



Orchid Growing Tips

Enthusiast shares how to surround yourself with these natural beauties

It all starts when you buy the plant.

If there is no drain hole in the pot, the roots will sit in water, which is death to orchids. Switch orchids to pots with a drain hole.

The potting medium is worth noting at this time, too. My preference is bark, not moss. Moss remains wet longer, even if you are watering lightly.

WATERING

With the right medium and pot now selected, watering is simple. The ice cube method is safe and conservative for beginners. Depending on the size of the pot, put two to three cubes per week in the planter.

However, I prefer a more straightforward approach. I put my finger in the pot, if it's dry, I water it while it is sitting in the sink

and allowing the pot to drain well. When watering, always try to water the medium, not the leaves, and make sure the leaves are dry when finished. My indoor orchids are watered every two weeks. Err on the side of under-watering, not overwatering.

LOCATION

Enjoy the plant wherever you will see it most! Once the orchid is in bloom, the hard work is over. Different types of orchids can handle varying amounts of sun, but most prefer dappled, indirect sun and, while in bloom, it's more for your enjoyment and less sensitive for them at

this point. Occasional water is all that is needed for now.

QUIRKS

The long, graceful leaves of phalaenopsis start to die back and yellow individually, from the bottom. That is totally normal. What is not normal is when the yellowing occurs on the top leaves. Those are new leaves and you do not want that. Worth saying again, make sure there is no water in the center of top leaves, this can rot the plant at the center, quickly. Pinch back dying blooms as they occur on the bloom stalk.

REBLOOM AND PLANT ON A TREE

We have many options in South Florida and throwing the plant out should not be one of them!

Shake the medium off the plant's leaves and roots. Trim crisp roots away. Healthy roots are plump and supple. At this point, it's easy to see how your plant can attach itself to the bark of a tree with water and time. Some sun is necessary for rebloom, but prolonged, direct sun is not good.

I use pantyhose tied around the tree with the roots pressed flat against the bark. They are soft and pliable, so they will never cut into the leaf as wire and thinner products will. (Search YouTube for short video demonstrations on securing an orchid to a tree using pantyhose.)

I like the look of moss to cover the pantyhose. Spanish moss is a bromeliad, so small amounts brought in your yard will multiply while creating an ethereal look. Once the

roots have attached themselves to the tree, the plant is getting nutrients from the tree. They can now handle wind, rain and drought and still rebloom. Their resiliency is amazing.

The timing of attaching the orchid to a tree is the tricky part as it's important to begin in the midst of rainy season. As a 'plan B,' the orchid can be attached closer to the bottom of the tree, allowing the irrigation to water it, so it will survive. Without irrigation or rain, the orchid will shrivel and die quickly in Florida's summer heat.

FERTILIZER

If you have held the root in your hand and molded it onto trees, you are family now. Your orchid family may like encouragement in the form of fertilizer. If this is out of your scope of interest, your orchids will still rebloom. It's all about how much effort you want to put forth for next season's blooms. I

always spray with water, then fertilize. Fertilizer can burn plant roots if they are dry.

YOU HAVE NO TREES?

Put the orchid under a shrub, allow weather to water it and rescue it later.

I still maintain certain favorites in wooden boxes that hang from trees. Mobility is the advantage here. When the orchid comes into bloom, bring it into your home.

When mixing different orchids for an arrangement, it's great to add small potted plants and fresh flowers in vials.

The different textures really make the overall effect unique.

I am amazed at the orchid bounty I am afforded each year with minimal effort.

This is our God-given weather here in South Florida, so take advantage of it.

It will reward you well! ❁

Christi Lavoy is a self-taught orchid enthusiast of more than 20 years. Lavoy designs elegant orchid support stakes called Botanistix®. She loves hearing others' successes and failures and sharing her gardens.

If you go...

What: Open House at Christi Lavoy's Botanistix® Orchid Garden

Where: Terrabella at Pelican Marsh, 9171 Torrefino Court

When: 11 a.m. – 5 p.m., Tuesday, Nov. 6

How: Share event and name at gate, 201-951-9211



Orchid enthusiast Christi Lavoy stakes her business on supporting their growth.

CREDIT: LUCETTE MORALES

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