

How To Care For Your Cattleya Orchid in Hawaii



Cattleyas and their hybrids are among the most popular orchids. By providing the conditions that they need, you can enjoy their beautiful flowers year after year.

Light is the single most important factor in growing cattleyas. They like partial sun – either dappled sun (50%) all day, or direct sun in early morning or late afternoon with more shade in the middle of the day. Indoors, cattleyas can be grown in an east or west window that gets some sun. They will not flower in deep shade. Cattleyas grow well outdoors attached to the trunk of a tree or hapu’u.

Temperature. Most cattleyas are temperature-tolerant and will grow anywhere in Hawaii.

Water. Thoroughly drench the pot when you water, then let it dry out before watering again. The roots will rot if kept constantly wet, so if in doubt, don’t water. As a rule of thumb, larger pots (6” or more) may need water once a week; smaller pots twice a week.

Humidity is never a problem in Hawaii unless the plant is kept indoors in air conditioning.

Fertilizer. Cattleyas, like most orchids, are light feeders. Commercially available fertilizers are fine, but mix them at half-strength. Fertilize every one to two weeks for actively growing plants, or once a month when not in active growth.

Potting. Your cattleya will need to be repotted when the plant grows over the side of the pot, or when the potting medium breaks down and drains poorly (usually after two or three years). The best time to repot is just as new roots are sprouting from the rhizome. Cattleyas must be potted in a special orchid mix such as chopped fir bark, not dirt, so the roots have good drainage.

Potting orchids is not like potting other plants, because they don’t grow in dirt. You can learn how, plus much more, at the Hilo Orchid Society (see below).

Hilo Orchid Society

Got questions? We can help. Everyone is welcome at our meetings, which are held the second Saturday of each month except August and December. Meetings feature speakers, growing tips, plant displays, and demos. Check our web site for location and details.

www.hiloorchidsociety.org