

How To Care For Your Dendrobium Orchid in Hawaii



Dendrobiums and their hybrids are among the most popular orchids. There are many different kinds of dendrobiums. We will talk about hybrids of *Dendrobium phalaenopsis*, which are the most popular kind. By providing the conditions that they need, you can enjoy their beautiful, long-lasting flowers year after year.

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

Temperature. These dendrobiums are warm-growers. Nighttime temperatures should be 60 or above, as is common in coastal areas of 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.

Fertilizer. Dendrobiums, 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.

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

Keikis. Your dendrobium may form offshoots called keikis on its upper stems. Leave them attached until they have grown roots. Then, if you like, you can remove them and pot them in their own pots.

Potting. Your dendrobium will need to be repotted when the plant grows over the side of the pot or the potting medium breaks down and drains poorly (usually after two or three years). Dendrobiums do best in pots that are small for the size of the plant. Orchids 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