

Spring Has Sprung - Great Time to Work on Your Orchids

By Jan Amador

The warmer weather is here so this is the time to step up your plan for orchid care. Time to start watering heavily since the temperature has gone up to the 80's. The vandas are going to need more water as the days get hotter, sometimes twice a day. Best to water early in the day, this helps so the plant can dry to help avoid problems.

Since this is still the dry season you should be watching for pests. Thrips love to get into the bud that is forming and will do harm to the flower before it emerges. For thrips you might try using mild liquid dish soap, like original Dawn, at a rate of 2 ounces per gallon of water. Add the soap to your sprayer last thing or you will have nothing but bubbles! Be sure you have watered your plants well the day before. Some people prefer to use the chemical Orthene, but be sure to protect yourself. You must spray the entire plant, top and underside of leaves, pseudobulbs and potting media. You should repeat this is 7 -10 days.

Repotting should be underway for your cattleyas, oncidiums and hard cane dendrobiums. Be sure to inspect your plants for any issues. You might want to evaluate if you want to do some mounting or dividing of your plants. You should remove the old potting mix and any dead roots. Make sure the plant is not going to wiggle in the pot or the root tips will break off. Great thing about mounting is that you don't have to repot again. Try cypress mounts, cork slabs, tree fern pots or slabs or a wooden basket with no medium at all or add wine corks or lava rock. Have fun trying something new.

Spring is when you add the time release fertilizer to your potted plants or put in the sachet bags for mounted orchids or vandas. What is great is that every time you water your plant it gets fed. Dynamite is the name of the fertilizer and it is available at Home Depot (Red container) or from a commercial grower, it is called Nutri-cote. The time release fertilizer might last up to 180 days so you will not re-apply until next spring.

Fertilizing is very important now for root growth and to generate flowers forming. All the growers tell us – the important thing is that you use what you have, as it is better than not fertilizing at all. Some say to fertilize weekly weakly, meaning at half strength. Some say that in the spring you should increase the amount of fertilizer to 2 teaspoons per gallon of water every two weeks. Some people like to use a bloom booster this time of year. There are all kinds of other things you can add to your fertilizer solution, MaxiCrop (made from seaweed), Epsom Salt (adds magnesium) and all sorts of other ingredients. Do a little research and learn what works for you. We have shared Bill Hodnetts formula so you might want to try that – it works for him.

In other words – Just Do It! Enjoy your orchids!