

Basic Orchid Culture

Light:

Sun (solar), Electric (artificial), or Supplemental

Solar is easiest, hence the greenhouse, but good window exposure works nearly as well. Eastern, Southeastern & Southern windows are best for plant growth.

Temperature:

Range based on origin: Cool: 45 to 70; Intermediate: 55 to 80; Warm: 65 to 90

For short times, most can exceed minimum if dry, and maximum if wet. Many desire a day/night temp. change to bloom well. Plants cannot adapt to poor conditions.

Water:

Watering 'schedule' – when the plant needs it. Pot weight; Finger Test; Pencil Test

In the home the top dries quickly. Visual check is misleading.

Shriveling of pseudobulbs can be caused by dead roots (overwatering), really dry conditions, and sometimes dormancy.

More orchids die of over watering than anything else. When in doubt, wait a day.

Food:

Can be natural or chemical. There is minimal difference in formulations of chemical fertilizers. N-P-K = nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium. Micronutrients are important in small quantities. 'Bloom boosters' reduce nitrogen & increase phosphorus.

Weakly, Weekly – light doses (1/4 strength) each time the plant NEEDS water.

Water thoroughly each time you water.

Once a month or so, thoroughly flush with clear water to remove excess, unused food.

Once or twice a year, add 1tsp of Epsom salts per gallon of water & flush with this.

Atmosphere:

Plants need a balance of breezes and humidity to allow transpiration to draw nutrients into the plant. Avoid blasts from HVAC.

Humidity can be increased locally by using pebble trays, grouping plants together, tenting plants (similar to a terrarium), and using a humidifier when necessary.

The American Orchid Society maintains information on basic and advanced orchid culture. Membership includes a subscription to the informative and entertaining monthly Orchids Magazine. Additional information is available via the society web site at www.AOS.org