



Phalaenopsis (Moth Orchid)

Light: Shading is important. The leaves are sun sensitive and burn easily. Provide plenty of luminous indirect light.

Temperature & Humidity: Their native habitat is primarily in the East Indies and the Philippines where the annual rainfall may be 90 inches or more. Most phalaenopsis plants attach themselves to shady sections of trees. Bearing this in mind, the humidity should be about 70% in the day time, dropping to around 40% at night. To improve humidity the pot can be set on large pebbles in a tray of water making sure the pot never stands in water. A fine mist spray at least twice a day is recommended to keep them healthy in the home. Phalaenopsis like a temperatures of about 70 degrees in the day time with a maximum of 90 degrees. A drop of 5 degrees but not more than 10 degrees at night is best.

Water: Apply water to the orchid bark and not the plant. Water standing in the crown of the leaves will lead to crown rot. Allow the bark to become nearly dry before watering again. That means the top will be dry and the middle will be moist. Water about twice a week during hot weather and once a week in cool damp weather.

Fertilizer: Phalaenopsis have no rest period, they must be fed often. Dilute orchid fertilizer to ½ strength and feed twice monthly. Less nitrogen and more phosphorus is advisable when flower buds appear. Miracle-Gro is good to use during flowering. Check the roots occasionally-they should show live, green growing tips.

Air Movement: Ventilation should be continuous. Cold air and drafts are injurious.

Potting: Orchid bark is a good growing medium and is generally used. Plants can be repotted as often as once a year to maintain favorable acidity.

Keikis: Phalaenopsis often make "keikis" or new shoots at the top of the stems. Leave these on until they put out roots about an inch long. Then they should be removed and potted in fine fir bark and charcoal mixed with a small amount of Perlite. Be sure to keep them damp.

Phalaenopsis species have a characteristic elegance and are grown extensively for the cut flower trade, the white flowers being popular for wedding bouquets. The name is derived from phalaina, a moth and opsis, appearance, therefore the common name "Moth Orchid". Phalaenopsis orchids are extremely tropical. They are accustomed to a warm, humid climate and demand the same conditions in cultivation. While most plants limit themselves to 20 or 30 flowers, some have as many as 170 flowers on a spike. Some bloom at Christmas time and others in June. The blooming season may be extended indefinitely by leaving 6-8 inches of the old flower stem on the plant and thereby inducing lateral inflorescence from the lower nodes.