



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

# **Phalaenopsis Orchids**

## **Leaflet No. 68**



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# PHALAENOPSIS ORCHIDS



Today's hybrid Phalaenopsis (or "Moth orchids") are descended from species originating in the tropics of the Far East. In nature, their roots cling to and ramble along tree limbs where they are exposed to the air and are fertilised by washings from tree leaves, bird droppings and decayed remains of animals and plants living on the same host tree.

As the roots are enclosed in plastic pots and to ensure that they get air, open composts of coarse or very coarse texture are used. We recommend Orchid compost.

## CULTURE

### Watering and Feeding

The main aim of successful culture is to keep the roots moist while preventing the compost becoming sodden. A 'dry' pot and plant feels light and a 'wet' one heavy, the plant being thoroughly watered from the top when it feels light. Allow the water to wash through freely (never stand the plant in a dish of water which would prevent air moving through the pots drainage holes) and when the plant is actively growing throughout most of the year, feed once a week in summer and once a fortnight in winter using orchid fertiliser at the recommended strength. Try to keep water out of the crown of the plant and see that the plant has dry foliage before nightfall. Phalaenopsis can tolerate a dry compost for a while especially if temperatures are lower

than recommended, when a wet compost could prove fatal to the orchid.

## **Light**

Phalaenopsis leaves readily burn in direct sunlight and should receive filtered light in spring, summer and autumn but direct light in winter time is advisable.

## **Temperatures**

Phalaenopsis prefer an even temperature. Night time temperatures should be a minimum of 15-18°C (60-65°F) for most of the year, and even higher temperatures can be provided. But in October night temperatures can be allowed to drop for about four weeks to 14°C (58 or 59°F) to initiate bloom spikes to flower in the winter.

Daytime temperatures from 21-27°C (70 to 80° F) are ideal but plants appear not to be harmed if exposed to 32-35°C (90 to 95°F) for short periods provided there is good air movement (not a draught!)

Humidity is also important to the Phalaenopsis. We recommend standing the orchid on a saucer of wet Hydroleca, but ensuring the base of the pot is NEVER standing in water.

## **Pests and Diseases**

Phalaenopsis can rot easily if temperatures are too low and compost too wet, if you experience problems then spray with a systemic fungicide at the recommended dilution, this will also control any mildew. Scale, Mealybug and Aphid can also occasionally be a problem, control with appropriate insecticide.

## **Repotting**

Phalaenopsis plants benefit from yearly re-potting when not in flower, ideally in late spring or early summer. Trim dead or broken roots back to sound growth and work new compost well around roots to hold the plant firmly: if in doubt use a short cane and raffia tie until the new roots run into the compost. The lowest pair of leaves should be just above the compost surface.

If the new compost is moist, delay watering for at least a week, and do not resume normal watering until the leaves look "full" - they usually tend to go a little "flabby" following re-potting, however, mist spray daily.

## **Additional Information**

Aerial roots are a natural part of the plant and should be left on the surface of the compost, as in their natural habitat, they are epiphytes. They should only be removed if damaged. Just before the flower begins to go over (becomes papery looking), it is advisable to cut the flower stalk back to two nodes up from the base of the plant. Sometimes a second flower spike can be produced but only if cutting back is not left too late.

**This leaflet is available in  
alternative formats.**

Please ask a member of staff or

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