

# Cryptocoryne affinis

*A tropical aquarium  
plant generally known  
under a different name*

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*Cryptocoryne affinis*. "a"  
shows a flowering plant ( $\times \frac{3}{8}$ ); "b" is the upper part of  
the flower just before opening  
( $\times \frac{3}{8}$ ) and "c" shows the  
opened "ball" or "kettle"  
of the flower ( $\times 1\frac{1}{2}$ ).



AMONG post-war novelties, *Cryptocoryne haerteliana* Jacobs. ex. Milk. proved to be a most successful aquarium plant. But first of all we should ascertain its correct name. Mr. H. Haertel (Dresden) imported an unnamed species of *Cryptocoryne* just before the outbreak of the second world war. The plants were grown at Kiel and Mr. Jacobsen, a superintendent of the botanical garden there, being unable to discover the scientific name, used to refer to them as *C. haerteliana*.

In 1949 Mr. Milkuhn published (*Wochenschrift*, 43, p. 288) the name and described the species in accordance with the International Rules of Botanical Nomenclature. So *C. haerteliana* Jacobs. ex. Milk. became established. Nobody had seen it in flower and so Mr. Milkuhn had to be satisfied by describing the leaf.

When I saw plants for the first time I adopted the view that *C. haerteliana* had not been previously described under another name (*Het Aquarium*, 24, 1953, No. 2). I was led into this error as I received very large and luxuriant specimens and I had no experience of its variability at that time. Actually, the correct title is *Cryptocoryne affinis* N. E. Brown ex. Hook. f., a name dating from 1893.

*C. affinis* is one of our very best aquarium plants. It grows exceedingly well (but only submerged) so long as a moderate amount of artificial light is available. Daylight is not well

tolerated in our latitude and, in greenhouses, the plants ought to be kept in deep shade.

It is an unexplained fact that *C. affinis* has not been seen in flower—as far as I know—in the last four years.\* They are grown in thousands and for some reason they remain sterile. One might try to discover the cause by experimenting with different amounts of light and alternating periods of darkness and light.

If it flowers, however, the species is most charming. The inflorescence may reach a length of more than 30 cm. (12 in.) and the upper part shows a spiralling triangular ridge (see the diagram). Finally this ridge splits along the rim and, through a narrow gap, the velvety, glowing black-purple inner surface of the twisted but erect limb becomes visible.

*C. affinis* has oblong, dark velvety green leaves, which are very easily distinguishable by the clearly marked greenish-white nerves on the surface. The blade is usually more or less regularly bullate. Depending on the amount of light, the lower surface of the leaf-blade may turn deep wine-red.

In the course of time *C. affinis* forms a dense "bush" in the aquarium, its height ranging between 8 and 35 cm. (3-14 in.). It increases rather quickly.

\* In 1955 (August-September, 1955, issue of *WATER LIFE*, p. 191) Frank Arnold, Forest Gate, London, E.7, reported the flowering of "*C. haerteliana*" in his tanks.—Ed.