

Growers guides | *Bulbophyllums*



Bulbophyllums are a genus of orchids containing some 2000 species, making it one of the largest genera of flowering plants in the world. They are small to medium sized epiphytes although some have leaves up to a metre long. Most species are found in the tropics and subtropics of Central and South America, Africa and Asia. All have a hinged lip that aids in pollination. The flowers are usually short lived (five - seven days) and are occasionally fragrant, although the fragrance of some species can be quite foul reportedly smelling like rotting elephant carcasses or animal dung. Since *Bulbophyllum* species are a very diverse and wide ranging group of orchids, only general culture is presented here. Growers should try and obtain habitat information for a particular species of interest and grow accordingly.

Temperature

Most *Bulbophyllum* species are warm growing and should see a winter temperature of no less than 15° C at night. Species from more temperate regions grow slightly cooler. Maintain a gentle air movement around the plants to avoid fungal and bacterial infections.

Light

This genus prefers moderate to bright light. Higher light, that does not damage the leaves, seems to result in better and more frequent blooming. If growing outside of a greenhouse, relatively bright East-facing windows or slightly-shaded north-facing windows work well for this.

Water

Water frequently, as both mounted and potted plants will thrive under wetter conditions than most orchids. *Bulbophyllums* may be the exception to the rule "when in doubt, don't water". Species from more temperate regions often have a dry period, and watering should be adjusted accordingly.

Feeding

Use a balanced fertiliser at quarter or half strength once a week during the summer. This can be reduced to once a month in the winter.

Humidity

Most *Bulbophyllum* species come from humid rainforests. Humidity should be kept at a minimum of 60% to 70% year round, although most prefer humidity at around 80% which can be difficult to do outside of a greenhouse.

Cutting Dead Flower Spike

Depending on the species, some have a single bloom on an inflorescence while others are sequentially blooming. Make sure to read up about the flowering habits of your orchids. Dead spikes can be cut at the base of the pseudobulb.

Repotting

Bulbophyllums prefer not to be repotted regularly and many species do better mounted. If potted, grow in a medium that is well draining but retains moisture as these plants thrive in moist conditions. Add sphagnum moss and other water retentive media to your mix. Mount on cork oak or materials that suit the fine roots of this genus.

Did you know?

Bulbophyllum is one of the largest genera of flowering plants, exceeded only by *Astragalus*.

Did you know?

The centre of diversity of this genus is believed to be in the montane forests of Papua New Guinea where more than 600 species can be found.