



THE LANDSCAPE CONSULTANTS

Your design and installation team



Growing Orchids

There are many different types of orchids making up the Orchidaceae family. The orchids fall into three different growing requirements.

Cool-climate orchids: *Bletilla, Cymbidium, Epidendrum, Epipactis, Laelia, Paphiopedilum (green leafed ones), and Pleione.*

Temperate- climate orchids: *Brassavola, Cattleya, Coelogyne, Dendrobium, Epidendrum, Laelia, Lycaste, Oncidium, Paphiopedilum (mottled-leaf ones).*

Warm-climate orchids: *Phalaenopsis, Vanda.*

Growing orchids in your own home is as easy as growing any other tropical plant. These plants are a lot hardier than you think and will adapt to many locations. It is thought that orchids are difficult to grow unless you have a greenhouse. This however is not true. With some 20,000 species and 100,000 artificial hybrids, there are of course some fussy plants that require special care. But on the most part there are many varieties that are easy-to-grow and will adapt to the temperatures and light conditions found in your home.

Orchids do differ a little from other houseplants, in that they are not grown in soil. Orchids must be planted in an orchid bark mixture specially made for orchid growing. Potting an orchid in soil is a sure way to kill it. In the wild orchids attach themselves by thick roots to the sides of trees and on branches. Clinging to the bark, the orchid get water and nutrients from the air and rain, adapting to survive when there is little rain by hoarding water in their thick leaves, stems and roots.

When watering your orchids, usually once a week or so water thoroughly and then allow them to dry slightly before watering again. Nothing kills an orchid faster than sitting in water logged pot.

Temperature plays a big roll in whether or not your orchids will bloom. A nightly temperature drop of 10 degrees, especially in the autumn and winter will induce the orchid to set flower buds more easily. The three growing requirements that were listed earlier in the handout indicates the orchids that fall into the warm, temperate and cool climate groups. This refers to the lowest temperature that each orchid prefers during the winter nights. Warm-climate orchids sulk if the temperature drops below 60F. And temperate-climate orchids prefer night temperatures around 55F. While cool-climate orchids will become accustomed to night temperatures of 50F. At the other extreme, most of the orchid family will not do well in temperature above 90F.

A good indication as to whether or not you orchid is getting enough light is by what colour the leaf is. The lush, rich, dark green that you want for most houseplants is not desirable in orchid leaves. Dark leaves are nice looking but it signals that there is not enough light. A grassy green colour (light or medium green with yellowish tones)

means the plant is receiving enough light to bloom. Southern and eastern facing windows work best for growing orchids. Too much direct sunlight can sun burn the leaves, causing them to bleach out to white, ultimately die and turn black.

Orchids do not need a lot of fertilization. To maintain healthy plant and have them bloom on a regular basis, apply a weak solution of 20-20-20 once a week. Make sure to water with plain water once a month to flush out any fertilizer salts that may have built up in the soil. Switch to a bloom-booster fertilizer in the fall, when most types of orchids are beginning to set buds. Peak blooming time of most orchids is between December and April.

Raising the humidity around your orchids will result in better flowering. Most of our homes have dry, hot air heating, that has very little humidity. To increase the humidity around the orchids you can simply set the pot on a tray of pebbles, and add water until the pebbles are almost covered. Also grouping your orchids together will help to create a humid area. Sufficient air movement is essential to keep fungal diseases and bacterial infections from invading your plants. Having a small fan that you can move around and simulate breezes that would be like the orchids natural environment.