

Phalaenopsis Orchid Care

The Moth Orchid is one of the easiest to grow indoors especially during winter due to its tolerance of low light levels, cool temperatures and long lasting winter bloom cycle. They are also recommended as a “beginner” orchid variety due to their easy care requirements similar to African Violets as follows:

Lighting: Bright indirect light from an eastern or western window or filtered light from a southern window is best so the foliage will stay cool and never burn. Fourteen hours of artificial light with four, 40 watt fluorescent bulbs or two, 40 watt incandescent bulbs placed 8” above the plant will work too.

Temperature: Preferring cool nights (60-65 degrees F) with a 15-20 degree increase during the day to 75-85 degrees F will trigger flowering. Avoid sudden temperature changes.

Water: Keep the soil evenly moist to slightly dry before thoroughly reapplying water. Do not let your orchid sit in water. When flowering, the orchid will require a bit more moisture. Try to water in the morning so the plant has the entire day to absorb it. Generally, you will need to do this once a week at the most. The most common error that orchid owners make is overwatering.

Humidity: Appreciating 60-70% humidity, the foliage of the orchid can be spray misted in the morning, on days you are not watering the soil. Avoid spraying buds and flowers. Placing the orchid pot on a humidity tray of moistened pebbles will help increase humidity easily too.

Fertilizing: Fertilize weekly in late fall with a balanced liquid plant food (20-20-20) using a ¼ strength dilution or use a specifically formulated orchid food following the package instructions. Apply the plant food to the soil with your regular watering schedule. Reduce feedings after bloom.

Repotting: It is healthy for a Phalaenopsis to be root bound, with some of the “air” roots sticking out of the soil. Repot as needed once every one to two years in early spring after flowering before the potting media breaks down. Replant with a porous orchid soil (i.e. 60% bark, 20% perlite, 20% sphagnum moss). Remove any dead roots at this time.

Pruning: As the blooms open from a mid-point on the flowering stem to the tip, they will fade in this same pattern on average after one to three months. Remove each faded flower by hand or let them naturally drop. After all flowers are finished blooming try pruning the stem to just above the first flower node (at the mid-point of the stem). Doing this may make the stem branch creating another blooming stem. If the stem does not branch and has yellowed and died back, cut it down leaving two nodes above the foliage or approximately 1-2” of stem above the foliage.

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