

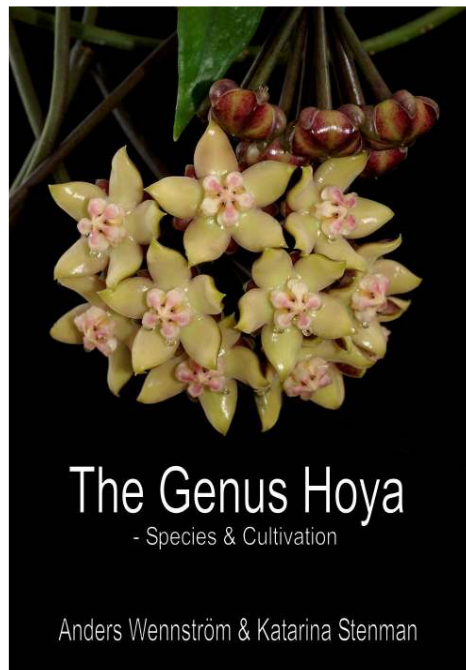


**Green Culture Singapore Feature Article for February 2009**

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## **Background about this Book**



This slim volume (144 pages) entitled “The Genus *Hoya*” fills a gap in current available hoyia literature. There are short chapters on hoyia taxonomy, morphology and pollination. Two useful chapters cover the cultivation and propagation of these vines, and there are lots of photographs. The rest of the book is dedicated to short descriptions of 118 hoyias with colour photographs of the flowers and leaves. This will be a useful guide for identification of hoyias, an issue that is notoriously difficult, sometimes controversial and always hotly debated in hoyia circles.

## The interview proper...

- **Can you share with us why you decided to write a book on hoyas?**

This is actually not our first book on hoyas. We have previously published one small booklet covering 20 hoyas species with sketches of flowers and leaves, and also two books. However, all these were written in Swedish.

Our first book, which we published ourselves, covered 53 species and had a colour section in it. Two years ago, we were approached by a publisher who wanted a book on hoyas for the Swedish market; that book was released last year. Despite these efforts, we felt that there was more that we can contribute to the available knowledge on hoyas. It has always been our dream to write a book in English, and the lack of time stalled our earlier attempts. We finally decided that it is now or never, and we also wanted a book that we ourselves would like to buy, but can rarely find on this genus.

- **How long did it take you to complete this book?**

Sometimes, we worked on it daily and some days, we had to take a break. The intensity varied, and we completed it in around six months.

- **What sort of research did you have to undertake? Which countries did you visit as part of your research?**

We have been growing hoyas since 1988, and have been actively reading and following the research around this genus. What we did more seriously when we embarked on this book, was to compare what different people had to say about the species. We had a lot of conversations with Christine Burton, and read up on available articles and descriptions. We are both plant biologists, and already have a good knowledge of plant ecology. We also travelled a lot in Australia and Asia (Thailand, Malaysia). We have personally grown and blossom all the plants covered in the book. We also brought in our knowledge from extensive growing experience of orchids, gesneriads, and cycads to mention a few.

- **What were some difficulties and challenges that you faced writing this book? Any interesting experiences to share?**

We have tried to be brief and concise, and at the same time, write simply without too much botanical jargon so that the beginner can still understand. A major challenge with hoyas has to be that there are many opinions, especially on the identification and names, and you need to value each opinion.

Another small aspect, which is important to many people, is the colour and smell of the flowers. It is difficult to describe smell correctly. My opinion of the fragrance of a particular species can be totally different from another opinion. Colours are also difficult, but there you have photographs to rely on.

Another challenge is that a publisher may not share the same perspectives as the biologists like us or the hoya enthusiasts. They look at other values, and that can sometimes be difficult. An example is the selection of which photographs to use. The publisher on our previous book objected to some photographs because there was an insect in it, or the flowers were held in a hand. For this book, because we produced it ourselves, we have creative licence and can choose which photographs to use.

The biggest challenge, however, is not writing the book, but the cost of printing and whether the book will sell or not. It is a big risk for small enterprises like us.

- **Who is this book targeted at?**

This book has a good selection and balance of hoyas. There are some that are commonly available, but some unusual species are also covered. In total, 118 species are featured. We want to show growers how the species look like, with photos of both the leaves and flowers. We also hope that the book will set a standard when it comes to hoya names, and that people at least will have a reference book to check up. We have aimed for a book that will have something for the beginner as well as for the serious collector.

- **You live in Sweden? How did your interest in hoyas begin?**

Having grown a vast number of different types of plants, we actually stumbled on hoyas. We had for a long time seen that there were many interesting species, but did not know where to buy them. We requested for a catalogue from David Liddle in 1987 or 1988 as we heard that he was selling Nepenthes, which we were growing at that time. He sent us a list of hoyas instead. We ordered some, and were hooked on hoyas after that.

- **How many hoyas do you grow personally, and how do you grow them?**

We grow more than 300 species of hoyas. All of them are grown in pots, except *H. imbricata*. Our main collection is grown in a greenhouse, but we also have a few in our home. To grow tropical plants indoors is very popular in Sweden. We live in a cold climate, but the good standard of the houses (heating, insulation and triple glazing) results in an ambient temperature that is around 20 degrees C throughout the year.

- **Any favourites?**

That varies, but at the moment I like particularly *H. halconensis* and *H. griffithii*.

## **Where to get this book?**

“The Genus *Hoya*” is available in Singapore at a cost of S\$69 before 7% GST at Nature’s Niche that is located at Orchidville, off Mandai.

The address of Nature’s Niche is 10, Lorong Lada Hitam, Singapore 778793.

Please call 6475 2319 to check for availability.

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