



Caring for Your Orchid

Test the Light




Here's a quick way to test the light for growing orchids indoors: on a bright, clear summer day, hold your hand about six inches above your orchid to see if a shadow is cast on the leaves. A faint shadow indicates that 'low' light orchids may be grown, while a strong, distinct shadow indicates there is enough sun to grow 'high' light orchids.

What's Your Exposure?

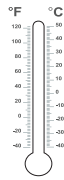


Unobstructed southern exposures offer the most possibilities for growing orchids. However, a wide variety of 'high' light and 'medium' light orchids will thrive on windowsills with a western or partially obstructed southern exposure. Eastern exposures will allow 'low' light orchids to bloom. Northern windows frequently don't provide enough light to allow orchids to bloom well, but artificial light can help supplement.

Water



Most orchids prefer to dry out a bit between waterings, although there are some exceptions. When watering, drench the pot thoroughly and drain completely. Never let the plant sit in water. Tepid water is preferred, and it is best to water early in the day so the foliage dries by nightfall. Keep in mind that far more orchids are killed from over-watering than from being too dry.



Cooler Nights

Many orchids prefer a nighttime drop in temperature. In some, this helps encourage flowering. For several weeks during the fall, leave the windows cracked open slightly at night to allow the temperature to drop 10 degrees. This should help your orchids set spikes for winter and spring blooms!

Saving Orchids

Orchids are one of the largest and most widespread plant families—as well as one of the most threatened. Many wild orchids are in danger of extinction due to climate change, habitat destruction, and poaching. Thanks to laboratory propagation, orchids are now widely available for anyone to grow in their home. This reduces the demand for wild-collected plants and helps preserve natural populations.

Learn more about orchid conservation from the North American Orchid Conservation Center, which was founded by the U.S. Botanic Garden and Smithsonian Institution (northamericanorchidcenter.org).

ORCHID HOME CARE



Bulbophyllum lepidum



UNITED STATES
BOTANIC GARDEN



Choose the Right Orchid for Your Home



Low light orchids

Paphiopedilum (slipper orchids, pictured above),
Phalaenopsis (moth orchids),
Ludisia discolor, and other jewel orchids



Medium light orchids

Oncidium (pictured above), miniature *Cattleya*,
and *Miltoniopsis* (pansy orchids)



High light orchids

Cattleya (corsage orchids), *Ascocenda*,
Phragmipedium (slipper orchids), *Brassia* (spider
orchids), and *Dendrobium* (pictured above)