



# ONCIDIUM ORCHID CARE



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.

## ONCIDIUM CULTURE

**TEMPERATURE** Recommended temperatures for most varieties are 55° to 60°F at night and 75° to 85°F during the day. 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.

**LIGHT** needs can vary from bright to nearly full direct sun depending on the species. Most will thrive with one to several hours of sun a day. Generally, thicker-leaved plants, such as a "mule-ear" and "equitant" oncidiums, can stand more light. In a greenhouse, 20 to 60 percent shade is required, depending on the plants. In the home, east, south or west windows are ideal. Many types of oncidiums will grow under artificial light.

**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.

**HUMIDITY** should be between 30 to 60 percent. Many oncidiums require less humidity than other orchids. Most greenhouses have adequate humidity. In the home, placing the plants above moist pebbles in trays is ideal.

**FERTILIZE** regularly while plants are actively growing. Applications of 30-10-10 formulations twice a month are ideal for plants in a fir 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, usually in the spring. Fine-grade potting media are usually used with fine-rooted plants and coarser mixes with larger 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. Repot every 24 months and soak the potting medium overnight before using.