

Cymbidium Orchids

Cymbidium are one of the most popular orchids in Southern California. They are easy to grow, thriving outside in our mild climate, blooming year after year. They prefer well-lighted areas like patios, with morning sun and afternoon shade, or a location that gets about 60% shade all day.

Do not place them in a dark, shaded location if you want them to bloom regularly. Good air movement is also necessary for optimum growth and bloom. Do not crowd the plants which are best grown in containers. Space them about the space of one plant apart.

Cymbidium orchids require a light, open, well drained medium for planting that retains some moisture. Fine fir bark (Orchid Bark 1/8" to 1/4") mixed with redwood compost at the rate of about 2/3 bark and 1/3 redwood works great. We usually have this already mixed in small amounts if you only have a few plants. If you have several, you might want to mix your own.

Water the plants when they become slightly dry, usually about once a week. Be sure they do not stay too wet. Good drainage is absolutely necessary.

Fertilize with a high nitrogen orchid food (30-10-10 or similar) twice a month from March to August. From September to February use a high phosphorous orchid food (6-30-30) twice a month. Some people prefer to use a slow release fertilizer, usually in a tablet form or possibly Osmocote 14-14-14 to or three times a year. Whatever you use, follow the label directions for best results.

Cymbidium usually have to be repotted every three years or so. You will see them getting crowded in the pot. Repotting is necessary as the mix starts to break down and if it holds too much water the roots will die. Often the plants are so large; they need to be divided into smaller pieces. The best time to repot or divide these plants is right after they bloom. If you wait too long, you will interrupt the bloom for the following year.

Pests that you may encounter are snails and slugs. Some are very small but they can do a lot of damage. Use bait to get rid of these pests. If you see aphids try to wash them off with water. If this is not successful, try a pyrethrum spray. Harder to kill, but less of a pest is scale. You will probably have to resort to Malathion, however, this is not usually a problem for most growers.