

## CYMBIDIUMS



So you bought yourself a Cymbidium Orchid, it was in flower last year when you purchased it. Your neighbors have several pots full, which flower every year. You want to know why yours did not flower?

Cymbidium orchids have been described as the easiest orchid plants to grow in the Sydney area. To make your orchid flower, you need to observe a few growing tips.

Cymbidiums are tree (epiphytes) dwellers, so to grow them in cultivated conditions you have to have them potted in a fairly open orchid mixture. That is, one that allows the water to flush through the bottom of the pot. Most commercially prepared orchid mixes are suitable. Again the mixture should be open to give the drainage required. A good indicator is to water the pot and watch the immediate reaction of the water escaping through the holes at the bottom of the pot. Also make sure that the pot is off the ground so that it can be flushed out.

*Watering:* During the spring to autumn periods, regular watering is required, say twice a week. Preferred time is early morning or late evening. Never water during the heat of the day. Remember these orchids are tree dwellers and do not like their roots water logged.

*Fertilising:* Cymbidiums have three distinct cycle periods: Growing, Flowering and Resting. The growing period is between spring and summer. Apply a fertilizer at least once a week. Fertilisers such as Aquasol T or Nitrasol T can be used. Fertilising should be used in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations. Better to apply a weaker solution. The flowering period is between autumn and winter. Switch to a blossom booster type fertilizer to encourage the flowering process. An all round fertiliser can be also considered. The third period is resting. It is the time when cymbidiums plant prefers to develop growth and not flowers.

*Repotting:* Because we have taken a tree plant cultivated it in confined space, repotting should be considered at least every two years. Repotting should be done after the flowering. Repotting can be either a time to divide the plant or move it into a larger pot. It is the time to tidy up the plant and take away old backbulbs. Backbulbs are ones that have contributed towards the flowering process and a source of food storage. Too many backbulbs actually hinder the plant because instead of concentrating on the new growth towards flowering, the plant tends to continue the storage process in the bulbs. Backbulbs are the ones that usually look black.

*Position:* I have left the most important to last. Cymbidiums need a good location with plenty of sunlight and airflow. Most researchers suggest that the plant should be in an area where it receives at least 6 hours of sunlight a day. Direct sunlight in hot summer days should be avoided. Indicators are the leaves which look yellowish from too much sunlight. Shadecloth coverage of 30% to 50% is ideal. Winter time is when increased sunlight is required. Watch out for frost. Frost can destroy young flower spikes. Consider some protection. Suggestion is a north east brick wall - under a carport could also be

considered.

*Pests:* Most common pest experienced with Cymbidium growers are snails, and grubs of the white butterfly and cabbage moth. These pests cause damage to the young buds of the flowers. Sprinkle snail bait around your plants, especially after rain, as this is when these pests are most active. Cabbage grubs can be eradicated with either House and Garden T spray or Hortico T cabbage dust.