

THE GREAT CYMBIDIUM MYTH

HIT AND MYTH: *Despite rumours to the contrary the stunning Cymbidium orchid is, in fact, as easy to grow as any other potted plant.*



During the past two hundred years, countless myths have arisen around the Cymbidium orchid with its sprays of exotic blooms. This mythical aura has resulted in the flowers gaining a reputation of being too temperamental to grow successfully and almost impossible to flower.

But nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, Cymbidiums are as easy to grow and flower as any other potted plant given a few essential requirements.

Light is of great importance for flowering success.

Low summer night temperatures are appreciated, thus summer quarters consisting of an open shade house covered with fifty per cent shade cloth will allow air to circulate, another important requirement as well as the cooler evenings.

To water during summer I run a sprinkler in the shade house for about half an hour every day at noon so the leaves are dry by nightfall.

Once a week I check the compost in a couple of pots and hand-water if they feel dry. Remember like most pot plants more cymbidiums are killed by over-watering than any other single cause. If in doubt whether to water or not, don't.

When you notice flower spikes beginning to show the orchids must have protection from frost and rain as both can damage or even destroy the spikes.

Covering the roof of the shade house with plastic will give the plants cover from the harsh elements. Alternatively you can grow the Cymbidiums in a plastic tunnel-type structure and place the orchids under a shade tree for the summer period before bringing them back indoors for the cooler months to flower.



Before returning the plants to the plastic house, it pays to give them a spray with an insecticide to kill any stray insects or their eggs because these may cause damage to the plants and their flower spikes.

If in doubt whether to water or not, don't.

Crowded conditions are not favorable to flowering and the rule is to place the pots a pot's-width apart. This space allows good air circulation, effective watering and less chance of insect infestation or disease.

Various types of composts are used throughout the world to grow cymbidium orchids all of which are equally successful. The pH should ideally be slightly acidic. Some ready-mixed composts also contain an even balance of nutrients.

Cymbidiums should be repotted in early spring or straight after flowering.

Plants only need repotting or dividing up when they have filled the pot with roots or have grown too large for the pot. When repotting, take care not to over-pot as cymbidiums like to be slightly root-bound. The pot should fit around the orchid leaving a space of around two centimeters to accommodate new growth.

LES HODGE

HOW I BECAME A MEMBER OF THE IOS — PETER STILLER

Peter Stiller, also a member of the Deutsche Orchideen-Gesellschaft, writes from Germany remembering how in 1997 his friend Huntley Lauder send him a copy of **The Irish Garden** with an article on orchid collecting in Belize.

Although it took six years, he finally made a visit to Dublin to meet with Brendan Sayers and Marie Hourigan at the National Botanic Gardens where "I walked the entire gardens and among many interesting specimen plants and trees, a cork oak caught my attention, which I had never seen before in nature".

Peter also viewed the various glasshouses that held the orchid collection with Marie and was "especially impressed by the gigantic pots of mature Cymbidiums."

Later that evening Brendan "took me by car to an area where he showed me several species of local wild orchids. On that wonderful day, I became a member of the **Irish Orchid Society** in spirit as well as *de facto*, which I remain to this day. Even though I live several flight hours away from Dublin I always receive **Pollinia**, which allows me to be part of the IOS from afar."

TO ALL MEMBERS

What do you like about the IOS? We would appreciate it if you would email either myself or Brendan with a short opinion. We will include comments in a future edition of **Pollinia**, edited should you be too loquacious in praise. Thank you. The Editor

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