

## Soft Cane Dendrobium Orchids



Den pink charm

**General Info.** Soft Cane Dendrobiums are epiphytes (grow on trees). The original species, which were the forebears of the modern hybrids, originated in Burma, India, Thailand and Indo China in the foothills of the Himalayas to an elevation of 4,000 feet. They have a definite growing period followed by a rest period in winter. They flower in spring and then send up new growth following flowering.

**Water.** Do not water during the rest period from Mothers Day to Fathers Day unless the canes begin to shrivel. *Mar-Apr* decrease watering. *May –Aug* only water if canes shrivel, *Sept-Oct* slowly increase watering as roots develop on new shoots. *Nov-Feb.* Watering in the heat of summer may be done daily.

**Fertilising.** In spring, when the new growth has started to develop and new roots appear, start fertilizing with a low nitrogen fertilizer. This should continue till mid March....Fertilising with high nitrogen will result in strong tall growth and poor flowering. Don't use slow release fertilizer. Do not fertilise in the rest period.

**Light.** Adult plants can be very successfully grown in a 30% shade house in summer. In the cooler months, they can be grown in direct sunlight. Hang on the clothes line on Mothers Day and bring into 30% house on Fathers Day. This is their rest period. It is however recommended that younger plants are given more shade.

**Potting.** Do not overpot. Use as small a pot as you can. They like their roots in a tight ball. So quite often the plant looks very large compared to the size of the pot. Many mediums have been used, tree fern, bark, sphag, . I grow them in Bark/ styrene or on Tree Fern or Bottle Brush logs.. Only repot after flowering and when temperature is above 13 degrees C. Only plants with 7-8 canes should be divided. Preferable that each division has 4-5 canes at a minimum.

**Temperature.** They drop their leaves in winter. Need a low temperature in the rest period to trigger flowering. They will survive with temperatures down to 3 to 4 degrees C in winter and in spring, when the temps get to 17-18 degrees C, they will flower. They will suffer if frosted. They need approx 1 month of low night temperatures to trigger flowering.

**Air Movement.** Need good air circulation... many growers hang their plants, rather than have them on a bench. Mr Yamamoto said that as long as the air circulation is good they can be grown in full sun all year round.



Den Dawn Maree

**Maintenance.** Some consider they are a high maintenance orchid.... They require staking to keep the canes erect however I have grown them on tree fern and let the canes hang down and quite like the effect of a mature plant in full flower. They drop their leaves in winter.

**Keikeis** ...Happen for a number of reasons....if there is root damage, if you fertilise in the rest period, if not given enough water for long periods and thus become stressed, if in too much shade they will flower and keikei at the same time. If Keikeis are removed too early they will stagnate for a long time. The Keikeis are best taken off after a year and when the new root growth for that year is over 3 inches.

**Pests.** Scale and Red Spider appear the most common. Am told they will also get mealy bug and aphids but have been lucky to avoid this so far. Never seen them attacked by Dendrobium beetles even when grown outside all year round.



**Fungal attack.** Fungal spots on leaves. I prefer to remove a leaf rather than spray. If you have good air circulation the spots will keep to a minimum. They drop most leaves in winter anyway. Always pick up fallen leaves rather than let them rot on the floor and spread the fungus.

Den Sander's Festival

By Ann Sales

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