

Growing Epidendrum



*Epidendrum*s, kin to *Cattleyas*, comprise a vast genus of tropical and subtropical species growing as far north as North Carolina on through Central America and South America. There are over a thousand species. Because of the size and diversity it is difficult to lump them into one definite description or culture. Some grow in rain forests while others grow in dry areas. Most are easy-to-grow and many are fragrant.

There are two major groups:

Reed-Stem: These plants have no pseudobulbs and are identified by their tall reed-like stems and terminal flower spikes. *E. ibaguense* (*E. radicans*) will grow in full sun all morning outside, in this climate, but be sure to bring them inside when the night temperatures drop to the low 50's.

Encyclia: Many botanists make a separate species of the *Epidendrum*s with pseudobulbs. Some of the bulbs are round like eggs, others are tall and thin and some look like an inverted ice cream cone. Many of these are now being hybridized with *cattleyas* to produce flowers almost as hardy

Light

An exposure that receives morning sun is desirable. They grow well with *cattleyas*. They can also be grown under lights.

Temperature & Humidity

Encyclia: The most desirable range is 63 to 83°F. by day and 55 to 68°F. by night.

Reed-Stem: These require slightly cooler growing conditions than *encyclia*. Both varieties will stand short durations of lower or higher temperatures, however, if the temperature is on the high side, it is necessary to raise the humidity. Both like a definite drop of approximately 10 degrees at night. Increase humidity by placing the pot on a bed of wet pebbles making sure the pot does not stand in water.

Watering

The frequency of watering depends upon the amount of sunlight, temperature, day-length, the type of pot and most of all the potting medium. *Epidendrum*s in nature are not constantly wet at the roots, but often soaked by rains and quickly dried out because of free air movement. When you water, soak all the pot, let the water run out, then soak it again. Let it drain and then wait until the pot feels dry and light before watering again. Misting the leaves daily is beneficial.

Fertilizer

Nowadays most plants are grown in bark, thus requiring a higher nitrogen fertilizer. The timing depends on the growth cycle. When there is no visible growth, fertilize every month or six weeks. When new roots are forming and new growths appear, start feeding Premium Orchid Food 20-20-20 at 1/2 strength every two weeks. Foliar feeding is also helpful.

Air Movement

This is very important as the plants are used to gentle breezes in their natural habitat. If there is no movement of air, the plants will stagnate. A small whisper fan nearby is a good way to generate this gentle air movement.

Potting

Repot every 2 years, in summer, just as the new growth is starting. Allow 3-5 bulbs to a division. Avoid too large a pot. Treat cuts with tree-seal or sulfur and cut off all dead roots. Remove old bark and repot in fresh bark that has been moistened. After potting keep plants shaded and on the dry side until new roots start to grow.

The object of this culture sheet is to give you basic information on the cultural requirements of Epidendrum and their allied genera. Should you need additional information please stop by the Flower Shop for personalized help.