

Growers guides | *Cymbidiums*



Cymbidiums have been grown by humans for nearly two thousand years and are prized for their long-lasting sprays of flowers. This genus contains 52 species and is distributed in tropical and subtropical Asia and Oceania, from northern India, China, Japan and Malaysia through the Philippines, Borneo and into northern Australia. There are two main types of cymbidiums - standards and miniatures. Flowers come in a wide range of colours, sizes and forms.

Temperature

Cymbidiums will tolerate considerable summer heat as long as they get cool, mild night temperatures (between 10° - 18°C). Cold temperatures, even below zero for a few hours each night, will not damage an acclimatised plant, but once the plant spikes or flowers it should be protected from temperatures below 5°C. Plants should always be kept free of frost. Where summer nights are warm (above 20°C), miniatures are recommended because many are more tolerant of heat.

Light

Cymbidiums need moderate to bright light. They enjoy sun in the morning and late afternoon, but will require shading from about 11am - 3pm. A light green leaf with just a hint of yellow indicates the maximum amount of light the plant can take, and a dark green leaf indicates not enough light.

Water

Watering of *cymbidiums* is a delicate balancing act. They should not be allowed to go completely dry, yet these plants don't want a soggy growing medium. Water when the medium starts getting dry. As with everything else, consideration must be given for the drying effects of varying ambient air temperature and humidity.

Feeding

High-nitrogen fertilisers should be used during spring and summer, while low nitrogen fertilisers should be used during autumn. Foods with a high potassium and phosphorus content should be provided during late summer and autumn to encourage blooming. These plants are hungry feeders to make sure to feed heavily during the growing seasons.

Humidity

Cymbidiums enjoy humidity levels of between 50 to 80 percent. This can be provided in the home by placing the plants on trays of gravel, only partially filled with water so that the plants do not sit in the water. Air should always be moving around the plants to prevent fungal or bacterial disease, especially if high humidity or cool temperatures exist.

Cutting Dead Flower Spike

Once flowering has ended and the spike has turned brown, cut the spike where it emerges from the base of the plant. *Cymbidiums* may produce multiple flower spikes from a pseudobulb.

Repotting

Repot every two to three years during spring with a well-draining medium. The mix can include rock wool, sphagnum moss, perlite and other materials that retain moisture for extended periods of time.

Did you know?

The species *Cymbidium hookerianum* is considered a delicacy in Bhutan where it is traditionally cooked in a spicy curry or stew called "olatshe" or "olachoto"