

Wallsend Nurseries

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Cymbidium Care

Cymbidiums (pronounced “sim bid ee um”) are easy care orchids. To get the best out of them all you need to do is follow a few simple guidelines. They are probably the most rewarding orchids for the home gardener providing long lasting displays throughout the Winter months.

Ideally they should be grown in a fernery or perhaps in a protected spot in the garden or even under light shade from a tree. Flower spikes should be staked as soon as they appear to prevent damage.

Light

Cymbidiums need very bright light, even direct sunlight is acceptable. Light shade is recommended for best results. Certainly, if shade cloth is to be used, it should be no more than 50% grade. Insufficient light will result in plants that look green and healthy but which produce straggly weak growth and don't flower. A good healthy Cymbidium 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.

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

Cymbidiums are tolerant of a wide range of temperatures but prefer a position which is protected from the elements so as to protect delicate flower buds from damage. During hot Summer weather it is always a good idea to moisten the plants regularly to keep them cool.

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% pine bark of appropriate size (treated if you like) or a mixture of materials. One third each of pine bark, 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. Apply snail bait to stop flower spike and bud damage.

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 perhaps repot the plant. Drench immediately with Antirot® 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.

Glomerella is a serious fungal disease of Cymbidiums that can be difficult to control. For the home gardener we recommend infected plants be discarded as soon as possible.

Virus infected plants are also best discarded as the virus can quickly spread throughout a collection.