



PAPHIOPEDILUM Care Sheet

Paphiopedilums (or Paphs), are tropical "lady slipper" orchids from Southeast Asia, characterized by their distinctive pouch-shaped lip.

LIGHT : Paphs make ideal orchids for indoor culture such as window sill and light stands or greenhouses. The plants should be protected from hot direct sunlight and care should be taken not to place the plants directly on top of radiators or television sets or right up against freezing windows. Indoors, an East, North, or West window is ideal for most Paphs; in a greenhouse from 750 - 1,500 fc (150 - 300 PAR = micromol/sq m/sec) is good. The plants are very adaptable. Place your hand about one foot above the plants and if you cannot count your fingers in the shadow that is created, that should be good.

WATERING : Paphs like to stay slightly moist - but not wet - at all times. 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.

Two precautions - do not allow water to collect in the "pouch" of the lady slipper or the bottom of the pouch may turn black. Do not use softened water to irrigate.

FERTILIZING : Water quality is critical for Paphs - 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 fertilize 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 20-10-20 type fertilizer with the fourth watering using a "bloom boost" type fertilizer (a high middle number like 15-50-5). Epsom salt at 2 tsp/gal water is also highly recommended about once monthly.

TEMPERATURE : Paphiopedilums are generally "warm" growing plants liking temperatures up to a high of 86° F (30° C) and they can tolerate temperatures down to 50° F (10° C). Keep in mind - the more air movement, the warmer the plants can be and the higher light levels they will accept without turning yellow; and if it is too cold, the pot stays too wet and the growth will suffer.

REPOTTING : If in doubt - REPOT! If anything looks irregular about the plant (wilting foliage, loose in the pot, flowers do not last long, brown tips to the leaves, etc.) - repot. The plants like good aeration around the roots and this is the easiest way to check out the condition of the root system. The Paphs can be repotted at any time and in any condition of flower. Repot about once yearly, and use the appropriate sized pot for the root system - let the root system dictate the pot size, not the size of the foliage.

MEDIA : The plants are very forgiving as to the potting media. We use a media based on 40% expanded slate plus rock wool, coir, medium grade fir bark, and perlite. Many growers use sphagnum moss which I personally do not like. Others use various mixes incorporating bark, perlite, and charcoal.

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