

# *The Orchid Society Of WA (Inc)*

## **Cymbidium Orchids**

Cymbidium orchids are hardy plants and are easy to grow. They like the same conditions as we do, temperatures in the 20's, humidity of about 50% and part shade in summer. Most amateurs can grow orchids well, but some have difficulty in flowering them. The following suggestions may help to achieve better results.

### **POSITION**

Cymbidiums will tolerate **full sun** throughout the year, but it is best to find a position where they will receive **50% shade in summer. Remember too much shade will cause a decrease in flowering.** 50% shade cloth is the best to use otherwise a very open shaded tree. Don't crowd your orchid plants, an empty pot of equal size should fit between. Pots should also be raised off the ground on wire mesh or something similar to allow for air movement around the roots.

### **WATERING**

This will depend on the type of potting mix used, position of orchid and atmospheric conditions, temperature and humidity. In winter, once or twice a week is sufficient in the morning. In summer, water daily, at night. The night time watering is to reduce the temperature. The drop in temperature helps in the initiation of flower spikes. In heat wave conditions watering may have to be done twice a day. When watering, thoroughly saturate the potting mix. Stop when the water comes out of the bottom of the pot.

### **FERTILIZING**

Everyone has their own thoughts. Slow release fertilizers such as Nutricote and Magamp (hard to get), can be added to the potting mix at a concentration of two tablespoons to a 5 litre bucket of potting mix. If you want to liquid fertilize, use half strength Aquasol, Polyfeed, Phostagen or Orchid Focus from Growth Technologies in O'Connor or from most Plant Nurseries – weekly.

### **POTTING MIX**

Again there are hundreds of combinations. Weathered pine bark, with the above slow release fertilizers, gives excellent results. The pine bark pieces should be about 10 to 15 mm in size. Never pot an orchid into sand, you will destroy its roots. The mix should be open. Water should run straight through the potting mix.

### **REPOTTING**

Pine bark breaks down and will retain the water in the pot. At this stage, usually every two years, the orchid should be repotted into a new mix. Use plastic pots and don't over pot. Give the plant enough room for one to two years only.

### **DIVIDING**

When the plant gets large the plant may have to be divided. When dividing, make each piece have a minimum of three green bulbs. Best time is after flowering or in spring. Try not to exceed pots of 250mm in size, they become too heavy.

### **BACKBULBS**

The old bulbs without leaves can be individually potted. This is done when repotting or dividing. These old bulbs usually will produce a new shoot, which can grow up to a flowering plant.

### **ORCHIDS IN SPIKE**

A flower spike can be supported using a bamboo or wire stake once it reaches about 15cm high. Spikes appear at the base of new growths during February to April. The spike at this stage looks like a fat pencil. At this stage snail pellets should be put around the pot and on top of the potting mix. When the flower buds break through the protective sheath, the plant should be moved to a position where the buds will be protected from strong winds, hail or frost. Don't place the orchid in a dark area as the buds won't open. A veranda or patio is ideal.

### **ORCHIDS IN FLOWER**

When the first flowers open then the plant can be taken inside. Water the plant once a week and cut the flower spike off no longer than four weeks after the first flower opens. Put the flower spike in a vase and cut 1 to 2cm off the bottom of the stem once a week at the same time changing the water.

### **DISEASES**

The main problem is fungal infection. If good air movement occurs in the growing area the fungal infections will not occur. Any fungicide can be used, e.g. Mancozeb, Fongarid or Previcur. The next biggest problem is red spider. Don't apply insecticide or fungicide sprays to flower buds, they can deform them. It is better to use a powder.

N.B. These suggestions have been made without prejudice as a guide only and no guarantees can be given with regard to successful growing of Cymbidium orchids.