



**Aylett Nurseries**  
*The Complete Garden Centre*

# Orchids

**Information Leaflet No. 67**



*A guide to caring  
for Miltonia,  
Paphiopedilum,  
Odontoglossum,  
Cymbidium &  
Dendrobium  
Orchids*



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# MILTONIA ORCHIDS AS POT PLANTS



Originating from mainly Brazil and Columbia, Miltonia or "Pansy - orchids" are suitable for indoors, like Cymbidium orchids they flower best in lower temperatures so avoid placing plants where there is excessive heat. Flowering generally occurs once a year but often can appear after intervals of 8 - 9 months. The main flowering being

from late spring through summer. In sunshine the blooms are often scented but try not to knock them - they bruise easily.

**Temperature:** Try to keep the plant at a minimum of 13 C (55°F) with daytime temperatures of 16-19°C (60-65°F). Avoid too much warmth as this will lead to sappy growth and poor flower quality. Miltonias need semi-humid conditions and it is a good idea to stand in a tray or dish of wet Hydroleca, or Hortag ensuring the base of the plant is NEVER standing in water. The foliage will benefit from a daily light misting of the leaves.

**Light:** Miltonias prefer filtered light most of the year moving to a brighter position in winter.

**Watering and Feeding:** Water to keep the compost moist but not wet. Ensure that no water is left standing at the bottom of the pot, and it may be best to transfer the plant to the sink, to water on the top of the compost with rain water and then allow to drain before replacing it in the dish, etc. Water is always best warmed to room - temperature before being used on an orchid plant. Feed

with orchid fertiliser at the recommended strength. Crinkling of the new leaves is a sure sign of erratic watering. The problem tends to occur in the late spring just as the new growth is starting and can also be affected by low temperatures. Unfortunately, the concertina - like appearance is permanent but does not affect flowering. Generally a slight change in culture is all that is required to remedy this occurrence.

**Composts:** Very free drainage is necessary for the fine roots, and as small a size a pot that is practicable is essential to prevent excessive water-retention in the compost. We recommend the use of orchid compost.

**Dividing and Repotting:** Miltonias look best if grown into clumps and flowering is normally enhanced in a larger plant. Orchid compost can deteriorate after 2 or so years and in spring when not in flower Miltonias can be re-potted into a slightly larger pot. Division can be made should more plants be required, with one large plant being split into 2 pieces only. Further division may affect any future flowering until re-established, and it may take another 2-3 years to obtain such flowering sized plants. If the new compost is moist do not water for at least a week, however, mist spray daily.

### **Additional information**

Remove dying flowers and leaves without delay, if they come into contact with healthy leaves these may be blemished. Black spots on leaves indicate the temperature has fallen too low, raise the temperature and decrease the humidity.

# PAPHIOPEDILUM ORCHIDS



This terrestrial orchid originates from the Indian Archipelago. Paphiopedilum or the "Lady Slipper" orchid is named because the pouch shaped lip of their flowers look very much like a slipper. The exotic wax-like richly coloured blooms can last for weeks - sometimes months! They are ideal for home growing, providing a long lasting floral show in the middle of winter. The blooming period generally begins in November and continues through to March with a few varieties blooming during the summer months.

Lady Slippers have no bulbs, but are made up of attractive, glossy, dark green or mottled leaves arising off short enclosed stem. After leaves are fully formed, the flowering stem rises from the centre of the newly developed growth.

**Temperature:** Paphiopedilum are divided into two temperature groups. The plain, dark green-leaved types are cooler growing and require a night temperature of 10°C-17°C (50-60°F) and a day temperature of 21°C-27°C (70-80°F). They begin their growth after blooming, during the months of March through to June, and that growth matures its full complement of 5 or 6 leaves between June and December. Flower buds will be initiated during that period of maximum growth activity.

The attractive mottled-leaved types come from the tropics and do best at a night temperature not below 17°C (60°F),

preferably 19°C (65°F). For best results their day temperature should be 24-30°C (75-85°F), and are ideal for rooms with continuous central heating.

**Light:** Paphiopedilums require less light than many orchids, thereby lending themselves to home growing conditions. Place in an area that gets reflected or subdued light, not bright sun. Leaves should be fairly deep-green colour; if yellowish, it could mean too much light. A well lit window is fine but stand the plant well back from the glass in strong sunlight.

**Watering:** Paphiopedilums must be kept continuously moist, but not soggy and waterlogged. Generally, you should water once every 3 to 7 days or when the pot feels light, depending upon the plant need. To water, take the plant to the sink and water until the compost is well wetted. Drain off excessive water before replacing in the tray and do not permit water to remain in the leaf axils (centre) overnight.

As Paphs are slow - growing, fertilising with orchid fertiliser at the recommended dilution every other watering should be sufficient. A light spray misting over the plant once or twice a day should provide useful humidity.

**Repotting:** Repotting should be carried out every 12-24 months, depending on health and growth after flowering, using an orchid bark. When a plant fills its pot it may be divided shortly after blooming, and will usually grow away quickly and bloom the following year. Paphiopedilum roots are brown in colour which can make it difficult to determine which are alive and which are dead.

The dead roots should be felt for and only removed if they feel flat and empty with the outer covering peeling away. These will generally be on the older growth of the plant.

**Pests and Diseases:** The plants generally remain pest-free. Occasionally, greenfly can infest young flower buds.

## **ODONTOGLOSSUM ORCHIDS**



This group includes; Oncidiums and Vuylstekeara and Dendrobium.

These are considered by many to be the most graceful and beautiful of all orchids. They are native to tropical and sub-tropical

Central and South America and mainly are confined to the mountainous regions.

**Temperatures:** This group will do well in quite cool conditions although in winter the temperature should not be below 10°C (50°F) at night and then only if the plants are rather dry at the roots. As growth begins in spring increase the temperature by a few degrees. Maximum summer temperature should be around 25°C (76°F). The ideal temperature is 17°C (60°F).

**Light:** This group prefers bright filtered light with some direct sunlight in winter.

**Watering:** Keep fairly moist but do not over water. Keep drier in winter if the temperature is cool. In hot weather keep cool by ventilation and spraying with water, but avoid draughts. To increase humidity stand on trays of moist

Hydroleuca or Hortag ensuring the base of the plant is NEVER standing in water.

**Feeding:** Feed with orchid fertiliser at recommended strength.

**Repotting:** This should be carried out (and perhaps divided if it has two or more leads with strong bulbs and growths) if there is no room for a new bulb to be made. This is usually done in the spring just before roots become active. We recommend using orchid compost. Cut any rotting or damaged roots back to firm growth. If the new compost is moist do not water for at least a week, however mist spray daily.

### **Additional Information**



Oncidiums need a three to four week rest period, either in winter, or for winter flowering plants, immediately after flowering. Reduce temperature to around 12°C (55°F) and give only enough water to keep the pseudobulbs from shrivelling.

Due to the mixed pedigree of this group, most of the plants tend to flower every nine months, regardless of the time of year.

## MINIATURE AND STANDARD CYMBIDIUM ORCHIDS



Cymbidiums are one of the most widely grown Orchids in cultivation. Originating from the Himalayas, these cool growing orchids will not flower if grown too warm or, under too much shade. They are winter

flowering, blooming between October and May, depending on the variety.

Well grown Cymbidium orchids usually flower every year, but even so a few plants will miss a year, and many varieties give a reduced quantity of blooms every other year. Divided plants may also miss blooming, particularly if dividing and re-potting is delayed into early summer.

Modern hybrids are always growing through the year with most growth occurring from May to mid-October.

Flower spikes are initiated between March and June, depending on season of flowering, and they become visible at the base of the plant at any time from July to November. Early flowering miniatures frequently show spikes by June. Flowering can commence with miniatures in September and continue to the following February or March. Standards begin and end a month or so later. Most plants will flower at much the same time every year.

**Temperature:** Cymbidiums are usually grown in conservatories or cool greenhouses, where a night temperature above 7°C (46°F) can be maintained. Provided the plant roots are moist, but not wet, winter

night temperatures can fall occasionally to 5°C (40°F) without damage to the plant. Although it is not to be recommended - Cymbidiums in dry conditions will survive even a slight frost. Bud drop often occurs in low temperatures and also if the temperature exceeds 13°C (55°F) at night.

Cymbidiums are durable pot plants and a plant with several spikes can provide a splendid display of blooms for up to three months if given fresh air, daytime temperatures up to 21°C or 22°C (70 or 72°F) and stood on a table in a position where it will benefit from window light without chilling draughts. It is advisable to cut spikes 4 to 6 weeks after they open to reduce the drain on the plant's reserves, and to enable it to produce growths strong enough to flower in the next season.

In summer, day temperatures may rise to 30-35°C (85 – 95°F), when the plants will appreciate fairly strong sunlight provided plenty of fresh air is admitted. From July to September, when there is no risk of night frost, it is advisable to move the plants outdoors to positions where they will get some shade from fierce midday and afternoon sunlight and shelter from gales. The lower night time temperatures will shock the plant into producing a flower spike, do not be afraid to leave the plant out longer if the weather is still mild.

**Watering and Feeding:** Cymbidiums should never be allowed to dry out - the compost should be moist at all times but NEVER soggy. Cymbidiums are potted, typically, in orchid compost or fir bark, dust free peat, and Perlite or Hydroleca.

In late spring and summer when full growth is being made, plants in bright sunshine may need a soaking every two days; and in dull weather every three or four days. As growth ceases, frequency of watering falls to perhaps once every seven to fourteen days, depending on how quickly the compost dries. Most growers water when the pot feels light in weight and withhold water when it feels heavy. During Spring and Summer when the plants are in vigorous growth feed once a week with orchid fertiliser at recommended dilution, reduce this to once a fortnight during Autumn/Winter. A sound rule of thumb about watering is in summertime, when in doubt, do, in winter, when in doubt, don't.

After flowering, and when the plant fills its pot, it may be divided and re-potted from February to April before growth has become vigorous. Directions for this may be found on pages 11-13 of this leaflet.

With good cultivation, your Cymbidium plant should give you interest and pleasure with a wealth of bloom for many years.

**Pests and Diseases:** Red spider and scale are the most common pests on Cymbidium. Greenfly can be a problem on flower buds and new shoots. Control pests and diseases with an appropriate insecticide. Rotting of leaves and new growth will occur if the compost remains wet over a long period.

# POTTING AND DIVIDING CYMBIDIUM ORCHIDS

## POTTING

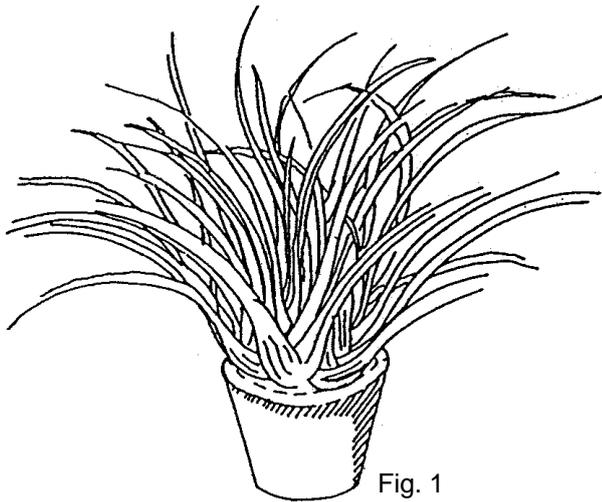


**Potting Mix:** We recommend the use of Orchid compost, which is a well balanced free draining medium, as the plant will not tolerate standing in water. The pots must have an adequate number of drainage holes.

**Re-potting Orchids:** As composts tend to deteriorate, Cymbidium orchids should be re-potted every other year, immediately after the flowering period. Remove existing pot and old compost. Inspect the root system, remove any obvious soft, rotting roots (the outer covering will peel away), and any leafless pseudobulbs which feel soft or empty. The plant is now ready for its new pot, when the plant is placed in the new pot with the oldest pseudobulb against one side, there should be approximately 5cm (2”) of space between the new growth and the pot rim. Place the plants root ball on a layer of moist orchid compost infill around the roots press firmly down, leaving a 1-2cm gap.

Do not water for 7-10 days, but mist spray foliage daily to encourage new roots, and then top growth.

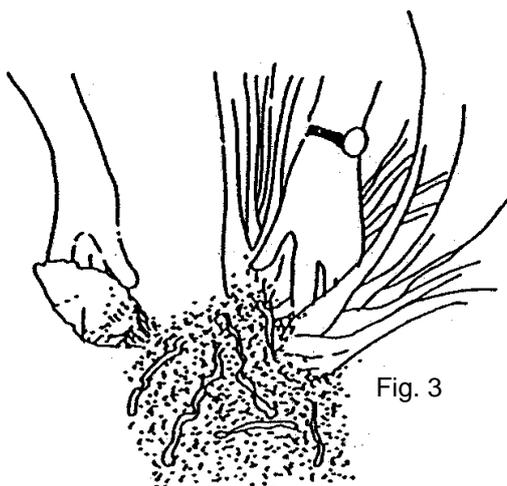
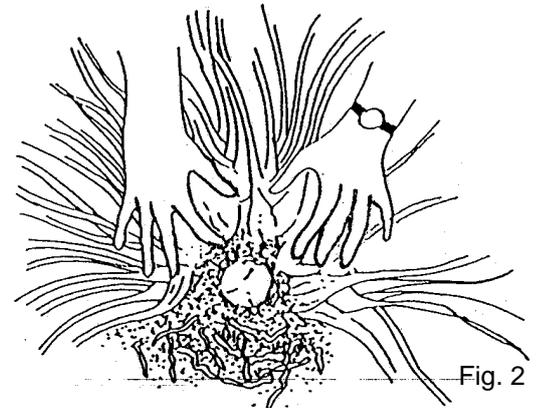
# HOW AND WHEN TO DIVIDE



**Fig. 1** - The plant illustrated above has just finished flowering. The pot is filled with bulbs with no room left for new bulb growth. You can either re-pot this plant on without dividing (also see above), or divide as shown in Fig. 2. If the plant is not

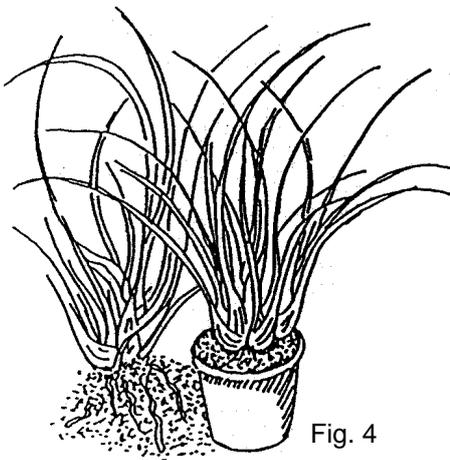
flowering, the best time to divide is in March otherwise, if still in blossom, as soon as blooms are cut. Do not divide after early July as this will usually prevent blooming the following year.

**Fig. 2** - This shows how division will be made. When separating the plant into flowering size divisions, keep a minimum of 3-5 bulbs on a division with one or two new shoots. Large divisions are advisable if all bulbs are strong and have leaves and roots. It takes a good sized, well established plant to produce the best flowers.



**Fig. 3** - Before dividing, wash or shake as much old potting compost off roots as possible. Examine the plant to see where separation can best be made. Firmly grasp the lower portions of

the bulbs and vigorously pull them apart. A sharp, sterile knife or secateurs will help in severing the rhizome (which joins the bulbs at their base). Remove any dead roots and cleanse the wound by a clean cut with the knife. The dormant, firm leafless bulbs - called back bulbs - can be removed to produce new plants but it may take 5 years before these will flower, by planting in orchid compost to 1/3 of their depth.



**Fig. 4** - Place newly divided Cymbidium divisions into a pot or tub, large enough to contain them for 2-3 years. Above a thin layer of crocks or polystyrene chips make a mound of compost in the bottom of the pot. Spread the roots and pot the growths and bulbs to 1/3 of their

depth. Firm compost about the roots being careful to ensure that the roots are not balled into the centre of the pot, but well spread throughout the compost. Work compost in well around the roots and water lightly to settle the compost. Place the plant temporarily in a well shaded, moist location and frequently spray the foliage. Do not water for this dry period allows cuts or fractures to heal over. When active root action shows, normal lighting, food, and watering can be resumed, normally after 3-4 weeks.

**This leaflet is available in  
alternative formats**

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