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# Grow With Us

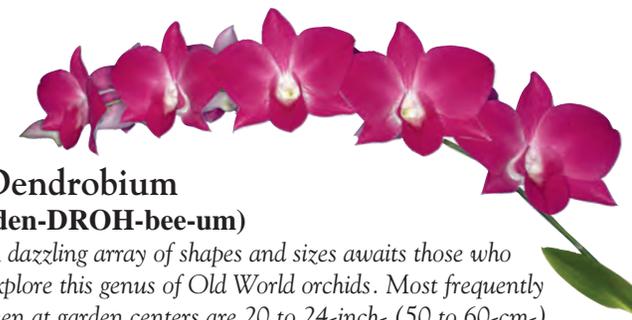
## Paphiopedilum (paff-ee-oh-PED-ih-lum)

The flowers of *paphiopedilums* are reminiscent of those of *cypripediums*, the slipper orchid, a native North American cousin. Leaf colors indicate temperature needs: Green-leaved *paphiopedilums* require 50–60 F (10–16 C) at night, while those with mottled leaves need 60–70 F (16–21 C) at night. Many thrive in an east, west or shaded south facing window. Compact hybrids are tailored to the space limitations of windowsills and light gardens, where the tubes should be 6–8 inches (15–20 cm) above the plants. Fertilize twice a month with half-strength 30-10-10 or 20-20-20.



## Cattleya (KAT-lee-ah)

For many, *cattleyas* are the classic orchid, which growers raise in well-lit greenhouses and on windowsills with an unobstructed east, west or shaded south exposure. Compact hybrids adapt to life under fluorescent lighting. Insufficient light can prevent *cattleyas* from flowering. *Cattleyas* typically bloom in spring or autumn; then they make new growths. During this time, water when the medium begins to dry, and fertilize every two weeks with water-soluble 20-20-20 fertilizer or 30-10-10 if potted in bark. Reduce watering and fertilize monthly at other times. Provide 75–85 F (24–29 C) day temperatures, with night temperatures around 60 F (16 C).



## Dendrobium (den-DROH-bee-um)

A dazzling array of shapes and sizes awaits those who explore this genus of Old World orchids. Most frequently seen at garden centers are 20 to 24-inch- (50 to 60-cm-) tall evergreen *dendrobiums* bearing a profusion of purple, white, pink and earth-toned flowers that last for weeks on the plant or up to 10 days when cut and placed in water. Permit the medium to dry slightly between waterings, and mist those in the home for healthy foliage. Apply 20-20-20 liquid fertilizer when new growths develop, usually in spring and summer. Temperatures below 40 F (4 C) can cause leaves to drop. *Dendrobiums* need bright east, west or southern exposures to promote flowering.

For American Orchid Society membership information and benefits go to [www.aos.org](http://www.aos.org).



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## Orchid Basics

# In the Home

Anyone can grow orchids in the home without living in the tropics or having the luxury of a greenhouse. Today, houseplants are a regular part of home decoration. If you have ever successfully grown a houseplant, or enjoyed a flowering potted plant, you can grow orchids. The good news is there are plenty of options to give yourself a beautiful display of flowering orchids year round.

Learn more about growing orchids in the home by visiting the American Orchid Society's Web site, [www.aos.org](http://www.aos.org). Culture sheets for more than a dozen genera and groups of orchids explain the basic needs required to grow and flower these plants successfully.

**LIGHT** No flowering plant will do well without sufficient light. In the home, where most available light is incidental (that is, at an angle, and therefore less intense), plants will need to be fairly close to an east or west, or lightly shaded south, window. A north window will rarely provide adequate light. If light is too intense in a southern exposure, a sheer curtain could be hung to diffuse the light. Extra hours of light will not entirely compensate for poor light quality. Indeed, extending day length artificially to more than 16 hours can be detrimental to the plants' health and often will prevent flowering.

**TEMPERATURE** The plants will be comfortable where you are comfortable. Typical home temperatures of 55–60 F (13–16 C) at night and 75 F (24 C) during the day are fine. Guard against excessively low or high temperatures immediately adjacent to glass windows. Some leeway for seasonal fluctuations is allowed.

**HUMIDITY** Rugs, drapes and some furniture act as giant wicks that absorb the home's humidity, as do heating and air-conditioning systems. Also, it is not advisable to have the home's interior be too wet to accommodate the plants. Solutions: Group plants to take advantage of their collective transpiration (exhaled moisture) or place them on gravel-filled humidity trays to raise the humidity to 50 percent.

**WATERING** Care must be taken to balance the rapid surface drying that can take place in the home with the plants' lower metabolic processes resulting from lower light. Each particular type of orchid will retain its basic water needs, whether for moisture or periodic dryness. The home grower also needs to give thought to the logistics of watering. You can carry plants to the sink or even outdoors (when weather allows), or water them in place and remove excessive water so the containers do not sit in water.

**FERTILIZER** Fertilize regularly at a low dosage of approximately one-quarter strength with a fertilizer appropriate to the potting mix in which your plants are grown. Fertilize less often during the winter.

**TIP FOR SUCCESS** Orchids grown in the home during the colder months will respond favorably to being summered outdoors in a protected area. When moving plants outdoors, take care to protect them from direct sun and position them where they will be easy to water and care for. Before returning them indoors in early autumn, inspect plants to make sure they are free of insects and ailments. Summering orchids outdoors will also expand the range of plant selections available to you.

**A SELECTION OF PLANTS** Some of the more popular orchids to begin with are:

**Angraecums** Dwarf Madagascan species, fragrant at night; bright light.

**Cattleya Alliance Hybrids and Species** Choose miniature types less than 10 inches tall; bright light of southern exposure is best.

**Dendrobiums** Dwarf phalaenopsis types, or higher-altitude miniatures; bright light at south window required.

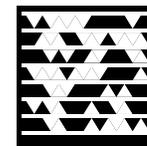
**Oncidiums** Many types available in flower, best if smaller growing; bright light.

**Paphiopedilums** Lady's-slipper orchids grow well under home conditions, giving long-lasting blooms; provide African-violet conditions.

**Phalaenopsis** Moth orchids are absolutely the number-one best orchid houseplant; provide African-violet conditions.

**ORCHIDS IN THE GARDEN** Properly selected and cared for, orchids can be among the showiest and most exotic of all garden or patio plants and almost without exception, no matter where you live there are orchids that can be adapted to outdoor culture for at least part of, if not the entire, year. There are many areas throughout the southern and central United States where temperatures for a good portion of the year are compatible with the needs of many orchids and even if you live in areas with severe winters you will find that orchids thrive out-of-doors during the warm summer months. Some coastal areas are nearly frost-free year round. In these areas, with some protection from excessive sun, wind and rain, lovely orchid plants can be successfully cultivated on the patio or as a part of the landscape. In frost-free areas, the plants can be left in place all year. Where frost or temperatures below 40 F (4 C) threaten, plants can be brought into the home to be grown on windowsills, under lights or on an unheated patio where the coldest temperatures are avoided. Even in areas of the country where the summers are cool, it's possible to find plants such as cymbidiums, odontoglossums or masdevallias that provide bright, colorful displays and thrive under cool conditions. The trick is in selecting plants that are already adapted to your particular area. Your particular temperature conditions will influence your choice of plants, as will light, watering, fertilizing and humidity. In most cases, you will be limited to whatever Mother Nature provides, eased only by the amount of shade you supply. Generally, there are many lovely orchids that will do well in the temperature range from 40–90 F (4–32 C). Consult with local nurseries that stock orchids as well as regional orchid growers to determine what orchids can be grown outdoors in your area.

For more detailed information regarding growing orchids, visit the American Orchid Society's website at [www.aos.org](http://www.aos.org).



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