



Gardening Notes by John Atkins

August/September 2010

Cattleyas

This is still a quite time of year for Cattleyas as although the weather is starting to warm during the day we are still experiencing the odd cold night, select those plants that need to be broken up or repotted and start when new root growth is evident.

Give plants a good weekly soak to wash out the undissolved salts that have remained in your potting mix, a left over from last season.

Fertilise weekly with an organic fertiliser and be vigilant for caterpillars and in particular the looper variety, as they seem to think Cattleya blooms a delicacy.

Cymbidiums

By now you should have your mix ready, pots cleaned and everything right to go. I like a mix of treated bark, coir chip, perlite, charcoal and a small quantity of dolomite and blood and bone worked into the mix.

Before dividing let your plants dry out slightly and this will make the task that much easier. Make sure you sterilise all cutting tools before starting on a new plant, you can use ordinary household bleach but I prefer liquid chlorine, the same as you would use in a swimming pool and I also lay out newspaper on the bench and again after each plant is finished with and the old mix removed change the paper. I cannot emphasise enough the need for hygiene, better to be over the top than risk losing a good plant.

Your old mix can either be added to the garden as a mulch or as in my case I had half in half to potting mix and use this for my bromeliads, but if doing this keep the Broms a good distance from your orchids.

After potting I like to give my plants a half strength application of Miracle-Gro. do this for the first month and this will get the plant over the shock of being repotted and get those all important roots on the move again, after the month return to your normal watering routine.

Paphiopedilum

Slipper orchids as we know them are still resting and therefore need only minimal care, water only when the mix is moderately dry but as this is the windy time of the year you need to be vigilant as they can dry out quite quickly and only fertilise every three or four weeks.

The end of September is the best time to repot and even though the plant may still seem to have plenty of room in it's pot I find a repot annually encourages new root growth that otherwise may not have eventuated.

Phalaenopsis

Most plants are well underway with new growths and should be showing signs of new flower spikes so be on the look out for slugs and snails, water weekly depending on the weather and fertilise at the same time.

Vandaceous

Vandas need a regular supply of moisture all year round but as we come out of winter I would limit this to every two or three days and change this to daily once the hot weather starts and always water in the morning. Fertilise every fortnight at the moment using a low nitrogen and then switch to a high level nitrogen in early October.

Natives

As the flowering season ends it is time to get ready to clean up or repot but look at the plant first and if there is still room in the pot and the mix is still open and lumpy then consider leaving it for another season. When repotting take the same precautions with hygiene to prevent the spread of viruses.

General information

Check for scale and mites and treat with **Anti Scale**, keep under the benches clean and leave bait out for slugs and snails.

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