

SPRIT OF GARDENING

Orchids

GROWING ORCHIDS INDOORS

Orchids are beautiful plants that can be easily be grown at home simply by following a few guidelines. Orchids are less trouble than many other plants if their conditions are as close as possible to those in their natural home.

Careful choice of the varieties to grow is the first requirement. It is difficult to keep a type that needs steamy jungle conditions in your living room. Even among the plants recommended there is considerable variation in needs and these individual quirks are explained with the plant descriptions.

There are basic requirements common to all orchids—heat, humidity and light. The most important factor is light. The intensity of light that orchid plants receive in the wild varies widely from the Amazon forest to the Colombian Cordilleras. But all tropical and subtropical regions have at least 10 - 14 hours of daylight. If the plants can get at least ten hours of light daily—if necessary boosting natural light with artificial—this will go along way towards achieving good growing conditions. Exposure to light for more than 16 hours a day may prevent orchids flowering. Also, except in winter in cool temperate regions, direct sunlight is too overpowering for most orchids.

LIGHT

The Phalaenopsis Orchid likes filtered sunlight. They do well in or directly adjacent to an east window. There should be no curtains on the windows or trees outside to reduce the light levels. A second location is in a south window that has a lace curtain or a tree outside to reduce the light levels to an indirect level.

WATERING + FERTILIZING

Orchids like to have their roots damp, but not wet. In the summer that means watering about twice a week and in the winter, during periods of lower sunlight, about once a week. After purchasing your Phal, in bloom you can regularly fertilize at about half strength (not more) with a general household plant food.

As long as the tip of the spike is alive it will continue to produce flowers. After the tip has died, cut it back to a lower “node” on the stem, and a new spike will likely start.



HUMIDITY

Phalaenopsis like high humidity. Keep away from forced air heat vents. If you are concerned about humidity you can place the pot on a tray of wet gravel that is an inch or two deep. Add water as evaporation occurs. DO NOT let the pot or roots sit in water as this will cause rot.