

CATTLEYA CULTURE

This group of orchids has a lot of relatives, such as Laelia, Brassavola, Sophronitis. Natural habitats for the family are the rainforests in Central and South America. They can be found on protected spots near the tree top. The thick, leathery leaves can take more light than most orchids. This orchid also has pseudo-bulbs for water storage. The tall plants produce voluptuous flowers that are colorful, huge, and often fragrant. Unfortunately, not a lot of homes can accommodate this giant. However, newer generations are compact (or even miniature) and thus more suitable for modern living. This orchid is often associated with the rich and famous. Socialites used it for corsage at banquets and parties, therefore the nickname “corsage orchid”. However, it has a humble beginning: it was shipped to England as a packing material for other tropical plants in the 19th century.

LIGHT: this is one of the most important factors in growing and blooming Cattleyas well. Very bright light to some early morning sun can be given to the plants, no direct sun in the middle of the day. This means an east, shaded south, or west window in the home is best.

TEMPERATURES: it should be 55 to 60° F at night and 70 to 85° F during the day. A 20° F difference between day & night is good for flower initiation. Fluctuating temperatures and drafts can cause bud drop on plants with flowers ready to open.

WATER & FERTILIZER: Cattleyas need to dry out thoroughly before being watered again. Provide plenty of water when new growths appear. These orchids are heavy feeders; a balanced fertilizer should be applied on a regular schedule.

It is best to apply fertilizer at 1/4 to 1/2 strength with every watering to make sturdy growths and promote healthy blooming. When in active growth, plants need to be fertilizer at 1/2 strength, and when not growing, at 1/4 strength. If in doubt, it's best to wait a day until watering.

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.

RE-POTTING: they need to be re-potted when the potting medium starts to break down and it begins to drain poorly, usually after 2 to 3 years, or when they grow out of their pots. It is best to repot just as new roots sprout from the rhizome, after flowering, or in the springtime. Cattleyas are often potted in a medium-grade orchid bark mix.



by appointment
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