

Moth Orchid (Phalaenopsis)

The most popular orchid with orchid growers. Their longevity and tolerance, together with the thousands of different varieties now available, make them ideal orchids for gifts and display. Phalaenopsis are very easy to look after despite what many people think. They make good indoor plants because they can tolerate the drier heat of central heating as well as having extremely long-lasting flowers at any time of year.



Re-flowering

1. If flowers drop from the plant naturally when it has finished flowering, then cut flower spike back to a node on the flower stem starting at the top-most node. This may shoot and produce a new flower spike. If this does not produce a new spike within a month or so, or if the stem starts to go brown, then cut above the next node down, and repeat the process.
2. If the stem dies back (goes brown all the way back to the plant) then cut it off just above the growing point, about half an inch (10mm) up. Place plant in cool place (north facing window sill) for a month to six weeks. This will promote new growth and new flower spikes. When a new spike shows, move the plant back to warmer conditions.

GENERAL CARE

Around 50 original species come from eastern Asia and the Philippines and grow naturally as epiphytes on trees in the warm, tropical forests, so need warmth all year round. High humidity is also beneficial. They do not have bulbs like other orchids but instead grow fleshy leaves, which store food and water with new ones forming from the central crown. They also produce a lot of aerial roots that come over the side of the pot as well as into the bark compost.

Light and temperature

An east or west facing windowsill is very good or a bathroom, for humidity, provided the light is adequate. Do not put plants in direct sunlight. Household conditions with a minimum temperature of 16C, but not higher than 26C, is desirable.

Watering and feeding

They benefit from humidity. To keep humidity high around the plants, place them in a saucer of gravel or grit and keep it moist. Spray plants to keep humidity up and avoid too much water in the pot.



Repotting your orchid is easy – just follow these step-by-step instructions.

- Remove your orchid from its existing pot **1**. A useful tip is to immerse the whole pot in water for ten minutes to loosen the roots. Then firmly squeeze the pot to help release the plant.
- Carefully and gently remove as much old bark as possible from around the roots **2**.
- Trim any damaged or dead roots **3**, simply snipping off as necessary by hand or with a small pair of scissors.

- Place a 1 cm layer of new bark in the bottom of the new pot **4**.
- Place your orchid in the centre of the pot, on the bark layer, holding the plant with its lowest leaf level with the rim of the pot **5**.
- Drop bark in between the roots, filling the voids. Tap the pot as you go, to shake bark down into the gaps.
- Spray the bark and leaves with Orchid Myst **6**. Leave the orchid to recover for 2–3 days then water as normal.



New plants

Sometimes a new plantlet grows from the nodes of a flowering spike when all the blooms have gone. Leave these to grow to form a new plant. When the plantlet shows signs of aerial roots, and with at least two leaves, then carefully remove the little plant by cutting the old flower stem above and below the small plant. Pot it in to moist sphagnum moss and leave it there until it grows more leaves (feed and water as for a mature plant). Later, pot on as a mature plant.

Re-potting

Re-pot annually in to a slightly larger pot. Plants may be left in their original pot for up to two years, but not more. For more advice and illustrations on re-potting, please [click here](http://focus-on-plants.com/tutorials/how-to-repot-an-orchid/). (http://focus-on-plants.com/tutorials/how-to-repot-an-orchid/) Never use a re-potting medium that contains peat. Always use a bark or coir-based medium. Always use a clear orchid pot with plenty of holes at the bottom for adequate drainage. The clear pot will promote photosynthesis by the roots.



Reflowering – Phalaenopsis

1. When the last flower is still open, cut the stem above the third or fourth stem node. This way, it is likely you will have a new side stem with flowers after two to three months. Flowers on side stems are usually smaller than on the main spike.
2. Alternatively, after flowering, cut the spike at the base. This way a new spike, with large flowers, will be in full bloom in four to five months.

Spraying with **Orchid Myst** two to three times a week will provide humidity and all the necessary nutrients, as well as promoting and assisting reflowering. Orchid Myst does not replace watering – water with clean water as required.

