

Cultural Notes - Mid-Summer



February and March are active growing months so make sure the growing conditions encourage this fully. Unfortunately pests and some diseases also enjoy hot, moist conditions. Maintain shading, watering and feeding to benefit from this active growing period, but make an extra effort to ensure good **ventilation**. Ventilation does not only mean air movement around the stems and leaves. Your potting medium should be open enough that the roots can dry out between waterings. As well as removing any old or dead leaves and other material from the plants, remove any weeds or 'volunteer' ferns and foliage plants, etc.

Most of our commonly grown orchids will burn during our hot dry spells in summer, so usually we should provide extra shade and extra water, even just misting on days between waterings. However it has been great weather for aphids, mealy bugs and fungus. Check whether your plants need some **Confidor** (for aphids), **Two-in-One** [Killyptus & Pyrethrum] (or metho, for mealy bugs) and **Mancozeb** or **Fongarid** (for fungus).

Cattleyas (and their hybrids with *Brassavolas*, *Laelias* and *Sophronitis*) Many of these will be preparing for Autumn flowering.

As these began as true epiphytes they need occasional thorough soakings followed by drier spells but still with high humidity. Give a thorough soaking twice a week but be prepared for more if the humidity drops. Make sure that water does not sit for long in developing flower spikes.

Continue with weak, balanced fertiliser.

Dendrobiums (Hard cane types, Australian natives & their hybrids, including Intermediate types.)

These are used to a hot, wet, monsoon type summer with a winter drought. They come from open woodlands so need high light levels. Water them three times a week but allow them to dry out between waterings. Continue with weak balanced fertiliser

You should be seeing new flower spikes ready for autumn flowers. Dendrobiums are particularly sensitive to light direction so try to stake spikes early and keep them oriented to the north.

Dendrobiums (Soft cane types & their hybrids)

These are used to a hot, wet, monsoon type summer so it is impossible to overwater or overfeed them at this stage. The deciduous forests they come from do not have high light levels in summer. However by Autumn they will require completely different treatment.

Oncidiums (As well as *Miltonias*, *Brassias* & their hybrids)

Generally these take less light than *Cattleyas* but the situation is complicated. Most of the hybrids will take the same light as *Cattleyas* but any hybrid with *Odontoglossum* will need cool conditions.

In Summer the main requirement is not to let their leaves burn, and to keep them moist. By now you should have finished any repotting and many of the *Brassia* hybrids will be sending out new flower spikes.

Vandas (and their related species and hybrids)

Most of these grow with bare, exposed roots and so need to have moist air around them. They *should* be watered every second day, and humidity levels can be kept up by extra, light mistings or by damping down the floor below them.

Phalaenopsis

These orchids are like the *Vandas* in their growth habit, their big fleshy, exposed roots and their lack of pseudobulbs. They must not be left to dry out, nor should they be left with water in the crown of the plant. Treat them as indoor plants but make sure they have good light.

Paphiopedilum

These plants also lack pseudobulbs and so need regular watering, probably every third day. Again, water sitting in the crown of the plant can rot newly emerging flower bulbs.

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