

# Awards Quarterly Style Book

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AMERICAN ORCHID SOCIETY  
16700 AOS Lane, Delray Beach, Florida 33446-4351  
Telephone 561-404-2050 Fax 561-404-2045  
E-mail [TheAOS@aos.org](mailto:TheAOS@aos.org) Web site [orchidweb.org](http://orchidweb.org)

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## Introduction

Perhaps you never noticed. Descriptions in the *Awards Quarterly* follow a definite format and logical sequencing. Do all judges write their descriptions so uniformly? Hardly!

Most award descriptions received in the Awards Registrar's office are reformatted to fit the style used in the *AQ*. This "style," as it is referred to in editorial circles, has been rather like an oral history passed from one generation to the next. At the urging and request of the late Donald E. Herman and me, Rufino Osorio prepared a printed style manual outlining the format and the sequencing of elements that were used. His purpose was to document the style that was first instituted by Dr. Alec Pridgeon and has been used by AOS staff for the last five years.

As National Training Coordinator, I am always on the lookout for ideas to help implement training procedures. This collection of information appeared to have excellent potential. At my request, Mr. Osorio reworked the manual into a form suitable for use in our judges' training program.

I see several benefits to be derived from including this manual as part of the description-writing phase of training: 1) the logical sequencing of elements can help the writer cover all the salient points needed to describe the awarded flower or plant adequately; 2) we can bring some uniformity to the descriptions that are sent to the registrar, resulting in reduced editing requirements; 3) the less editing required, the faster the awards can be published, and 4) less "handling" of the text will allow the description to be published more nearly as written by the judging team.

I must emphasize that the AOS staff never changes the content/intent of the descriptions, only the format. "Style" is an entirely different concept from "content." The content of awards descriptions has been and remains the responsibility of the judges and cannot be over-stressed in training. Presenting that content in the best possible form is an editorial responsibility. The AOS is fortunate in having an excellent editorial staff.

There have been comments (no doubt valid) that the published descriptions are "not good English." However, the purpose of publication of the descriptions is to communicate as efficiently as possible the judging team's assessment of an awarded flower or plant. A well-written description, with consistent formatting and sequencing is basic to this communication and facilitates the referencing of award data.

Mr. Osorio and the AOS staff have given us a valuable tool. Our best thanks to them can be to use it.

Anita Aldrich  
National Training Coordinator

September 10, 1990

## I. Sequence

### \* Descriptions are composed of three principal sections

An award description is made up of various parts, or sections, which together constitute the description. The different sections are separated by semicolons and the description ends with a period.

Descriptions may be broken into three sections: 1) description of the vegetative portions of the plant (including cultural condition and practices); 2) description of the inflorescences and flowers; and 3) comments. Not every description includes all three sections. These sections may be emphasized, de-emphasized, and/or left out altogether by judges as deemed appropriate.

The three principal sections are separated by semicolons and are listed in the following sequence:

1. Vegetative parts and culture
2. Inflorescence(s) and flower(s)
3. Comments

The sequence as listed above is essentially a summary of the sequence used in botanical descriptions. However, because AOS awards descriptions always begin with an enumeration of the number of flowers, buds and inflorescences, there is a long-standing and persistent tendency to describe the flowers before describing vegetative parts and culture. In any case, the above sequence should be adhered to as closely as possible by AOS staff when editing award descriptions, and especially so when editing CBRs and CCMS, two awards in which the vegetative parts and culture are frequently mentioned.

### \* Description of the inflorescences and flowers

The section of a description which concerns itself with the inflorescences and flowers is itself broken down into subsections. These subsections are also separated by semicolons and follow a strict sequence in *Awards Quarterly*. In describing the inflorescences and flowers, the sequence proceeds from the general to the specific and from the outer parts of a flower to the inner. This sequence is summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Sequence of Floral Parts

<b>Most Genera</b> .....	<b><i>Paphiopedilum</i></b>
Number of Flowers .....	Number of Flowers
Number of Buds .....	Number of Buds
Number of Inflorescences .....	Number of Inflorescences
Form-Arrangement-Presentation .....	Form-Arrangement-Presentation
General Flower Color .....	General Flower Color
Dorsal Sepal .....	Dorsal Sepal
Lateral Sepals .....	Synsepal
Petals .....	Petals
Lip* .....	Pouch

Spur .....	(Not Applicable)
Column** .....	Staminode
Ovary .....	Ovary
Substance .....	Substance
Texture .....	Texture

\*Includes callus, cirrhi, disk, midlobe, side lobes and throat where applicable.

\*\*Includes anther cap.

Table 1 is **not** a list of the elements which should be included in a description. It is a list showing the sequence in which the various parts of the description of the inflorescences and flowers are listed in *Awards Quarterly*.

**\* An exception to the sequence shown in Table 1**

Because orchid flowers are complex both in their morphology and color patterns, sometimes it is not possible to adhere to the above sequence. It is also difficult or impossible to adhere to the above sequence when various parts are described together as follows:

... flower with cream base color; dorsal sepal and petals spotted mahogany; lateral sepals somewhat recurved, blushed mahogany at base...

In this example, the petals are described out of sequence (before the lateral sepals) because they are described in combination with the dorsal sepal. This is preferable to the redundancy evident in the following:

... flower with cream base color; dorsal sepal spotted mahogany; lateral sepals somewhat recurved, blushed mahogany at base; petals spotted mahogany...

Whenever two or more floral parts are described together in one subsection, that subsection is placed in the sequence of the leading floral part. Thus, if the lateral sepals and the lip are described together, that subsection would be placed in sequence as if only the lateral sepals were being described (because the lateral sepals are described before the lip). See additional examples below:

**CORRECT .....** **INCORRECT**

... sepals and lip red, pink at base; petals solid red.....	petals solid red; sepals and lip red, pink at base
...dorsal sepal and petals ivory; lateral sepals white.....	lateral sepals white; dorsal sepal and petals ivory
... petals and column lavender; lip violet.....	lip violet; petals and column lavender

**\* Another exception to the sequence shown in Table 1**



**Table 2.** Common Spelling Errors**CORRECT .....INCORRECT**

chartreuse.....	chartruse
crystalline .....	crystaline
fuchsia.....	fuschia
hirsute .....	hirsuite
iridescent.....	irridescnt
lavender .....	lavendar
overlaid .....	overlayed
raspberry .....	rasberry
striped .....	stripped
tessellation .....	tesellation
tessellation .....	tesselation
venation .....	veination

**Table 2A.** Preferred Spelling**USE .....INSTEAD OF**

apices .....	apexes
midlobe .....	mid lobe
midlobe .....	mid-lobe
side lobes .....	side-lobes
side lobes .....	sidelobes

**\*Preferred usage**

Table 3 lists the preferred usage for terms commonly used in award descriptions. The terms appearing on the right hand side are frequently used. However, they should be replaced with their equivalents on the left hand side when descriptions are edited for *Awards Quarterly*.

**Table 3.** Preferred Usage**USE .....INSTEAD OF**

parentage.....	cross
dorsal sepal .....	dorsal (meaning dorsal sepal)
lip (in nearly all genera) .....	labellum
pouch (in <i>Paphiopedilum</i> ) .....	labellum
pouch (in <i>Paphiopedilum</i> ) .....	lip
pendent .....	pendant
margin(s) or edge(s) .....	periphery
anther cap.....	pollen cap
ramicaul(s).....	secondary stem(s)*

parts .....	segments
sepaline caudae .....	sepaline tails
staminode (in <i>Paphiopedilum</i> ) .....	shield
pouch (in <i>Paphiopedilum</i> ) .....	slipper
synsepal .....	synsepalum
cauda (esp. in <i>Masdevallia</i> ) .....	tail
caudae .....	tails
parts .....	tepals
cultivar .....	variety (horticultural)
synsepal (in <i>Paphiopedilum</i> ) .....	ventral sepal
lateral sepals .....	ventral sepals

\*As applied to vegetative growths (not the inflorescence), especially in the Pleurothallidinae.

The terms spike and spray are often used to describe orchid inflorescences. However, the term "spike" has a definite meaning in botany and very few orchid inflorescences are true spikes. "Spray" is commonly used to denote branching, often pendent or semi-pendent inflorescences, but the correct botanical term is "panicle." In paphiopedilums, the term "stem" is often used to refer to the floral scape. In all of these cases (spike, spray and stem), the word "inflorescence" is preferred. However, scientifically accurate botanical terms denoting an inflorescence (such as raceme, panicle or scape) are also acceptable for publication in *Awards Quarterly*.

An unusual case occurs among certain dendrobiums which produce clusters of flowers along the length of a elongated pseudobulb (cane). In such cases, it is sometimes difficult to determine the number of inflorescences and the entire cane is treated as if it were in fact just one inflorescence. In the descriptions of such dendrobiums, the use of the word "cane" (e.g., Fifteen flowers and 10 buds on two canes ... ) is accepted for publication in *Awards Quarterly*.

#### \* **Cultivar/Variety**

The words "cultivar" and "variety" are sometimes used interchangeably by orchidists. However, in order to avoid confusion, the word variety should be used only to describe a botanical variety. Distinct horticultural forms and clones should be referred to as cultivars, never as varieties. The word "variety" has a definite meaning in botany, and its use to signify a cultivar may result in confusion.

#### \* **Words describing color patterns ending in "ing"**

The following words ending in "ing" are often used in descriptions. The preferred usage for these words is listed below:



**USE ..... INSTEAD OF**

bars or barred.....	barring
blotches or blotched.....	blotching
edge(s) or edged or margin(s) or margined ...	edging
mark(s) or marked (but see below).....	marking(s)
pattern.....	patterning
spots or spotted.....	spotting
stripes or striped.....	striping
veins or veined.....	veining

In the case of "marking" or "markings," more precise and definite words such as bars, blotches, dashes, maculations, spots, tessellation, etc. are preferred. Note the following examples of preferred usage for the above terms:

**PREFERRED..... NOT PREFERRED**

petals striped red OR petals with red stripes.....	petals with red striping
dorsal sepal spotted pink OR .....	dorsal sepal with pink
dorsal sepal with pink spots.....	spotting
lip blotched mahogany OR lip with mahogany blotches.....	lip with mahogany blotching

**III. Colors****\* Ambiguity in describing colors**

Terms describing colors should be carefully chosen to avoid confusion or ambiguity. Two persistent sources of ambiguity are:

**Amaranth:** a sort of wine purple, but sometimes confused for a yellowish green because the common roadside weeds of the genus *Amaranthus* are a peculiar yellow-green color. Also, amaranth is being developed as a minor grain crop and this form has greenish to bright yellow seed heads. Because of the publicity this grain is receiving as a health food, it is likely that many people will come to associate the word "amaranth" with the grain, which is not wine purple in color.

**Raspberry:** there are both black and red raspberries. Depending on the geographic region, one or the other color is associated with raspberries. Thus, the use of the word raspberry standing alone should be avoided. However, "raspberry red" or "raspberry black" is acceptable.

**\* Unfamiliar color terms**

Certain color terms such as *bois de rose*, celadon green, cochineal red, garnet lake, madder red and perilla purple are often unfamiliar to some AOS members. Unfortunately, a lifetime familiarity with a particular color term may blind one to the

fact that a color term is obscure or little known. However, except for outright errors, color terms should not be changed or edited by AOS staff, no matter how obscure or unfamiliar.

Overly specific color terms should also be avoided. For example, apple green suffices for Granny Smith apple green or Pippin apple green (Granny Smith and Pippin being particular types of apples). Overly specific color terms should be edited if doing so does not change the meaning or affect the judges' intent.

#### \* **Compound color terms**

Compound color terms are hyphenated according to the following rules:

Color modified by another color, use a hyphen: yellow-green, purple-blue, brown-red.

Color modified by another color ending in "ish," omit the hyphen: yellowish green, purplish blue, brownish red.

Color modified by a noun, omit the hyphen: grass green, sky blue, brick red.

Often, a color is modified by a noun which is itself a color term as in: lime green, cinnamon red mahogany brown. In each of these cases the modifiers are used in everyday conversation as both nouns and as colors: lime is a fruit or a type of green; cinnamon is a spice or a type of reddish brown; and mahogany is a wood or a type of brown. In such cases, treat the modifier as a noun and omit the hyphen. **However**, "orange" and "rose" are exceptions to the preceding rule and they are never treated as nouns when they modify another color. Thus, colors modified by "orange" or "rose" are hyphenated:

orange-red  
orange-yellow  
orange-violet  
rose-red  
rose-purple  
rose-pink

#### **IV. Punctuation and Numbers**

##### \* **Periods**

A period marks the end of a description. Thus, no periods should be used within the body of a description. The various parts of a description should be separated by semicolons. If it is necessary to subdivide within a section or subsections, commas are used as in the following example:

... petals pink; lip deep pink, midlobe attractively veined deep purple, side lobes less strongly veined, throat bright yellow; column white with prominent pink wings . . .

Note how the lip is described in one section and commas are used to separate the description of the various parts of the lip such as the midlobe, side lobes and throat.

#### \* **Hyphens**

Hyphens should follow common usage as indicated in a dictionary. Compound words beginning with well (such as well-held or well-presented) are always hyphenated. Compound words formed by combining a color with a color pattern should also be hyphenated (as in red-blotched, pink-spotted, purple-dotted, yellow-picoteed, violet-splashed, etc.). Fractions are also hyphenated (as in one-half, two-thirds, three-fifths, etc.).

#### \* **Commas**

In general, commas are used sparingly in edited descriptions. However, care should be taken by AOS staff in adding or deleting commas when doing so would lead to ambiguity. See further notes on commas under the section on periods above.

#### \* **Numbers**

Numbers between one and nine are always spelled out. Numbers larger than nine are written as numbers. However, any number, no matter how large, is always spelled out if it begins a sentence. Numbers between 21 and 99 are hyphenated when spelled out. Large numbers are not hyphenated when spelled out. However, if a large number contains within it a number between 21 and 99, that part of it is hyphenated (see below for example). The word "and" is not used when writing out large numbers:

#### **CORRECT** ..... **INCORRECT**

Thirty-four .....	Thirty four
One hundred thirty-four .....	One hundred and thirty four
(NOTE: only the "34" is hyphenated) .....	One-hundred-and-thirty-four
One thousand three hundred fifty-two.....	One thousand three hundred and fifty-two

### **V. Taxonomic Verification and Descriptions**

Any notes provided in the taxonomic verification of an award are to be included in the edited description. Because of the way in which provisional awards are processed, the judging team which writes the description rarely sees the taxonomic

verification (which may not occur until many months after the award is granted). Thus, AOS staff should carefully review taxonomic verifications for pertinent notes which should be added to the description.

Such notes are considered part of the description because of their educational value, education being one of the principal purposes of the American Orchid Society. Such notes are to be regarded as comments and placed at the end of the description. The source of the taxonomic notes should be clearly stated along with the name of the taxonomic authority making the identification. Below is an example:

*Planta aberrans* 'Upstart' CBR/AOS

Original description: Flowers very tiny, nonresupinate, pink with purple margins; plant a dwarf monopodial in a little known and rarely cultivated genus.

O.I.C. taxonomic verification: This is indeed *Planta aberrans*. Discovered 75 years ago and only recently found again in the wild, it may prove to be a variety of the more common *Planta normalis*.

Edited description: Flowers very tiny, nonresupinate, borne on a dwarf monopodial plant of a little known and rarely cultivated genus; flowers pink with purple margins; according to the O.I.C., this plant was, "Discovered 75 years ago and only recently found again in the wild, it may prove to be a variety of the more common *Planta normalis*."

## VI. Ambiguity in Descriptions

Ambiguity is a common occurrence in award descriptions. In editing descriptions for publication it is important to note instances of ambiguity and to eliminate them whenever possible. Sometimes a telephone call to the exhibitor or to a member of the judging team will clear up the problem.

If available, reference to the award slide is also helpful in resolving ambiguous descriptions. Unfortunately, it is sometimes necessary to refer a description back to the Judging Center for clarification, a time-consuming process which can result in significant delays in the processing of an award. Below are common and typical examples of ambiguity in award descriptions.

### Example 1

Ambiguous (genus *Paphiopedilum*): Petals pink fading to cream at column. Ciliate margins and irregular spots on upper halves.

Analysis: Do the petals fade to cream at their base? Or was the word column carefully chosen to imply that the cream color is carried over to the column itself? Is column correct or is it really the staminode that is being referred to? Does the clause "on upper halves" refer only to the irregular spots, or does it refer to both the ciliate margins and the irregular spots?

Unambiguous: ... petals pink, fading to cream proximally, ciliate, upper halves with irregular spots . . .

### **Example 2**

Ambiguous: Flowers well-presented, somewhat past their prime. Very pale pink color with sepals and petals medium pink.

Analysis: How can the flower be very pale pink if the sepals and petals are medium pink? Is it that the lip is very pale pink and because of its large size it dominates the flower and gives the impression of the flowers being very pale pink?

Unambiguous: ...sepals and petals medium pink; lip much paler, very large and dominant resulting in the impression of very pale pink flowers . . .

### **Example 3**

Ambiguous: Striking yellow lip and petals. Sepals more subdued, underlaid and veined orange. Creamy yellow picotee margin. Hard texture.

Analysis: What color are the sepals? We know that they are a more subdued yellow than the lip and petals, but if the latter are a bright vivid yellow, the sepals could be a fairly strong shade of yellow and still be "more subdued." What has a yellow picotee margin? The sepals? The lip and petals? All parts of the flower?

Unambiguous: ... sepals golden yellow, color subdued as compared to petals and lip, underlaid and veined orange, with yellow picotee; petals and lip striking, very bright canary yellow; texture hard . . .

### **Example 4**

Ambiguous (genus *Masdevallia*): Lateral sepals lavender with long, pale pink tails, dorsal sepal's tail pale pink, brighter pink at the base on reverse side.

Analysis: What is brighter pink on the reverse side, the base of the dorsal sepal or the base of the dorsal sepal caudae?

Unambiguous: ... dorsal sepal lavender, its base bright pink on reverse side, cauda paler pink; lateral sepals lavender with long, pale pink caudae . . .

## VII. Examples of Edited Descriptions

### Description 1

5 flower(s) & 2 bud(s) on 2 inflorescence(s)

Inflorescences arched; sepals golden yellow. Leaves & 1 inflorescence showing slight mechanical damage. Lip pale yellow; petals creamy yellow. White column very prominent Sepals blushed apricot at base. Lip with faint spots in throat.

Edited Version: Five flowers and two buds on two arched inflorescences; sepals golden yellow, blushed apricot at base; petals creamy yellow; lip pale yellow with faint spots in throat; column white, very prominent; leaves and one inflorescence showing slight mechanical damage.

### Description 2

2 flower(s) & 0 bud(s) on 1 inflorescence(s)

Petals and sepals white with very slight greenish cast; labellum of same color with deep yellow throat, attractively ruffled; petals with very heavy midline veining, extremely overlapped creating some asymmetry in shape precluding higher score; extremely heavy substance.

Edited Version: Two flowers on one inflorescence; sepals and petals white with very slight greenish cast; petals with very heavy midline vein; lip same color with deep yellow throat, attractively ruffled; substance extremely heavy; petals extremely overlapped creating some asymmetry in shape precluding higher score.

### Description 3

30 flower(s) & 15 bud(s) on 23 inflorescence(s)

A rigidly upright tree fern mounted plant of up to 105 cm growth. Inflorescences borne below the nodes and frequently two-flowered. Color of sepals and petals ochre fading to near white proximally. Flowers nonresupinate, spurs subtending the dorsal sepal. Lip white, column pale green, anther cap creamy-green.

Edited Version: Thirty flowers and 15 buds on 23 inflorescences borne below the nodes and frequently two-flowered, carried on a rigidly upright plant of up to 105 cm growth mounted on tree fern; sepals and petals ochre, fading to near white proximally; lip white; spur subtending dorsal sepal (rather than the lip) due to nonresupinate flowers; column pale green, anther cap creamy green.

Note: The above is a good example of the complexities of editing (and writing) award descriptions. The fact that the flowers are nonresupinate concerns their form and presentation. If placed in the preferred sequence, the description would begin, "Thirty nonresupinate flowers . . .". Or else the description of the inflorescences would have been followed with, ". . . flowers nonresupinate; sepals and petals ochre . . .". However, the judges evidently wished to emphasize the fact that the spur

subtended the dorsal sepal (rather than the lip as is usually the case) because the flowers are nonresupinate. In this case, strict preferred sequence was not followed in order to emphasize the unusual position of the spur. A short note was also added to the original description [ . . . (rather than the lip) . . . ] to emphasize this point further, which has significant educational value.

**Description 4 (*Paphiopedilum*)**

1 flower(s) & 0 bud(s) on 1 inflorescence(s)

Flower of good substance and excellent sheen, of excellent shape with wide petals, well-held on 45 cm stem; dorsal sepal tan with dark brown striping; petals cream blushed brown at apices; staminode light brown and extremely hirsute; lip red brown and somewhat small; synsepal similar to dorsal with fainter striping; size of lip precluded higher score.

Edited Version: One flower of excellent shape well-held on one 45-cm inflorescence; dorsal sepal tan, striped dark brown; synsepal similar, with fainter stripes; petals wide, cream, blushed brown at apices; pouch red-brown, somewhat small; staminode light brown, extremely hirsute; substance good; texture an excellent sheen; size of pouch precluded higher score.

**Description 5 (*Paphiopedilum*)**

1 flower(s) & 0 bud(s) on 1 inflorescence(s)

Overall large flower with unusually glossy pouch; dorsal sepal and petals chartreuse with clearly lined burgundy veins; petals with wide picoteed margin of rose-burgundy; pouch pink, upper margin darker; staminode yellow.

Edited Version: One overall large flower on one inflorescence; dorsal sepal and petals chartreuse with clearly lined burgundy veins; petals with wide picoteed margin of rose burgundy; pouch unusually glossy, pink with upper margin darker; staminode yellow.

**Description 6 (*Pleurothallis* - CBR)**

6 flower(s) & 6 bud(s) on 11 inflorescence(s)

Base color of sepals is light pink, almost translucent with 3 keels appearing as veining. Both the dorsal sepal and synsepal bordered and flushed with wine red. Petals and lip are same base color bordered with dark wine red. Contrast in color accents charming little ovoid flower.

Edited Version: Six little ovoid flowers and six buds on 11 inflorescences; dorsal sepal and synsepal almost translucent with light pink base color, bordered and flushed with wine red, with venation formed of three keels; petals and lip with same base color, bordered with dark wine red; contrast in color accents charm.

**Description 7 (*Dendrobium* - CCM)**

194 flower(s) & 6 bud(s) on 50 inflorescence(s)

Flowers butter yellow. Plant 78 cm high by 58 cm wide. Ten canes grown in sandy soil with redwood chips in 35.6 cm clay pot

Edited Version: One hundred ninety-four flowers and six buds on 50 inflorescences; plant 78 cm high by 58 cm wide, consisting of 10 canes, grown in sandy soil with redwood chips in 35.6 cm clay pot; flowers butter yellow.

**Description 8 (*Cymbidium* - JC)**

17 flower(s) & 0 bud(s) on 1 inflorescence(s)

Commended for beautiful unique coloring; sepals and petals white flushed pink with interesting feathering and stripes; lip suffused and patterned with shades of raspberry pink and red.

Edited Version: Seventeen flowers on one inflorescence; sepals and petals white, flushed pink with interesting raspberry colored feathering and stripes; lip suffused and patterned with shades of raspberry pink and red; commended for beautiful unique coloring.

**Description 9 (*Paphiopedilum* - CHM)**

One flower(s) & 0 bud(s) on 1 inflorescence(s)

Flower clear citron yellow with neither the typical spotting in the pouch nor the usual markings on the staminode; severe reflexing petals precluded merit scoring; commended for being an unusual color variety; foliage clear green as well, lacking all usual pigment.

Edited Version: One flower on one inflorescence; foliage clear green, lacking all usual pigmentation; flower clear citron yellow, lacking both the typical spots in the pouch and usual marks on the staminode; commended as an unusual color variety; severe reflexing of petals precluded merit scoring.