

# ORCHID INFORMATION

## Pots

### Wire Baskets

- Requires a liner of shredded coconut husk or sphagnum moss to hold in the potting medium.
- Media dries out faster than a plastic pot.
- Very good for plants that produce a spike through the bottom of the pot.

### Wooden Baskets

- Basket does not hold media very well.
- Usually large chunks of charcoal are used
- Used for plants that have large air roots.
- Excellent for plants like vandas.

### Drainage

- Place a 1 inch layer of Styrofoam peanuts or pieces of broken clay pots in the bottom of the pot to provide good drainage.
- Water must flow freely through the potting medium. If the flow is restricted it generally means the medium is breaking down and it will hold too much water. This results in rotten roots.

### Rhizome Pot Clips

- Metal clips that anchor the plant to keep it from falling over.
- These are required until the new roots develop to hold the plant in the pot.

### Used Pots

- Scrub clean.
- Soak in a solution of 1 part Clorox to 9 parts water, rinse with clean water.

## Plaques

### Cork

- Bark of the cork oak (*Quercus suber*)
- Very durable, lasts indefinitely
- Does not absorb water

### Tree Fern

- Cut slabs of the trunks of the tree fern.
- Many small spaces between the individual fibres.
- Holds a bit of water.
- Good root aeration

- Breaks down over a long period of time.

### Please note

- Plants mounted on plaques must be in a high humidity environment (above 60%) or watered daily.

## Potting Media

### Fir Bark

- Organic, comes in three grades, fine, medium and large.
- Native to north America
- Holds 80% of its weight in water
- Drains freely
- Easy to use
- Ph of 5.0
- Soak overnight before using
- Use 30-10-10 fertilizer
- Most widely used potting material

### Seedling mix

- 80% fine fir bark 10% small perlite, 10% extra fine charcoal.
- Used for small seedlings and plants that have thin roots.
- The fine bark has a large surface area that holds a lot of water.
- The perlite loosens the mix to make sure it drains and that air gets to the roots.
- The charcoal "sweetens" the mix it absorbs any unwanted materials.

### Tree Fern

- Organic, comes from South America.
- Drains exceedingly freely, hold little water.
- Very decay resistant, deterioration is very slow.
- Easy to use.
- Use 20-20-20 fertilizer.
- At times can be very difficult to get.

### New Zealand Sphagnum Moss

- Organic, native to New Zealand.
- Holds a lot of water, extremely sponge-like.
- Easy to use, soak before using.
- Use 20-20-20 fertilizer.
- Ph is 3.5

- Lately sphagnum moss from Chile is becoming popular because it has the same properties but is cheaper and more available.

#### **Cubed Coconut Husk**

- Organic, light weight, easy to use.
- Holds water between the individual fibres in the cubes, drains freely.
- Is slow to break down.
- Make sure that it is washed and all the salt is removed
- A relatively new potting material that has been widely accepted.

#### **Perlite**

- Inorganic, lightweight, inexpensive, easy to use.
- A form of volcanic ash that has been expanded by high heat.
- Holds some water but not much
- Does not break down.
- Keeps mixes open for good aeration.
- Ph of 4.8
- Comes in various sizes.
- Most popular additive to mixes.

#### **Charcoal**

- Organic, native to North America, easy to use.
- Does not absorb water, but gathers and holds it on its surface.
- Does not break down.
- Absorbs impurities and fertilizer residues.
- Used to “sweeten” mixes by absorbing unwanted materials.
- Second most popular additive to mixes.

#### **Styrofoam**

- Inorganic, manmade plastic foam, easy to use.
- Non-porous does not absorb water at all.
- Inexpensive, does not break down
- Used to aerate and open up the mix.
- Often small Styrofoam is used as an alternative to perlite.
- Large peanuts of Styrofoam are placed in the bottom of pots to provide good drainage.

#### **Promix**

- Mostly made from peat moss. Peat moss is broken down sphagnum moss.
- Retains a great deal of water.
- Used for potting up many terrestrial orchids.
- Used as a moisture-retaining additive to potting mixes

#### **Hydrotron**

- Expanded clay pellets
- Inorganic, does not break down, with proper cleaning can be reused.
- Provides excellent drainage and aeration to roots. Usually added to potting mixes.

### **Fertilizer**

#### **High Nitrogen (30-10-10)**

- Required for plants growing in fir bark. Bark deteriorates over time because a common wood eating fungus breaks it down. This fungus also devours an astonishing amount of nitrogen. Orchids normally like a balanced fertilizer, like 20-20-20 so the extra nitrogen in the 30-10-10 is simply to feed this fungus, which otherwise will rob the nitrogen it needs from the orchid plant.

#### **Blossom Booster (10-30-10)**

- Promotes blooming.
- Used just before a plant should start to spike.
- Increases flower count and flower size.

#### **Balanced (20-20-20)**

- Used for plants growing in organic media except fir bark, sphagnum, tree fern, coconut cubes, cork plaques, and tree fern plaques.

#### **Weblinks**

[www.aos.org](http://www.aos.org)

(look for culture sheets in the Orchid Information Section of the AOS site)

[www.everything-orchids.com](http://www.everything-orchids.com)

[www.peterboroughgardens.ca](http://www.peterboroughgardens.ca)

[www.orchids.wikia.com/wiki/Main\\_Page](http://www.orchids.wikia.com/wiki/Main_Page)