

ORCHID CARE

An Overview of Varieties and Maintenance



Orchids have long excited and enchanted us with their seemingly endless array of colors, shapes and sizes. The range is vast, encompassing more than 20,000 species and covering the entire scope of aesthetic tastes from dainty pastels to dramatic jewel tones. Just as the appearances vary drastically, so too can the specific care required for each type.

This page is simply a general guide for beginners. There is a large amount to be learned about specific types, but don't let this discourage you from buying and owning an orchid of your own. Many people find success with just a basic knowledge of indoor plant care.

Terms You Should Know

Epiphytic: Many orchids are epiphytic, which means they do not grow in soil. Usually they can be found in and on trees. They have many air roots that absorb the moisture they need from the surrounding air and prefer warm, humid temperatures.

Terrestrial: These are orchids that grow in soil in the wild. They are often cooler growing plants that can be brought out during the summer in mild climates.

Growing Medium: This is what the orchid is sitting in, inside the pot. Often epiphytic orchids are mounted onto something, so they don't need any growing medium at all. If you are going to have an orchid in a pot, you will need some kind of medium to support it. Usually bark is used, but all that's needed is something that drains well and doesn't stay soggy.

TEMPERATURE:

Most orchids prefer average room temperature-about 70°F. Most require a temperature drop at night of about 10-15° F to develop blooms. That change can be the most critical factor to reblooming.

LIGHT:

Most orchids prefer good light but not direct sun. They need about 12-14 hours per day in summer, 10-12 in winter. Additional illumination in winter can be provided with grow lights.

WATERING:

Most orchids do best if the potting medium is allowed to nearly dry before fresh water is run through the pot. Allow the pot to drain thoroughly and never let it sit in excess water. Orchids can die if the roots suffocate from overwatering. It is usually better to err on the side of underwatering than overwatering.

FERTILIZING:

To encourage growth and bloom formation, fertilize every 2-3 weeks before bloom with an orchid fertilizer. Allow a period of rest after blooming until the new growth starts. Deciduous orchids do not need fertilizer when leafless. We recommend liquid fertilizer or special orchid food. *ALWAYS* water the plant before fertilizing to prevent root damage.

REPOTTING:

Repotting should be avoided as long as possible. When the plant gets to be about 3-4 times bigger than the pot or develops many air roots out of the container, or if the medium gets rotten it is time. Repot after bloom, but before new roots start active development. Orchids tend to bloom easier and bigger if potbound and in large, mature clumps. Keeping them large and tight in their containers also helps to prevent over-watering.

SPECIFIC ORCHID GENERA

CATTLEYA

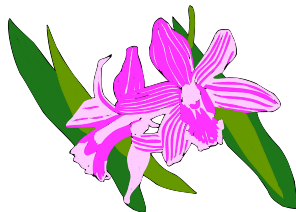
Once proclaimed the “Queen of Flowers” it originates in South America. An epiphytic, evergreen orchid that is separated into 2 groups: unifoliate (one leaf per pseudobulb) and bifoliate (two leaves). Generally the first group has bigger leaves and blooms.

Temp: 60°-65°F at night
70°-85°F during the day

Light: East or west facing window is best, with bright filtered light.

Water: Need to dry out thoroughly between watering.

Humidity: 50-80%



CYMBIDIUM

Origins span a large area from India to southern Australia. They can be either epiphytic or terrestrial. They do well outdoors from spring to fall in shade, but be sure to bring indoors before the first frosts.

Temperature is the most important for flowering.

Temp: 50°-60°F at night (summer)
75°-85°F during the day (summer)
45°-55°F at night (winter)
65°-75°F during the day (winter)

Light: Morning and Afternoon (filtered) sun

Water: Keep fairly moist, water heavily during growing season.
(Every 7-10 days)



DENDROBIUM

Epiphytic and the most diverse genera of them all, they are found from Asia to Australia. Plants have various cultural needs but can be loosely divided into two groups: deciduous and evergreen. Be sure to know what kind you have. This type of orchid will benefit from more in depth care information.

Temp: 55°-65°F at night
75°-85°F during the day

Light: Bright light (south facing)

Water: Keep dry during the winter months, but in spring start watering to keep medium continually moist.



ONCIDIUM

This is a large and variable group that occurs naturally from Florida to Brazil. They are epiphytic and many of them are fragrant. They form long spikes with as many as a few dozen blooms. Related species include Brassia, Odontoglossum and Miltonidium.

Temp: 55°-65°F at night
75°-85°F during the day

Light: Bright indirect light

Water: Moist during growing season, let dry between watering.

Humidity: 70%



PAPHIOPEDILUM

A very popular terrestrial orchid from Asia, often called lady slipper orchid. Blooming is better when pot is restricted. Plantlets from the crown can be divided and planted on their own after bloom.

Temp: 50°-60°F at night
70°-85°F during the day

Try to maintain a 10-15° difference between night and day to ensure bloom.

Light: No direct sun, low to medium light.

Water: Don't let the plant dry out between watering.

Humidity: 60-70%



PHALAENOPSIS

A very popular epiphytic orchid originating in India, the Philippines, and Southern Asia, sometimes referred to as “moth” orchid. A bit lower maintenance than other species. They can produce bloom spikes up to 6-9 months of the year if happy. Leave old spikes to promote rebloom.

Temp: 60°-75°F at night
75°-85°F during the day

Light: Low light. Bright north facing, or a protected east facing.

Water: Even water all year, letting the medium dry between watering.

