



Phalaenopsis Care Sheet

LIGHT : Phalaenopsis orchids are considered to be one of the best of all modern orchid hybrids not only because the flowers come in a huge variety of colors that will last for upwards of many months at a time, but also because of all the orchids, the Phals can truly be considered house plants. If given sufficient light indoors, the plants will grow and flower year after year. If strictly grown indoors, we suggest placing the orchid in a North or East window, protected from hot direct sun. Cool morning sun would, however, be beneficial. Phalaenopsis can be grown under 48" full spectrum fluorescent lights - preferably 4 bulbs to a fixture held about 6" - 12" above the foliage and turned on about 16 hours daily. If grown in greenhouses, 750 - 1,500 fc (150 - 300 PAR = micromol/sq m/sec) is good. If grown outdoors, an overhang provides protection from excessive rain and/or overhead watering and from any direct hot sunlight. Flowers may last upwards of 4-5 months, and after the plant is finished flowering, cut back the inflorescence to just below the first flower.

WATERING : Phalaenopsis orchids cannot store water as most other types of orchids can. They come from the rain forests of Borneo and the Far East, therefore they like to be kept warm and very slightly on the moist side, but not sopping wet. The pot should not be watered again until very nearly dry. Do not allow to sit in water. Water thoroughly in the morning once to twice weekly depending on your cultural conditions (light, temperature, humidity, air movement, etc.) allowing the top of the media to dry slightly between waterings.

FERTILIZING : Water quality is not as critical for Phals as for Paphs, but 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 second watering, using about $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ strength 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 being a "bloom boost" type fertilizer (high middle number like 15-50-5). Epson salt at 2 tsp/gal water is also highly recommended about once monthly.

TEMPERATURE : Phals are generally "warm" growing plants liking temperatures up to the high 80°s F (30° C) and they can tolerate temperatures down into the upper 50°s F (14° 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 Phals are best repotted after flowering in the late spring or early summer. 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 bark, and perlite to increase drainage and moisture holding. Many growers use sphagnum moss which I personally do not like. Others use various mixes incorporating bark, perlite, and charcoal. The main thing is not to have a media that turns mushy or breaks down too quickly.

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