

THE ROSEDALE PLANTSMAN'S GUIDE TO CARING FOR PHALAENOPSIS ORCHID



Phalaenopsis (the moth orchid) are easy to look after and can continue growing and flowering regularly for many years with minimal maintenance. Flowers often last six weeks on the plant and come in a broad array of colors. Provide modest light and consistent moisture, and they will provide you years of beautiful flowers.

LIGHT

Providing sufficient light is important for healthy growth and flower production. In the home an east or west facing window is ideal. A shaded south window will be tolerated, but too much direct light causes leaves to sunburn. Growing under lights also works well. Affordable, full spectrum LED grow lights are readily available on the market today. Foliage should be naturally semi-erect, and of a medium olive-green. Dark green, limp foliage indicates too little light.

WATER

Overwatering is, without question, the main reason Phalaenopsis suffer. Constant wetness will cause the roots and crown to rot, preventing the plant from taking up nourishment which will cause the leaves to droop and eventually kill the plant. Water when the plant begins to dry out, usually every 7 to 10 days. Give it a good soak and be sure to get rid of any standing water. Do not let any water sit in the leaves as this can lead to crown rot. Keep your orchid in a pot with a good draining orchid potting mix.

TEMPERATURE

Phalaenopsis orchid will grow fine under normal home temperatures. Each year one or two new leaves will appear. Once this growth phase completes, usually in the fall, a bloom spike will emerge from the stem beneath the second and third leaf from the top. Providing several nights in the 60's will help to set the bloom spikes. Phalaenopsis orchids bloom in the late winter through the spring. Bloom spikes can be cut back 1/2 way once the flowering fades to promote a secondary spike. If after a month, no new spikes form, then cut back completely.

FERTILIZER

Orchids need to be fed regularly, but do far better with too little fertilizer than with too much. A recommended approach is "weakly, weekly". Fertilize with a fertilizer made for orchids at 1/4 strength each time you water, rather than applying a full dose once a month.

POTTING

Repotting should be done every one to two years before the mix breaks down too far. It's best done after the main flowering season, using a fresh orchid potting mix. Clean out all the old potting mix and any dead or dying roots. Select a pot size for the root mass, not the top size of the plant. They like to be root bound. Using clear orchid pots can be helpful if you're prone to overwatering. The clear pot makes it easy to see if the potting media is moist prior to watering.