

MILTONIA

mil-TOH-nee-ah - The Pansy Orchid

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Milioniopsis (*mil-toh-nee-OP-sis*) are cool-growing orchids that originate in the higher elevations of the Andes in Colombia, Panama and Ecuador. The warmer-growing species, properly *Miltonia*, originate from the Minas Gerais area of Brazil and more closely resemble large-flowered *Oncidium*s. Their flowers can be brilliantly patterned.

LIGHT: Should be relatively shaded, prefer moderate levels of sunlight. They do best in an east facing window that gets one to two hours of early morning sun, but is out of direct sunlight for the rest of the day. They can be grown in a south or west facing window if shaded by a sheer curtain or kept back from the window. Direct sunlight burns the thin leaves within a short period of time.

WATER: Must be plentiful and the medium must drain perfectly. In their native habitat, the plants are drenched almost daily and, because of this, they are intolerant of salt buildup, so leaching every fourth or fifth watering is important when growing in pots. When they are not getting enough water or humidity, the leaves have a tendency to grow with accordion-like pleats.

TEMPERATURE: This is critical for the cool-growing plants. Unless temperatures are kept under 80°F, they may not flower. The minimum temperature is 50 to 55°F. Thus, these are really better thought of as intermediate growers because they need intermediate temperatures throughout the year - not too hot, not too cold. The warmer growers will take temps over 90°F as long as humidity levels of 70 to 75% or higher are maintained.

HUMIDITY: Must be at least 70% because of the plant's need for abundant water. Less humidity will stress the plant and can lead to susceptibility to disease, though too much humidity is worse than too little.

FERTILIZER: As *Milioniopsis* are very sensitive to salt build up, a little fertilizer will go a long way! Use an even numbered formula such as 7-7-7 or 10-10-10. Only fertilize when the plant is in active growth; when growing new leaves or growing a bloom spike.

POTTING: The roots of pansy orchids are very sensitive to salt (fertilizer) and mineral (water quality) build up in the medium. As the medium is also composting, it is recommended to completely remove and replace the medium on a yearly basis. Pansy orchids can be potted in either medium sized fir bark, a mixture of fir bark and peat fines or sphagnum moss, or all sphagnum moss. Replacing the medium and planting in a new pot will encourage healthy root growth.

PESTS: Mealybugs, scale insects, and spider mites can be occasional problems. The first line of defense is always simple removal. A ball of cotton or light finger pressure and a stream of warm water can be used to wipe any insects and their debris off of the leaves. A horticultural or neem oil spray can then be used to smother the insects and their eggs. It is best to examine your plants on a regular basis, as early detection and control is always more effective than trying to control a major infestation.



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