



PAPHIOPEDILUM (SLIPPER) ORCHIDS

Slipper orchids, with their unusually shaped, long-lasting waxy blooms are among the more exotic of orchids which can be easily grown provided a few basic rules are followed.

Widely spread in their natural environment, *Paphiopedilum* are found in areas from India to New Guinea and over 80 species have been described.

Most hybrids and many species *Paphs.* will grow well in an unheated glasshouse in South Australia and require similar conditions to African Violets and Ferns. Many will thrive in a simple shade-house environment.

Basic requirements are good ventilation without draughts, heavy shade in summer, good potting medium, water and plenty of humidity. A well ventilated, shady glasshouse is ideal but not absolutely necessary.

As an indoor plant, slipper orchids can be grown on a window ledge or similar position:-

- select a large, flat, shallow plastic tray or flower pot saucer.
- Fill the tray with some decorative stones, pebbles, scoria, crushed marble or gravel and half fill the tray with water.
- Place the tray in a light (not direct sunlight) window or similar position.
- The *Paphiopedilum* pots can be placed on this tray, making sure that the bottoms of the pots are above the water level.

You have now created the necessary humid environment that slipper orchids require. Make sure that the plants are watered regularly. Slipper orchids do not enjoy very well potting medium nor do they like being completely dry. A constant damp condition is ideal.

Paphs. require repotting into fresh bark potting medium every 1-2 years. This is essential for the well being of the plant. Do not over-pot into too large a container. Select a pot to suit the size of the root system.

Propagation of *Paphiopedilums* is by seedling or division. When dividing it is always advisable to make divisions of at least 2 connected growths. Unfortunately, however, some species have the habit of breaking up into single growths. This leaves the grower no alternative but to re-pot these single pieces. Care should be taken to avoid damaging the root hairs which are peculiar to this genus.

If, at any time, the plants appear unhealthy, they should be taken out of their pots and examined. Remove any pests (mealy bugs often attack roots as well as top growth) and cut away any dead roots. Re-pot into fresh compost.

It is usual for odd leaves to turn yellow and fall from plants that are several years old. Excessive leaf loss can be a sign of over watering.

Regular feeding with applications of Horticultural Solutions Paph. Mix or similar fertilizer at the recommended rate will ensure plant growth and flower production.