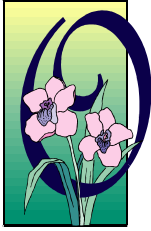


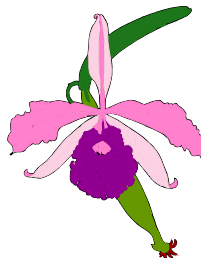
# Orchids



Orchids are beautiful, exotic houseplants which will flower for many years to come if they are properly cared for.

**Light levels** are very important to orchids, so provide them with a sunny position near a window or provide additional fluorescent lighting. Many varieties can be grown entirely under artificial light. If placed outside, ensure the orchid receives some shading to protect from overheating. A check as to whether you are providing the correct amount of light is the colour of the foliage. A healthy orchid plant has light to medium green foliage with new leaves showing a soft sheen. Reddish or purplish edges on the foliage indicates the plant is getting the maximum amount of light without burning. Pale or yellowish-green leaves indicate that the orchid is receiving too much light, and sun scalding is manifested by bleached-looking spots that turn black, then crispy and dried out. In such cases, provide more shade for the plant.

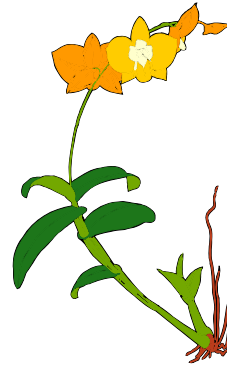
**Flowering** is also closely linked to proper light levels. An orchid may live for a long time under less than



desirable light conditions, but may never flower. Light levels are more important than fertilizing in prompting flowering. If for many years flowering is not initiated, even when proper light levels are provided, then a “cooling down” period may be necessary. For a minimum of 6 weeks, keep the orchid in a cooler place such as a basement or a garage, but still provide sufficient light and water.

**Temperatures** found in most homes is acceptable for growing orchids. Beware of exposing the plant to temperature extremes, which is common right beside glass windows.

**Watering** requirements is specific to each individual variety, but generally orchids require less water when they are not actively growing, usually in the winter months, and more during active growth, usually in the spring & summer months. Orchids with thinner, softer foliage will typically require more water than those with thicker, more succulent foliage. Most orchids prefer a drying out period between waterings. Water so that some water collects in the tray below—this will help flush out salts that can build up in the potting media and cause root burn. However, do not let the orchid sit in water as good air circulation is required for



healthy root growth. Over-watering can lead to soggy, brown, mushy roots. Healthy roots are white, firm and fleshy with green tips.

**Misting** the plants is also recommended to replicate an orchid’s natural environment, which is usually very humid. Misting the foliage and exposed roots and/or placing the orchid on a pebble tray (tray with gravel or clay pebbles and water) will increase the humidity around the orchid.

**Media** for planting orchids has to allow good air circulation and the ability for the roots to dry out between waterings. Common media used includes tree fern fibres, sphagnum moss, peat moss, bark chips and sifted perlite. Do not use regular potting or garden soil.

**Fertilizing** is important since the potting media will have little food value. Orchids planted in bark should be provided with a high nitrogen food such as 30-10-10. A 20-20-20 fertilizer is sufficient for orchids grown in other kinds of media. With water soluble fertilizers, it is recommended to use at half strength and fertilize once a week. Fertilize less often in winter months.

