

Cattleyas are the Corsage Orchid and are among the most commonly grown orchids. Their culture is often used as the basis for comparison with other types of orchids. Like most other cultivated orchids, Cattleyas are epiphytes, or air plants. They have well-developed water-storage organs (called pseudobulbs) and large, fleshy roots. They should be potted in a porous, free-draining medium. The most commonly used medium are fir bark, shredded tree-fern fiber, various types of rock, processed coconut fiber and, lately, mixes based on peat moss and perlite. Cattleyas must be kept away from cold, dry air while in bloom.

Light: Sufficient light is important for healthy growth and flower production. Provide bright light with some sun, preferably an east, west or lightly shaded south window. In a greenhouse, provide about 30 to 50 percent full sun. Under grow lights, use four 40-watt fluorescent tubes and two 40-watt incandescent bulbs directly over the plants. Plants should be naturally erect, without need of much staking and of a medium olive green color. Dark green, limp foliage indicates too little light.

Temperature: Mature plants need a 15 to 20 degree difference between night and day; ideally nighttime temperatures of 55 to 60 degrees and day temperatures of up to 95 to 100 degrees if shading, humidity and air circulation are increased. Seedling Cattleyas need temperatures 5 to 10 degrees higher than mature plants.

Water: Mature plants must dry out between watering. Seedlings need more constant moisture.

Humidity: Cattleyas need 50 to 60% humidity. In the home, place plants on trays of moistened pebbles. In the greenhouse, use a humidifier if conditions are too dry.

Fertilizer: Plants must be fed on a regular basis. The exact fertilizer used will depend on the mix in which the plant is growing. A general rule is to use a balanced (10-10-10, etc.) fertilizer weakly, weekly; fertilize every week at 1/4 to 1/2 of the recommended formula.

Potting: Re-potting should be done every two to three years in spring before the mix breaks down. Pot firmly in media that has good aeration and ample drainage allowing enough room for two years growth.