

Summer Survival

Dear **Orchid** Friends:

Sydney summers...those long, languid, steamy days. Summer is an important time in maintaining the health of your **orchids**. Summer is usually a time of less flowering, so it's an ideal time to get your **orchids** into shape. High temperatures, humidity and an intense sun can make your **orchids** susceptible to problems or disease. Here are some tips so you may enjoy healthy **orchids**.

Summer is an excellent time to repot your **orchids** if needed. Check whether your plants need dividing. It may be that the plant has outgrown the pot or the medium has started to decompose. If the medium begins to decay, it retains more moisture and restricts airflow to the roots. A soggy medium invites pests as well. Repot after the plant finishes Flowering and when it shows signs of new root growth. Use the smallest pot that will accommodate approximately 1 1/2 - 2 years growth. Don't overpot in a pot that is too large. Remove and wash away the old potting medium. Examine the roots. Snip any rotten, decaying roots. Divide the plant if desired and place in a clean pot with fresh medium.

Insects are most active during the warm summer months. Get into the habit of looking at your plants. Inspect the undersides as well. As temperatures increase, good air movement is important to your **orchid** plants. Healthy **orchids** are more resistant to pests and diseases. Remove dried sheathing on cattleyas to rid of hiding places for insects. You may find an occasional insect on one of your plants, but this is not cause for panic. Separate the plants from the others and treat it appropriately. Early inspection of your plants will locate those stray insects and allows you to take action before it becomes a problem throughout your entire collection. We live in Sydney...an occasional insect is not uncommon.

A large percentage of **orchid** problems are caused by either too much or too little water. Too much water can cause root rot and the excess moisture may allow a virus or bacteria to settle. A stressed plant also invites insects. Rinse off the leaves on your **orchids** to keep spider mites away. **Orchids** outside on porches or in your yard should be protected from excess rainfall. It may be necessary to apply a fungicide and insecticide on occasion if needed. An occasional application of fungicide is an extra protection in high humidity and helps to keep viruses at bay.

Other care tips: Keep your **orchids** out of the hot, midday sun to prevent sunburn. Use clean potting materials and disinfect your shears between plants. This helps prevent any spread of disease. Fertilise your **orchids** regularly. Growth achieved now will better support the flowers later. Brighter light, longer hours in the day, higher temperatures cause the **orchid** plants to consume more so fertilise regularly.

Summer is an excellent time to truly get to know your plants. Enjoy your **orchids**. Have fun with your **orchids**...hold them, inspect them. A little summer care now will reward you with beautiful flowers later.