

Wallsend Nurseries

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Cattleya Care

Cattleya (pronounced “cat lee ah” and NOT “cattle ay ah”) are easy care orchids. To get the best out of them all you need to do is follow a few simple guidelines.

Ideally they should be grown in an unheated glasshouse or fernery but can be grown equally well on a window sill or similar well lit position.

Light

Cattleyas need very bright light but not necessarily direct sunlight as this can cause leaf burn. At least 50-70% shade is recommended for best results. Insufficient light will result in plants that look green and healthy but which produce straggly weak growth and don't flower. A good healthy Cattleya plant will have a slightly “hard” or even light green appearance when it has adequate light.

Watering

Plants should be watered only when they are slightly dry. Sometimes the potting media can appear dry but is actually quite wet under the surface. In Summer 3-4 times per week will be OK if the weather is hot. In Winter watering is best left until the plants are thoroughly dry, say once per fortnight in warm weather or even once per month in cold weather. Choose a warm morning and water early so the plants have time to dry out before night fall. Cattleyas MUST NOT be allowed to remain cold & wet for any period of time or they will quickly rot and die.

Fertilizing

Generally it is best to fertilize little and often. Use a good quality orchid fertilizer such as “Campbell's” yellow or blue series of fertilizers. Use at half strength at weekly intervals throughout the growing season.

Temperature

Cattleyas are tolerant of a wide range of temperatures but prefer a position which is protected from cold winds during the Winter months. 10-15c would be a good minimum but if the plants are kept dry they can withstand somewhat colder temps for short periods. Maximum would be around 30c ideally but if the ventilation & watering are adequate they will tolerate much hotter conditions with little ill effects. Ensure the plants are well ventilated at all times of the year. They grow much better if there is some air movement on hot days & it will help reduce fungal problems during Winter also.

Potting

Repotting is best done in warm weather when new root growth becomes apparent. Division of the plants can also be done at this time. The potting media can be as simple as 100% pinebark of appropriate size (treated if you like) or a mixture of materials. One third each of pinebark, charcoal & polystyrene broken up into small pieces makes a good mix. It drains freely & provides good root aeration.

Pests and Diseases

Scale & Mealy bugs are the worst problems here. Use white oil to control scale insects perhaps with some Malathon® or Folimat® added. Use Confidor® to control Mealy Bug. Kelthane® will help control red spider mites. Baythroid® will control caterpillars and aphids safely without burning the plant or the delicate flower buds if applied at the recommended rates.

Fungal problems are not really all that common. Mancozeb® or Copper Oxychloride can be applied as a preventative. If root rot sets in fast action is necessary. Cut away all of the dead or dying pseudobulbs and repot the plant into new media. Drench immediately with Antiro® at the recommended rate. Root rot is difficult to cure and is often related to the plant being too cold and wet particularly during winter.