

Chinese Cymbidiums

Chinese cymbidiums have been in cultivation for centuries throughout the orient, where they have been prized for their graceful leaves, dainty flowers and delicate fragrances. They are often used to landscape koi ponds. Plants with variegated foliage or peloric flowers are highly prized, and draw significantly higher prices. They are remarkably easy to grow in almost all parts of the mainland U.S., as they don't require the cool, sunny conditions needed for standard cymbidiums.

Temperature

Growing temperature is the most critical factor in blooming the oriental cymbidiums. During the height of summer, Chinese cymbidiums should be grown under 80% to 95% shade, with temperatures from 75 to 85 deg F. Higher temperatures may be maintained if increased air movement is provided. Night temperatures in late summer and early fall (August to October) must be 50 to 60 deg F to initiate flower spikes. Optimum temperatures in winter are 45 to 55 deg F at night and 65 to 75 deg F during the day. Most Chinese cymbidiums can withstand light frost and survive, but it is not recommended.

Light

Shade more heavily during the summer months (about 80-90%) and increase the air movement. Keep about 60% shade during the spring and fall and gradually remove shade in winter. The leaves should be a dark green color, not medium green or golden, although this will vary a bit with the species.

Water

The plants roots should be kept moist (but not sopping wet) all the time. Frequency of watering is dependent on the mix that you're using, so watering could be anywhere from every three days to once a week. We grow all of our cymbidiums using our Semi-Hydroponic culture. During summer, avoid watering during the hottest part of the day. Whatever your culture method, it is advisable to use a pot / medium combination that dries out evenly.

Humidity

In winter, try to keep humidity at 50% to 60%. Higher humidity is recommended during the summer.

Fertilizer

We find that fertilizing at about 35-50 ppm N with every watering is preferred. The specific formula is not critical, as long as the plant gets plenty of calcium, magnesium, and trace elements with it.

Potting

Chinese cymbidiums have very long roots, so deep containers are recommended. Slim, deep containers, such as Chinese, Korean and Japanese pots are considered by some to be the best as they restrict the roots. The growers from mainland China typically use large pots with rocks taking up all of the bottom, and surrounding the medium. Repot in the spring after flowering. As with most plants, select a container that will allow for two to three years of growth before crowding the container. These are fairly fast growers, typically putting up 2 or 3 bulbs a year. Carefully remove all old potting medium from the roots. If you wish to divide the plant, maintain 2 to 3 bulbs with leaves in each division. Place the active growing bulb furthest from the side of the container. Spread the roots over a cone of the mix in the bottom of the container. Fill the remainder of the container with mix and by tapping the container to seat the mix. Do not compact the mix. The rhizome should be about 1/2" below the surface of the medium. Supply limited amount of water and keep under shade until new growth starts.