



## SARCOCHILUS ORCHIDS

Sarcochilus Orchids are natives of Australia, growing mainly in New South Wales and Queensland. They are small epiphytes or lithophytes that grow under shade or in one or two cases on hot exposed rock faces. They have a short stem, a few leaves, and colourful flowers on short inflorescences.

One remarkable thing about Sarcochilus is that each growth continues to extend and flower year after year with the result that you can have many spikes in a relatively small pot.

With progress in hybridization there are now a variety of colours and markings ranging from various shades of yellow, green, pink, orange and purple through to solid red. Markings vary with different sizes of spots, blotches, stripes, plus shadings of the centres and edges.

Sarcochilus prefer shade house conditions, plenty of air movement, and protection from excessive heat. They should be grown under 50% shade in winter, but at least 85% shade is recommended in summer. They must not be exposed to the direct midday sun in summer as they will burn very easily.

**GROWING MEDIUM:** The potting mix should be open and free draining. The Sarcochilus plants like a well aired pot to promote good root growth. For small plants in up to 100mm pots, a mixture of 5-8mm bark, isolite and marble chips works very well. The grade of bark can be increased to 10-12mm for larger plants in larger pots.

**WATERING:** During winter, the rain should suffice, unless there is an exceptionally dry spell. In summer do not let the plants dry out. Water two or three times a week. Give the plant enough water to keep it damp but do not overwater as this will promote root rot. It may be necessary during hot spells to water every day; small plants perhaps several times a day.

**HUMIDITY:** Native orchids also appreciate a misting during warmer weather. This raises the humidity around the plants. Use some moisture retaining material underneath benches and water this down regularly.

**FERTILIZER:** Slow release fertilizer is very good for Sarcochilus. In addition to foliar feeding most soluble fertilizers will do the job, but with Sarcochilus a low Nitrogen fertilizer is preferable. Always use half to quarter strength and there is less likelihood of burning the plant. Use fortnightly throughout the year.

**REPOTTING:** Sarcochilus do not have pseudobulbs. The plants are better left to build up for spectacular show but they can also be broken up into single growths if required, and potted into 80mm pots. Keep the potting mix on the dry side, and foliar feed for the first six to eight weeks.

**MOUNTS:** Sarcochilus lend themselves to being mounted on boards.

**SOUTH COAST ORCHID CLUB OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

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