

ORCHID CARE



Anyone can grow orchids in the home without living in the tropics or having the luxury of a greenhouse. Today, houseplants are a regular part of home decoration. If you have ever successfully grown a houseplant, or enjoyed a flowering potted plant, you can grow orchids. The good news is there are plenty of options to give yourself a beautiful display of flowering orchids year round. Hint: Orchids grown in the home during the colder months will respond wonderfully well to being summered outdoors in a protected area. This will also extend the range of plant selections available to you. For more information, be sure to read the American Orchid Society's (AOS) Orchids in the Garden and on the Patio.

Light

No flowering plant will do well without sufficient light. In the home, plants will need to be fairly close to an east, west or lightly shade south window. A north window will rarely provide adequate light. If light is too intense in a southern exposure, a sheer curtain could be hung to diffuse the light. Extra hours of light will not entirely compensate for low light. Extending day length artificially to more than 16 hours can be detrimental to the plants' health and often will prevent flowering.

Placement or Location

Keeping the above requirements in mind, find a place for your orchid, then avoid moving it around, if possible. For plants that like to be outside during the summer, same rule applies, but be aware of changing sun/shadow patterns during the season. If necessary, move it to avoid sunburn.

Temperature

Keeping the above requirements in mind, find a place for your orchid, then avoid moving it around, if possible. For plants that like to be outside during the summer, same rule applies, but be aware of changing sun/shadow patterns during the season. If necessary, move it to avoid sunburn.

Humidity

Home interiors are too dry for most plants. Group plants to take advantage of their collective moisture or place them on a tray of moistened pebbles to raise the humidity.

Watering

Care must be taken to balance the rapid surface drying that can take place in the home with the plants' lower metabolic processes resulting from lower light. Each particular type of orchid will retain its basic water needs, whether for moisture or periodic dryness. The home grower also needs to give thought to the logistics of watering. You can carry plants to the sink or even outdoors (when weather allows), or water them in place and remove excessive water so the containers do not sit in water.

Fertilizer

Fertilize regularly at a low dosage of approximately one-quarter strength with a fertilizer appropriate to the potting mix in which your plants are grown. Fertilize less often during the winter.

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A Selection of Plants:

Cattleya Alliance Hybrids & Species

Choose miniature types less than 10 inches tall; bright light of southern exposure is best.

Dendrobiums

Dwarf phalaenopsis types, or higher-altitude miniatures; bright light at southern window required.

Intergenerics

These are hybrids, or genetic crosses, between 2 or more genera. Many colors and forms are available, and they often have multiple blooming stems.

Miltonias

These are sometimes referred to as pansy orchids, because they have a similar flower shape and markings. The fragrance is strong and sweet. The leaves and stems are usually somewhat drooping. This orchid prefers diffused light and regular moisture. No direct sun, and do not let them dry out. Like many plants, they do best if left in one location.

Oncidiums

Many types available in flower, best if smaller growing; bright light.

Paphiopedilums

Lady's-slipper orchids grow well under home conditions, giving long-lasting blooms; provide African-violet conditions.

Phalaenopsis

Moth orchids are absolutely the number-one best orchid houseplant; provide African-violet conditions.

Zygopetulum

The fragrant, long-lived flowers of this orchid are thick and waxy. The flowers are green and brown, with stripes and speckles in multiple colors. They make excellent cut flowers. The flower stems emerge from the pseudobulb at the base, which should remain solid and plump with adequate water.

The American Orchid Society is the world's leading provider of information about and related to orchids.

American Orchid Society

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