

Natural History Snippets

Brief reports by members based on their observations of nature

Members are invited to submit their photographs and stories to muhudubella@gmail.com for publication

Cymbidiums in Sri Lanka

The orchid genus *Cymbidium* is popular in temperate climates as they make good potted or bedding plants, being ground orchids. Sri Lanka has three accepted species in the genus—one terrestrial, and the other two epiphytic. The terrestrial *Cymbidium haematodes* is classed as Vulnerable in the 2020 Red List of Threatened Species, while *C. bicolor* and *C. aloifolium* are of Least Concern. *C. bicolor* and *C. aloifolium* are similar; *aloifolium* has prominent stripes on its lip while *bicolor* has blotches & spots.



Cymbidium bicolor in cultivation.
(l) Plant growing on a tree with pods.
(c) A flower enlarged.
(r) Flowers on the long, pendulous raceme.



Cymbidium cf. *finlaysonianum*. A species from the far east in cultivation. Photographed at an Orchid Circle of Ceylon exhibition in 2004.



Cymbidium haematodes
formerly
C. ensifolium

C. haematodes is "Rather common in open places in the submontane or mid country wet evergreen forests up to 1524 m altitude..."

(Jayaweera, 1981, Revised Handbook to the Flora of Ceylon, Vol. II)

Jayaweera (1981) gives the name *C. aloifolium* to the plants with maroon-striped flowers. In a note he states that "Lindley recognised *Cymbidium bicolor* as a separate species from *C. aloifolium*, but the characters are not sufficiently distinct to maintain this separation." Both names are still recognised and are listed in the Red List as occurring in Sri Lanka. The name used by Henry Trimen in the 1898 Handbook to the Flora of Ceylon was *Cymbidium bicolor*, with *C. aloifolium* as a synonym. J. D. Hooker, in a note in the same publication states that the name *aloifolium* was assigned to a plant from Jaffna. Dr. Suranjan Fernando explains that *bicolor* has blotches or spots on the lip while *aloifolium* has stripes. A website of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew has named images.

