

Growers guides | *Stanhopea*



Stanhopea is a genus comprising 55 species found in damp forests from Mexico to Trinidad to NW Argentina. This genera has incredible flowers with intricate, complex structures and mechanisms for pollination. Most have inflorescences that grow downward, so the plants must be potted in hanging baskets or similar containers. Flowers are often spicily fragrant, and although the flowers are short-lived, each plant may produce many inflorescences throughout the year.

Temperature

This genera prefers intermediate conditions, with daytime temperatures peaking at around 25°C going down to 10°C at night. Plants can stand short spells of higher temperatures, but air movement, humidity and shading must all be increased. Many species flower in the summer, and putting them outside in the summer may be beneficial. Move into higher light conditions slowly to avoid burn.

Light

Bright light is wanted, with direct sunlight diffused by shade cloth or opaque roofing so as not to burn the leaves. Most growers suspend these orchids due to their pendulous inflorescences. This also brings the plants closer to the light. Light levels approximating those for cattleyas are best.

Water

This genera needs plenty of water to produce strong pseudobulbs and prevent foliar spotting. Stanhopeas and their relatives can be sensitive to salt accumulation in the medium, so should never be allowed to dry out entirely, even during the winter months when growth may slow or stop. Poor watering habits are also conducive to root loss in these types, and some may be very slow to re-establish once they have lost their roots.

Feeding

Use a balanced fertiliser at half strength once a week while plants are actively growing. In the blooming season, which is mainly summer, use a 10-30-20 blossom-booster formulation.

Humidity

Humidity should be at least 70 percent. Some species prefer much higher humidity. Maintain constant air movement.

Cutting Dead Flower Spike

Dead spikes can be cut off where they emerge from the hanging basket. Flowering may occur throughout the summer.

Repotting

Repotting is best done right after summer flowering, as most plants seem to grow year round. Plants that rest in the winter can be repotted in the spring. The best flowerings come from large clumps of plants, so large baskets are usually used. An airy, yet moist medium seems to work best, such as medium-grade bark mixed with sphagnum moss and perlite. Vigorous plants may need repotting every three years or so.

Did you know?

The genus is named after Philip Henry Stanhope, the 4th Earl of Stanhope, who was the president of the Medico-Botanical Society of London between 1829 and 1837.

Did you know?

The bee species, *Eulaema meriana*, is known to pollinate these flowers supposedly because the orchids can deceptively mimic the form of a female and her sex pheromones.