

Growing *Odontoglossum*



Odontoglossum, with over 300 known species from Mexico and South America, is predominately a genus of orchids from high elevations, hence cool growing, but some species come from warm lowlands. Hundreds of hybrids have been made within the genus. Such genera as *Oncidium*, *Miltonia*, *Cochlioda*, *Brassia* and others have been crossed with *Odontoglossum* to get multi-generic hybrids.

Odontoglossums are of sympodial habit with bright green leaves and pseudobulbs, the latter usually oval or round and somewhat flattened. The flower spike arises from the base of each new growth, often one from each side. The Andean species bloom chiefly in the spring and early summer with the hybrids blooming throughout the year. Most will last for weeks and are used as a commercial cut flower.

Light

A bright window without direct sunlight may prove adequate for most plants in the home. Proper light conditions will produce a clear light green color in the leaves. A dark green color with soft lush growth may indicate too little light. Yellow green foliage indicates too much light.

Temperature & Humidity

Most *Odontoglossums* grow in the high, cool elevations of the Colombian Andes. Consequently, in cultivation, they need a night temperature between 45-50°F. throughout the year to do their best. Daytime temperatures should not exceed 70°F. Humidity should be in the range of 70% or better.

Nowadays many *Odontoglossums* are hybridized with warm-growing species to create hybrids more adaptable to the cultural conditions of the average hobbyist.

Watering

Most *Odontoglossums* need abundant water with excellent drainage, much in the manner of *Miltonias*. The bark is kept moist, but not soggy. Frequent waterings, often two or more per week during the very warm summer months, depending, of course, on light and temperature conditions. Foliage will unfold with accordion pleats if kept too dry.

Fertilizer

Odontoglossums are light feeders. Fertilize twice a month with Premium Orchid Food 20-20-20 used at ½ strength.

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

Odontoglossums do well in fir bark provided the medium is porous and moist. The plants do best if not disturbed too often, repotting being required when the medium is broken down. Pot to allow two or three year's growth, remembering that the pseudobulbs grow very closely together and will require a relatively small pot. They tend, naturally, to lose their leaves on back bulbs, but any excessive shriveling may indicate that the bark may be broken down.

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