

Ray's growing Guide - Paphiopedilums

Paphiopedilums, more commonly known as Slipper Orchids, are shade loving plants from areas throughout Asia. They usually grow amongst rocks, moss and leaf litter in damp but well drained positions. Blooms are long lasting and are available in a range of colours. There are three main styles of flowers popular amongst growers. These are the complex hybrids which have large round flowers with broad segments and bloom during the winter. The second group are the maudiae types which have attractive tessellated leaves and smaller flowers. The third group are the multiflorals, sometimes with 4 or 5 flowers on a stem. They have long strap like green leaves and are the slowest to grow.

Temperature & Light. Slippers are generally tolerant of a broad range of temperatures, however protection from frosts is necessary, especially for the maudiae and multifloral types. They thrive in conditions soft ferns such as maidenhair enjoy. The multiflora group will enjoy a little brighter light than the other two groups.

Watering & Fertilising. Watering should be sufficient to keep the root system just damp. It is important to avoid over watering so even short dry periods are ok. The root system on Paphs can be easily damaged if the potting medium is old or the plants are overwatered. As a guide, water twice a week in summer and once a week in winter, depending on the weather of course. It is best to water during the morning in winter and evenings during summer. Try to avoid water lying on the leaves for lengthy periods. Include a balanced (flowering formula) fertiliser into the water at half the recommended strength, every second watering. A dusting of Dolomite occasionally will add calcium and help keep the media sweet.

Potting. A standard pot just big enough to contain the root system is adequate. Use a mix of large grade OrchidMate Coconut Husk Chips or pine bark with added perlite, styrene or charcoal. Media must be coarse enough to allow good drainage but still remain damp for a few days. As a guide, in a 150mm pot use 10-15mm bark.

Pests & Disease. Slippers appear resistant to orchid virus. Fungus can develop on the leaves or in the leaf axils, usually due to overwatering. Mealy bug can sometimes attack leaves and roots but is easily controlled with Rogor or similar. These plants are relatively pest free.