

# Cardiff & The Vale of Glam. Orchid Society

## GENERAL CARE OF ORCHIDS



Orchids must have humidity so stand plants in a tray or outer container. Use chippings, hortag or pebbles in the bottom of the tray or container and add water. Stand plant/s on an inverted saucer. Orchids do not like standing in water - this can kill them very quickly.

A good book on culture is very helpful as it gives notes on care for different types of orchids.

Most orchids other than Miltonia like their leaves sprayed except in winter. Never spray the flowers. With Phalaenopsis (Moth Orchid) only spray in hot weather and be careful not to get water into the crown (centre) of the plant.

A weak dilution of Tomato feed is good for orchids, as is Phostrogen or specialist orchid feeds. As orchids are not hungry plants do not give more than half strength feed. Feed for 3 feeds (at intervals of a week to 10 days) and then give plain water the 4th time. This helps to prevent any build up of harmful substances.

It is always better to underwater than to over water. You can water a dehydrated plant but you will rarely be able to resuscitate a waterlogged one. However in *exceptionally hot* weather be ready to water two or three times a week instead of the usual once. It is quite safe to use tap water in Cardiff and most of the Vale of Glamorgan, but do allow it to stand for at least an hour but preferably over night to allow Chlorine to evaporate. People elsewhere will have to check with their local Water Company to find if tap water is suitable in their area.

Temperature is important but there is normally quite a wide range that a plant will tolerate. For optimum results it is important to stay within the recommended temps: -

For hothouse plants:	Min 65°F	Max. 85-90°F
Intermediate plants	Min 55°F	Max. 86°F
Cool plants	Min 50°F	Max. 75°F

Orchids that grow at very high altitudes in their natural habitat will need cool temperatures during the winter and need to be shaded from strong sun in the summer as their leaves will quickly become scorched. This can leave unsightly marked leaves and the plant will quickly wilt. Some *very early* morning sun or *late* afternoon sun can be beneficial to flower production.

There are other methods of growing orchids successfully – semi-hydro culture and full hydro culture. The former uses a sealed container and the root ball sits about two thirds of the way up in the pot. The medium used is grit, chippings, small stones or hydroleca, thoroughly washed and rinsed several times. When water and weak feed is given it is measured carefully and a quarter of the capacity of the container is given. Full hydro culture is sitting the root ball again three quarters of the way up in the pot which this time has drainage holes at the bottom. The whole container then sits in an outer container which has about an 1” of water and feed and this is kept topped up so that it seeps gradually up to the root ball and the whole medium is kept evenly moist. The roots stay at the level at which they are comfortable. Feeds especially designed for hydroculture should be used where possible.

It is really beneficial to join an orchid society if you can as you learn a great deal from other members. Our orchid society website with lots of free fact sheets can be found here:

<http://www.cardiffandthevaleorchidsociety.co.uk/>