

# Cattleya Orchids

This genus is named after the English orchid collector William Cattley (early 19th century).

## Cultivation

Cattleyas, in particular the twin-leaved species, are relatively easy to care for if growth and rest periods are observed. Some species (eg. *C loddigesii*, and *C skinneri*) can even be successfully cultivated on the windowsill. Most Cattleyas require an intermediate position. During the growing period which for many species commences in spring, they require plenty of water, although stagnant conditions should be avoided.



*C skinneri*

As soon as the pseudobulbs have matured, watering should be reduced to induce formation of flowers. As soon as the buds can be seen in the sheath, watering should be increased. After flowering, the rest period commences, during which time the compost should be kept fairly dry and only a little watering is required.

Cattleyas are known for their quest for light at all times to ensure that the plants flower. As soon as new roots form after the rest period, repotting can be carried out, if necessary. The size of the pots must be such that repotting does not become necessary for two to three years. New plants are easily propagated from the back-bulbs, which can be detached. When cutting back bulbs always have at least three or four pseudobulbs to secure further growth, all cuts must be treated with fungicide to avoid any kind of bacteria.

When repotting it is best to prepare the bark by soaking in water with quarter strength fertilizer for 24 hours, this ensures the bark is thoroughly damp. Dry pine bark repels moisture. Place the plant in the pot and, while holding the plant with one hand, add the potting mix to the top of the pot, then tap the side of the pot to consolidate the mix, add more mix as necessary. The base of the plant should be level with the top of the pot following mix consolidation. If the plant is not firmly held in the pot due to lack of roots, stake it until the new roots have penetrated the mix.



This genus consists of approximately forty natural species. Cattleyas have long been counted amongst the best known and most sought-after orchids because of their beautiful, colourful and large flowers. Their value to the nursery man has increased through the culture of specific hybrids and intergeneric hybrids (e.g. with *Brassavola*, *Laella*, and *Sophranitis* – Slc, Blc, Lc etc). It includes some of the most important orchids for nurseries specializing in cut flowers.

Blc Dream Trader

All *Cattleya* species are epiphytes from the jungles of Central and South America. They have a strong root stock with usually erect, egg-shaped cylindrical pseudobulbs. At their apex there are one or two rather large, green, thick, leathery leaves. They can be divided into two groups according to the number of leaves namely the single-leaved or labiata group, to which the *C. labiata* species belongs, with few, but relatively large flowers, and the twin leaved group, which has as many and somewhat smaller flowers. A sheath forms at the base of the leaves at the end of the growing period, and from this the inflorescence develops and emerges.

By Mel Wheeler

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