and have a glistening waxy appearance. *crispum* is used to improve the flower size and shape when hybridizing, however it has also been line-bred, so today's *crispum* plants are the result of generations of selective breeding.

## Basic Culture.



*Odontoglossum crispum*

*Odontoglossums* do not enjoy extremes of temperature. Try to maintain temperature between 8-10C - 26-28C. Short durations below or above this will not cause major damage provided the plants are in good condition have adequate moisture and shade if the temperature is high and are somewhat drier if the temperature is low.

'Good' air movement is essential.

Plenty of water in summer and somewhat drier in winter.

Aim for approximately 60% humidity if the plants are in a glass or bush house.

Bark mix, sphagnum moss and rock-wool have all been known to be good growing medium.

Fertilizer can be used at a quarter of the recommended strength.

*Helen Edwards*