

# ONCIDIUM

*on-SID-ee-um*

This is an extraordinarily large and diverse New World genus with an equally diverse number of habitats. Oncidiums may originate anywhere from sea level in the tropics to the high elevations of the Andes. This obviously makes cultural generalizations difficult. Some genera included are *Aspasia*, *Brassia*, warm-growing *Miltonias* (often called the Brazilian type) and many of their hybrids. The complex crosses between many different genera result in vigorous plants, many spikes, and fantastic colors and shapes. Oncidiums are easy to bloom and easy to grow.

**LIGHT:** When grown on a windowsill, Oncidiums will grow best in three to four hours of direct morning sun. A windowsill that faces south/southeast is best. If you have either a south or west facing window, a sheer curtain that diffuses the sun light would be best. A north facing window will not give good results over a long period of time.

**WATER:** Requirements vary with the type of plant. Generally, plants with large fleshy roots or leaves need less-frequent watering than thin-leaved or thin-rooted plants. Watering should be thorough, and the medium should dry at least halfway through the pot before watering again. This may be every two to 10 days depending on weather, pot size and material, type of orchid and type of potting medium. Plants not actively growing should be watered less; many species have winter rest periods.

**TEMPERATURE:** Like cooler temperatures and will tolerate 55° nights and up to 85° days normally, with warmer temperatures in the summer. Temperatures up to 95 to 100°F are tolerated if humidity and air movement are increased as the temperatures rise, a good general rule in any case.

**HUMIDITY:** A relative humidity of 50% - 60% is ideal. Good air movement is essential if your humidity is extremely high. In the home this is less of a problem, but in the greenhouse circulating fans to move the air are a must!

**FERTILIZER:** Regularly while plants are actively growing. Applications of 30-10-10 formulations twice a month are ideal for plants in a bark-based potting medium. A 20-20-20 formulation should be used on plants in other media or on slabs. If skies are cloudy, applications once a month are sufficient.

**POTTING:** Should be done when new growth is about one-half mature, which is usually in the spring. Fine-grade potting media are usually used with fine-rooted plants; the standard size is medium grade. The plant should be positioned in the pot so that the newest growth is farthest away from the edge of the pot, allowing the maximum number of new growths before crowding the pot. Spread the roots over a cone of potting medium and fill in around the roots. Firm the medium around the roots. Keep humidity high and the potting medium dry until new roots form.

**PESTS:** The Oncidium group is relatively pest free. Scale insects and spider mites can be an occasional problem. 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 wash most insects and their debris off of the leaves. A horticultural or neem oil spray can then be used to smother the pests and their eggs. It is best to examine your plants as early detection and control is always more effective than trying to control a major infestation.

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