

Vanilla Culture Care

The world's most popular flavor comes from an orchid!

The vanilla flavoring comes from the seed pod of an orchid flower. Vanilla grows like a vine and has some specific requirements that need to be met for it to thrive and produce blooms.

LIGHT: Vanilla naturally grows on a tree under the canopy, so filtered sunlight is best. An eastern exposure windowsill with 4-5 hours of sunlight would be ideal.

WATER: The pot that the vine is planted in will need to be watered well when it is dry. Remember, it is an orchid. Orchids like a lot of water run over their roots when they are dry, but then they must dry out or the roots will rot.

HUMIDITY: Vanilla naturally grows in tropical environments and requires a good amount of humidity.

TEMPERATURE: Vanilla bean plants require a temperature of 70° F (21° C) during the daytime and 60° F (16° C) at night to grow. It can take temperatures lower than that, but it will not flower if it is consistently kept at cooler temperatures.

FERTILIZER: Feed every other watering in the spring and summer and once a month in the fall and winter. Use balanced all-purpose plant food diluted to half of the recommended strength.

POTTING MEDIUM: The vine needs to be grown in a well-drained potting medium. An orchid mix with some added peat moss is recommended.

NOTES:

Vanilla is a vine and needs to be grown on a totem, moss pole, or trellis. We would suggest a minimum of 3 feet tall to start, with more added as they mature as the vines will need to reach 12-15 feet to be flowering size. The plant can be trained to grow up and down the structure.

As the orchid grows, the new roots will attach to the support and others will reach down to the soil. It will take anywhere from 2-7 years for the plant to grow large enough to bloom. The active growing tip of the vines needs to be 0.25 to 0.50 inches thick before it is strong enough to flower.

To get the vanilla beans, the flowers will need to be hand-pollinated. Each bloom only lasts for one day and is best pollinated in the late morning. Once the flower is pollinated, the beans will form in about a week and will need to mature on the plant for about 9 months before they are ready to be harvested. After the pod is harvested it will need to be sterilized, then dried for several months before it is ready to be used.



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