

How To Care For Your Paphiopedilum Orchid in Hawaii



Paphiopedilums (paphs) and their hybrids are known as slipper orchids because of the pouch or slipper-shaped structure in the flower. By providing the conditions that they need, you can enjoy their striking flowers year after year.

Light. Paphs need less light than most other orchids. They like bright shade (not deep shade). Indoors, grow them at a window that receives bright light (but not sun) all day, with possibly some early-morning direct sun. Outdoors, grow them in a spot shaded from direct sun.

Temperature. Paphs fall into three categories. Those with mottled leaves, which are the most commonly grown, like warm conditions, with nighttime temperatures of 60 or more. Most paphs with plain green leaves like cooler conditions, with nighttime temperatures in the 50s. Large-leaved paphs with multiple flowers also like to grow warm.

Water. Unlike most orchids, paphs like to be kept damp and not dry out, though they should not be soggy. When you water, thoroughly drench the pot.

Avoid watering the leaves, as water that sits in the leaves can cause rot. As a rule of thumb, watering twice a week is usually sufficient.

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

Fertilizer. Paphs are very light feeders. Commercially available fertilizers are fine, but mix them at ¼ strength. Fertilize every one to two weeks for actively growing plants, or once a month when not in active growth.

Potting. Your paph will need to be repotted when the potting medium breaks down and drains poorly (usually after two years). Some growers repot every year. Paphs 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