

# Growers guides | *Zygopetalum*



The Zygopetalum genus is very small and only contains 15 recognised species, although there are an abundance of hybrids. Zygopetalums produce beautiful waxy-looking blooms which are very fragrant. The blooms are usually green and brown striped or speckled, with a broad white velvety lip marked with purple, indigo, maroon, or fuchsia. The genus is mostly distributed throughout tropical South America and is closely related to Bollea, Huntleya, Pabstia, Pescatorea, Promenaea, Warrea and a number of other minor genera.

## Temperature

Zygopetalums require cool to intermediate temperatures. The ideal daytime temperatures to grow your Zygopetalum orchid are between 21°C to 27°C, and night temperatures of between 10°C and 16°C. Zygopetalums are able to survive in temperatures up to 30°C, although they will need more frequent watering in order to ensure that they do not completely dry out. Extended exposure to both hot and cold temperatures (beyond the ideal ranges) can cause disease and bloom damage.

## Light

Zygopetalums need bright but indirect light in order to thrive. If your orchid is receiving the optimal amount of light the leaves will be a yellowish green color. Too little light will cause the leaves to become a very dark green color and may cause the plant to not produce blooms.

## Water

It is very important to not let Zygopetalums dry out completely between waterings. While the orchid is in active growth, during the warmer months you will want to water more frequently (approximately once or twice a week depending on your growing conditions), and less frequently in the cooler months when the orchid is not actively growing.

## Feeding

Zygopetalums should be fertilised every other watering with a half-strength solution when the orchid is actively growing. When the orchid is not actively growing, fertilising once a month is sufficient. If you notice that the tips of the leaves are beginning to turn black, this is an indication that there is too much fertiliser buildup. It is important to flush out any excess fertiliser (once a month) so that the excess salts do not do damage to the plant's roots or leaves.

## Humidity

Zygopetalums require humidity levels of around 60%. The higher the temperature, the higher to humidity should be. Remember, if you have high humidity levels, it is equally important to maintain proper air movement to prevent orchid disease from developing. If black spots appear on the leaves of your Zygopetalum, this is an indication that you need more air circulation. An easy way to increase the air movement for your plant is by putting an oscillating fan nearby your orchid.

## 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.

## Repotting

Zygopetalums should be repotted every year or second year depending on how quickly the potting medium breaks down or if the orchid outgrows the pot. A good potting mixture for Zygopetalums is a mixture of bark, coconut chips, and perlite.

*Did you know?*

This orchid's generic name is derived from the Greek words zygon (yoke) and petalon (petal). These refer to the yoke-like growth at the base of the lip caused by the fusion of petals and the sepals.