

The ORCHID CLUB of SOUTH AUSTRALIA Inc.



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MASDEVALLIA CULTURE

Masdevallia's grow in various locations in South America at from 1000m to 3000m altitude. Therefore, some require Cattleya house conditions. The majority however, grow from 2000m to 2500m altitude and are forest dwellers growing on the trees. The varieties which grow on rocks and on lateritic soils are more difficult to grow in the Sydney climate. They include Masdevallia rosea, coccinea and davisii, but they can be grown if they are kept shaded and cool during the summer.

Masdevallias grow best in fine sequoia bark and we add fine styrene to the mixture (about 20%) they seem to do better with this. Pot in small plastic pots and allow them to become crowded. Use 60mm square pots to start them and then go to 100mm rounds. Stake the new growth so the plants are secure. After repotting, use frequent misting to induce rooting. We water two or three times a week to keep the plant moving. Use 30-20-10N/P205/K20 fertilizer. Occasional use of trace elements is desirable. Iron chelates should be added each time they are fertilized.

During hot days use frequent misting even up to ½ to 1 hour intervals if it is possible. Masdevallias often grow during the winter and should be watered at least twice a week with fertilizer at the rate of 1 teaspoon or 15gms per 5 litres.

When the plants becomes crowded it is a good idea, after flowering, to divide the plants as many varieties have the flowers close to the leaves and they are not seen to advantage. The varieties which have long spikes like Masdevallia coccinea veitchiana and amabilis should be secure with bamboo stakes.

One of the enemies of Masdevallias is damping-off disease. You should treat the plants with Aliette so as to prevent water and soil borne organism attacking. Spray with Benlate in the Autumn to prevent black spot developing. The plants also benefits from a spray of Roveral in the spring as the new growth and flower spikes are sometimes attacked by botrytis. Often all the spikes will just wither away if no treatment is given.

Repotting may be done in Autumn, Winter or Spring but it is best not to do too much to them in the middle of Summer.

Masdevallias are among the easiest orchids to grow. They like 70% shade, humidity and not too much draft. Keep moist at all times. Temperature range 10-28 C. Avoid hot days – they may need extra protection and misting to keep down the temperature. Extra shade is needed during November/December/February period.

During Winter avoid frosts as they, in the main, grow in rain forest and freezing will kill them. They rarely go below 6C in their Country of origin.

They can suffer from thrips, aphids, scale and mites but generally do not seem to be worried by insects. Snails and slugs can attack, if so, use metaldehyde or Measurol. Grasshoppers and crickets sometimes have a munch, if so, spray with ICI Ambus or Gesapon 80.