

# CATTLEYA

*KAT-lee-ah* - The Corsage Orchid

Cattleyas are among the most commonly grown orchids and their culture is often used as the basis for comparison with other types of orchids. The Cattleya is an excellent plant for the beginner. These plants can withstand many of the initial mistakes made by the novice grower and the flowers are a delight.



**LIGHT:** Cattleyas grow in strong sun in nature and need 4 to 6 hours of strong sun on their leaves. An east or west window with sunlight at noon is good. When moving your orchid into stronger sunlight, increase light gradually over several weeks.

**WATER:** Always water orchids in the morning so that the leaves are dry before night. How often to water depends on the potting media used, the type of pot (plastic or clay), and the size of the pot. Large Cattleya in bark need watering about once a week. A rule of thumb to use on individual pots is to feel the pot; if it is light, water. They like to be watered well, drained well, and to be almost dry before re-watering.

**TEMPERATURE:** Cattleya can withstand hot weather if adequate ventilation and humidity are provided. They do best when the temperature is between 65 and 75°F in the day and between 58 and 62°F at night. The temperature differential is especially important.

**HUMIDITY:** A minimum humidity of 50% is generally considered a necessity. However it does not need to be constant. In the home, morning misting and/or humidity trays (do not sit the pot directly on the gravel) are usually enough. Air movement is essential at all times, but especially critical when the humidity is very high. In the home, natural air movement is usually enough, but in enclosures and greenhouses, fans are recommended.

**FERTILIZER:** Feed plants potted in bark with a 30-10-10 fertilizer twice a month in the growing season and about once a month in late fall through early spring, alternating with at least two good waterings to leach salts.

**PESTS:** Slugs and snails can be controlled with products containing metaldehyde. Diatomaceous earth is quite effective against slugs, and beer in a shallow bowl is a good trap for them. For mealy bugs, scales and other pests, use insecticides like malathion. Remember that these products are intended to kill and should be used in the open air outside your home. Paraffinic oil, which smothers bugs and their eggs, is labeled for use in the home. Use any of these products with caution and in accordance with the manufacturers' label. Insecticidal soap is also effective against these insects and safe, but it has less residual action. With any of these products, some insects, and especially their eggs, will survive to breed again. One dose of even a systemic insecticide will not wipe out a large population of insects totally and completely. In the home, vigilance is often the best defense against pests. If you get them early, before they start laying eggs, they can be eliminated relatively easily.

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