

The Orchid Society Of WA (Inc)

Phalaenopsis (fal-en-OP-sis)

INDOORS

To grow your Phalaenopsis orchid indoors, simply choose a WELL VENTILATED spot away from heaters, as with all indoor plants, and not directly on windowsills where in summer, the sun can cause sunburn, and in winter, the glass will conduct cold. To provide some humidity, place your plant pot OVER, not INTO a dish of wet pebbles, stones, blue metal etc to the length of the leaves (placing the pot on an upturned bowl in the pebbles will keep it away from the actual water).

Water your plant when the pot feels a little lighter, about everyday in summer and 6/7 days in winter, but this is just a guide—feel inside your pot, it should be moist, not wet, and don't overwater in colder weather. As with all indoor plants, ALWAYS WATER IN THE MORNING, SO THE PLANT HAS TIME TO DRY OFF DURING THE DAY. If the plant is still wet in the crown (centre) after a couple of hours, dry it out carefully with a tissue or cotton buds, as a wet crown may develop crown rot. During the hot days, MIST the leaves with water several times day (keep your misting bottle handy). This keeps your plant cool. If you have evaporative cooling, your plants will love it, but they don't take too kindly to refrigerated air-conditioning, as it dries out the air. Providing humidity is important. This goes for all indoor plants.

Fertilize every week with a balanced product. A good idea is to use a soluble fertilizer and water it in, as directed on the packet. Your Phalaenopsis will look great in a decorative outer pot, but make sure that there are drain holes in it, and lift your plant pot up off the floor of the decorative pot just a little. Making your pebble dish more interesting with small ferns, and other low light complementary plants will assist all of them to grow happily in a friendly eco environment, and your display will invite pleasant comments from visitors.

OUTDOORS

It is possible to grow your Phalaenopsis outdoors for several months of the of the year, that is, during summer, when the flower spike has been removed, up to May when the next season's spike should be forming. It should then be grown indoors to protect it from the cold weather, unless you have an outside hothouse, with an absolute minimum temperature of 15 °C. In summer it is important to provide heavy shade and a cool atmosphere for the plant, so put it in your fern house if you have one, or with your other orchids, down low in the shade house (not on the ground) for maximum shade and cooling. These plants grow in the understory of the tropical rainforest where it is cool and shady. Of course in summer you will need to water it often, early in the day, making sure that the crown has dried, and misting frequently is beneficial just as if you were growing it inside your house. Keep your plant away from hot wind of course, and OUT OF DIRECT SUNLIGHT.

REPOTTING

Repot your Phalaenopsis into fresh orchid bark when the roots are crowding out of the pot. The fresh bark should be without any soil, twigs, leaves or dust etc, so sieving your bark to remove these is a good idea. Use a grade of bark AT LEAST 20 mm in size to allow easy drainage, and you could add one third charcoal if you wish. MAKE SURE YOUR CLIPPERS ARE WELL STERILISED FIRST, AND DON'T DO MORE THAN ONE PLANT IN BETWEEN STERILISATIONS. After removing the plant, trim the roots and dip them in a weak anti-fungal solution (Listerine, previcur etc). The new pot should be either the same size, if the plant hasn't grown much, or a larger one if it has. The new bark should come to the junction of the lowest leaf. Water it in well, and then follow the above growing instructions. MISTING RATHER THAN WATERING THE PLANT HEAVILY DURING THE ROOT REGROWTH PERIOD WILL HELP KEEP THE LEAVES BOUYANT.

As a general rule, more roots and larger leaves mean larger bark and a larger pot, which should have MANY DRAINAGE HOLES so your plant will grow more healthy roots. The lowest leaf of the plant will turn yellow and drop off from time to time, this is normal, but you should have two or more green leaves intact at any time. If the bulk of the leaves take on a very pale green or yellowish hue, you are probably growing it in too much light, or aren't fertilizing enough, so try another position for your plant, and perhaps fertilize more often. For people deflasking, it is beneficial to grow the tiny plants in live sphagnum moss or coco peat packed tightly in the pot for the first year or until the plant has developed a vigorous root system.

NB: These suggestions have been made without prejudice as a guide and no guarantees can be given with regard to successful growing.