



Phalaenopsis

(fal-en-OPP-siss)

Commonly known as the 'Moth Orchid' these plants are now the world's most popular potted orchid. Perhaps no other orchid is better suited to growing in the home with long lasting sprays of blooms.

Light:

Sufficient light is important for healthy growth and flowering. They can be grown in any room which gives bright light, but no direct sun. The plants grow best in a room where temperature does not frequently drop below 15 degrees. The leaves should be naturally semi-erect and a medium green colour. Limp, dark foliage indicates too little light or a loss of roots. Root loss is generally due to over watering.



Watering / Fertilising:

Plants should be kept moist at all times but it is better to be a little on the dry side than to sit in trays of water. A thorough watering in the morning is best and do not allow water to sit in the centre of the leaves. Watering twice a week should be sufficient in most heated rooms. If temperatures are kept low, once each week may be sufficient. Phalaenopsis prefer some humidity and grow well when placed on top of a tray of moistened pebbles. Fertilising should be done on a regular basis. We would recommend every two weeks with a half strength liquid fertiliser.

Potting:

Re-potting should be done after one or two years, before the mix deteriorates. This is best done in late Spring or Summer. Use a well drained mix that retains some moisture, such as 4 parts fine to medium grade orchid bark and one part sphagnum or peat moss. Always select a pot size that fits the root system snugly. Never over pot. Phalaenopsis will often send out aerial roots. This is quite natural and they should be left intact and sprayed with water occasionally. Green growing tips on these roots are an indication of good growing conditions. These plants are often potted in clear pots to allow extra light to the root system, this helps keep the roots inside the pot.

Flowering:

Plants may produce a secondary flower spike after their initial blooming. Once the flowers have faded, cut the spike off below the position of the first flower. Within one - two months one of the nodes on the stem may swell and begin to form a new flower spike. If this does not occur, the stem will dry and it is then best cut off at the base and wait for a new flower spike to be produced.

Pests:

The main pests to attack these plants are mealey bugs and the general run of garden insects such as aphids, caterpillars etc. Most of these will not be a problem in the home, however mealey bugs often thrive in the dry conditions of the living room. These are small white, furry insects approx 3mm long and are found mainly on the backs of the leaves ad sometimes in the potting mix. They can be killed by dipping a cotton bud in methylated spirits and applying directly to the insect. You will need to maintain this course of action for 3 - 4 weeks to make sure all newly hatched insects are destroyed. Alternatively spraying with Lebaycid is very effective.