



Orchids how to buy and grow them successfully

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There are so many places selling orchids these days like grocery stores, building supply stores, as well as specialized floral departments and florist shops.

First of all, we should decide which is the right orchid for us. Today we can purchase orchids that are grown specifically as pot plants. Since they bloom for many weeks while most potted plants only bloom for a short while, they are a really good value. Make sure you check the name on the pot so that you know what kind you have.

Once you get your plant home, one of the first things you should do, is look around your home and decide which is the best location for your orchids. As it is summertime (if it ever stops raining), the ideal place for your orchid right now is in a window that receives either the morning or evening sun, but not direct sun during the hottest part of the day. Most indoor orchids will be happy in this situation.

Those orchids that like the shadiest places such as Phalaenopsis and Paphiopedilums will do equally well in a window that does not receive too much sun in the summer time. On the other hand, Cattleyas and Dendrobiums are examples of orchids that like a considerable amount of light, and these will be well suited to a window that receives a great deal of sun, provided there is some shading between the plants and the glass. Blinds or sheer curtains will be sufficient to prevent burning from direct sun. This will still give the plants the extra light that they need for optimum growth and ripening of the pseudobulbs.

In the winter most orchids will be comfortable in a well lit window, because the sun will not reach high enough in the sky to cause any problems with burning. The high-risk time here is in the early spring when the sun starts to climb higher each day, gradually gaining strength. Some orchids will need to be moved quickly to a less sunny spot.

In summer, place your orchids so that the back of the plant is facing the window with the new growth facing into the room. In this way tender new leaves cannot become accidentally burnt and the older pseudobulbs can be well ripened to assist the flowering.

In winter, the plants can be turned around so that the new growth will receive the most light.

It is usually best not to keep turning your orchids when they are flowering, since it causes the flowers to face in different directions.

Most orchids grow better close to the window than sitting in the center of your living room, unless it is particularly well lit, with high ceilings and white walls. Actually an area like this would suit *Phalaenopsis* very well.

Orchids normally grow with their roots exposed in humid environments. They can easily be damaged by getting too waterlogged. Water once a week or so using room temperature water and never allow the plant to sit in water. You can pour the water through the medium or immerse for a minute or two but no longer.

Whilst your orchids are flowering they can be brought into the room for display for as long as the flowers last. After all that work, you will want to enjoy them. Once the flowers have faded return them to their growing area.

Orchids should not be so close to the window that their leaves touch the glass. On winter nights you should have heavy drapes to close in front of the glass but behind the orchids. In the summer time windows can be left open to give the plants a flow of fresh air, whenever the weather is warm enough. Be very careful that they are not sitting in a (cold) draught. Do not sit them for instance on top of the television because it will be too hot. Check that they are not placed in danger of being knocked over and damaged by children or pets.

Now to the feeding. Orchids can be fed at all ages, from young seedlings and propagations to adult plants. Feed only the healthy ones. Do not feed plants that are sick or have lost their roots or have just been repotted. Sick plants have no way of taking up the food and any new roots that appear may be burnt by the residue remaining in the growing medium. Do not feed orchids that are "resting". Their roots have become inactive and the chemicals will just stay in the medium where they may cause harm to the plant as it starts to grow in the spring.

Tips for Feeding

- Buy a proven product rather attempting to mix your own.
- Only feed orchids that are actively growing.
- Apply feed at every second or third watering.
- Never overfeed orchids.
- Feed only healthy plants.
- Use any one of the popular brands of fertilizer sold for houseplants if necessary but at half the recommended dose – remember I keep telling you this for all your plants.

Most of all enjoy these beautiful flowering plants, do not worry so much that you cannot take the time to just sit and look. Remember if your plant does die – you have not paid that much for it. I gave one to my grandson for Christmas (his request). It has already gone to that greenhouse in the sky and it cost \$49.95 sigh.

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