

Growing Oncidium



To date there are at least three hundred species of Oncidiums. They are found throughout tropical America from Florida to the West Indies, south through Central America to the southern part of Brazil. Some are found in low hot regions, while others seek the cool high altitudes. They are amenable to most any growing conditions, however, and can easily be grown in the greenhouse or home. They come in a variety of sizes and colors, some with leaves thick and yellow-green or dark green and mottled, some have leaves thin and pencil-like and some have thin grass-like leaves.

Light

All Oncidiums need good light, such as an east window or even a south window in the winter. If the leaves tend to bleach out and get yellowish, the plant is getting too much sun. If the leaves are a very dark green, the plant is getting too little sun.

Temperature & Humidity

Most Oncidiums will grow nicely with Cattleyas, requiring a temperature range between 58°F. at night to a maximum of 90°F. for short periods in the daytime. Daytime temperature of 70°F. is ideal. If the plant is of the cool variety, 55°F. nighttime temperature is desired.

If the plants are grown in the home, be sure to provide a tray of pebbles with enough water to provide humidity, but making sure that the bottom of the pot is not standing in water. A thorough daily misting adds to the humidity and keeps the leaves free of dust.

Watering

Oncidiums require a thorough watering twice a week in summer and once a week in winter if they are grown in bark. If the top of the bark stays wet, don't water. This is a sign the bark has broken down and the plant needs repotting. Should the plant be growing on tree fern or cork, it will require dunking in a bucket of water almost every day provided it dries out in between. A plastic pot may require less frequent watering.

Fertilizer

Fertilize with Premium Orchid Food 20-20-20 used at 1/2 strength every 2 weeks. Slightly less, after flowering, until new roots start to grow.

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

Oncidiums do well in fir bark, using broken pieces of pots for drainage at the bottom of the pot. They may also be grown on slabs of bark or logs of tree fern, preferably having a rough texture. Some do best in baskets. Divide the plants in clumps with three or more pseudobulbs, just before the new growth starts.

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