

Care of your Vanda Type Orchid

The Vanda type orchid that you receive has been grown in moderate to high light greenhouse conditions with warm days and cool nights, but should quickly adapt to your home. In nature, Vandas are epiphytic orchids, growing on trees where they experience warm temperatures, high humidity, and moderate to high light levels due to variable shading by the trees. Vandas and their relatives have thick, succulent leaves and extremely large roots, both of which store moisture. They do not have pseudobulbs. If the leaves are smooth and firm feeling, the plant is getting enough water. If the leaves become shriveled, this means that the plant needs more water. Vandas need excellent drainage, and are often grown in baskets, with or without medium, which provides their roots full contact with the air. If necessary, they can also be grown in clay pots which, unlike plastic, allow the roots to “breathe” a little. We grow the young seedlings in band pots with some sphagnum moss. It is good to let the plants dry out completely between waterings, and never allow them to stand in water. However, Vandas need plenty of water, so it is best to grow them in a chunky, fast draining medium like medium or large bark chips or in a basket with no medium, and water frequently, especially in hot weather. Growing them in a poorly draining medium and/or watering infrequently could damage the roots. Do not allow water to stand overnight (or during the day in cool weather) in the folds where the leaves join the stem or in the plant’s crown, as this could lead to rot. Vanda-type orchids will almost certainly grow many roots that extend outside the pot. This is normal for an epiphytic plant such as an orchid. Never cut live roots from a Vanda or any other kind of orchid. During growing season feed Vandas once or twice a month, watering with a dilute general-purpose fertilizer. If plants are not growing, they do not need to be fertilized.

Follow the above instructions, give plenty of light, and your Vanda should thrive. Different Vanda type species and hybrids bloom at different times of year. A cue that your orchid is about to bloom is the emergence of a bud spike from the side of the plant, in the fold at the base of one of the leaves. Most Vandas produce only one growth that continuously grows upwards and blooms multiple times, but others may produce many growths that form a clump. If the plant should become too tall, it is possible to cut the top part, including several nodes with aerial roots and plant this “cutting” in a new pot. The old stump will likely form more plants. This is, however, not an efficient way to propagate plants, so should only be done in order to salvage an overgrown specimen.

Many of the seedlings that we sell come potted in sphagnum moss because we have found that immature plants stay healthiest and grow fastest that way. They can usually continue to be grown in the moss for another year, but can also be potted into a medium of your choice or mounted. You may also receive a vanda-type orchid growing in a net pot or basket with little or no medium. This is OK! Just make sure that the roots don’t dry out too much, and the plant will appreciate being allowed to “go barefoot”. Small vandaceous orchids may be mounted.

Enjoy your orchid! If you have any questions about caring for your orchid, feel free to contact us by e-mail or phone.

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