

Basic Orchid Care

There are estimated to be somewhere between 25,000 to 35,000 orchid ¹ species in the world, of which over 10,000 are tropical. And this does not take into account all the hybrids that have been generated over the years ². Orchids are primarily found in tropical areas in all continents except Antarctica. They are most abundant in places like Southeast Asia, South America, and other places with warm climates, such as rain forest-type places. They may be found in the wild on all kinds of media such as trees, rocks, and even the ground.

There is a dizzying array of facts and information about orchid growing, culture, division, pests, diseases, feeding and so on. All this can quickly become very confusing, especially for hobby novices.

We at the Tropical Orchid Society (TOS ³) are certainly no exception. While we are fortunate to count many experienced orchid growers among our numbers, many of us are more likely either relatively inexperienced or rank novices. Because we welcome more and more new members each month, the need for comprehensive information continues to grow.

As a result, we try to collect as much relevant information as possible and offer it up to our members. Our highly successful monthly presentations ⁴ by "old pros" has given us myriad useful hints, tips and techniques. Q&A also allows members to get answers to questions personally meaningful to each of us.

Local commercial growers and suppliers also provide good input. We find that these folks are always willing to help in any way they can. Next time you visit one, don't shy from asking them about whatever you may have on your mind.

Many orchid shows in the south Florida area are totally awesome. Not only will you be blown away by the vast number of beautiful and unusual orchids you will find there, show exhibitors and sales booths are also eager to answer your questions - especially about the particular plants they have for sale. Hint: whenever you purchase a new plant, don't hesitate to question the seller about the plant's care and feeding. In particular, ask about light, water, fertilizers, temperature, diseases and other issues you need to know about to help your new plant thrive. Each orchid species and hybrid is different, so don't assume anything. Remember, these are the experts on making that particular plant survive.

You will also find a wealth of info on the web. Google practically any question you have and you are likely to find more answers than you can handle. For example, Google "orchid, vanda, water" and you will get approximately 439,000 hits!

And don't forget that there are lots of good books. Some can be rather expensive; others not so much. Some are tailored especially toward growing orchids in Florida or the subtropics. A few have even been written by people who have given presentations to our members. Sometimes we have books for sale right at the meeting.

¹ Orchids are members of the class Liliopsida, which includes lilies, irises, grasses, palms, and bananas.

² *Orchid hybrids are indicated by a 'x' mark, such as 'Aerides x Vanda x Luisia'. The 'x' is often referred to as "times", "by" or "cross".*

³ Tropical Orchid Society, Royal Palm Beach, FL 33421-1551

⁴ Notes on some of the presentations can be found on this website.

Magazines can also be helpful too. For example, joining the American Orchid Society (AOS) allows you to receive a copy of their Orchids magazine, either in digital form or hard copy. Visit the [AOS website](#) for details.

So, anyway, enjoy the information given here. We hope it helps. Much contained within is there specifically because novice growers have found the info quite helpful and/or even necessary.

Should you have other helpful info that you would like to share, then send us a note to [xxxxxxx](#). Text, Word documents or PDF attachments are preferred. And don't forget to provide your contact info.

Finally, note that some info is repeated in more than one section to avoid a lot of unnecessary page turning.

Wherever possible, attributions within this document are presented in square brackets. See the References section for sources.

Most orchid care parameters fall under what presenter Bill Thoms ^[13] refers to by the acronym 'WAFHSE' (pronounced "Waffle House"). This stands for water, air, food, light, housing, sickness and Epsom Salts. Of these, for most orchids water and light are probably the two most important. As time goes on and conditions change, things such as food and sickness rise in importance. But that said, good husbandry in terms of light and water go a long way to making your orchids thrive.

The following sections go into these items in more detail. Each chapter is presented as a list of considerations and reminders. No particular order is intended. Rather, various meeting presentations are split into the chapters where they are the most meaningful.

- flush plants monthly [7].
- Vandas need frequent watering [7].
- Light and water requirements are 99% of growing orchids [6].
- Move to higher light only in early spring [7].
- Do not water in high sunlight [7].

If your orchid grows to the point where the roots are wrapping around the pot, don't pull it out to repot. Simply place into a larger pot.

Notes

"Mother Nature" orchids -- no water, fertilizer or spray [6].

Bleach 10% ?? [7].

Plants can infect each other by close proximity or touching, one below another, trimming [7].

Propane torch is good for cleaning scissors [7].

Dollar store [6]:

Baby liquid vitamins

Green tree wire

Rubbing alcohol

Cinnemon - 3:1 water, put in sprayer, stronger for scale

Growers

Quest Orchids in Miami - Cattleyas [2].

Magazines

"Orchid Digest"

"Orchids" -- AOS

Hints and Tips