

Phalaenopsis Orchids



Phalaenopsis orchids are regarded as the most beautiful orchid of them all. They are easy to grow in the home environment if a few basic guidelines are followed. The larger and more mature plants can bloom for three months at a time and often twice a year.

Phal violacea

They are a warm growing orchid and therefore need a bush house that can be closed up to give them some protection from the cold weather in winter. Some growers like to keep their minimum temperature at approximately 15 degrees but they will tolerate approximately 10 degrees providing the day temperature is kept at about 25 degrees. It is the difference between the high and low temperature that counts.

LIGHT:

Phalaenopsis orchids should be grown as an indoor plant and never receive direct sunlight. They are a low light orchid but need adequate light for at least part of the day in order to grow well. The foliage of your plant will tell you if the light is adequate or even if the plants are receiving too much. The leaves should be a medium green and of a firm substance. A roof of fiberglass and 70% shade cloth is usually quite adequate.

AIR MOVEMENT:

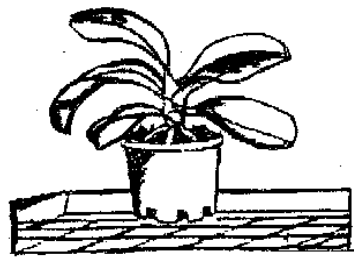
Phalaenopsis orchids love good air movement. If you find it is necessary to shut all windows in your home it would be a good idea to run a fan in the direction of your plants. This will minimize the chance of a fungal attack and promote healthy growth.

TEMPERATURE:

Phalaenopsis orchids love warmth and humidity. They can be grown indoors, in a sunroom, but humidity must be provided. This can be achieved by placing the plants on a grid over a tray of water. There are many people who grow Phalaenopsis in this way.



Tray of Gravel



Grid for Top of Gravel

DO

- Grow under a solid roof or protect from overhead moisture
- Water early in the morning
- Fertilize early in the morning
- Keep good air movement
- Maintain good clean growing conditions
- Do enjoy growing Phalaenopsis

DON'T

- Water after lunch
- Fertilize after lunch

WATERING AND FERTILIZING:

Because Phalaenopsis grow at a steady constant rate throughout the year given optimum light and temperature conditions, they need fairly consistent watering and fertilizing. They appreciate fertilizer in a weak solution at half the recommended strength; this will keep them in good growth.

Watering frequency, however, is not solely determined by plant and growth habits. Low humidity will increase water loss through the leaves and potting medium, thereby increasing water requirements. Higher temperature and light conditions will have a similar effect, necessitating more frequent watering. Conversely, low light and temperature conditions will greatly reduce the water (and fertilizer) needs of a Phalaenopsis, as such conditions not only slow water loss but the growth rate as well.

The main growth period occurs after the end of the flowering period, but these plants do not need any definite rest period. A lessening of water and fertilizer during winter is all that is required.

POTTING MEDIUM:

Choosing the proper potting medium for Phalaenopsis is perhaps a matter of trial and error. The best choices, however, are made after considering the characteristics of the plant, the grower, as well as the potting medium. Phalaenopsis are sometimes potted in fine grade materials because of their higher requirement for moisture. A fine grade mix does dry more slowly, being less porous. But this reduced porosity has a significant drawback in that it greatly reduces the oxygen level of the mix, particularly when it is wet, all the more so when it has begun to decompose. Roots cannot function without adequate oxygen and Phalaenopsis roots especially seem to require excellent aeration.

Many successful Phalaenopsis growers use medium and even coarse grade potting medium for all but their smaller seedlings, and community pots. Remembering that in their natural habitat these plants are epiphytes, it is best to use a fairly open potting mix, using equal qualities of bark and charcoal.

REPOTTING:

Whatever the grade of materials when first used, the final decay of an organic potting medium makes repotting necessary, as the humus resulting lacks sufficient aeration for survival of the Phalaenopsis roots. Yet there are other reasons for repotting. While these monopodials do not grow over the edge of the pot as many sympodial orchids do, they do grow taller to the point that the region of the stem with the most active roots is above and out of the potting medium. Either of the two reasons mentioned would justify repotting.



Phal Mem Masami Takasaki x Pinlong Memory

Live Phalaenopsis roots are light in appearance, whereas dead roots quickly become dark and brown. After the plant has been unpotted, and the decision to repot has been made, the plant should be cleaned of both decaying potting medium and decaying roots.

Once this has been done, a suitable pot which accommodates the root system comfortably can be chosen and the orchid repotted.

By M Wheeler

These notes have been used at our Cultural and New Grower's Meetings. They are from various sources and we thank the authors. All articles are supplied in good faith and the Bribie Island Orchid Society and its members will not be held responsible for any loss or damage.