



Growing Paphiopedilums (Slipper Orchids)

Housing: Paphiopedilums are best grown in a cool glass house or a shade house with top cover for protection from the rain. They do require a fair amount of shade. The correct level can be determined by holding your hand about 30cm above the leaves; a faint shadow should be cast. If you see a distinct shadow there is too much light, no shadow is an indication of too little. In Sydney in the middle of summer this requires 80 – 90% shade which can be reduced to about 50% in winter. They can be grown indoors next to a window providing diffused light. Wherever they are grown they require good gentle air movement.

Water: Correct watering is the secret to successful growing of Paphs. The potting mix they are in needs to remain just damp but definitely not wet. I find a thorough watering once a week is sufficient even in summer. More Paphs have been killed by too much watering rather than too little.

Fertiliser: Paphs respond well to regular, dilute liquid fertilising after watering each week at about one quarter strength of the manufacturer's recommendation. Any reasonably balanced orchid fertiliser that is low in urea is ideal. Solid slow release fertilisers are not recommended.

Potting: Repotting should be carried out either annually or every second year in an open mix that drains well. Potting mixes based on bark or coconut husks with added ingredients such as charcoal, perlite, diatomite or pebbles work well as does bark by itself or even peat and perlite. Do not repot into a pot that is too large. A pot that just comfortably holds the roots is ideal no matter how large the leaves.

Problems: Damping off and fungal attacks can be a problem with Paphs. These are usually an indication that your growing conditions are not correct, most commonly brought about by too much water or too little air movement. Mealy bugs can sometimes be a problem but a dab of iso-propanol with a cotton bud will generally take care of them.

For more information visit an orchid society such as The North Shore Orchid Society which meets at 8.00pm on the 1st Wednesday of the month at the Forestville Memorial Hall, Starkey St, Forestville. All visitors welcome.



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