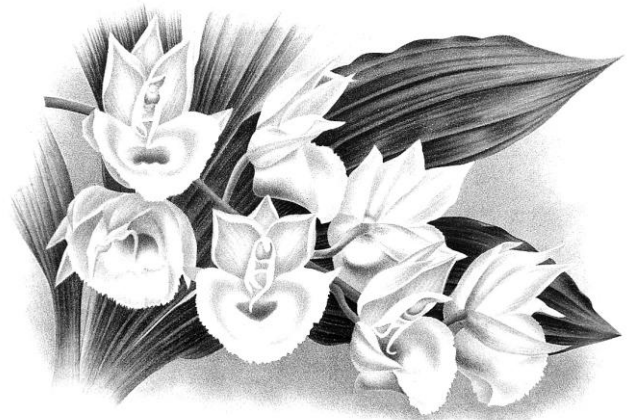


CATASETUM Orchid

Pronounced kat-ah-SEE-tum

These unique and unusual orchids are native to Central and South America from Mexico to Bolivia and Brazil. Plants display multiple waxy blooms on pendulous inflorescences that originate at the base of the plant's pseudobulbs. Flowers have the unique trait of being either male or female and, often, the pollinia are ejected from the male flower onto the pollinator. Plants are deciduous and require a rest period after dropping its leaves.



Healthy Catasetums start with healthy roots:

- Pot in media that will retain moisture to support the roots during the plant's growing season. The media should also allow for good drainage. Coconut husk chips, New Zealand sphagnum or a fine bark mixed with vermiculite chips are all examples of suitable potting media.
- Plants experience a dormancy period in the fall and winter which is signaled by the yellowing and eventual dropping of the leaves. Watering should only be done if the pseudobulbs show signs of withering during this time.
- Repot when the new growth is just beginning in the spring and the newly developing roots are showing. Remember that watering should not commence until the roots are well developed (10 cm. in length).
- Once new roots are established, watering should be constant and sufficient to support the new growth(s). Fertilizing using a high nitrogen formulation (30-10-10) will help support the large leaves and pseudobulbs that develop rapidly.
- During the growing period, after dormancy, daytime temperatures must be raised to 27° - 32°C.
- Once the pseudobulbs have grown, adjust the fertilizer to a blossom booster such as a 10-30-20 in late summer.
- This family of orchids, unlike many, does well when repotted in divisions consisting of 2-3 pseudobulbs.

Healthy leaves produce more and bigger flowers:

- Plants will tolerate high light conditions, levels suggested for cattleyas, during the growth period but be careful not to burn tender new leaves.
- Healthy leaves are large, broad and sturdy and dark green. Spider mites are attracted to the soft leaves and will live and feed on the underside of the leaves. Watch for this and treat with a mild insecticidal soap. Humidity will reduce the risk of mites.
- The dormancy phase will begin in late autumn when the leaves will yellow and drop off. Any fertilizing should stop at this time and watering done at reduced levels (half) by mid-November.
- By January 1st, all watering should stop.
- Catasetums do well in humidity levels of 40-60% and strong air movement provided to reduce the risk of fungal or bacterial problems.
- During the growth period, day temperatures of 27° - 32°C are ideal, dropping to 15°-20°C at night. After the growth period, day temperatures can be reduced to as low as 21°C.

Catasetums usually bloom annually:

- Catasetums will bloom at the end of the growing season, sending out 1-2 pendulous inflorescences from the base of the pseudobulb.
- Blooms may be male or female, rarely with both on the same plant, with the male bloom being the most showy.

Space prevents more detail here. The general "Orchid Culture" sheets in this series, available from your society or on the web at <http://www.canadianorchidcongress.ca/> provide further cultural information. For specific help with your orchids or further information join your local orchid society.

