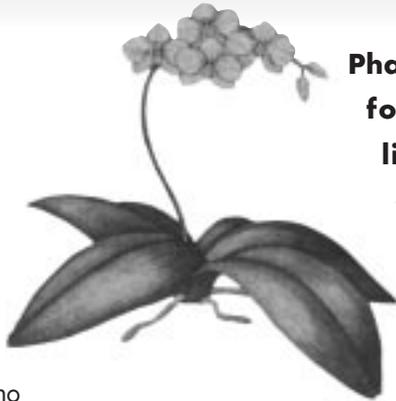


# Phalaenopsis

# The Moth Orchid



**Phalaenopsis, the moth orchid, is one of the best orchids for growing in the home. They have been grown in livingrooms and parlours since Victorian times, and are one of the easiest orchids available.**

## LIGHT

Phalaenopsis grow easily in a bright window, with little or no direct sun. An east window is ideal in the home; shaded-south or west windows are acceptable. Artificial lighting is excellent. Usually four fluorescent tubes in one fixture are placed 6 inches to 1 foot over the leaves, 12 to 16 hours a day.

## TEMPERATURE

Phalaenopsis should always be above 60°F at night, and range between 75°F and 85°F or more during the day. Night temperatures to 55°F are desirable for several weeks in the fall, in order to initiate flower spikes. Fluctuating temperatures, as on a window sill, can cause bud drop on plants with buds ready to open.

## HUMIDITY

In the home, set the plants on trays of gravel, partially filled with water. The pots should never sit in the water. Mist the plants in the mornings only. The leaves should always be dry by nightfall. Grouping plants together raises the humidity by conserving the water that the plants transpire. At rainy times of the year, it is important that the humid air is moving to prevent fungal or bacterial diseases.

## WATER

Because they have no major water-storage organs other than their leaves, Phalaenopsis must never completely dry out. Plants should be thoroughly watered and not watered again until nearly dry through the pot. In the heat of the summer in a dry climate, this may be every

other day; in the winter in a cool northern greenhouse, it may be every ten days. Water only in the morning, so that the leaves are dry by nightfall, to prevent rot from occurring on the leaves.

## FERTILIZING

Twice-a-month applications of high-nitrogen fertilizer (30-10-10 or a similar formulation) are best in warm, humid conditions. When flowering is desired, a high-phosphorus fertilizer (10-30-20 or a similar formulation) may be applied to promote blooming. Some growers apply fertilizer at 1/4 strength with every watering; this is best for warm, humid conditions. When cooler, or under dull conditions, fertilizer should be applied once a month.

## RE-POTTING

Phalaenopsis plants must be potted with a well-draining mix, such as fir bark, various types of stone, sphagnum moss, or combinations of these. Potting is usually done every 1 to 3 years, and is best done in the spring after blooming. Mature plants can grow in the same pot until the potting medium starts to decompose, usually in two years. Root rot occurs if plants are left in a soggy medium. Seedlings usually grow fast enough to need re-potting yearly, and should be re-potted in a fine-grade medium. When mature, a plant may stay in the same pot size for many years, but must have the medium changed. To re-pot, remove all the old medium from the roots, trim soft rotted roots, and spread the remaining roots over a handful of medium in the bottom of a new pot. Fill the rest of the pot with medium, working it through the roots, so that the junction of the roots and the stem is at the top of the medium. Keep the plant shaded and humid, but drier in the pot, for several weeks to promote new root growth. A vitamin B1 solution may be helpful in establishing plants.



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