



Growing guide | *Dendrobiums*

Dendrobium is a very diverse genus of orchids with very different cultural needs. Many go through a growth phase and then a rest phase during the course of a year, and must be given water, food, light and temperature to match these periods of growth and rest. Flowers can last one day to many weeks, depending on the type. Some of the longer lasting *dendrobiums* are commonly used as cut flowers because of their sturdy stems and distinctive colouring.

Temperature: The ideal day temperature is between 23° - 30°C, while the ideal night temperature is 15° - 18°C. Occasional temperature extremes are tolerated if exposure is not prolonged.

Light: *Dendrobiums* prefer bright to intermediate light, but will require shading between 11am and 3pm.

Water: Watering of *dendrobiums* is a tricky one, and cannot be standardised across the genus due to the growing conditions of the various types. Some require watering year round (although less is needed in winter), while some species and hybrids require a complete dry rest period, where water is restricted for about five weeks.

Feeding: High-nitrogen fertilisers should be used during spring and summer, while low nitrogen fertilisers should be used during autumn. A general all-purpose fertiliser can be given throughout the year, although little food, if any, is required during the winter months.

Humidity: *Dendrobiums* 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.

Repotting: Repot every two to three years during spring with a well-draining medium. Many *dendrobium* species are epiphytic so mounting may be a preferred option to reduce the need to repot.

Cutting Dead Flower Spike: After your *dendrobium* has finished flowering remove as much of the spike as possible without cutting into the leafy stem.