



## BULBOPHYLLUM

One great advantage of growing *Bulbophyllums* (*Cirrhopetalum*) is that most of the species and hybrids are growing continuously, that is they do not have a prolonged rest period but do slow their progress slightly in mid winter on the cold days with lower light.

*Bulbophyllums* and *Cirrhopetalums* are described separately but have been mostly placed in their correct categories although you can still buy a *Bulbophyllum* and it is in fact a *Cirrhopetalum* and visa versa but do not worry because both have beautiful flowers from small 8 to 10mm up to over 100mm and both types have similar growth habit and growing conditions. They are spread around in most tropical areas of the world and also extend into the temperate climates with a total of more than 3000 species with the greatest number in New Guinea and some in Australia. Because most of the genus is either clumpy or rambling and have a short root system of about an inch

(25mm) or so and can have a rhizome from a few mm to 50mm in length, they are best grown on cork or weathered tree fern mounts or in shallow pans or trays to allow them to extend and travel and also avoid rotting the roots. Available from most garden supply outlets to successfully grow these are Terracotta saucers 120mm diameter x 40mm deep, also black plastic pots about 120mm diameter x 30mm deep. In nature they never dry out with most being epiphytes found growing in mosses and rotted humus others are lithophytes growing on moss covered rocks. In cultivation temperature ranges are best provided between 7°C and 32° to 35°C is ideal with humidity provided as high as possible to 80%. Grown on trays of wet gravel will provide a reasonable level of humidity around the plants.

A good mix is small bark with added chopped sphagnum moss or any other moisture retaining product. This will provide a free draining mix that suits this genus. If mounting, tie the plant on the mount using nylon fishing line or make up thin wire staples and wire the plant across the rhizome of which most are 10 to 50mm in length and making sure you do not pinch the wire too tight so as to damage the plant. Ties and 'staples' can be removed after the plant has attached-its roots. Cover the area with a good layer of Sphagnum Moss, this can be held in place by tying a piece of nylon stocking over the sphagnum and root area. Most flower from a new mature growth, which can occur depending on the species between autumn and spring.. Using a weak mix of non urea based fertilizer at each watering will provide excellent growth and a thorough flush with plain water every month will ensure there is no salt build up around your root system.

Keep an eye out for scale and Mealy Bug as these pests occasionally like to attack, so using your favorite 'Eliminator' will ensure you keep these pests at bay. Because they are kept fairly damp all year round a spray of Fongarid™ twice per year will aid in avoiding new leads from rotting. In very hot weather Envy™ or Stressgard™ can be sprayed on the plants to protect them from de-hydration.

A very different and rewarding genus to grown and flower. There are around 40 plus species found here in Australia most in Queensland so a little adjustment to culture will grow these successfully in Adelaide.

*David & Pat Harmer*