



**ATLANTIC**  
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# Orchid Phalaenopsis



*Phalaenopsis*, the Moth Orchid, is one of the best orchids for growing in the home, and is also a favorite with greenhouse growers. Culture for *Doritis*, a related genus and *Doritaenopsis*, a hybrid between the two genera, is the same as for pure *Phalaenopsis*.

**Temperatures** for *Phalaenopsis* should usually be above 60° F. at night and range between 75° - 85° F. or more during the day. Night temperatures to 55° F. are desirable for several weeks in the fall, in order to initiate flower spikes. Fluctuating temperatures can cause bud drop on plants with buds ready to open.

**Light** is easy to provide for *Phalaenopsis*. They grow easily in a bright window, with little or no sun. An east window is ideal in the home; shaded south windows or west windows are acceptable. In dull, northern winter climates, a full south exposure may be needed. Artificial lighting is excellent. Usually fluorescent tubes in one fixture are placed 6" -12" over the leaves, for 12 - 16 hours a day (following natural day length).

**Water:** Let the orchid mix dry out **almost completely** before watering. However, never allow mix to become "bone dry". Feel for moisture approximately 2" down into the orchid mix or moss - not just on the surface. Do not let water stand on leaves overnight or for any length of time. Don't let plants stand in water!

**Humidity** is important to *Phalaenopsis*, the recommended humidity is 50% -80%. In the home, set the plants on trays of gravel, partially filled with water, so that the pots never sit in the water. In dry climates or during dry weather, using a humidifier in the room is recommended.

**Fertilizer** should be applied on a regular schedule, especially if the weather is warm, when the plants are most often growing. Twice a month application of high-nitrogen fertilizer (30-10-10 or a similar formulation) are appropriate in spring and summer. When flowering is desired, a high-phosphorus fertilizer (10-30-20 or a similar formulation) may be applied to promote blooming. During fall and winter, fertilizer should be applied once a month.

**Potting** is best done in the spring, after blooming. *Phalaenopsis* plants must be potted in a well-draining mix, such as orchid mix or sphagnum moss. Potting is usually done every 1 - 3 years. Mature plants can grow in the same pot until the potting medium starts to decompose (usually in two years). Root rot occurs if plants are left in a soggy medium. Mature plants are potted in a medium-grade medium. When mature, a plant may stay in the same pot size for many years, but must have the medium changed. To repot, remove all the old medium from the roots, trim off soft, rotted roots and spread the remaining roots over a handful of medium in the bottom of the new pot. Fill the rest of the pot with medium, working it through the roots, so that the junction of the roots and the stem is at the top of the medium. Keep the plant shaded and humid, but drier in the pot, for several weeks to promote new growth. A vitamin B-1 solution may be helpful in establishing plants.

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