

# Ascocentrum garayi

By Martin Motes

A Bright Exposure is Key to Successfully Flowering this Vanda Relative



GREG ALLIKAS

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*ASCOCENTRUM GARAYI* PACKS MORE brilliant color into a small space than nearly any orchid. Four to six hyacinthlike, 4-inch (10-cm) plumes of golden orange, perfectly formed flowers emanating from a 3-inch (7.5-cm) pot earn this species a place in any orchid collection. Long confused with the Javanese species *Ascocentrum miniatum*, *Asctm. garayi* is an Indochinese plant quickly distinguished by its shorter, thicker foliage and overall more compact growth habit. The lip shape also differs from *Asctm. miniatum*.



Martin Motes

The key to the simple cultivation of ascocentrums also lies in an understanding of its plant architecture. Culture is similar to that for vandas (from which genus DNA evidence shows little difference), but the short thick leaves of *Asctm. garayi* denote a plant that needs high light intensity. It should be grown in the brightest part of the greenhouse, windowsill or light garden. Like vandas, *Asctm. garayi* does best with abundant water but should dry quickly. Also as with vandas, the best advice under all growing conditions is to water with two or three passes until the roots turn overall dark green. Water again when the roots have returned to a white appearance.



GREG ALLIKAS

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Outdoors in tropical and subtropical areas, *Asctm. garayi* is typically grown in slatted wood or plastic baskets to allow for the rapid drying that it needs following heavy rains. In temperate greenhouses, on windowsills or under lights, clay pots are more practical. These can also be partially filled with bark, charcoal or wood pieces relatively large for the 3–4 inch (7.5–10 cm) pots that usually contain this diminutive species. In a mixed collection of orchids it is advisable always to water *Asctm. garayi* (and the other Aeriidinae) first and then at the end of the watering session, last. Weekly to biweekly applications of Peters Excel® 15-5-15, plus additional applications of potassium nitrate and magnesium sulfate will keep the plants well nourished. Michigan State University 19-4-23 is also recommended. Like most other Aeriidinae, *Asctm.*

[1] This is the true *Ascocentrum miniatum*, a native of Java, and not the plant properly referred to now as *Ascocentrum garayi*. The narrow straight lip and reddish coppery color of *Asctm. miniatum* distinguish it from *Asctm. garayi*. Shown here is *Asctm. miniatum* 'Mary Motes', CHM/AOS. Grower: Motes Orchids.

[2] Diminutive size and ease of culture make *Asctm. garayi* a favorite. You will find this orchid also offered for sale as *Asctm. miniatum*. *Ascocentrum garayi* is distributed in Laos, Thailand and Vietnam. Mature plants produce many keikis, making it an excellent choice for specimen culture. A well-grown plant should have thick, rigid leaves liberally sprinkled with purple anthocyanin spots. Grower: Greg Allikas.





LARRY JOHNSON

3



GREG ALLIKAS

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*garayi* does best at temperatures between 60 F (15 C) and 86 F (30 C). Growth will be slowed or stopped at temperatures below 50 F (10 C) and above 94 F (34 C).

*Ascocentrum garayi* has been much improved in flower quality by selections in both Thailand and Florida. There is no reason for anyone to seek wild-collected plants. In addition to improving the species, breeders in both Thailand and Florida have created numerous colorful, compact hybrids that are exceptionally well suited to cultivation under all circumstances and highly desirable for their free-flowing nature.

An early line of highly successful breeding in Thailand arose from *Ascocenda* Pralor (Meda Arnold × *Asctm. garayi*). This hybrid consistently transmits the golden-orange color and the desirably compact growth habit of *Asctm. garayi* to its progeny. Both *Ascocenda* Su-Fun Beauty (*V. Bangkokapi* × Pralor) and *Ascocenda* Udomchai (*V. Nam Phung* × Parlor) are famous for brightening greenhouses with their nearly constant bloom. The color dominance of *Asctm. garayi* in these hybrids makes distinguishing between these lovely orange flowers difficult.

A more distinct and varied line of breeding began in Thailand with *Ascocenda* Sagarik (*V. sanderiana* × *Asctm. garayi*). This hybrid when bred to the *V. sanderiana*-like *Vanda* Filipino (*sanderiana* × Lenavat) produced the golden-masked *Ascda. Motes Goldpiece*, a winner of both AOS and international recognition for its nearly perfect form and rich color. When *Ascda. Motes Goldpiece* was crossed to *Ascda. Motes Mandarin* a range of color beyond the gold of *Asctm. garayi* emerged in the highly awarded *Ascocenda* Miami Mandarin.”

*Ascocenda* Motes Goldpiece crossed to the deep purple *Ascocenda* John De Biase (Kasem’s Delight × Yip Sum Wah) produced the even more variable-colored and highly awarded *Ascocenda* Bartholomew Motes.

*Ascocenda* Motes Goldpiece has been the most successful parent of standard *Ascocenda* hybrids. It is also the most successful parent of new lines of breeding using *Vanda lamellata* to lengthen the spike and separate the flowers on densely packed hybrids from *Asctm. garayi*. Perhaps the finest of these is *Ascocenda* Motes Burning Sands, recognized both by American Orchid Society and World Orchid Conference judges for its perfectly arranged brilliantly colored flowers. *Vanda lamellata* has been also successfully paired to *ascocendas* of the *Ascda. Pralor* lines to produce more vividly colored orange flowers on longer stems, such as in *Ascocenda* Motes Ginger Hot (*V. lamellata* var. *boxallii* × Motes Goldenrod), *Ascocenda* Fulford’s Gold (Udomchai × *V. lamellata*) and *Ascocenda* Karina Luciano Schmidt (Fuchs Inferno × *V. lamellata*). These vigorous hybrids consistently produce their long stems of glowing gold flowers several times per year.

Both *Ascocentrum garayi* and its hybrids have earned a well deserved place in the hearts and collections of orchid growers worldwide.

*Martin Motes, PhD, a second-generation orchidist, has been growing vandas in South Florida for more than 50 years. He has bred hundreds of new hybrids and received scores of American Orchid Society awards, including three FCCs and three Awards of Quality. His hybrids swept gold,*

[3] *Ascocentrum garayi* is still commonly confused with *Asctm. miniatum* as in the beautifully grown *Asctm. garayi* ‘Mary’s Easter Basket’, CCM/AOS, shown here. *Ascocentrum miniatum* is a larger plant with longer more narrow leaves than *Asctm. garayi*. Grower: Jean Wilson.

[4] *Ascocenda* Motes Goldpiece ‘Mary Motes’, AM/AOS (*Ascda. Sagarik* × *V. Filipino*), with a boldly marked, vividly colored, full-formed flower, garnered a silver medal at the 18th World Orchid Conference. Grower: Motes Orchids.

*silver and bronze medals at the 18th World Orchid Conference in Dijon, France, where Vanda Mary Motes (Blue Grig × tessellata) garnered the trophy for Best Vanda in Show. He is an accredited AOS judge and author of three books: Vandas: Their History, Botany, and Culture, Florida Orchid Growing and Florida Vanda Growing plus articles in Orchid Digest, The Orchid Review, Orchids and elsewhere. Motes, in collaboration with David Roberts, PhD, of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, is working on a monograph of the genus Vanda. He is looking forward to celebrating his 35th anniversary of marriage to Mary Motes, author of the widely praised memoir of Yugoslavia, Kosovo, Kosovo, and the cult, best-selling comic novel Orchid Territory based on the arcane orchid world of South Florida. 25000 Southwest 162nd Avenue, Redland, Florida 33031 (e-mail martinmotes@gmail.com).*