

PHALAENOPSIS

By Dr. Graham McKay

Depending on the reference book, Phalaenopsis consists of in excess of 50 species of epiphytic and occasionally lithophytic orchids. They are monopodial orchids consisting of short stem growth with succulent leaves and copious fleshy roots. They originate from India through South-East Asia and tropical Australia.

They are the most commonly grown orchids on the planet comprising greater than 70% of all pot plant orchids. This is because they have generally long lasting floriferous flower sprays, wide range of colours and are fast growing from pollination to flowering in less than 3 years (in some cases 1 and a half to 2 years).

GROWING CONDITIONS

• **Light**

40 to 10% light transmission. I currently use 25 to 12% but will increase to 35 to 17% in future.

• **Temperature**

Not greater than 30°C, ideally 28° serves best.

Not less than 16°C, ideally 20° minimum, but temperatures as low as 3° can be sustained for short periods overnight.

• **Fertiliser**

High nitrogen all year round eg 200mg Nitrogen per litre. I use Peters Peat-Lite High Nitrogen. Lower strength with Sphagnum Moss medium.

• **Medium**

Currently I use 6 parts medium bark: 2 parts medium styrene foam: 1 part super coarse Perlite. Spagnum Moss or Coconut Husk have proved excellent and both have water saving advantages. Clear pots with styrene foam in the base gives good results.

• **Water**

Depending on medium eg sphagnum ONCE WEEKLY or when sphagnum dries out.

• **Air Movement**

Essential convection or ideally fans.

• **Winter**

Continue to use fertilizer, water only on sunny days, in mornings and into pot only - avoiding the growing centre. Heat if possible.

• **Humidity**

50 to 80%. Wet floors in morning or have a humidity controlled floor spray.

• **Flowering**

Dropping the temperature to 20 to 25°C for three weeks will give 100% spiking. Light screens and rapid air movement can influence this.

COLOURS AVAILABLE:

- Standard whites and pinks
- Yellow
- Red
- Orange
- Green
- Blues

All these are available in striped, spotted, harlequin, French spot, multiflora and novelty forms. Standard forms have flower sizes up to 6 inch (150mm) width and flower counts up to 20 per spike.

INTERNATIONAL PHALAENOPSIS ALLIAN

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The IPA in Australia may be able to help source specific plants.