

# *“Solutions for a happier lawn and garden”*



## HOW THE HECK DO I TAKE CARE OF IT?

“This orchid is so beautiful but how the heck do I take care of it? I’d probably just kill it!” This is what I hear from a lot of our Van Wilgen’s customers and I respectfully beg to differ with you. Orchids are fairly easy and the main variety we carry, Phalaenopsis, blooms for months and yes folks, you can get it to rebloom again and again. If patiently waiting for an orchid to rebloom is just not your thing, then do as Ryan Van Wilgen suggests and simply enjoy them for the 3 months that they bloom. That is more then you will get from any cut flower bouquet.

Don’t let orchid’s slender and delicate looking beauty fool you. They are tougher then you think and can handle any type of home from a quaint cottage to a New York City apartment. Care is pretty basic but there are a few things we should discuss. Orchids need 4 main things to be successful: light, temperature, water and fertilizer. The beautiful orchids you buy at Van Wilgen’s will keep you happy if you keep them happy.

**Light:** Phalaenopsis/Moth Orchids can thrive in a little less sunlight then some other varieties. A brightly lit window will do, but pounding, direct, southern exposure may give your orchids a sunburn. Ouch! Believe it or not, the more yellowy/green orchid leaves look, the better the lighting is. The darker green the leaves are means that they could use a little more sunlight. I know the leaves look healthy but chances are you will not get another bloom. If your orchid leaves have a reddish tinge or streak to them, they are getting too much sun. Play with them in different parts of your home. Their color will let you know when they are pleased.

**Temperature:** If we think about the fact that orchids come from and thrive in warm, tropical climates, then it makes sense they would like a fairly warm home. Orchids do fine in our consistently 70 degree houses. Damage can be done if temperatures drop below 60 degrees. The only time we want our orchid friends to experience a cold shock is in the fall. This will push them to produce a flower spike. Often, we recommend putting them by a cooler window or opening the window at night to give them a temperature drop. The drop in temperature for a few weeks (only down to 55 degrees minimum) seems rather cruel but they tend to like it. Consider doing this around September/October.

**Water:** We all need it but orchids need it in the form of watering and humidity. A good rule of thumb that I like to follow is to water the orchid as many days apart as the pot measures in inches. For instance, if your orchid is planted in a 5 inch pot, water it every 5 days. Easy, right?! Give your orchid a real treat and set it in a tray with rocks and water. Ahhhh, humidity, they love it! The orchid roots need to sit on the rocks, above the water, not in it, or you will get root rot. This constant release of humidity gets absorbed by all the air roots and orchids thrive. Misting an orchid is just not the same as a tray full of pebbles and water. Misting can actually cause some unwanted fungal leaf problems. No ice cubes folks, remember they are tropical plants.





**Fertilizer:** There are many schools of thought on fertilization of orchids but I think we narrowed it down to the easiest and one of the most productive programs using Jack's Classic Orchid Special 30-10-10 and Jack's Classic Orchid Bloom Booster 3-9-6. First we need to understand the cycle of the Phalaenopsis orchid. We talked about what a long bloomer it is (yay!) but we did not discuss the time of year it usually likes to bloom. Late spring and summer is time for vegetative growth of orchids, meaning they are busy producing leaves and strong healthy root systems. We need to up the amount we fertilize them for these months and use Jack's Classic Orchid Special 30-10-10. The higher dose of Nitrogen (the first #) is necessary because our orchids are planted primarily in bark and bark gobbles up the Nitrogen. In fall, most orchids will set their spikes to get ready for winter and early spring bloom. During the fall and winter, it is important to fertilize with Jack's Classic Orchid Bloom Booster 3-9-6 because the higher Phosphorus (the middle #) will get the spike going and keep the flowers blooming longer.

"Fertilize weakly weakly" is a common expression used for orchid care. You can either fertilize your orchids weekly with Jack's at a ¼ dose rate or 1X per month at full strength in the fall and winter. In spring and summer, fertilize at ½ dose rate or 2X's per month. I am giving you choices so you can have a say in how you care for your beloved orchids. Remember, orchids are tough, so don't over-love them.

Now, throw every piece of advice I gave you away. Tee hee. I'm just kidding with ya. What I am really trying to say is there are different ways to care for your orchids. My suggestion is not the be-all and end-all of orchid fertilization but I guarantee, it will help.

Come see us at Van Wilgen's Garden Center. We would love to help!

Thanks a bunch...Stacey

*Van Wilgen's*

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