



# TARZANEGROUP

MICRO, MINIATURE AND SMALL ORCHIDS

## PLEIONE TERRESTRIAL ORCHIDS



**Origin:** Asia

**Temperatures:** Cold to warm growing small terrestrial orchid species

**Light:** Bright indirect light

**Watering & Fertilizing:** Regular watering and fertilizing in active growing season, goes completely dormant – no fertilizing and watering when in dormancy.

**General care:** These unusual terrestrial orchids spread over the Himalayas grow from relatively large pseudobulbs. They are famous for their beautiful huge flowers that originate from new shoots formed at the base of the pseudobulb in early spring. Different species bloom in different colors, from pink to purplish, white or yellow, while the fringed, tubular lip is often paler or white, with yellow, red or purple dots and stripes. Small root system makes them excellent plants for shallow decorative pots. These are completely dormant terrestrial orchids. During active growing season they prefer temperatures under 77F, occasional temperatures up to 85F occurs in their natural habitat too. During the winter dormancy, bulbs should be protected from freezing. They can be stored in the fridge in paper bags in zones that are too warm. Preferably grown as potted plants, they can be also potted directly in soil outside in areas that are not too hot and only very gentle occasional frost occurs a few times during the winter. We prefer potting in shallow small clay pots. They need watering more frequently but the

evaporation from their surface helps to keep the roots cool and provides humidity around the plants. Due to shallow root system, you should use small shallow low pots, even decorative bonsai pots work great.

Pleione will grow in a variety of mixes, mix should be always airy and well drained. Mix of 3 parts bark and 2 parts moss works well, but we do grow ours in 100% pure live sphagnum moss that provides good aeration to roots when still holding enough moisture, it is also antiseptic. The bark can be small to medium grade orchid bark. Pleiones can be potted or re-potted anytime while they are dormant. They can be taken out of pots for the winter dormancy and potted back in early spring, anytime between January – March. Cooler temps will lead to later sprouting. When repotting, remove most of the dead roots (roots are annual and die at the end of each growing season). Rather than remove the old roots entirely, trim them back but leave a length of 1". This will help to anchor the pseudobulb in the new compost when potting. Like the roots, the pseudobulbs are annual and towards the end of the growing season they shrivel and die. The old pseudobulbs should be removed and thrown away. The pseudobulbs should be planted with approximately one third their depth sticking out above the compost and spaced about 1" apart.

Pleione will require watering from spring through summer to autumn and then kept totally dry while dormant in the winter. The critical time is early in the season. The roots usually start to grow more or less as the flowers fade and at this time it is important to give only a little water - the aim is to keep the compost only-just damp and make the newly-emerging roots go searching for moisture. If the mix is too wet at this time there is a danger the new roots will rot. Once however the roots are well established (often evidenced by rapid leaf growth) watering can be increased substantially. Pleiones come from areas which get the summer monsoon. As long as your mix is very free draining, it is difficult to give them too much water once they are actively growing. It is best to use rain water, soft tap water or water produced by reverse-osmosis, but this is not so critical as for many other orchids and they will tolerate hard tap water. If possible, keep them open to the weather in summer so they can be rained on.

As days shorten in the autumn and growth slows, reduce watering. When the leaves start to go yellow it is time to stop watering altogether and allow them to completely dry out. The leaves will go brown and finally fall off and the pseudobulbs enter their dormant phase.

Pleione need to be fertilized to build up the pseudobulbs for flowering the following year. They like regular but weak fertilizing (1/8<sup>th</sup> strength) with a liquid fertilizer, we do use fish mix for all our terrestrial orchids. Feeding should start once the leaves start to grow quickly and continue until the autumn.

Pleione needs to be shaded from direct, bright sunshine. A shade cloth is ideal, or keep these in bright indirect light (semi-shade) with some early morning sun or late evening one. They also enjoy fresh air, so good air movement is crucial - a fan is very useful to give some air movement if necessary. They prefer cool temperatures, preferably below 77F but they will tolerate higher temperatures for a while.

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