

A LAELIA BY ANY OTHER NAME IS STILL AN ORCHID!

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What in the world did those orchids that grow in Brazil do to deserve this! Take *Sophranitis coccinea*, an orchid from Brazil, first described by Lindley in 1836 as a *Cattleya*, then transferred to the genus *Sophranitis* in 1862. It is a small orchid with bright red or scarlet flowers, and has been used extensively in hybridization to impart its red color and smaller size to many orchids. The genus *Sophranitis*, as originally interpreted, has only about four or five species that grow in damp mountain regions in Brazil. Then look at *Laelia purpurata*. This species, also from Brazil, was first described as *Laelia purpurata* by Lindley in 1852 (even though he really thought it was a *Cattleya*). Later it was thought to be a species of *Cattleya*, but more recently it has been considered a species of *Sophranitis*. Now that scientists have all the advanced technology and especially DNA identifying techniques, they have shuffled around the species of *Sophranitis* and the Brazilian laelias again. As a retired botanist and plant taxonomist (but I did not work on orchids!!) I find these plant name changes interesting, but as an orchid grower, somewhat frustrating, but fun! Delving into all these name changes does add another dimension to the challenges of the orchidist.

I read recently that at the World Orchid Conference in Miami in 2008 there was a decision to transfer all the Brazilian laelias to the genus *Sophranitis*, but that in the future not only the Brazilian laelias but also all the other species in *Sophranitis* might be reassigned to the genus *Cattleya*! Well your worst fears have been realized and they are now *Cattleya*. So *Sophranitis coccinea* is *Cattleya coccinea* and all of its “cousins” are now *Cattleya*, too. *Laelia purpurata* is *Cattleya purpurata*, and all of its buddies in Brazil, over 50 species, are now *Cattleya*! Fortunately, the 10 or more species of *Laelia* that grow in Mexico and Central America, which are considered quite distinct, are still *Laelia*.

Now, that in itself is not such a big deal, but *Cattleya* (syn. *Sophranitis*) *coccinea* and *Cattleya* (syn. *Laelia*) *purpurata* as well as a number of other former laelias from Brazil, including *L. pumila*, *L. dayana*, *L. sincorana*, and *L. tenebrosa*, to mention only a few, have been used a lot in hybridizing orchids, so that means massive name changes in lots and lots of familiar orchids, many of which you probably have in your collection. I know I do in mine. Thus all the Sc.’s (*Sophranocattleya*) that were created using *Sophranitis* are now ***Cattleya***. All the Bl.’s (*Brassolaelia*) that were created by using species of *Laelia* from Brazil as a parent are now Bc.’s (*Brassocattleya*). The Lc.’s (*Laeliocattleya*) are now ***Cattleya***. And the Slc.’s (*Sophranolaeliocattleya*) that were created by using species of *Sophranitis* and *Laelia* from Brazil as a parent are now ***Cattleya***. Aren’t names fun!

I have summarized some of the more common name changes in the table below:

The Old Way	The New Way
<i>Brassolaelia</i> (Bl.)	<i>Brassocattleya</i> (Bc.)
<i>Bl.</i> Morning Glory	<i>Bc.</i> Morning Glory
<i>Bl.</i> Richard Mueller	<i>Bc.</i> Richard Mueller

Bl. Yellow Bird
Laeliocattleya (Lc.)
Lc. Aloha Case
Lc. Atticus
Lc. Bonanza Queen
Lc. Canhamiana
Lc. Green Veil
Lc. Irene Finney
Lc. Longriver Compton
Lc. Love Knot
Lc. Mari's Song
Lc. Melody Fair
Lc. Memoria. Robert Strait
Lc. Mini Purple
Lc. Purple Cascade
Lc. Tainan City
Lc. Tokyo Magic
Lc. Tropical Pointer
Sophrolaeliocattleya (Slc.)
Slc. Bright Angel
Slc. Charming Jewel
Slc. Jungle Gem
Slc. Love Castle
Slc. Naomi Kerns
Slc. Tangerine Jewel
Slc. Wendy's Valentine
Sophrocattleya (Sc.)
Sc. Beaufort
Sc. Doris
Sc. Royal Beau

Bc. Yellow Bird
Cattleya (C.)
C. Aloha Case
C. Atticus
C. Bonanza Queen
C. Canhamiana
C. Green Veil
C. Irene Finney
C. Longriver Compton
C. Love Knot
C. Mari's Song
C. Melody Fair
C. Memoria. Robert Strait
C. Mini Purple
C. Purple Cascade
C. Tainan City
C. Tokyo Magic
C. Tropical Pointer
Cattleya (C.)
C. Bright Angel
C. Charming Jewel
C. Jungle Gem
C. Love Castle
C. Naomi Kerns
C. Tangerine Jewel
C. Wendy's Valentine
Cattleya (C.)
C. Beaufort
C. Doris
C. Royal Beau

And on it goes, but that is probably more than you wanted to know already. If you are interested in checking on the correct name of your favorite orchid, you can go to the Royal Horticultural Orchid Registry site on the Internet at

www.rhs.org.uk/plants/registerpages/orchiddetails.asp

Happy 'Orchiding.'

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