



Oncidium Intergeneric (Dancing Lady) Orchids

Culture Sheet

Oncidium Intergenerics are a large group of orchids bred from several families (genus) in the group Oncidium, or dancing lady orchids. This group also contains the Miltoniopsis (Pansy Orchids), and Brassia (Spider Orchids). This group of orchids originates from Central and South America and is tolerant of a wide range of conditions, but to maintain and grow your orchid we have put together some general pointers to help you.

Watering

The trick to growing your orchid is to maintain regular moisture so that the bulbs are nice and full. Water regularly to keep moist and allow them to drain off excess water, but don't let them sit in water. A general rule of thumb is to water once every 3 to 4 days when kept inside, or every 2 days when outside. In the heat of summer this maybe increased to everyday (outside) or in winter every 3 to 7 days depending on the weather (outside).

Your orchid likes to have humidity around their root system, so another trick when growing outside is to sit their pot inside a larger pot, eg a terracotta pot, that has a layer of gravel in the bottom, this will keep the roots cooler and humidity higher. As a general rule Miltoniopsis (Milt) and Odontonia (Odtina) varieties will prefer not to dry out at all, so water regularly.

Growing Conditions

Whilst your orchid is in flower you may keep it inside to enjoy. When it has finished flowering you may then move it outdoors. The orchid you have purchased with this culture sheet has been grown in SE Queensland under 50% shadecloth or white Solarweave, not a climate controlled greenhouse. Therefore you only need to provide a sheltered position with approximately 50% shade as the basic growing condition. Your dancing lady orchids will tolerate temperatures from 2 to 38 degrees celcius, but have been known to tolerate extremes outside of this range.

If you don't have a shade house, your orchid will grow on a sunny vehranda out of direct sunlight, or in the garden where it is shaded by trees. Some varieties in the Miltassia (Mtssa), Brassia (Brs) and Oncidium (Onc) will happily grow as epiphytes on the trunks of trees such as Frangipanni, where they are shaded in summer and receive full sun in winter when the Frangipanni loses its leaves.

As a general rule of thumb, they will prefer more shade during the summer months and less shade during the winter months. Some types such as Miltonia (Milt) and Odontonia (Odtina) will prefer a shadier spot than other types like Brassia and Oncidium.

Fertilising

The easiest way to fertilise your orchid is to apply a slow release (eg Nutricote or Osmocote) once a year in spring at the manufacturers recommended rate. Regular supplimentary applications of liquid fertiliser will help, so ask your local garden centre about specialist orchid fertilisers.

Repotting

Repotting maybe done most of the year when the plant is actively growing roots (look for the little green root tips). The best time, which will vary between each variety, is just after flowering and as the plant is producing new bulb growths. Dancing Lady orchids prefer to fill out their pot prior to repotting, and if potted up do so into a pot only a little bigger than the old one. For example if your plant is in a 105mm pot, go up to only a 130 or 140mm pot. Well drained squat pots are best.

The preferred potting mix is either a medium to coarse bark or a medium coco husk chip (CHC) and coarse perlite mix. In general the potting mix should be open and drain well whilst holding a limited amount of water. After repotting sprinkle a teaspoon of Gypsum and half a teaspoon of Dolomite over the potting mix to add calcium and counter any excessive acidity, then add a slow release fertiliser at the manufacturers recommended rate.

If your orchid starts to grow roots over the top of the pot don't worry, most are epiphitic in their natural habitat, so roots will grow out of the pot in the open air if your growing conditions are right.

Pests and Diseases

The first major pest of Dancing Lady orchids is slugs and snails, which will eat the roots and flower spikes. A few pellets of snail bait placed in the pot will control these, or grow your plant up and away from where slugs and snails can get to them. The other major pest for flower spikes is caterpillars, so keep an eye out and remove when seen. Otherwise a suitable insecticide maybe purchased from your local garden centre.

Other occasional pests are scale, mealy bugs and aphids, which may all be controlled by a suitable botanical oil spray and/or with a recommended insecticide. Be careful to read the instructions and don't apply on hot days or during hot weather.

Occasionally your orchid will get fungal or bacterial spots on its leaves, which maybe controlled with a suitable fungicide available from your local garden centre. Some varieties prefer to be grown under cover to avoid wet foliage and continued damp potting mix from lengthy rain periods that will increase the occurrence of leaf spots. Most are not threatening to the life of your plant, but do detract from the overall appearance. Some varieties such as Onc. Space Race will get a little black spot on the leaf during cold weather.

Flowering

Dancing Lady orchids will flower at various times of the year, so check your local supplier regularly for the seasons variety. Some will flower even twice or three times a year, where as some will flower once a year during a specific time. When your plant starts to flower bring it in under cover and avoid getting water on the flower spike in the last weeks prior to flowering.

Further Information

For further information on growing your Oncidium Intergeneric orchid, visit your local orchid society shows or meetings, where the sharing of growing hints, tips and successes will help you grow and enjoy your orchid for a long time.

