



ARIZONA-SONORA
DESERT
MUSEUM

ARIZONA-SONORA DESERT MUSEUM PLANT CARE INFORMATION

ORCHIDS IN DESERT CLIMATES

The orchids available here are tough varieties, tolerant of high temperatures and often low humidities; most also like high light intensities.



LIGHT: About 50% sun seems to be right. These orchids are at their best when the leaves are light green to yellowish green. Dark green is a sign of not enough light, and they will not flower. Equitant *Oncidium*s need less light, about 70% shade.



WATER AND HUMIDITY: The medium and the roots should dry out between waterings. Don't keep the roots wet or they will rot. Look for plump, stiff leaves, not wrinkled or limp. Humidity should be kept above 50%, but most of these orchids will tolerate much less if they are watered more frequently.

FEEDING: Regular feeding with balanced water-soluble formulas (such as 20-20-20 or 30-10-10) will keep growth vigorous and insure flowering.



POTTING/MOUNTING: Various potting media work well. The important factor is to be aware that in nature orchid roots are exposed to the air, creeping along the surface of tree branches or rocks. Thus the medium must be very coarse so as to permit excellent drainage and air circulation. Most kinds also grow well mounted on slabs of any rough-surfaced wood which does not rot quickly. Cork oak is the best. Cholla skeletons are also very good (get permission to collect!). Rough-cut cedar or redwood boards from a lumber yard work well, though they are less aesthetic. "Terrestrial" orchids such as *Cyrtopodium* should be stabilized in a pot with chunks of evergreen bark, coconut husk pieces, or >1" pumice.



TEMPERATURE: These orchids prefer nights between 50 and 70°F, and days in the 80s or 90s. Short periods of higher or lower temperatures are not harmful. Some of these might be possible to grow outdoors if sheltered from dry winds and frost. However, a greenhouse or very bright window is recommended.