



Orchiata FAQs

Why does the bag weight of Orchiata change?

At different times of the year due to weather conditions the moisture content of Orchiata can change. Therefore the weight will change. Orchiata is packed by the litre so you will always receive the same amount of Orchiata.

Why is Orchiata better than other types of bark? Local bark is much cheaper and holds more water...

Orchiata, in general, is better than other types of bark products for many reasons. First, New Zealand Pinus radiata is a very thick, much harder and structurally sound material which allows us to form a rounder nugget. Bark from other countries may consist of fir or other pine that is not as hard and may delaminate when it is processed. As other barks are not as structurally hard they do not last very long in the pot and can cause water, nutrient and pathogen problems.

Pinus radiata naturally has a waxy layer that prevents the material taking up water. This is why fresh Pinus radiata bark can have some rewetting issues. We process the Pinus radiata bark so that it holds onto water and nutrients for the plants while maintaining a hard core so it lasts a longer period of time in the pot. Although local bark may be cheaper, you are likely to have more management issues with this material and lower quality plants.

Some Orchiata smells unusual, is the material toxic?

Occasionally due to some certain types of fungi growing or storage conditions, Orchiata may smell strange. Often Orchiata has a strong pine smell which is the natural smell of the bark and can be mistaken for a bad smell; other times it may be a musty smell. Sometimes fungi grow in wetter conditions and this can cause a bad odour. If the material smells unusual try and store the material in an aerated place and let us know about its condition.

Orchiata FAQs continued...

What are the fungi that we see sometimes when we open a bag?

In certain conditions, fungi may grow on Orchiata. If the product is left in warm moist conditions, it can encourage fungi growth.

Often you will see a fine whitish grey layer of fungi on Orchiata when you open the bag. These are most likely Penicillium or Paecilomyces. These are not detrimental to your plants; they are often beneficial as they help to prevent the colonisation of pathogenic fungi. In most cases, when the material is moved or shifted around the fungi is disturbed and will disappear.

Washing Orchiata to remove fungi is unnecessary and, as a micro-organism, the fungi will likely still be present after washing.

What is dolomite?

Dolomite is a natural mineral that contains calcium and magnesium. Research shows dolomite addition to substrates is very beneficial. We add dolomite to Orchiata to:

- Stabilize the substrate by increasing the pH to within a range of 5.5 to 6.5
- Prevent salt accumulation
- Provide the minerals calcium and magnesium, essential for plant growth

The dolomite in Orchiata provides the plant with an initial start up supply of these two minerals. Growers must remember though that after a good length of time (around 9 months), dolomite will have broken down and growers must reapply dolomite or other liming compounds to maintain optimum plant growth.

What is the white powder on my Orchiata?

This is dolomite (calcium magnesium) which we apply to Orchiata in the final stages of production. This is beneficial for your plant (see What is dolomite?); if you see this do not wash it out.

How do you store Orchiata?

While a covered building specially designed for storage is always preferred, we realise that not all growers have these types of facilities. If the rules below are followed, the product should remain pest free and in a high quality state until used. There are eight main features that will preserve the quality of Orchiata while in storage:

- The material should be stored with ample air movement both underneath and around the bags. This will prevent humidity or temperature build up which may encourage fungal and insect growth.
- Store under cover, either in a shed or storage facility or covered with a tarpaulin (still try to allow air to circulate around the bags). This will protect the material and packaging from the elements.
- Store out of direct sunlight so that the packaging is not affected and temperature and humidity are.
- Prevent the material from becoming too wet or dry. Conditions that allow Orchiata to become wet via rain or water pooling will encourage unwanted fungal growth. This may be detrimental to plant growth if kept unchecked. Orchiata that is too dry may create rewetting problems when used.
- Store in cool conditions to keep humidity and temperature low. This will prevent fungal growth and deter insect infestation.
- Store on a concreted area or metal shelves away from contamination such as weeds, flowing water, or animals.
- Use the product as soon as possible. Fresh is best.
- Do not keep in containers that can attract heat and build up to high temperatures.

Orchiata FAQs continued...

Orchiata FAQs continued...

What is the best pH and EC level?

The best pH and EC will depend on the type of orchid you are growing as well as the fertilizer regime you use. We provide Orchiata at a start pH of 5.5 – 6.5 through the addition of dolomite. From research, most orchids grow well within this range. The initial EC of Orchiata is < 0.3 mS/cm, however, with fertilizer addition this will slowly increase. Over time the pH will eventually drop and the EC will increase. It is important to check the pH and EC to make sure a balance is maintained and plant management in the pot is correct.

How does Orchiata hold moisture?

Through the production process, the waxy, water repellent layer of Pinus radiata is removed, allowing the Orchiata particles to hold onto water. When Orchiata dries it will also rewet well.

Are you cutting down forests to produce Orchiata?

No; our raw bark is a by-product of the timber industry in New Zealand. All of the bark that we use is Pinus radiata. Pinus radiata covers 1.8 million hectares of forest in New Zealand. The forests are completely man-made and renewable as they are used for the New Zealand timber industry. We do not use any endemic or non-renewable resources.

Is Orchiata composted?

No; Orchiata is processed through a uniquely managed maturing method, not composted. Maturing removes the outer waxy layer from the material but keeps the inner core hard. Composting causes the whole particle to break down leading to a less structurally sound particle. You can think of our process like wine making. We take the grape and make wine, not vinegar.

Usage

What size pot and grade should i use for my Orchids?

This will depend on the orchid type you are growing and its climate requirements. However most orchids prefer to be restricted in their pot; you must never use pots that are too big. It is also important that the pots that you purchase have appropriate drain holes which allow all water to drain (no pooling). General guidelines are highlighted below; however please contact us if more information is required.

ORCHID TYPE: Small Flask Plant
POT SIZE: 3cm plug or 5cm pot
ORCHIATA GRADE EXAMPLE: Precision or Classic

ORCHID TYPE: Small Plant
POT SIZE: 7cm pot
ORCHIATA GRADE EXAMPLE: Classic or Power

Orchiata FAQs continued...

Usage continued...

Can you plant moss plugs into Orchiata?

Orchiata is a very stable substrate and it is recommended that you do not mix other materials with it for growth. However, many growers begin their plants in Sphagnum moss and then transplant into Orchiata. If you start growth in Sphagnum moss you can plant the plugs into Orchiata saving time and labour but you must only use high quality Sphagnum such as New Zealand Sphagnum moss. This is because Sphagnum such as Chinese moss breaks down very quickly and can contain materials that cause pathogen and water problems. NZ Sphagnum moss is more robust, does not break down and can last as long as the Orchiata.

Does Orchiata accumulate salts and need flushing?

No; Orchiata is not like other bark based substrates. As Pinus Radiata bark is not soft and spongy it does not absorb additional salts. It only holds enough nutrients on the outside layer of the chip for the plant. To check this you can test the EC of the Orchiata over time. There is no need for flushing; just good water and fertiliser management.

How can you tell when Orchiata is dry enough to rewater?

It is important that you allow Orchiata to dry sufficiently before rewatering. These wet and dry cycles help to control fungi and insect growth which leads to stronger root growth. You can tell when Orchiata has dried sufficiently by either picking up the pot and feeling the weight (a dry pot will be very light compared to a wet pot); or by carefully digging down into the media – the media should be dry for the first 2 – 3cm (in small pots) and 4 – 5 cm in bigger pots.

How often you water the orchid will depend on the orchid type, pot type and time of year.

What fertilizer works best?

You can use any fertilizer that is suited to orchids in Orchiata. Although a granular fertilizer is less labour intensive, liquid or foliar feed is common especially for Phalaenopsis type orchids. It is up to the grower what they will use for a fertilizer.

Do I need to wash Orchiata?

No, Orchiata does not need to be washed before use; it should be used straight from the bag. Unlike some other bark products, Orchiata:

Has not been contaminated by soil or other organic matter

Does not contain high salt

Does not contain high amounts of bark dust as processing removes this

If you DO wash Orchiata you will wash out the dolomite, which we have added during production as it is beneficial for plant growth. Washing Orchiata will unnecessarily increase labour costs, while destroying one of the key benefits of the product.

