

Commonly known as the Lady's Slipper Orchid, Paphiopedilums are the Old World relatives of North American temperate-zone lady's slipper orchids (Cypripediums.) Paphs are one of the best orchids for home growing, requiring only fairly bright light and normal home temperatures to provide some of the orchid kingdom's longest-lasting and most exotic blooms. There are several general types of Paphiopedilums requiring slightly different cultural regimens, though all should do well with the general care instructions given here. Slipper orchids can last eight to ten weeks or more in bloom.

Light: Sufficient light is important for healthy growth and flower production. Provide bright light with no direct sun— ideally an east, west or shaded south window. In a greenhouse environment, provide about 30 percent full sun; if using grow lights, use four 40-watt fluorescent tubes and two 40-watt incandescent bulbs directly over the plants. Foliage should be naturally semi-erect and firm, not drooping. Dark green, limp foliage indicates too little light.

Temperature: Mature plants need a 15 to 20 degree difference between night and day. Nighttime temperatures of 60-65 degrees and day temperatures of 75-85 degrees are ideal. Seedlings need temperatures 5 to 10 degrees higher than mature plants.

Water: Mature plants should never dry out between watering. Seedlings need more constant attention to moisture levels.

Humidity: Paphs need 60-70% 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 although Paphs will grow and flower with less fertilizer than most orchids. 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 one to two years before the mix breaks down too far and can be done almost any time of year, using a well-draining but water-retentive mix.