

## PAPHIOPEDILUM (PAPH.) CULTURE

*Paphiopedilum* (*paf-ee-oh-PED-ee-lum*) commonly known as the Slipper Orchid, because of its distinct petals which form a cup called the 'slipper'. This cup collects the pollinator and guides it up to freedom at the back of the flower whilst sticking pollen onto its head. Plants originate on the islands from Papua New Guinea up to mainland China and India. Most are terrestrial growing species and come from tropical forests. There are as many as 100 recognised species of *Paphiopedilum*, and new species are still being found.

The *Paphiopedilum* forms a fan of leaves which produces a flowering spike at its centre when mature. The flower spikes of some species carry only 1 flower, whilst others can carry up to 7. Other species produce flowers on their spikes sequentially over an extended period. There are also a variety of leaf colours and patterns, from grass green to dark green and grey mottled and almost black undersides. Many believe the mottled variety should be grown at warmer conditions to the solid green, but this is not necessary.



**Paph. godefroyae var. leucochilu**

All *Paphiopedilum*s grow happily at intermediate conditions. Commonly the house plants available are hybrids, which have been bred over several generations to use various attributes offered by the species available from the wild.



**Paph Fremont Peak**

### **TEMPERATURE:**

Approximately 18-22°C day-time temperature and 13-15°C night-time. The drop in temperature from day to night is an important part of the plants growing culture.

### **LIGHT:**

Most *Paphiopedilum*s do not require high light levels to grow, and the simplest method of determining this is to hold your hand over the plant, if it casts a shadow, the light level is too high.

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## **WATERING & FERTILISER:**

Where ever possible, use rainwater. This is because it is pH neutral and free from salts and additives. Water approximately every 7 to 10 days, or when the potting mix in the pot has almost dried out. It is beneficial to add a little feed regularly, high nitrogen during the growth season and high potash to assist during the flowering season. About once a month, use only water with no addition of feed, this will help flush out any excess salt build up from the feed.

## **POTTING:**

When the plant has finished flowering, it is beneficial to change the potting mix and check the root system of the plant. Use a good quality open bark based mixture. Paphiopedilums enjoy being relatively pot bound.



**Paph. hirsutissimum var. exquiralei**

## **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:**

A Paphiopedilum growth will only flower once. During the year's cycle, one or more new growths should form at the base of the mature growth. This will be next year's cycle. As these mature over the next year, the now previously flowered growth will slowly, leaf by leaf, die back. After a number of years, this process means that it may be possible to divide the plant into two or more separate plants, provided they all have new growth and root systems. Many people prefer to keep the growths together during repotting, resulting in large, impressive specimen

## **BOOKS:**

Harold Koopowitz – Tropical Slipper Orchids ISBN 978-0-88192-864-8

Lance A Birk – The Paphiopedilum Grower's Manual ISBN 9612826-1-4

Information taken from the Growers and Buyers Guide to Orchids in the UK –  
(Golden Guide - 2013)

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