

## **Orchid of the Month – Lycaste – AOS Culture Sheet** *submitted by Susan Makar*

Lycastes are deciduous in various degrees, from the strongly deciduous, yellow-flowered species like *Lycaste aromatic* that flowers from leafless pseudobulbs to the evergreen types like *Lycaste skinneri* with pseudobulbs that retain their leaves at flowering. This genus produces large, long-lasting, showy, triangular flowers that are waxy. The plants are distinctive for their roundish pseudobulbs and broad, plicate (pleated) leaves. Culture for the hybrid genus *Angulocaste* (*Lycaste Anguloa*) follows the culture for the *Lycaste* parent.



**Light** requirements vary. Deciduous species require light conditions as for cattleyas — 2,000 to 4,000 foot-candles or 50 to 70 percent shade. More light is usually provided as new growths form pseudobulbs. Evergreen species grow best with less light — 1,500 to 2,000 foot-candles or 60 to 80 percent shade.

**Temperatures** for the evergreen species should be fairly constant and never hot. Nights of 60 F and days of 75 to 80 F are desirable. The deciduous species of *Lycaste* can tolerate a wider range, up to 95 F during the day and down to 50 F at night when dormant in the winter.

**Water** should be applied freely during active growth (usually summer). The potting medium should begin to dry out between waterings. Deciduous species should be kept almost completely dry when leafless; evergreen species should be kept only slightly drier than normal after pseudobulbs form. Water should be kept off the leaves, and especially out of the new growths, to prevent rot or leaf spotting, which disfigure otherwise handsome plants.

**Humidity** should be maintained at 40 to 70 percent. Deciduous species need less humidity when dormant. Brisk air circulation will help prevent damage to leaves by leafspot fungi.

**Fertilize** regularly and heavily when plants are actively growing. A higher nitrogen formulation (such as 30-10-10) is recommended during active growth (usually summer); some growers spread blood meal on the top of the potting medium as new pseudobulbs form, though in inexperienced hands this can be dangerous to the plant. In autumn, or as growths mature and pseudobulbs are produced, fertilizer is reduced or switched to a high-phosphorus (such as 10-30-20) formulation to stimulate flower production.