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Vanda tricolor conservation efforts in Java, Indonesia

Vanda tricolor is widespread in South East Asia, relatively easily cultivated in the garden, and is often seen growing floriferously on garden trees, fence posts and verandas. There are several distinctive floral morphologies, recognised as forms, varieties and subspecies by some, and a putative but unclear geographical relationship between these entities. Whilst the species is widespread in cultivation in its native regions of Java and Bali, wild populations are small and highly fragmented. The author's recent field trip to Java and Bali found few wild examples of the species, and the few plants found were in the most inaccessible trees, due to massive overcollection, often with no other *V. tricolor* plants to be found in the area. A small scale, poorly funded effort to cultivate and reintroduce *V. tricolor* into the natural park at Kaliurang on Mt Merapi in Java uses some interesting and somewhat eye-opening methods and gives rise to some interesting discussion about whether doing something, irrespective of the scientific considerations, is better than doing nothing. The author has carried out a study of the *V. tricolor* plants collected from the wild by the Indonesian botanic gardens and a selection of those in cultivation in Europe, and used various population genetics methods to elucidate the presence of genetic structure within the specimens and how it relates to their geographical origins. The results show several interesting features, including that the plants being reintroduced to Mt Merapi are genetically and potentially geographically diverse. The importance of integrating such studies with such conservation efforts, particularly in the planning stages, will be discussed.