

Are orchids hard to grow?

The common belief is that orchids are very delicate and need special conditions to grow them successfully. NOTHING could be further from the truth. Most orchids, require very little in the way of care, in fact, they are better off with a little 'benign neglect.'

What kind of orchid is easiest to grow?

The Phalaenopsis (Moth Orchid) also known as the 'beginner orchid' is very easy to grow in the home. The other great thing about Phals is their long bloom time. It is not unusual for them to be in bloom for 3 to 6 months at a time. Once the plant reaches maturity at about 6 to 7 years, the plant almost never goes out of bloom.

When should I water?

Most orchids that are grown in the home need to be watered about every 7-10 days, or when the dirt turns light brown and the pot feels light when you lift it. The number of days in between waterings will vary depending on pot size, amount of media in the pot, root mass, and plant size. But no matter the pot size, the important thing is to let the dirt dry between waterings. With only a few exceptions, they do not like to stay moist all the time. The best way to water is to set the plant in the sink or bathtub and pour water over the potting soil until the water runs freely from the bottom of the pot. On the day you water, check the plant to be sure there is no water sitting in the crown of the plant. This could cause a disease called 'Crown Rot'. If there is moisture in the center, take the corner of a paper towel and wick out the water. If you have your plant sitting in a saucer with rocks and some water, be sure that the roots or the bottom of the pot are not sitting in water.

What kind of water should I use?

Good tap water, rainwater, lake water, distilled water, well water, and RO water are all acceptable. DO NOT use water directly from a water softener. Eventually the plants would be adversely affected by the salt in the water.

How often should I fertilize and what should I use?

Fertilizer should be applied every other time you water. We recommend a water-soluble plant food that easily dissolves in water. If you have some house plant fertilizer on hand that you would like to use up, use it half strength. If you don't have fertilizer, go to our website and read about our fertilizer. It's all we have used for the past 8 years for our orchids as well as our outside flowers, houseplants, and vegetable plants.

Repotting in a decorative pot?

Yes, as long as the pot has good drainage holes and is not oversized for the root mass. Orchids do not like to be over potted. If your pot does not have good drainage holes, we recommend that you leave your plant in the plastic pot, and place it in the decorative pot. If the lip is showing just cover the top with moss. It can be purchased in the flowering arranging area of any craft or superstore. On the day you water, remember to check the bottom of the decorative pot to be sure the bottom of your plastic pot is not sitting in water.

Should I save the excess fertilizer water that runs through the pot?

This is definitely a big NO! All living things give off some waste products and plants are no exception. Fertilizers leave some residual behind as well. If you use the excess water, these waste products will build up in the soil instead of being rinsed out.

How much light do Orchids need?

Good indirect light is what is needed. An east, south, or west window will work. A north window is usually too little light, unless it is a very large window without any shading. Indirect light is important. Direct sun rays beating on the plant will burn holes in the leaves. If you chose a window that has hot afternoon sun, there are several things you can do. Move the plant back a little from the window, draw the sheer curtains, or tip the blinds up if you have them.

Why did my buds get dry and fall off?

Buds usually fall off for two reasons. First, they will not complete their cycle if there are too many cloudy days in a row. Second, the plant became dry. This is caused either by not giving the plant enough water, or there is excess air blowing directly on the buds. We can't do much about the lack of sunshine, but we certainly can adjust the water and the air movement. All orchids like a certain amount of air movement, but not warm air blowing directly from a register. They prefer a ceiling fan or small oscillating fan. But the good news is Phals do not like it when they don't complete their bloom cycle. More often than not, if conditions are corrected they will continue to grow buds on the end of the flower spike, until they replace the buds that fell away.

How do I get my orchids to bloom again?

Most orchid plants bloom in response to a change to their growing conditions. The bloom is what is needed to produce a seed pod. In order to accomplish this, change the plants, will do two things. First, we re-pot, and then we cool the plant down at night only. The night temperature should be about 63 degrees. In the home, this cool down can usually be accomplished easily by placing your plant close to the window in the fall when it is cooler outside, or in a closet, garage or basement. Remember though, no cooler than about 58 °. Then in the daytime, the plant should be where it will be warm again. After the bloom spike starts, leave the plant where is normally grown. The flower stem will finish without any more help from us.

When the blooms are finished, where should I cut the bloom spike?

If your plant is a good size plant (a leaf span of 8") then the stem may side-branch and produces more buds and flowers. To encourage this process, cut the stem back to about ½ "above a notch (notches look like an upside down v shaped growth on the stem) count back one or two notches below where the flowers started. Use clean scissors or knife and cut through the stem above the notch. Give the plant plenty of time to develop a side branch. If the stem dries up and gets hard, just cut it off near the base and wait for the next flower spike to start. It takes about 60% of the plants energy to bloom, so if it doesn't side branch, nothing's wrong, it just needs to grow instead of bloom.

Why have my bottom leaves fallen off?

It is perfectly normal for the bottom leaves to fall off of a Phalaenopsis. They will only hold a certain number of leaves at one time, so as new leaves grow from the top, old ones fall off the bottom.

What are the white lacy looking things on my plants?

These are mealy bugs, and can harm your plant. The first option we recommend to eliminate these bugs is rubbing alcohol. It is safe, economical and usually effective. Simply add the alcohol to a spray bottle and spray directly on all the critters. Spray the soil and if needed the stem and flowers. You may lose some blooms, but it is worth it to get rid of these pesky bugs. Repeat this procedure for at least two 7 day cycles. This alcohol regimen also works well on scale. The next option would be one of the agricultural oils such as Neem Oil, Volck Oil, or Sun Oil. They can be purchased at any good garden center. Just follow package directions. These oils are also safe to use in the home, and around children and pets. If you are still having trouble, just e-mail or call us and we will recommend some other options.

How often should I re-pot?

Orchids should be re-potted about once a year. If you are using bark as a potting media, it breaks down in about a year and must be replaced. If you are growing in our type mix, peat moss, seedling bark, and a coconut fiber combination, it needs to be changed once a year as the roots usually have grown enough that there isn't much potting media left. It has been displaced by roots.

My plant has two names, how do I know which is the right one?

The names you see on your tag are the names of the parents that made up your plant. The person who developed your plant may not have given it a name yet. That usually doesn't occur until the plant either wins a national award, or someone wants to use the plant for further breeding.

What do the initials behind the name of my plant mean?

The initials HCC (Highly Commended Certificate), AM (Award of Merit) and FCC (First Class Certificate) indicate that the plant has received a national award, The AOS after the award initials, mean that the award was given by the American Orchid Society. If your plant has any of these awards, it means that the plant and flowers are superior and has many outstanding qualities.

Why do my leaves look like they are wilted?

Usually this is the result of watering too often or the base of your plant is sitting in water, either in a saucer or decorative pot. If watered less often (every 7-10 days) does not solve the problem, then the plant will need to be re-potted.

I broke a piece of leaf off, what should I do?

Anytime there is a fresh cut on your plant or an exposed wet spot (for example, from an insect chewing on the leaf) the area should be treated. Coat the exposed part of the leaf with cinnamon. This will dry the area quickly, and also prevent the plant from getting a bacterial or fungal infection. Plus, it smells good too!!!