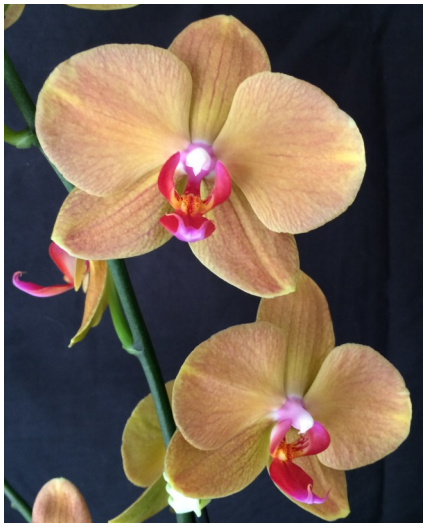
PHALAENOPSIS



There are six main considerations in the Culture of *Phalaenopsis* or moth orchids. Related genera, *Doritis* and *Doritaenopsis* should be treated the same as *Phalaenopsis*. If the following conditions are provided, the *Phalaenopsis* orchid should provide years of enjoyment.

1. **TEMPERATURE:** The ideal temperature range is between 20-27^{0}C. Night temperatures should not fall below 20^{0}C except for spike initiation [see point 5]. As the temperature increases the humidity must be increased. This can be done by standing the orchid pot on a layer of gravel placed in a saucer of water. Ensure that the pot is free draining.
2. **LIGHT:** *Phalaenopsis* orchids thrive in lower light conditions and are therefore ideally suited as indoor plants. The optimum amount of light for this orchid is between 1000 and 1500 foot candles in the greenhouse or placed near an east facing window in the home. During dull winter days a northern light source may be beneficial but do not expose to direct sunlight. Keeping an eye on the orchid leaves will give you an indication of correct light conditions. If the leaves turn a very dark green then increase the light. If the leaves begin to turn yellow then decrease the light.
3. **WATER:** Watering is one of the most important aspects in the cultivation of *Phalaenopsis* orchids, as this orchid, unlike many other orchids, has no bulbs to use for nutrient storage. Watering should be done when the plant's growing medium (bark) appears to be drying out. Do not over water as this can cause root rot. Ensure that the water flows freely from the drainage holes in the pot. Water in the morning to let the crown and the leaves of the plant to dry completely, this will avoid crown rot. Do not leave water in the crown overnight. Dry the crown with paper towel if required.
4. **FERTILIZER:** As mentioned above this orchid has no facility for food storage, so must be fed in another manner. The *Phalaenopsis* takes food from the growing medium and although it is not a big eater, an effort must be made to keep nutrients available to the plant. When the plant is in its growing cycle and when the flower spikes have been set, use a balanced 20:20:20 soluble fertilizer as per directions. If the leaves begin to feel soft, reduce the amount of nitrogen or increase the light a little. When initiating flower spikes [see point 5] give the plant a fertilizer that is higher in phosphorous and potassium e.g. 2:10:10 for four or five weeks. Fertilizing can be reduced during the winter when plant growth slows down.
5. **FLOWER SPIKE INITIATION:** To set the flower spikes, the Spring flowering *Phalaenopsis* must have its night time temperature reduced to around 12-15^{0}C for a couple of weeks as Autumn approaches. For Summer flowering plants, use the lengthening daylight hours as their trigger to set spikes. When the spikes are seen, position the plant so that the spike can grow towards the light source. Use a stake to support the spike if required.
6. **PESTS:** *Phalaenopsis* orchids have a few pests that can cause serious damage to the plant and must be controlled. These include mealy bug, scale, spider mite, fungal and bacterial infections. Good air circulation is vital to assist in avoiding these pests.

SOUTH COAST ORCHID CLUB OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA
Website : http://www.scocsa.com.au
Email: scocsa@outlook.com **Address: PO Box 1060 Flagstaff Hill SA 5159**