

Dendrobium Speciosum Var. Speciosum 'National White' HCC/AOC-NSW



Den. speciosum 'Nifty'

Not just a rock lily but a diamond (lily)!

National White is my favourite native orchid and possibly my favourite orchid overall. Very few people fail to be impressed by the sight of it. For me it was love at first sight.

It was introduced to the orchid growing fraternity by Col Brandon who achieved one of the earliest quality awards with it when it gained HCC number 297 from the AOC in September 1979. The virtues of National White that were acknowledged by the judges on this occasion were:

- Pristine white flowers offset by the dark purple markings on the labellum
 - The upright racemes with all flowers well above the leaves, no need for stakes with this one!
 - The very generous flower count that is naturally arranged to form a perfect 'foxtail' display
- Excellently formed flowers that put their arms (petals) and legs (sepals) in the air to present a flat face to the onlooker.

Overall the impression is one of a snow white orchid that has well and truly got its showbench act together. It was further honoured at the Australasian Native Orchid Conference in Wollongong where it was awarded section champion.

As a parent National White has produced many outstanding hybrids such as Den. Karloo (with Gracious Falcon), Den. Lynette Banks (with Eureka), Den. Graham Hewitt (with Ellen) and Den. Hilda Poxon (with tetragonum var. giganteum). As a grandparent it has been involved in the highly awarded Den. Karsun and Den. Kayla hybrids.

National White's hybrids invariably inherit its spike habit, high flower count, flower form and modest growth dimensions. A notable trait in these offspring is that National White tends to mask the colour contribution of the other parent. A sure fire way to produce cleanskin or lightly spotted Hilda Poxons is to use it as a parent. Several attempts to produce red Den. Delicatums using National White (seeing that white speciosums are rather rare then surely the white would be recessive) have failed to produce the desired result regardless of how dark the Den. kingianum was. The other notable reproductive feature of National White is its reluctance to produce viable hybrid seed pods although attempts to breed it with other Den. speciosums have been more successful. The seedlings from such outcrosses are showing great promise with those to flower so far being of very high quality.

National white has small to average sized pseudobulbs with unique very broad, sometimes almost rounded leaves. It flowers reliably each season and will produce racemes from the secondary eyes under the leaves as readily as it does from the primary eyes. Occasionally it will produce so many racemes that the plant struggles to maintain the effort needed resulting in small, short-lived flowers. It prefers to be grown under shadier conditions than most other rock lilies, possibly because it lacks some pigment or because of its broad leaves. It is also quite intolerant of overfertilizing as several growers who were going to "put decent canes on it" have found out to their regret. Otherwise

Dendrobium speciosum var. speciosum 'National White' HCC/AOC-NSW is a real gem which should be treated the same as any other rock lily.

Neville Roper
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