

A Pot Within a Pot

By Keith Nelson

I recently received a *Cymbidiella falcigera*. This plant is native to Madagascar along the coast and along rivers in forests at elevations of sea level to 400 meters.



***Cymbidiella falcigera* (Rchb.f.) Garay**
[as *Cymbidiella humblotii* (Rolfe)
Rolfe], *Flore de Madagascar et des
Comores, Orchidées*, vol. 49(2): Or-
chidées, p. 63 (1941) [M.J. Vesque]

The plant arrived fine and looked good. I researched the care and found it needs hot temperatures and high humidity. I like that, no cold rests or temperature changes to have to keep track of. Deep shade, again good, the high light parts of my house are overcrowded. Water and fertilize copiously as they are robust and

vigorous growers, great, I am heavy handed with a watering can so that is satisfying.

This orchid requires excellent drainage. This is a requirement that required examination of the growing medium. The medium for my plant looked like a medium for terrestrial orchids. Another species, *Cymbidiella fiabellata*, does not require a well-draining medium and prefers a wet medium like sphagnum moss with a little humus. I wonder if someone got the two mixed up sometime in the past. The medium did not look like a well-draining medium, so after a few days I decided to take it out of the pot and examine the roots.

The medium looked like some type of terrestrial mix with a few Styrofoam peanuts. Fig. 1. Figure 1 also shows a surprise, there was a little plastic net pot in the middle of the pot. This plastic net



Figure 1

pot was surrounded by the other medium in a 6" plastic pot. I know October is not the time to re-pot but as long as I was this far, the thing to do was to push ahead. Sometimes one has no choice but to repot when the plant needs it.

I cut the plastic pot apart. Inside the pot was a tight ball of soggy sphagnum moss and roots. Most of the roots in the sphagnum moss were bad as were others closely surrounding the net pot, Fig. 2. The best roots were coming out from



Figure 2

the plant above the original medium. These little net pots are very common in mass produced Phalaenopsis so be aware of this. I was a little surprised to find it on this species orchid.

Figure 3 shows the roots after they have been cleaned and are ready for re-potting. I also



Figure 3

found there were two distinct plants but

because the new plants were firmly imbedded in the tree fern stake it was impractical to separate them. Figure 4 shows the newly potted plant in a large Aircone pot. I like the



Figure 4

plastic Aircone pots so I can see the humidity inside the pot. You can see there is quite a bit of growth up the accompanying stake with roots growing into the stake. There is also a large growth behind the stake.

After I was finished I found another reference that said Cymbidiellas are extremely intolerant of re-potting and root disturbance, more so than most orchids a grower might ever encounter. All Cymbidiellas have a reputation for refusing to bloom for several years after a re-potting. This plant certainly went through a serious repotting so I may be in for a long wait.