

# ANGRAECUM CULTURE

This diverse orchid is known as the “orchid of Africa” because most species are from the continent and Madagascar, although a few species can be found in Southeast Asia. In nature, they thrive in tropical woodlands and rainforests. Most of the species grow on trees, though a few of them grow on shaded rock crevices. Therefore their thick fleshy leaves act as water storage and thus can withstand the dry season. This genus is also made known by Darwin, because he believed (and later proven) the existence of a moth with a foot-long tongue to get the nectar from the long spur of the species *sesquipedale* (nicknamed Darwin orchid). The main characteristic of the genus is the famous spur from the flower. The colors are simple and plain, either white, green, or beige. However, the starry-shaped flowers are very waxy and thus long-lasting, and some species emit fragrance at night to attract nocturnal moths.

**LIGHT:** they grow and bloom well in a bright window with sheer curtain. In the home an east window, shaded south or west window are all ideal. Never allow direct sun to fall on these orchids. Give them as much light as they can tolerate. They will not bloom if they are underexposed.

**TEMPERATURES:** generally, temperature should be between 55 and 65° F at night and between 65 and 75° F during the day. However, cool-tolerant varieties should be grown under 65° F, while warmth-loving ones should be kept above 60° F. Fluctuating temperatures, over-watering and drafts can cause bud drop on plants with flowers ready to open.

**WATER & FERTILIZER:** plants should be thoroughly watered. Allow the potting mix to nearly dry out before watering again. One week is a good rule of thumb. If you are unsure, wait at least two or three days rather than over-water by watering too often. Water more in summer and much less in the winter. Keep the plants on the dryer side from late autumn to early spring, to mimic the dry season in their natural habitat. This cool dry condition will initiate flower spikes later in spring. Some species like to be mounted on wood slab or tree fern logs. They need to be watered everyday in warm seasons, and every 3 to 4 days in cool weather.

Using a watering can with the orchid in the sink works best. Pour at least one gallon through the pot to make sure the orchid is watered well. Remember, you can not over-water by pouring too much water through the pot, only by watering too often. A balanced fertilizer, like a 20-20-20, should be applied on a regular schedule. It is best to apply fertilizer at 1/4 strength with every watering.

**RE-POTTING:** the best result is usually achieved by re-potting from spring to early summer, when they are actively growing or right after flowering. Angraecum can be potted in any well-draining mix, such as medium/large fir bark and perlite. Re-potting is done every 2 years or so when the potting medium starts to decompose. Mounted plants require no re-potting. However, they may need to be transferred onto bigger slabs/logs over the years.



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