

KNOW YOUR WATER **by Chuck Acker**

When Keith contacted me regarding an issue he was having with his orchids, I knew almost immediately what the root of the cause would be. Several other hobby growers and former customers of mine had also contacted me over the past year or so with similar issues.

It has become known in the past decade or more that our orchids do prefer water that is somewhat pure in makeup versus using water right out of any tap or other source. With this knowledge many of us have invested in some sort of water purification method whether it is collecting rain water, using dehumidifier water or installing an RO (reverse osmosis) system. While all these methods may indeed give the near pure water that our orchids love, they also present other less desirable qualities.

Water of these types generally have a low pH reading, some so low that it can and does become toxic to the plants. It is very important to know the pH of the water you are using, as well as your fertilized water too. When you start with



water of a low pH and add nearly any type of fertilizer to it, the pH will drop and in some cases drop dramatically. That is why I recommended Keith should use the “pH UP” product.

If your orchid(s) do not respond favorably to your new pH regimen then they may need to be repotted into some fresh medium. As Keith had mentioned, the potting mediums will become more acidic as they age and break down, so simply changing the pH of your water and fertilizer water may not always be the answer alone.

One way to test the pH of your potting medium is to catch some of the water draining out of the pot on your watering day and check the pH of that water. If your drain water has a higher pH than it did before it went into the pot, then you have an acidic potting medium that should be changed.

Happy Growing!

Chuck Acker