

Orchids Worth Growing

In addition to the larger families of orchids, enthusiasts will find a number of plants from the smaller or lesser-known genera of great value in the orchid house, either for unusual form, colour or perfume.



Rossioglossum grande [syn. Odontoglossum grande]

The beautiful Odontoglossum tribe requires rather specialised conditions to succeed but Rossioglossum grande is easy to grow and is not at all particular about growing conditions. A cool glasshouse or even a well protected bush house suits this plant.

It has large 10cm bulbs and deep green leaves and produces four or five flowers per spike, with each flower about 15cm across. Colour is chocolate brown with yellow bands across the sepals, and white lip with red brown spotting. This species is related to the oncidiums and will interbreed with that alliance.

Grow in terracotta or plastic pots in a mixture of fine [bean size] bark with about a quarter charcoal. Water regularly while new growths are developing.

Zygopetalum mackayi

Should be in every collection. It grows in bush house conditions anywhere cymbidiums can be grown.

Zygopetalum mackayi produces strong, egg shaped bulbs about duck egg size, topped with fairly soft, green leaves about 25cm in length and about 5cm wide. Unlike most orchids, the flower spike emerges from the new growth and carries five to eight flowers on upright spikes. The flowers are about 7cm wide and the petals and sepals are green spotted with purple, with a purple and white veined lip the full width of the bloom. In addition to the broad, attractive lip, the flower is fragrant. Grow in the same conditions and type of compost as cymbidiums.



Stanhopea tigrina

Is one of the most unusual orchids. The small ribbed bulbs and large 25cm light green leaves are quite like several other epiphytic orchids, but the flower comes from beneath.

Stanhopea tigrina must be grown in a basket lined with tea tree bark or coconut fibre as the flower spike grows directly downwards from the bottom of the bulb, through the base of the basket and opens to two or more huge, tiger striped flowers as big as an open hand. The flowers

open about Christmas time in the eastern States and are strongly fragrant with a vanilla chocolate perfume.

Stanhopea tigrina is easy to grow, not choosy about compost or conditions. Compost suitable for cymbidiums is usually suitable for Stanhopea and 50% shade, or even more, is not detrimental. The basket can be hung from a branch of a garden tree, or trellis, and still produce several blooms each December.

Several other Stanhopea species are available with cream, white and brown spotted blooms, all flowering the 'flower beneath' style.

Bifrenaria harrisoniae

Is a cool growing orchid with short, 7.5cm angular bulbs topped with a single, tough, green leaf. The bulbs soon form solid clumps and the flower spikes are produced from the base of the bulbs. Two to three flowers, creamy in colour and with a purple and gold striped lip, are produced from each bulb.

Grow in a mixture of half cymbidium compost and half fine charcoal, in a light position, with about 50% sunlight.





Lycaste virginalis

Is one of a genus of plants from Mexico, Central and South America. It is easy to grow and very rewarding with its large flowers [10 to 15cm] of delicate pink with deeper colour on the labellum. The flowers are almost triangular, a shape created by the broad, open sepals. The labellum and petals are smaller and form a rosette in the centre of the flower.

The plant has large egg shaped bulbs and pleated, green leaves as large as those of an aspidistra. It is deciduous and the flowers are produced from the base of mature bulbs. *Lycaste virginalis* will grow in an unheated glasshouse or a well protected verandah. Use the compost recommended for *Paphiopedilums*, or fine bark, with some charcoal and a little peat moss. Water and fertilize while new growths are being produced and keep just damp while flowers are developing. Grow in airy conditions with 60% shade.

Some plants should be grown for their perfume alone, but as well as being delightfully fragrant *Brassavola nodosa* is also beautiful. Although related to the *Cattleya* alliance, it has round, fleshy almost terete leaves thicker than a large pencil but as long, and grooved on one side. The plant is sympodial and grows on branches of trees, often close to the sea.

The flowers are produced all the year round. The petals and sepals are thin and pale green in colour but the spade shaped labellum is white and forms quite the largest part of the flower. The perfume is strongest at night, apparently to attract night flying insects. The flowers are long lasting. If a plant is taken inside when in bloom it will perfume the whole house.

Brassavola nodosa

Can be grown in a well drained pot or slab of bark. Pot drainage should be perfect with about a quarter of the pot filled with broken crocks. Bark, charcoal and other quick draining material should be used so that the plant quickly dries after watering. *B. nodosa* is sometimes called 'the lady of the night' for its soft, moonlight colour and night perfume



These are just a few of the interesting and attractive orchid species which are easy to grow. Not only are there many more species which are equally beautiful and interesting but many new hybrids are bred every year. The grower can see many of these orchids at nurseries, and can buy flowered or unflowered seedlings.

The anticipation of watching the first blooms develop and open is a true pleasure. Many a grower has suddenly found themselves the owner of a champion plant grown from an inexpensive seedling. Their investment of three or four dollars suddenly becomes a most sort after plant. This is one of the rewards of growing orchids.

With a collection of carefully selected orchids the grower is assured of some orchid flowers in every month of the year. Here are a list of plants likely to flower in the months listed. The list is not an attempt to catalogue all plants. Remember that local conditions may cause a plant to vary its time of flowering by a month or two.

These notes have been used at our Cultural and New Grower's Meetings. They are from various sources and we thank the authors. All articles are supplied in good faith and the Bribie Island Orchid Society and its members will not be held responsible for any loss or damage.