

## *Catasetinae Care Sheet*

The Catasetinae are a family of pseudobulb producing orchids from South America. The orchids we are producing and growing are hybrids of *Catasetum*, *Cynoches*, and *Mormodes* along with complex multi-generic hybrids. These modern hybrids are more intensely colored, a much higher quality shape, and easier to grow and flower than the older hybrids. There are generally more male flowers which have better colors and the female flowers are generally larger and longer lasting.

**LIGHT** : The *Catasetum* group of orchids can be grown in a wide variety of light conditions that would be suitable for *Phalaenopsis*, *Paphiopedilum*, *Cattleya*, and even *Vanda*. This type of orchid can produce 3 different types of flowers - male flowers (generally the prettiest and most desirable) have a tendency to be produced with lower light levels (similar to *Phalaenopsis* or *Maudiae*-type *Paphiopedilums* = 750 - 1,500 fc / 150 - 300 PAR = micromol/sq m/sec is good); female flowers are usually produced with higher light levels (similar to *Cattleya* or *Dendrobium* light levels = from 2,500 - 6,000 fc / 500 - 1,200 PAR); and perfect hermaphroditic flowers can be produced. Sometimes, you will get male and female flowers on the same inflorescence.

**WATERING + FERTILIZER** : The *Catasetinae* like to stay slightly moist - but not wet - at all times during their ACTIVE growth during the spring and summer months (just like Phals and Paphs). Generally water the pots thoroughly twice weekly, allowing the top of the media to dry out very slightly. If you are experiencing a dry, sunny, warm week, the pot may require an additional very light watering. Do not let the pot sit in water.

In late Fall or early Winter, especially if the temperatures fall below 55° F (13° C), the leaves will have a tendency to yellow and fall off. Stop fertilizing and reduce watering to once or twice monthly as the leaves fall off (the end of Oct or in early Nov at the latest). Young plants might keep growing if the daily minimum temperatures do not fall below 60° F (16° C), but you want more mature plants to go dormant. The pseudobulbs might shrivel slightly during dormancy - high humidity during the dormancy period will help prevent this. Water sparingly (no fertilizer) on sunny days during the dormancy months.

NOTE: I think the complex hybrids involving *Aslla.*, *Cyrt.*, *Euph.*, *Gal.*, *Gra.*, and *Gram.* also require a strict no fertilizer / reduced water dormancy, but not as dry as the rest of the *Catasetinae* - mist (not heavy watering) more often throughout the winter months.

New growth should occur by February or March - start normal watering practices once the new growths are producing roots 3" or so long. It is VERY important to water the plant with new growth only after the growth is about 4" tall and has produced noticeable new roots. The plants are susceptible to rot at this stage.

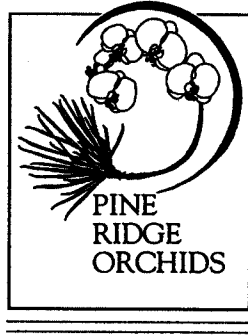
**TEMPERATURE** : The *Catasetinae* are warm growing plants. I have noticed plants that are flowering may drop buds if the temperatures at night fall below 60° F.

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**FERTILIZING** : Water quality is critical for all orchids - the purer and cleaner the water, the better you can control everything. If you think you have poor quality "hard" water, you may be best to water every third or fourth watering, using no fertilizer. If your water quality is superior, you can increase the quantity and frequency of fertilizing - depending upon light, air movement, and temperature. Use a 2-1-2 type fertilizer with the fourth watering using a "bloom boost" type fertilizer (a high middle number). Epson salt at 2 tsp/gal water is also highly recommended about once monthly. The Catasetinae are heavy feeders when in active growth.

Stop fertilizing by October. One month of applying only water will help harden the plants for the late Fall and Winter dormancy period.

**REPOTTING** : Repot yearly - the plants like good aeration around the roots. The Catasetinae are like Oncidiums and Cattleyas - repot when in active new growth if possible and the new growths are about 3" - 4" tall. Place the pseudobulbs in the corner of the pot with the oldest growths up against the edge of the pot and the new growth toward the most available media. If you are working with older pseudobulbs with no new growth showing (try to keep the divisions to 2 - 3 growths), you might have to place the plant in the middle of the container. The plants are very forgiving as to the potting media. Our Phal/Paph mix is based on 40% expanded slate plus rock wool, coir, medium grade fir bark, and perlite. Recent feedback from growers in Taiwan indicates that commercial growers have stopped using coconut chips in the media because they claim that after one year in the pot, the coconut starts to give off excessive levels of salts - I have not really seen this, but when I had to order new media components, I changed from coco chips to bark. Other growers use sphagnum moss which I personally do not like.

**KEIKI PRODUCTION** : The old pseudobulbs sometimes produce growths up along the sides of the pseudobulbs. I have been allowing the plants to do this and using a sterile (super-saturated TSP dipped) knife or a new single-edged razor blade to gently slice off the plantlet when it has started to produce 2 or 3 short roots - they are free clonal divisions. Also, if a pseudobulb starts to rot, you can cut the growth off and trim off any diseased tissue --- lay the growth down in a tray and there is a very good chance the growth will produce adventitious growths. Cut these growths off when they develop a nice root system and pot them up.

**PESTS & DISEASE** : watch for spider mites and possibly mealybugs in hot weather and rot in early growth. Provide good air movement at all times.

Early Spring when new growths are starting --- watch for rats and mice which like to eat off the new growths leaving green scraps all over the pots and benches - a good rain resistant bait containing grain will be effective - if you have pets, place the bait inside a 3" diameter piece of PVC pipe about 2' long and tie the pipe down to the bench top or leg - that will keep the dog away from the bait.

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