

**CYMBIDIUM ENSIFOLIUM VAR.  
HAEMATODES TRIM.**

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*CURATOR: HENERATGODA BOTANIC GARDENS, GAMPAAHA*

**C**YMBIDIUM is the name given by Swartz to a fairly large group of tropical orchids of the Vanda tribe consisting of both epiphytes and terrestrials. There are about fifty species of the genus, the majority of which are to be found growing in the warm parts of China, Japan, Australia and the Indo-Malayan regions.

*Cymbidium ensifolium* var. *haematodes* Trim. is a terrestrial, unlike its local relative, *Cymbidium bicolor* which is the commonest epiphyte on the wayside trees at mid and low elevations. It is confined to certain humid zones like Hantane, Galaha, Bogawantalawa and certain parts of Hewagam Korale. Even in these places the plant often escapes notice owing to its long, narrow grass-like leaves, of which it has a tuft which may reach three feet in length, each being half to three quarters of an inch in breadth and borne on a short stem.

The long, worm-like roots are of a creamy white colour. The dull citron-yellow flowers, with pink-veined sepals and petals and a lip beautifully mottled with a darker shade of the same colour, are about two to two and a half inches across and are borne on an erect stalk one and a half to two feet in height.

The plant is worthy of inclusion in any collection of orchids as it flowers three times a year, especially during the wet months, when most other orchids are out of bloom. This orchid responds readily to cultivation but resents too much root disturbance. When re-potting becomes necessary it must be done but provision should be made for the plant to remain undisturbed in its new receptacle for about two years.

Well decomposed leaf-mould should form two thirds of the compost, the remainder being cattle manure mixed with charcoal and a handful of finely crushed crocks. The drainage should be

carefully adjusted as the plant requires copious supplies of water when in full growth. A few pieces of sun-baked cowdung of the size of marbles, sparsely placed over the drainage will be of benefit at a later stage when the roots come in contact with these: but this should not be overdone.

During active growth or when the plant is about to flower a little liquid manure (cowdung dissolved in water) once a week will enable the plant to produce better blooms. This application should cease as soon as the flowers open so as to enable them to remain for a longer period.

After potting, the plant may be placed in the shade until new shoots appear when it may be shifted into the open.

At low elevations it will thrive in a shady spot or in the verandah, but it prefers a warm, dry atmosphere.