

Basic Dendrobium Care Information

Hi there – we'll make our best effort to personally let you know how to take care of your plant when you are here – but this should be good reference material for you. You can always contact us if you need to – (473) 536-8638.

Dendrobium Orchids (Dens) are a very popular orchids with strong growth habits on strong canes and come in many colors. They are particularly well suited to home and hobby growers as they are very successful and last many years – getting larger and larger every year.

We grow a large number of named varieties of Dendrobium in addition to some custom crosses bred to have larger than normal flower sizes. Many of our orchids sell before they come into flower so it is important that we accurately label them and we do our best not to mistakenly label them.

Orchid Growth and Pot Sizes

We sell the majority of our Dendrobium initially in a 4" pot and after they have been with us for quite a while, in a 6" pot. At some point you will be wondering if they need to be repotted. Please note that Dendrobium orchids like (prefer) tight pots. The way we recommend for you to tell if they must be repotted is to look at the roots. If you see just a few on the surface, simply let them be. At some point the roots will begin to "jump" from the pots – based on this, believe me, you will know when time is right! Then begin the repotting of the Dendrobium.

Repotting is fairly easy – we recommend that you move them into pots that are 2" larger than the one they are in now – so 4 to 6, 6 to 8 etc. We recommend that you use the gravel we have here in Grenada (after washing it to remove the sand). We generally use ¾" red gravel – sometimes mixing in 1/2 " gravel from the pot the Dendrobium initially grew in. Make sure to move the label to the new pot or to get a new label and mark it with a water-proof pen. Avoid pots with no drainage – really – if you need a fancy pot purchase one that your new pot will fit into and make certain that during times of rain or watering that the pots are separated and drainage is thorough before reassembling. You do not want the orchids sitting in water.

You can get the gravel in many stores here such as Ramdhany in bags – you'll find they contain about 1/3 sand most of the time, so make sure you wash the gravel. You do not need to pack the new gravel and pot super tightly – just enough really to help the plant stand up straight. This is the main job of the roots since these orchids are epiphytes and get most of their substance from their leaves. Please do not bury the roots too deeply – best to keep them at the same level as they were growing.

As They Get Older

As your Dendrobium grows over time the number of canes will increase. When you reach a minimum of 8 canes you may split the plant if you'd prefer to, but you do not need to. Eventually as it grows you will reach a point where the pot size it can remain in for a number of years. Some of our dendrobium are in 3 gallon pots and have 15 - 20 or more of the canes. We repot these every couple of years.

You may find, after a while, that some of the canes in your Dendrobium have lost their leaves seem to be dead. Wait - Unless they are blackened or completely wilted, they are probably alive! Removing them when you repot is not necessary or desirable unless you object to their look. If you do, then pull them and separate them from the canes with leaves – and a surprise - you can often grow new plants from the removed canes by laying them on their sides and every so often misting or watering them. If you are successful, you may eventually find a new orchid growing on the cane called a Keiki – when this Keiki reaches proper size (3 canes itself) you can cut it off with a knife or razor and plant it into a small pot. If you leave the cane attached to the plant, they will store food for the plant and it will grow stronger.

Sun and Light

Dendrobiums like and need a good amount of light. I do not recommend growing this variety inside unless you have a very sunny window. Many people use a veranda if it is oriented the correct way.

We grow them here under 43% - 63% shade-cloth though, as the mid-day sun from 11 – 1:30 or so can give them sunburn very quickly. If you see a white circle starting to form on the top-side of the leaf that is probably what happened – you need to move them asap in this case to a more sun-light protected place. Sunburn will probably not kill them, but they need time to recover a bit if this happens and may lose the leaf.

You can successfully grow your Dendrobium in a pot under a tree or tied to a tree. Palm trees are great for this as they make a lot of their shade midday and do not have too dense a shade. If you have too little sun the plant will grow but may take longer to bloom. Given a choice I would go for less light – at least they will live through it! But perfection is good too!

Watering

Dendrobiums like to be watered thoroughly when they are dry but do not like to be kept with wet roots. You need to let them dry between waterings.

If it is one of our plants it was raised and sold in gravel - scratch away a layer or two of the gravel with your finger and look at the gravel inside the pot – if it is darker than the gravel on top of the pot it is still wet! Do not water. If it is dry (the same color) then thoroughly soak the leaves and the pot – You want water to clean the leaves and to wash out any salts in the growing medium. Orchid leaves will absorb the water so get them wet.

We grow our orchids under plastic so we can control rain – our neighbors often comment on seeing me out there watering during the rain – we water them when they need it. If you are growing outside and they are getting rain on them you may not need to water for long periods. Perhaps not during the rainy season at all! It is super dry here in Lance aux Epines so we basically water 2 times a week or so unless it is super hot when we water lightly in between the heavy waterings to keep them humidified.

Fertilizer

We recommend light fertilization as the roots can burn easily compared to other plants. Every 2 – 4 weeks fertilize with a basic liquid fertilizer such as 20-20-20 or a standard orchid fertilizer. If you see blossom-booster fertilizer in

your store, be gentle with it or give me a call. It has some different ingredients in it in different proportions. Now here is the important part – the fertilizer packaging will typically tell you to use 1 tablespoon per gallon – DO NOT DO THIS – use 1 teaspoon or somewhere between ¼ and 1/3 of the recommended strength.

Pests

We are affected here in Lance aux Epines by **spider mites, thrips** and **snail/slugs**. Other growers report that they get aphids and other pests but we have not seen that here particularly. This may be because we have a lot of other plants to attract the Aphids and Whitefly.

Mites - The Spider Mites are everywhere in the trees and blow out of them in the wind so they blow everywhere all the time - watch for white scratch marks under the leaves and/or do preventative spraying regularly. Maybe both would be a good idea – we inspect plants most mornings on all of the grow benches. The mite is a small spider – 8 legs and all. You cannot see them without a scope of some kind.

There are a number of NEEM based insecticide/miticides that do a good job on the mites but please note that a number of regular insecticides do NOT kill them – read the label to see what the claims are. Several systemic insecticides also kill mites – check the label and wash your hands, wear gloves, etc. after you spray or handle the plants as they are strong. We spray for Spider Mites every 7 – 10 days. Their reproductive cycle is 3 -4 days so if you do have an infestation, spray more frequently to interrupt their cycle.

Others report that Mealy Bugs are a problem and we have had them in the past – look for a fluffy cotton-like thing under the leaf and particularly in the crevices where the leaves come out of the main stalk. Alcohol based treatments do work. If you have a real infestation, then I recommend an insecticide – the Mealy Bugs suck the plant juices so will weaken the plant quickly.

A general systemic insecticide used every several weeks will handle a lot of the pests – just be cautious of your health and that of others and your pets.

Snails, Slugs – These chewing mollusc are particularly nasty and can do a lot of damage quickly. They are usually active overnight so some morning you may be surprised to lose an anticipated new flower or several leaves. They can be controlled somewhat by putting salt down or making beer in dishes available. We use a granular bait made by Carraxx – sprinkle it around and the problem usually stops pretty much overnight – renew it after a lot of rain.

Diseases

All orchids seem to be pretty susceptible to root disease – we plant ours almost solely in gravel to reduce this issue. Controlling the amount of water you give the plant will help with this – when you water - water thoroughly so that the water runs out of the pot (you can and should get the leaves wet on Dendrobiums). In between let your gravel dry out.

If you grow with materials in the medium that break down over time such as bark, charcoal, coconut husk, etc. then eventually they need to be replaced – be cautious of this as disease can be introduced in some cases as the medium breaks down.

The two fungicidal issues we have here where we grow are fusarium wilt and black spot disease. They can both be controlled – we use fungicides here frequently, but Neem oils has also been reported to be helpful. If you do have symptoms of disease do not freak out – cure if, and then once it is done and the plant is healthy again and growing you can clean up the leaves a bit.

Aunt Martha's Visits

You may get frequent visits from well meaning friends and relatives. They will tell you how they do it and they will often want you to change your approach. That is fine but consider this – before you remove the gravel and some other ingredients or change what we are telling you to do here – are your plants growing fine right now? Are they healthy and looking right? Is there an actual benefit of making a change or introducing someone else's "magic". We are giving you straight info based on our real-world processes and learnings growing many orchids. Your visitor may mean well – we do not doubt that.

So, make your decision – we have already proven to you, I hope, that what we do works.

If You Have an Issue or Question

Call us or come visit with your question or problem. If you have an issue with the plant, send us a picture of the top and the bottom of the leaf so we can see what you see. Sometime damage shows in one place but it is caused in another. We will make every effort to help you figure out the next step!

Michael@473Orchids.com

(473) 536-8638 – Phone or WhatsApp

www.473orchids.com – our website, showing or available plant varieties, helpful instructions, pricing, and directions

We are open from 7 am – 8 pm 7 days a week – I go to bed pretty early. We are mostly just me – it is best to call before coming to make sure I am in and available.

Thanks for your interest and support!