

Hillsvie Gardens

OREGON GROWN ORCHIDS

Complex Paphiopedilums ~ by Theresa Hill

Growing Complex Paphiopedilums - Complex Paphiopedilums once the rage are again gaining favor with Orchid Enthusiasts. This fascinating group within the Genus Paphiopedilum produces long lasting flowers in a multitude of colors and patterns. Complex Paphiopedilums are not demanding in their cultural requirements and reward the grower with stunning flowers. During the fall and winter when the temperatures outside are cold and dreary, the Complex Paphiopedilums begin to flower and continue into spring.

Temperature and Light - Complex Paphiopedilums grow well with night temperatures of 55 to 60 degrees. Daytime temperatures of 65 to 75 or even 80 degrees are fine. Light levels should be between 1,000 to 1,500 foot-candles. If grown in too much shade the growth will not be turgid. Here in the Pacific Northwest we use shading from the end of March or first of April to the second week of October. By the end of October we have clear glass till the first of April. The exact time is dependent on the weather. Consult your local Orchid Society or local growers.

Watering and Feeding - All Paphiopedilums require moisture at the roots and should not be allowed to dry out. Paphiopedilums do not have pseudobulbs like other Orchids. We push our Paphiopedilums with water, not fertilizer. Plants should be well-hydrated 24 hours before feeding with any fertilizer. We do not put fertilizer salts at the roots. We foliar feed our Paphiopedilums with overhead application of a low phosphate fertilizer. Paphiopedilums respond well to fertilizer, as do all living things requiring food. A low phosphate fertilizer is what we recommend. Always water your plants well the day before applying any fertilizer, as the plants should be well hydrated. Fertilize your plants once a week at half the recommended strength. This will be adequate. Paphiopedilums will require special treatment during non-peak growth periods, which are during the winter and summer. In these non-peak growth periods you must pay attention not to apply fertilizer when the temperatures are at their extreme.

Humidity and Air - Humidity is an important factor often overlooked. Paphiopedilums will do well with 40 to 60% humidity. More is required when the temperatures are higher. Good fresh air movement is always a benefit to living things. Plants are no exception.

Potting - There are many different potting mix blends. For all seedlings in community pots to 2" pot size we use a mix consisting of seedling bark with some sponge roc added for good drainage. For plants in 4" pot size or larger we use a mix consisting of one 5 gallon bucket of Medium bark, one 5 gallon bucket of seedling bark, and two 1 gallon pots of sponge roc. Whatever your choice, plants benefit from repotting. When the medium breaks down, roots begin to rot, flower size and productivity drops off. Paphiopedilums respond well to repotting every year or two. If you add fertilizers to your mix by drench feeding you will need to repot annually.

Orchid Ailments - Paphiopedilums are relatively free of pests and diseases. Slugs and snails are always the most common problem with any orchid. We do recommend the A.O.S. handbook, "Orchid Pests and Diseases" available from The American Orchid Society.

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More information can be found at <http://www.hillsviegardens.com>