



## Orchid Care PHALAENOPSIS

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**Taxonomic Name:** *Phalaenopsis*  
**Orchid Family**  
**Herbaceous Plants**

If you were to ask one hundred orchid experts which is the best beginner's orchid, probably ninety-nine would vote for the phalaenopsis. Also known as the moth orchid, this diverse genus of showy bloomers thrives in conditions quite similar to those needed by most houseplants. Phalaenopsis specimens usually have a distinct appearance: their flower-bearing spikes rise high above large, leathery, oval leaves that lie so low that they seem to be stemless. Most hybrids have been derived from parent species that originated in the tropics of the Far East.

### ***How to Care for Your Plant:***

**LIGHT:** Bright *indirect* sunlight is best. If possible, place your phalaenopsis near a bright eastern, western, or southern window, but out of the path of the sun's rays.

**WATERING:** Keep in mind that phalaenopsis orchids lack the water-storage organs that many other tropical orchids have. Consequently, water your plant thoroughly as soon as the top inch of its potting medium is completely dry. You can "top water" the plant in the conventional way, or gently submerge the pot in warmish water standing in a basin. If you use the latter method, you'll probably have to water less often, but make sure that the buoyant potting medium does not float up and dislodge the plant.

**FEEDING:** Follow the orchidist's maxim, "Feed weakly, weekly." In other words, apply an orchid fertilizer once a week, but at one-quarter the concentration listed on the product label. It's also a good idea to suspend feeding for about one month after your plant has finished its latest spate of flowering. **NOTE:** If your orchid is potted in fir-bark mixture, use a high-nitrogen (high first number) orchid fertilizer. If your plant is rooted in any other medium, use a high-phosphorus (high middle number) orchid fertilizer.

**TEMPERATURE, HUMIDITY, AND OTHER FACTORS:** Phalaenopsis plants tolerate normal daytime temperatures, but at no time should the temperature drop below 60 degrees Fahrenheit. Separately, provide ample humidity--use a room humidifier nearby, or a set pebble tray partially filled with water under the plant. **NOTE:** When the final bloom on your orchid's current flower stem wilts, cut the stem back about halfway, just above one of the nodes (bud swellings). There is a good chance that a new flowering branch will grow out below the cut.