

# The Natural Genus *Vanda*

A Monograph

Motes, M. 2021. Redland Press, Redland, Florida. Printed in China. ISBN 978-1-6376033-0-7. Hardbound with dust jacket, 360 pages, 311 color photographs, 14 watercolor or watercolor-painted drawings and 21 line drawings. Order online at <https://www.motesorchids.com/store?category=Books>).

THE *NATURAL GENUS Vanda* is simply a gold mine of intensively researched information and *clarification*—some via valuable collaboration with a number of herbaria, taxonomists and respected nonprofessionals *cum* a high level of expertise such as Johan Hermans and Peter O’Byrne. What does he mean by ‘the natural genus’: species currently considered as *Vanda* including genera folded into *Vanda* such as the former *Asococentrum* and *Neofinetia*. This book is intended to be used and not left on a shelf: the dust jacket is substantial and the paper inside the book is heavy and allowed for clear printing of photos and drawings.

The bibliography and the index to species are extensive. My only complaint is that the index to illustrations only lists the photographers’ names—there is no list of illustrations by species. You can dig through all the references to species in the species index but if you simply want a photo of *Vanda tricolor* or a variety, you have to wade through nearly 30 listings. Likewise, the Table of Contents lists the sections of *Vanda*, but not the individual species for quick reference to the main start page for each. However, there is a chart of each section, the species included in each, key morphological characteristics and the natural location, which will speed location of a description in the book.

The book, however, organizes the species by section based on the DNA analysis by Lauren Gardiner, a student of Dr. David Roberts, who was then at Kew, and further modified by a mutual (with Motes) understanding of the morphology of the species in *Vanda*. The result became a working structure of the sections of *Vanda* for future research. Numerous other people contributed expertise, discussion and advice such as Eric Christenson, Phillip Cribb, Tim Yam, Emrys Chew, Stig Dalström, Destario Metusala, and Gary Yong Gee.

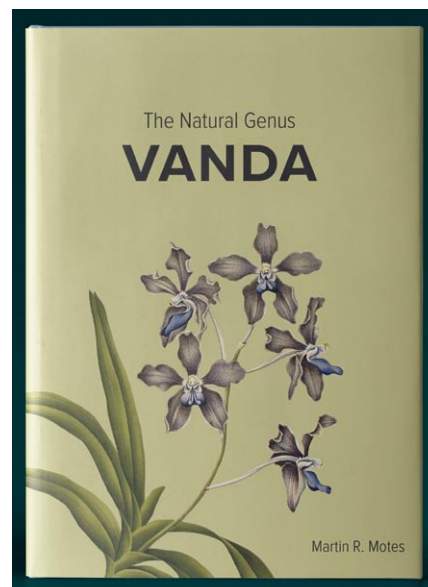
Forget that Martin Motes is an owner of Motes Orchids, best known commercially for hybrids and improved species, this book is a solid scientific reference with

a history of the genus, descriptions and some information on hybridization for many species and a 12-page chapter on the history of vanda hybridization that would also be valuable to orchid judges and orchid growers. The author, through detailed and extensive research, teases out differences between species and elucidates descriptions of species heretofore not recognized as species or folds a species currently recognized by the World Checklist of Selected Plant families into another species (e.g. *Vanda jainii* into *Vanda cristata*) or rejects a species such as *Vanda arbuthnotiana* but with detailed justification. Classification of orchids is always a moving target as research offers new insights. Numerous natural hybrids are also discussed including the history and historical confusion.

Each species has a general description with some history, a description that will make orchid growers and hybridizers happy. For example: *Vanda vietnamica*:

“First described as a monotypic genus, *Christensonia*, DNA evidence has placed *Vanda vietnamica* firmly in *Vanda*. Its creamy-white tepals and large spreading white lip make this species an attractive horticultural subject. The board flat leaves of *V. vietnamica* are very efficient light gatherers making this plant similar to *Phalaenopsis* in its precocious flowering and tolerance of lower light. Seedlings of the species are known to bloom for the first time on plants with stems no more than two centimeters tall. These qualities are encouraging its use in hybridization. Like *V. falcata* and *V. denisoniana*, this species suppresses color in its progeny. As with *V. falcata*, the most successful hybrids to date have resulted from breeding *V. vietnamica* to flowers with strong lip color.” (page 224)

Note that there are hints about culture and flowering, a description of its horticultural qualities and use in hybridization. The next page gives a standard type description for those trying to ascertain if a particular plant is actually



what it is supposed to be: SITF rejoice! Photos demonstrate the inflorescence and key points of morphology needed for identification (in this case, the column foot side view and erect scape). The initial description for some species also points out AOS awards correctly or erroneously attributed to the species, e.g., *Vanda luzonica*. Such information can be invaluable for AOS judges. There is also an index to synonyms and a checklist of species once described in other species but currently included in *Vanda*.

A few people will be disappointed that no detailed description of how to grow each species exists in the book. Be fair! Such descriptions could not take into account the myriad growing conditions that hobby growers experience, yet hints such as found for *V. vietnamica* for early flowering and tolerance of low light (who says all vandas need high light!) should help substantially with culture. This book is, as mentioned in the first sentence, a gold mine for hobbyists, judges and scientists alike.

— Jean Allen-Ikeson is the chair of the AOS editorial board (email: [jean.ikeson@gmail.com](mailto:jean.ikeson@gmail.com)).