



June 2016

Horticulture Feature: Orchids

The South Florida orchid show season is finished since the sunburn hot Redlands Orchid Festival is past. Your warm growing orchids are just getting happy though, so lets talk about them a bit. Flowering takes a lot from a plant and in nature some orchids can live 75 years, flower maybe 10 times and only set seed once.

We are nature’s helpers to keep potted plants and we can select strong growers and push nutrition to get better growth and more frequent blooms. If you look now at your plants they have new leaves/shoots emerging that will offer the next blooms. From the new shoots you’ll see lots of new root tips growing. You’ll notice some types of orchids are trying to bloom now and others are just green plants.

Let’s have some cultural information and also some flower talk so you can better choose plants to extend your blooming season. If you haven’t repotted now is the time. If you wait you might watch wonderful new roots go into an old potting mix and the whole plant can begin a bad decline. Depending on the amount of organic matter in your potting mix plants should be repotted between annually and every 3 years. Even without organic components that break down (like fir bark, coconut chunks, tree fern, and sphagnum) the inorganic components start to accumulate salts that will burn your new orchid root tips. With summer heat and rain using fertilizer work better and it’s less risky. The plants are growing and want the food and the rains leech salts and help buffer the strong chemical fertilizer.

Spider mites love the dry, hot weather so if you didn’t spray you might start to see some spider mite damage. Even with spray those things are nearly impossible to get rid of so don’t worry because the plants can still bloom even with a few funky leaves. Be sure the plants aren’t standing in water or in areas that flood. Orchids love water but also like air and want to dry or nearly dry between waterings depending on the species. Air circulation helps with spider mites and with drying the roots between waterings. Keep some shade and watch the plants so that they don’t burn because few orchids tolerate blazing full sun.

Basically, to get the blooms we want you only need to consider potting mix, light, water, and food if you’ve picked orchids suited to our climate. Check the chart for species that perform in our area and when they might bloom. Having a few different types of orchids can give you a good chance of always having something blooming.

| Genus | Difficulty | Bloom season | Light strength | watering |
|----------|------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|
| Angrecum | Moderate | December-April | Low to medium | Evenly moist |

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|---------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|
| Brassavola | Easy | 2-4 times/year | High | Dry between waterings |
| Broughtoniana | Easy | Spring/summer/fall | High | Dry between waterings |
| Bulbophyllum | Moderate to hard | Spring and more | Low to medium | Love water but need to dry |
| Cattleya Huge group | Easy | All year | High | Dry between waterings |
| Cypripedium | Difficult | Spring and more | Low | Constant moisture |
| Dendrobium Huge group | Easy to Difficult | Varies | Medium | Dry side of moist |
| Epidendron | Easiest | All year | High | Wet or dry |
| Encyclia | Easy | Late spring | High | Dry between watering |
| Grammataphyllum | Easy | Late spring | Medium to high | Almost dry between waterings |
| Oncidium | Easy | Summer | Medium | Almost dry between waterings |
| Paphiopedilum | Difficult | All year | Low | Constant moisture |
| Phalaenopsis | Easy | Winter | Low | moist |
| Schomburkia/Laelia/Myrmecophila | Easy | Late spring/summer | High | Dry between waterings |
| Sobralia (ground orchid) | Easy | All year | Medium | Dry side of moist |
| Vanda | Easy | All year | High up to full sun | Wet and dry daily |

A few other genera to consider: Peristeria, Spathoglottis, Bletia, Cymbidium, Stanhopea, Maxillaria, Renanthera