Nepenthes mirabilis variation

by Bruce Lee Bednar (25 Lake Court Loop, Ocala, FL 32672)

The mirabilis complex, this common form of Nepenthes, is variable. The different forms often have been given separate identities as species, but eventually were recognized as variations of a single specie. Some of the plants in circulation have acquired incorrect names accidentally, or sometimes fraudulently to increase trading value to put as much mileage on them as possible. The problem of old synonyms occurs with plants mostly out of Europe where many mirabilis are still labelled phyllamphora, an abandoned name not used in decades.

The plant in CP trade labeled kampotiana is not at all the original plant described by Lecomte. The true species is not believed to be in cultivation at this date. Instead, the bogus "kampot" is thought to be a natural hybrid between mirabilis and thorelii, and has appeared on newer collectors' lists unofficially labelled x lecouflei. To add more wood to the fire, there is doubt to the authenticity of "thorelii-long green." Lecomte's paper on thorelii is difficult to obtain, if it's still around at all. Many feel "thorelii-long green" is the Thailand mirabilis, and the pubescent leaved, squat pitted "short round" is the true species. If this is so, many hybrids using thorelii as a parent are mislabeled and plants like x hachyo and x effulgent koto would be intergrades, not hybrids.

I've seen very little information on the species anamensis described by Macfarlane as a highland variety. The one in cultivation seems also to be a mirabilis variant. The light green pitcher, maroon and green wavy leaves are too similar to the other mirabilis types of the Indo-China area.

Two other plants have been brought to my attention as being bogus. One which seems to have been renamed in Australia somewhere along the line is geoffraysia, another plant of Lecomte. I have not seen the bogus type which is typical mirabilis, obviously labelled so as to increase its popularity. The true specie geoffraysia is not at all similar to mirabilis, and there would be no room for confusion in identifying the two.

Smillesii is another example, truly a mirabilis with a "new name." The plant has been around for years; rename it and once again the plant sells.

A new monograph is needed for the genus Nepenthes. The mirabilis complex needs much work itself. Until a standard is achieved, many Nepenthes collectors will remain lost. In the next few years many plants not in cultivation will become available. It is very important to be able to properly identify them so others can confidently rest assured what they have labelled is really what they have. Any comments?

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