

# Out in the Garden

Rockport Garden Club, November 2020



## Garden Diary: Growing Phalaenopsis Orchids

There are many genera of orchids. I am going to focus on growing Phalaenopsis because that is most common and the orchid most of us have at home.



The very first thing I have to say is never put ice cubes in your pots. Phals are temperate plants and do not like ice on their feet. The theory of the ice cubes is to use about that quantity of water. Plants should be watered thoroughly when the medium is which they are growing is dry. They prefer to dry out and not have soggy medium.

I have found this to be a variable on timing. In the summer when it can be quite humid, they do not dry out as fast. In the winter, when the heat is on, they tend to dry out much more quickly.

I have my Phals growing in long fiber New Zealand sphagnum moss. I have found this works better than Chilean moss which is more dense and compacts around the roots. The moss should be good for several years before your plants need repotting.

Repotting is intimidating for some people. When your plant is growing up and out of the pot, or if the material is broken down, you should think about repotting. It is a good idea to make sure there are some new roots started. The first thing to do is to water the roots thoroughly. Dry roots are quite brittle. Wet roots have some flexibility. When the plant is out of the pot, clean off all the old material as best as you can without breaking any roots. Trim away all the dead roots. Then put drainage in the bottom of the pot. I like to use

Styrofoam peanuts packing material. The sphagnum moss should be soaked before you use it. Gently wrap the moss around the base of the plant loosely catching all the roots you can. Some roots have a mind of their own and will not go into a pot. That's all right. They are epiphytic plants and prefer growing on the side of a tree in the wild. Ease the plant into the pot, pressing the moss lightly.



You do not want to tamp it down. It should be tight enough to keep the plant upright. Some might need a stake to hold it up until the roots hopefully grow down and keep it in place. This is a newly repotted plant. Water well.

I fertilize my orchids about once a month, using a balanced fertilizer. I use about  $\frac{3}{4}$  tsp in a gallon of water. It is important that your plants not be bone dry when you fertilize. They should be moist.

After blooming, cut off the stem close to the base of the plant. Before cutting, check the nodes along the stem. If any look viable- not dry at all- you can try cutting about  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch above the node. Sometimes this will encourage the plant to send off a new spike off the old stem. It doesn't always work, but it's fun when it does. Phalaenopsis prefer bright light but not direct sunlight. I have had them get sunburned by being too close to the window.

More Phals are killed from being pampered too much. Relax and enjoy them.

—Submitted by Marilyn Thompson

*Volunteers don't get paid, not because they're worthless, but because they're priceless.*

~Sherry Anderson



## The Garden Cart: Chokeberry

*Aronia arbutifolia* or red chokeberry is a multi-stemmed, deciduous shrub with four season interest and deserves greater use in the garden. Its numerous clusters of small, white flowers with red stamens in spring attract native bees. In autumn it produces glossy, edible red fruit and vibrant scarlet red foliage. It is a good replacement for burning bush. The buds are even red in winter.



The common name is in reference to the tart berries that are so astringent they cause one to choke. Chokeberries have 7 times more antioxidants per pound than low bush blueberries so I may have to learn how to make jam if I can get to the fruit before the birds.



The 'Brilliantissima' cultivar differs from the species by being more compact, producing more lustrous red fall color and producing larger and more abundant fruit.

It has no serious insect or disease problems.

### Attributes:

Height: 5-10 feet  
Spread: 4 feet  
Hardiness: 4-9  
Bloom Color: White  
Exposure: Sun to Part Shade  
Soil Moisture: Boggy, Average or Dry  
Maintenance: Low, Remove root suckers  
Attracts: Songbirds, Native bees  
Ecoregion: Eastern United States  
Ornamental Interest: Spring bloom, Summer fruit, Fall Foliage  
Tolerance: Drought and Salt

—Patty Hock



## Garden Reminders:

What to do in your Garden  
this Month

## Garden Club:



## Garden Calendar:

### Member ZOOM Meeting

Monday, November 9<sup>th</sup>

12:00 Mingle

12:30 Business Meeting

1:00 Speaker:

Eileen Saunders

*“Decorating for the  
Holidays”*

[ZOOM Meeting Link](#)

