**Caring for Mounted Orchids**

            For many orchids, growing on a **mount** is the most natural thing.  Since most orchids are ‘epiphytic’ or tree dwelling, they can easily adapt to growing on various types of mounting material.  Members of the Cattleya family as well as Chilochistas, Angreacums, Bulbophyllums and Phalaenopsis all provide a variety of species and hybrids you can try growing this way.  Usually your best choices are plants that will remain somewhat compact.  If you try growing larger plants on mounts, the growth habit can get rather untidy and larger pseudobulbs may not be able to support themselves.  Also, terrestrials such as Paphiopedilums, Jewel orchids and Cymbidiums are not good choices because the roots on these should not dry out as much as mount culture will allow and their roots are not designed to cling to the rough surface of wood and bark.

            ***What Can I Use-*** When selecting a mount to attach your plant to, choose a material that will last a long time and is large enough to allow for several years growth. Cork bark, slabs of compressed tree fern, hickory bark, crepe myrtle branches, and driftwood all make good choices.  Remember, when growing in pots the main reason for repotting is to provide fresh media and more growing space.  This problem is all but eliminated when growing on mounts, so a well grown specimen will most likely never be removed or reworked until the mount is covered or falls apart.

            ***Getting Started-*** If possible, try to work with your plant during a time when it has a new growth and new roots already started.  Starting with a bare root plant, place a small pad of damp sphagnum moss between the roots and mount.  For Cattleyas and similar sympodial plants the new growth should be against the bark, with enough room to grow ‘up’ the mount.  For monopodials such as Phalaenopsis, the new growth faces out with the foliage positioned to prevent water from collecting in the crown.  Attach your plant firmly using coated floral wire (24 gauge works great) or plastic coated twist tie. Again, this material should be long-lasting since some plants may take a few months to completely root to the mount.  Raffia and twine may be more natural looking, but could disintegrate before the plant is attached and allow the roots to slip.  Wrap the wire snugly around the roots and moss a few times and then between the pseudobulbs for Cattleyas, making sure to avoid new growths, roots or other tender areas.

            ***Okay, Now How Do I Grow It?*** Keeping adequate humidity is very important to all orchids, but even more so with mounted plants.  There is very little material surrounding the roots to provide lasting moisture and you will notice even the moss you placed around the roots will dry after only a day or so.  In the average home, sunroom or greenhouse your plant will need to be *watered 3-5 times per week*.  The best way is to take your orchid to a sink or faucet and drench the entire plant and mount.  If you have low humidity, grow outdoors or have very high temperatures in the summer, expect to water *at least once* every sunny day.  If your plant is unhappy due to low humidity try a cool mist humidifier and a small fan in your growing space.  Fertilizer can be applied about every 2-3 weeks, after a through watering.

            Temperatures and light will depend on the species or hybrid you are growing.  Most plants will appreciate lower light and moderate temperatures for the first few weeks after mounting to avoid stress.  After that, you will need to adjust for the culture of specific plants.