



## CYMBIDIUM

sym-BID-ee-um

These orchids are prized for their long-lasting sprays of flowers, used especially as cut flowers or for corsages in the spring. There are two main types of cymbidiums - standards and miniatures. Where summer nights are warm (above 21C), only miniatures can be recommended, because many are more tolerant of heat and able to flower in warmer weather.

**Light** is important for growing cymbidiums. Coming from cool and bright areas in Asia, they need high light but cool temperatures. In many southern climates, high summer temperatures, especially at night, may prevent the plants from blooming. The maximum amount of light possible, short of burning, should be given to the plants. This means only light shade during the middle of the day, or about 20 percent shade. In cool areas (such as coastal California), full sun is tolerated. Leaves should be a medium to golden green in colour, not dark green.

**Temperatures** are another critical factor in flowering standard and miniature cymbidiums. During the summer, standard cymbidiums are usually grown outside in semi shade, where day temperatures should be 24C to 29C (or more), but night temperatures in the late summer to autumn (August to October) must be 10C to 15C to initiate flower spikes. Optimum temperatures in winter are 7C to 13C at night and 18C to 24C during the day. When plants are in bud, temperatures must be as constant as possible, between 13C and 24C. Miniatures can stand temperatures five to 10 degrees higher than standards and still flower. Most cymbidiums can tolerate light frosts and survive, but this is not recommended. Bring them inside when temperatures dip to 4C. In mild climates, they can be grown outside year round. A bright and cool location inside is best for winter months.

**Water** to provide a constant supply of moisture to cymbidiums, which are semi terrestrial plants. They generally produce all their vegetative growth during the spring and summer and need the most water during that period. Water heavily during the growth season, keeping the potting material evenly moist. Reduce water when the pseudo bulbs complete growing in late summer. Keep barely moist during the winter.

**Humidity** outdoors is usually sufficient during the summer, except in dry climates, where evaporative cooling in a greenhouse is necessary. Keep humidity at 40 to 60 percent during the winter, especially if plants are in bud. Keep the air moving to prevent fungus (Botrytis) from spotting the flowers.

**Fertilizer** at the proper time to help cymbidiums flower. During the growth season (spring through late summer), high nitrogen fertilizer (such as 30-10-10) is used. In late summer, use a high-phosphorus, blossom-booster fertilizer (such as 10- 30-20), to help form bloom spikes. Fertilize at full strength every week to two weeks. In winter, fertilize once a month.

**Potting** is usually done in the spring after flowering, usually every two years or when the potting medium decomposes. Shake all of the old potting mix off the roots, dividing the plant if desired. Pick a water-retentive potting mix; medium-grade fir bark with peat moss and perlite is a common mix. Select a pot that will allow for at least two to three years of pseudo bulb growth before crowding the pot, while planning on placing the active growing pseudo bulb(s) of the division farthest from the side of the pot. Spread the roots over a cone of the mix in the bottom of the pot and fill the container with medium, working it among the roots, tamping firmly. Single back bulbs need not even be placed in mix until new growth and roots are noted. Keep shaded and warm until new growth sprouts, and pot as above.