

CYMBIDIUM

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On the West Coast of the United States, and in other cool-summer areas that receive no severe frosts, Cymbidiums are among the most popular of spring-flowering orchids and are often grown as garden plants. Their striking sprays of long-lasting blooms provide ideal home or patio decoration, and are often used as cut flowers. There are both standard (large-flowered) and miniature (smaller-flowered) types grown. The miniature types, often known as “novelties,” are more heat-tolerant, but neither type is particularly good in warm summer areas. Cymbidiums are terrestrial plants in nature and require a moisture-retentive but well-drained mix. Fir bark is most commonly used, though more and more growers are switching to artificial or inorganic mixes as quality fir bark becomes less available.

LIGHT: Inside, keep them in either a west or south facing window where they can get as much sun as possible. Outside from spring to autumn, Cymbidiums should be grown in direct morning sun to dappled sun all day. Remember, when you first move them outside, they are not yet used to strong sun, and acclimate them gradually. Leaves should be naturally erect and of a medium olive-green color. Dark-green, limp foliage indicates too little light.

WATER: Inside, while in bloom, allow your Cymbidium to become surface dry before watering. Water the plant by putting it in the sink and allowing the water to flow through the pot for a full minute. Water again when surface dries. That is about once per week for a 6” pot. Outside when the days get hot, you will need to water more frequently. During the spring and summer while in active growth, keep evenly moist, but never sitting in water. Mature plants must never dry out between waterings.

TEMPERATURE: In the spring, Cymbidiums love to be moved out of doors as soon as the night temperature stays in the mid-40°s or above. They don’t need to come back inside until right before the first frost. Their outside time can be extended by bringing the plants inside when a night time frost is likely and then put them back outside during the day as it warms up. Cool temperatures are very important for initiation of spikes. Inside, keep them in a cool, sunny room for best flowering.

HUMIDITY: Humidity is less critical to Cymbidiums than with most other orchids. Air movement is essential at all times in summer for cooling and in winter to avoid stagnant air and fungus problems.

FERTILIZER: Cymbidiums like to be fed every two weeks with a balanced fertilizer from March until September. Stop fertilizing on Labor Day and reduce watering to once every 2 to 2 1/2 weeks (6” pot). Keep to the reduced watering schedule until bloom spikes appear or until new growth emerges in late winter. Then return to the surface-dry/once per week schedule.

POTTING: Re-pot before putting outside in the spring. Untangle the tightly packed roots and remove as much of the old potting medium as possible. Re-pot into a larger pot that will allow space for new growth. Do not over-pot.

PESTS: Slugs can be a problem outside. Use a product like Sluggo, or a beer-baited trap to catch and remove.



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