

SUTHERLAND SHIRE ORCHID SOCIETY

Paphiopedilum Winston Churchill



Paph. Sunny Tears x Winston Churchill

It is true of most orchid genera that occasionally a single pivotal hybrid is made that go on to influence breeding for generations to come. Paphiopedilum Winston Churchill, registered by Stuart Low Co. of England in 1951 is one such hybrid. As its name implies it was named in honour of British wartime Prime Minister and statesman Winston Churchill from a crossing of Paph. Eridge and Paph. Hampton. These two parents appear in other registered hybrids, but none to rival the famous Winston Churchill they created.

Orchid enthusiasts around the world often comment about the impact Paphiopedilum Winston Churchill had on American paphiopedilum breeding. This is true it did, but it must be emphasised that this is an English hybrid that was moved to America during World War II. Like so many orchid

genera, Paphiopedilum stud stock was moved to the USA during World War II to avoid being wiped out by German bombing. There was also the restriction on fuel for any purpose other than providing food. In England solid fuel was used to fire most glasshouse boilers.

How many hybrids of the cross were ever raised is unknown, but two outstanding cultivars, the spotted "Indomitable" FCC/AOS and the red "Redoubtable" FCC/AOS emerged to dominate red and spotted standard paphiopedilum parentage for decades to follow. They were and are so valuable as stud breeding plants; they are still widely used today almost sixty years after the hybrid was originally made. Numerous other cultivars including "Invincible" and "Atlas" have been used extensively as breeding plants through the decades. Several Winston Churchill cultivars are tetraploids and as such exert a great and lasting influence on their progeny. The cross of Paph. Winston Churchill has been remade several times but to my knowledge none of the progeny have surpassed the original.

The most famous cultivars "Redoubtable" and "Indomitable" are very fertile parents but need careful mating to avoid results that can be somewhat indiscriminate. i.e. the rather small spotting of "Indomitable" can be so overwhelmed that a "brushed/muddy" effect is achieved. A partner with dominant colour and spots is required, such as Paph Small World (Ernest E Platt x Blendia) This hybrid was made in the early 1950's by the famous Paphiopedilum breeder Ronnie Ratcliffe. Bred to Paph Winston Churchill "Indomitable" it produces Paph British Bulldog,(1979) a prime example of a wonderful Winston Churchill hybrid. When we look at Sanders List of Hybrids it shows that over 300 hybrids have been registered from this grex to date. This number will surely grow, as many of today's paphiopedilum catalogues still have seedlings available with Paph Winston Churchill as one of the parents. The list is too long to produce the number of Paph. Winston Churchill hybrids that have gone on to become superior breeding plants, gained awards world wide, and have been show champions, in their own right. In the world of Orchids, Paphiopedilum Winston Churchill must stand as one of the most pivotally important hybrids ever made. Paphiopedilum breeders around the world look forward to seeing its name continue to appear in breeding circles for years to come and appreciate the outstanding progeny it continues to produce.

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