

## **Orchids**

### **Part 3: Friend or Foe?**

In Part 1, we briefly discussed the environmental needs and light requirements for most orchids. In Part 2, we presented more information on watering and potting mediums. For Part 3, we will briefly touch on a few natural tips for orchid care and discuss some of the more interesting orchid myths.

Orchids love rainwater! If the temperature is moderate (60-70° F) and the rain is light, your orchid would enjoy a trip outside to sit in the rain! Be sure to empty any excess water from the plant and dry its leaves once you bring it back inside. The next best thing is to collect rainwater and use it instead of tap water.

You can also “recycle” the excess water that drains from your orchid by placing a pan under it to catch the run-off. If the water stays in the tray, all the better for creating a more humid environment! Some people will place their orchid pots on a pebble and water filled tray just to create more humidity!

There are many organic pesticides on the market today but many people prefer the natural alternatives. Organic liquid soaps mixed with water and sprayed on the plant will help with pest control as will ingredients like pepper and garlic. Should your plant develop signs of a pest problem, do your research to identify the pest, then follow the best practices for the situation. (a very good start is to isolate the problem orchid, so those pests aren't shared!)

Some people will even recycle wood and make their own bark! Using the wood from trees that naturally drop their bark, cut the wood into pieces the desired size, then steam the bark over simmering water for at least 30 minutes. Allow the bark to cool for a full day and keep it isolated so no bugs or germs can infiltrate the new bark.

In Part 1 we dismissed the idea that orchids like ice cubes, but you will come across those who truly believe in watering this way. Most of the time the orchid will become dehydrated with only this small amount of water in a quick draining medium and the orchids performance will be poor.

Another myth is that orchids should only be repotted at night when the plant is resting in order to cause the orchid less disturbance. As sensitive as an orchid can be, it is fine to repot in the daylight!

It is true that the fragrance from an orchid can cause some people to faint! There are some heavily scented orchids, such as cattleyas, that can cause people to faint or feel nauseous. At the same time, those that are allergic to pollen can have orchids without worry. Orchid pollen is in a mass state and does not dissipate into the air.

So, are orchids our friends or foe? Most growers would say that most orchids have been (or are) friendly. There are a few that would challenge anyone and some that have moved on to – shall we say – greener pastures. However, anyone even remotely interested in trying to grow orchids should try an orchid or two and find out for yourself what makes growing orchids both challenging and rewarding.