

Growers guides | *Paphiopedilum*



Paphiopedilum or Lady's Slippers are one of the most unique and intriguing of all orchids. The genus contains nearly 100 species. Their exotic, wax-like, richly coloured blooms can last for weeks or even months. The flower stem rises from the centre of the new growth to form one of the most unusual flowers in the world. Best of all, they are ideal for home growing.

Temperature

Paphiopedilums are divided into two temperature groups: warm and cool growers. The attractive mottled-leaf types come from the temperate zones and do best with a night temperature not below 15°C, and a day temperature of 23 - 30°C. The solid green-leafed types come from the higher, cooler altitudes. They require a night temperature of 10° - 15°C and a day temperature of 21° - 27°C.

Light

Place in any bright window but protect from mid-day sun. Leaves should be a medium-green colour. If they are too pale or yellowish, the plant could be getting too much light. Approximately the same light intensity as African Violets is preferred.

Water

Paphiopedilums must be kept constantly moist throughout the year, but not soggy. Check the media below the surface on a regular basis to determine the need for water. Normal watering intervals are between seven and ten days.

Feeding

Good results may be obtained by using a general purpose fertiliser as well as fertilisers high in nitrogen all year round. Feed once a month at one-third or half of the recommended dilution. *Paphiopedilums* are sensitive to fertiliser burn so make sure to flush the medium after every fourth fertilising.

Humidity

Paphiopedilums require minimum humidity levels of between 50 and 70%. To increase humidity in the house place 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

After your *paphiopedilum* has finished flowering cut the spike off where it emerges from the plant. Be sure that it has stopped flowering completely as some species and hybrids are sequential flowers. Some of the sequentially flowering *paphiopedilums* can be in flower for over a year. Do not cut the flower spike until all flowers have finished blooming and the spike turns brown.

Repotting

Paphiopedilums can be repotted annually as their medium needs to stay fresh although some people repot every two to three years during spring with a well-draining medium. It is important that the base of the growth be potted no deeper than 2cm in the medium. *Paphiopedilums* do not like their roots exposed.

Did you know?

Some *paphiopedilum* species can take over 20 years to flower. Some species are very slow growing whereas others are much more vigorous. Many hybrids include more vigorous species to ensure that they flower faster.

Did you know?

Paphiopedilum rothschildianum, is known as the Gold of Kinabalu, can cost up to \$5000 per plant. This species, affectionately labelled the 'king of the paphs' is very rare in the wild, found in only one location in Malaysia.