

DENDROBIUM

den-DROH-bee-um - The Spray Orchid

Dendrobiums are among the most commonly encountered orchids in the retail trade. Like most other cultivated orchids, Dendrobiums are air plants. They have well-developed water-storage organs (pseudobulbs), often called “canes,” for their upright, leafy appearance. They should be potted in porous, free-draining media. There are many types of Dendrobiums available to the specialist grower. However, hybrids involving *Den. phalaenopsis* are what you will most often encounter.



LIGHT: Sufficient light is important for healthy growth and flower production. Dendrobiums need lots of light, but not direct sun. A lightly shaded south window is best. East or west facing windows are satisfactory if bright (avoid direct sun except at the beginning or end of the day).

WATER: Dendrobiums like to be in small pots and are usually much taller than the pot is wide. Because they are usually large plants in relatively small pots, watering twice a week is about average. They like to be almost dry before re-watering. When watering, place the plant in the sink and use tepid water. Do not use salt softened or distilled water. Let the water run through the plant for a minute or so. Be sure to let the plant drain completely.

TEMPERATURE: Dendrobiums can withstand hot weather if adequate ventilation and humidity are provided. They are best grown when the temperature is between 65 and 75°F in the day and between 55 to 60°F at

night. Keep in mind that temperatures close to the window on a windowsill will be colder or hotter than your general house temperature.

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: Should be provided on a regular basis during the active growing period. The exact fertilizer you use will depend on the mix in which your plant is growing. A good general rule is to apply a balanced (10-10-10, 12-12-12, or similar ratio) fertilizer “weakly, weekly” during the period of active growth. That is, fertilize every week at one half of the recommended dilution.

POTTING: When re-potting, use a small pot; using a large pot will slow growth and reduces flowering significantly. Re-pot every two to three years.

PESTS: Dendrobiums are 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 on a regular basis, as early detection and control is always more effective than trying to control a major infestation.

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