

## CATTLEYA CULTURE

Cattleyas are one of the most exotic plants in the Orchid family and are related to a number of other genera, namely Brassavola, Encyclia, Laelia and Sophronitis and produce some interesting hybrids. This family (alliance) of plants is spread throughout Central America stretching from Mexico in the North down into South America especially on the east and western coastal areas. They are available in many different colours with large to small flowers with some being very fragrant. Cattleyas are epiphytes (air plant) and have a water storage organ called a pseudobulb with most having large fleshy roots and leaves.

### **TEMPERATURE:**

The ideal temperature range is 12 to 15°C at night and 18 to 25°C during the day with a 5°C differential recommended between day and night. On warm sunny days try to create some humidity - for greenhouse grown plants water the floor in the early morning but if grown in the home this can be done by standing plants on a tray of moist gravel or hydroleca. For greenhouse plants add a fan to help move the air around.



**Laelia purpurata 'flamea'**

### **LIGHT:**

Bright light is very important for healthy growth and strong flowers but always avoid midday sun as this can burn the foliage. If grown in the home the best aspect is an East or West facing window being careful not to trap your plant between the window and curtain in the winter months.

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**Cattleya labiata (photo – Mr S. Than)**

### **WATERING & FEEDING:**

Always water your plant from the top which is best done in the early morning. This allows the plant to dry out slightly by nightfall. Water once a week in summer and every two weeks in winter ensuring that a good liquid feed is included at every other watering. Always buy fertiliser from a reputable orchid nursery; if it works for them then it will work for you.

### **POTTING & DIVIDING:**

For best results repot every two years using a good quality bark mix. When dividing your plant make sure you have 4/5 healthy pseudobulbs and place in a pot just big enough for two years growth. Remove all dead roots and place the plant in the centre of the pot whilst adding fresh compost. Water well and leave for a few weeks before watering again. Make sure all cutting tools are clean and sterilized before and after use.

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

Photographs supplied by S. Pask unless stated

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