

Orchid Care

and how to rebloom your phalaenopsis

temp of 65-75° and bright, indirect light. If it doesn't spike within a couple months, try moving it to a new location. It may need more light or cooler temperatures. Patiently wait for another few months for it to grow tall and flower. Once it reaches 5", you can support the spike with a stake and a loose tie.

7. Keep it Up!

Continue to water and fertilize. Don't move the orchid around. Phalaenopsis can usually grow a flower spike (or two) a year!



GETTING STARTED

You've just purchased a unique and gorgeous blooming orchid to adorn your living space...now what? Orchids are notoriously fickle, but with proper care can thrive and survive. Other types can be trickier to get to rebloom, but in the case of phalaenopsis orchids, they can be fairly easy to rebloom- once or twice a year!

LOCATION

Your new orchid can live happily in your home or office with the right lighting conditions. In general, orchids love medium to bright, indirect light. This means that east and west-facing windows that do not get direct sunlight can work well. Keep an eye on the leaves. If they are yellowing, it may not be getting enough light, and if they have black tips, it may be getting sunburned.

Blooms grow from stem to tip, and are lost in that order. The blooms on orchids last several weeks to months. (Phalaenopsis orchids have the longest lasting blooms, averaging about 2-3 months). Different types of orchids have ideal temperature ranges. For example, a Phalaenopsis orchid is a warm growing orchid, and prefers daytime temperatures between 70°-85°F, and should not drop below 65° at night. Cool growing orchids such as Cymbidiums and Miltonias prefer between 50°-70° and can handle considerably cooler temperatures at night.

WATERING & FEEDING

Remember...less is best. The most common issue with orchids is too much water. This causes them to drop their blooms early. Most orchids like to get almost totally dry between watering. Matsui Nursery, where we source our orchids, recommends a schedule by variety: Phalaenopsis and Miltonias should be watered every 10-15 days. Allow them to almost completely dry out between watering. Cymbidiums should be watered every 4-7 days. Keep them moist, but not soggy. Do not let them dry out.

How to water your orchid: Feel the growing medium. Is it almost dry, and feel light in weight? Give it a good drench under slow, lukewarm running water for about 10-25 seconds on each side of the

plant, right over the roots, avoiding the leaves and flowers. You can also dunk the orchid in water for a few minutes, letting it soak in really well. Let it drain completely before returning it to its decorative pot. Never let them stand in water or stay constantly wet or soggy. The roots will rot if they are getting too much water, and it will eventually kill the plant.

FERTILIZING

There's no need to fertilize your orchid while it is in its first bloom. We carry an orchid fertilizer that can be used once per week, and will help your orchid to rebloom.

REPOTTING YOUR ORCHID

You'll want to repot your orchid only every two years, when the potting medium begins to decompose. The best time to repot is in the spring, or in cooler months after flowering. You can repot in the same container, or increase the size 1/2-1" in diameter. Remove all the old medium from the roots. Trim any rotted roots and then spread the remaining healthy roots over a handful of medium in the pot. (Ideally a medium sized orchid bark or a peat based mix should be used. Do not use regular potting soil.) Then fill the rest of the pot with your medium, gently working it in to get rid of any large air pockets, keeping the roots fairly tight. Wait 1-3 days before watering.

COMMON PROBLEMS

Keep an eye on the leaves. New leaves that turn black or yellow are a warning sign. It can indicate stress, too much water, insufficient feeding, or too much direct mid-day light. If you notice yellowing of the bottom two leaves, don't worry- this is a normal part of the growth cycle. Snip them off with sterile scissors, or let them drop on their own. Black tips on leaves can be caused by hard water, fungal disease, or overfeeding. Black areas on leaves can be from sunburn, or if you notice them growing in size, fungal disease. Cut any affected leaves off with sterile snips and make adjustments in your care.

Watch the roots. They should be full of water and look greyish-green, not whitish grey. If they are brown and soggy, it usually means overwatering has occurred. Most orchid roots remain healthiest when you allow the potting medium to nearly dry out between waterings, and then water thoroughly. Never allow the plant to stand in water for long periods of time. Orchids like to be "root bound", and do not need repotting frequently, generally not for about two years. You may see little air roots peeking out the sides of the pot, and this is good!

Keep these roots on your orchid plant, unless they turn yellow and shrivel up, in which case you can trim them off after the orchid is done blooming.

REBLOOMING

Yes, YOU can get your orchid to bloom again! Phalaenopsis are the easiest orchids to rebloom. We'll list the 7 simple steps you need to take to get your orchid to bloom again.

1. Fertilize.

After it drops the last flower, you can start fertilizing once a month with an orchid fertilizer. A great option is Neilsons' Orchid Elixir, made in Oregon. It's a low-sulfur, ready-to-use fertilizer that can be used on all tropical plants. It's recommended to feed every time you water the orchid (which makes it easy to remember). Keep your orchid in bright, indirect light.

2. Snip off Flower Spike after the Flowers Drop.

You have three options at this point. (1) *Leave the spike.* Sometimes new, smaller blooms will flower at the tip of the plant if you leave the spike in place, but not usually. (2) *You can use sterile, sharp snips and cut at a slight angle just in between the second and third node counting up from the bottom.* This works only for Phalaenopsis, and only about half the time. (3.) *Remove the flower spike entirely with sterilized snips, clipping it 1/2" from the base of the plant.* This gives the plant a chance to reset and grow stronger roots. The third option will provide larger blossoms when the orchid blooms again.

3. Water Properly.

Water your orchid about every 10-14 days for standard Phalaenopsis, or about 7-10 for the minis. Remember that watering less is best. Let your potting medium almost dry out before watering.

4. Wait a Few Months for a New Leaf.

After you've cut the flower spike, wait a few months before inducing a new spike. Once the orchid grows a fully grown new leaf, it is recovered, and ready to bloom again! This new leaf will likely be as big or bigger than the other leaves on the plant.

5. Chill.

To get a new flower spike, place your orchid into an area with a lower room temperature, that gets about 55-60° at night. Sometimes it's as simple as moving it into a window and away from the heater.

6. Watch for a New Spike.

In about a month or so, you'll see a new flower spike appear. It will have a knobby end on it, which is called a "mitten". Once it starts spiking, you can move it back to its normal location with a room