

Growing House Orchid Plant Tip

No hard and fast rules can be set down for the beginner to follow when it comes to growing house orchids. It has been said that each grower in her own bush house, within limitations established by the plants, is a law unto herself.

The amount of each element in the light-heat-moisture-air formula will vary according to season, experience, and variety. One of the things that make the growing of orchids unique and stimulating is the spirited controversy that arises over every aspect of culture.

One of the many points on which there is no incontrovertible procedure is the matter of how much light should be admitted.

Here's an important growing house orchid plant tip - It must be decided whether to grow the plants 'soft' or 'hard,' to use the parlance of experienced growers.

The amateur must make his own choice. To grow 'soft' means to shade the plants from the sun so that the leaves remain a beautiful dark green.

There can be no doubt that this method produces the most beautiful plants, but the quality of flower is a question that cannot be answered so definitely. In 'soft' conditions care must be exercised not to shade to the point where flower growth will be hindered.

To grow 'hard' means to allow so much light that the leaves have decided overtones of yellow. This method, while marring the appearance of the plant, is said by its proponents to give increased flowers.

Too much light must be avoided, since it will burn the plant and growth will be interrupted. Dry, yellow flower sheaths will at times result from such sunburn, and incipient buds will become steamy and subject to destruction by wet rot.

Cutting off the very top of such a sheath with a sharp knife will allow air to reach the bud and may save it.

The claim that growing orchids 'hard' increases flower growth appears logical if the conditions under which orchids grow in their natural state are considered: the natural environment is 'hard.'

It must be remembered, however, that nature controls sunlight in a way difficult to approximate in the greenhouse. Even in those areas where certain varieties grow in so-called 'full sun/' it will be found that drifting clouds give a protection that is absent under intensely directed light in the greenhouse.

Once the amateur has made the choice between 'soft' and 'hard' methods, the subsequent treatment must be consistent. If much sun is provided, more moisture and air will be required.

If the plants are grown with minimum sun they will require less moisture, but an increase in ventilation may be needed to keep the air sweet.

Here's another growing house orchid plant tip - Too great an increase in heat during the winter is a common error of orchid growers. Plants store up energy during the daylight hours and give off or transpire energy at night. Increase in night heat increases transpiration.

Shorter periods of daylight lessen the manufacture of energy. If the plant loses more energy at night than it is able to store during the day, obviously it will suffer.

Orchids are very susceptible to shock of any kind, and they take considerable time to recover—if they ever do. This danger must be borne in mind regarding sunburn, chilling, or energy deficit.

There is the further difficulty of each species' having its own light requirements. Quick reference to conditions in the native homes of the species that the amateur is likely to acquire will illustrate the point. Cattleyas, native to Central and South America, are found hanging on trees in the tropical rain forests.

The burning sun of midday is usually kept off the plant by foliage directly overhead. The grower, guided by this knowledge, lets Cattleyas be exposed to the sun, but provides shade in summer during the warmest part of the day, for sunburn must be avoided.

The increased exposure to sun necessitates a corresponding increase in humidity to prevent the pseudobulbs from shriveling