

Product Information

The Orchidaceae (orchid) family is the largest family of flowering plants in terms of number of species (estimated to be as many as 30,000). It also is estimated that there are as many as 800 genera of orchids, many of which are intergeneric hybrids (crossbreeds).

Regardless of type (genus) or size, orchid blooms have six “petals”—actually three sepals, two petals and a third modified petal that forms a lip. In some types of orchids, such as Paphiopedilums, the two lower sepals are fused and appear as a single structure.

Hues vary among orchid types, but collectively, these exotic blooms are available naturally in virtually every color except blue-green and blue. Many are bi-colors, with spots or blotches on lips and/or “petals.” Dyes and other color enhancements increase the range of available hues.

With proper care and environmental conditions, individual orchid blooms can last for weeks, bloom spikes can last for months and plants can last for years.

Care Tips

Potted orchids require bright indirect light every day; however, do not expose these plants to direct sunlight. Most orchid plants (except Cattleyas and Miltonias) require an evenly moist—but not waterlogged—growing medium, so water plants regularly:

- Thoroughly soak the potting medium during each watering, then allow to drain. Frequency will be determined by air temperature, humidity, air circulation, type of pot (plastic or clay) and type of potting medium.
- For best results, water orchid plants in the morning.
- Water orchids less frequently during winter months.
- Orchids must have pots with good drainage so that water can flow out and roots and potting medium won't rot.

Most orchid types prefer daytime temperatures during the summer between 20 C - 27 C and nighttime temps between 15 C – 20 C (all orchids require cooler nighttime temperatures—at least 10 degrees lower than daytime temperatures). During winter months, daytime temps can drop to as low as 15 C and nighttime temps to 12 C; however, cold drafts and prolonged exposure to temperatures lower than 10 C can damage orchids.





Orchids require constantly humid air, so mist leaves (not blooms) lightly but regularly with distilled water (to prevent spots on leaves), preferably in the morning; place pots on pebble trays; place open bowls of water near the plants; or run a humidifier in the room. Avoid misting Vanda orchids. Orchids will not tolerate hot, stuffy conditions, so make sure there is good air movement in the room, especially in warmer environments.

Fertilize blooming orchids every other watering (less often during winter months), with a specially formulated orchid food. Always water orchid plants prior to feeding; never fertilize a dry plant. Every month or so, flush the potting medium with water to rinse away salt buildups, especially with plants in clay pots. Do not feed plants that are not in bloom.

Orchid potting media generally include any combination of the following ingredients: fir, pine or redwood tree bark; coconut husks/coir fiber; Sphagnum moss and/or peat moss; perlite, vermiculite or similar material; gravel and/or sand; and charcoal. These materials won't compact around the roots (allowing air to circulate), and many retain moisture.

It is normal for orchid roots to grow outside the pot, so repot these plants only when the potting medium begins to decompose—usually every two years—and do so only after a blooming cycle. Use a potting medium developed specifically for orchids (see “Growing Medium”).

Remove blossoms as they fade. Periodically, wipe the topsides and undersides of plant leaves with warm soapy water to remove dust as well as insects that may hide on the plants. Wipe with the grain of the leaves. Do not use leaf shine on orchid foliage.

When all the blooms have faded, cut the stem(s) to about 2 inches. This will enable some plants to rebloom from both the base and from the existing stem, producing multiple spikes during future blooming. Each type of orchid has its own flowering frequency, time and “triggers”:

- The flowering of some orchids, including Phalaenopses, is triggered primarily by temperature. These plants will initiate bloom spikes (given enough light) when the nights start to get cooler.
- Other genera, including Cattleya, are triggered primarily by light. It is important that these plants not be exposed to artificial light at night because it will confuse them and interrupt flowering.
- Still other genera have internal blooming clocks and will bloom on their own schedules rather than being triggered by temperature or light.