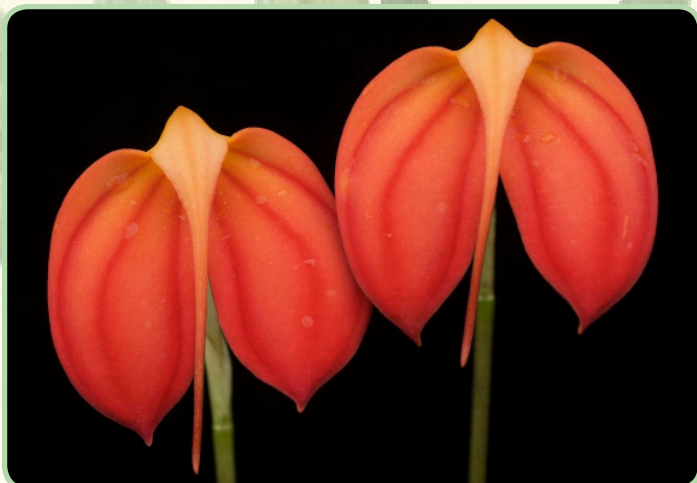


Growers guides | *Masdevallia*



The *Masdevallia* genus consists of some 350 species usually from cool areas in Central and South America into Mexico. *Masdevallias* are best known for their showy flowers consisting of sepals fused into a tubelike structure. Their origins in cool, damp environments make them an excellent choice for cool or coastal climates. Most species and hybrids are compact enough so that they can be easily accommodated on windowsills or under lights.

Temperature

Masdevallias should be kept cool to intermediate. The plants will grow slowly and eventually expire if temperatures are high for long periods. Cool evenings help reduce heat stress during the day. Night temperatures of 12 to 16°C, and day temperatures of 18 and 24°C are ideal. Evaporative cooling pads or humidifiers can help maintain cooler conditions.

Light

Light should be like that given for *phalaenopsis* and *paphiopedilums* — low to intermediate levels. Plants grow well under standard fluorescent fixtures and can be summered outside in shade. In the home, place in an east or shaded south window or under artificial lights.

Water

Water is critical for these plants because they have minimal water-storage tissue. Roots should be allowed to become almost dry before watering again. If drainage is adequate, constantly moist (not wet) roots are fine. Good-quality water low in dissolved solids is imperative for success.

Feeding

Use a balanced fertiliser at quarter or half strength once a week while plants are actively growing. This can be reduced to once a month in the winter. Applications of 30-10-10-type formulations are ideal for plants in a bark-based medium. A 20-20-20-type formulation should be used for plants in other media.

Humidity

Humidity is an important factor in the successful culture of *masdevallias*. The ideal range is 60 to 80 percent. In the home, set the plants on trays of gravel partially filled with water. In the greenhouse or enclosed growing area, humidity can be increased by use of a humidifier, while evaporative coolers help raise humidity and lower temperatures.

Cutting Dead Flower Spike

Dead spikes can be cut off at the base of the inflorescence, close to the plant. Some species and hybrids can flower more than once a year.

Repotting

Potting is best done in the winter or early spring, before the heat of summer arrives or as new roots are produced. Plants must be repotted frequently, every one to two years, before the potting mix decomposes. A fine-grade potting medium, mixed with sphagnum moss and polystyrene balls can be used.

Did you know?

Many *Masdevallia* species are difficult to maintain in cultivation unless the plants can be kept cool and moist all the time.

Did you know?

The genus is named for Jose Masdeval, a physician and botanist in the court of Charles III of Spain.