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Vanda

Introduction

Vanda are an interesting orchid which can be grown without growing medium. Native to the Himalayas, all through Asia, Australia, and New Guinea; some of the most popular species are epiphytic plants which grow on various parts of trees. *Vanda* have very robust aerial roots which extract moisture from the atmosphere. These orchids are grown for their stunning floral colour which may occur throughout the year. Some related genera such as the Mokara, and Dimorphorchis however are partially terrestrial and require much more wet conditions at their roots. Bare root basked culture is preferred as a convenience by most growers; however stunning specimens have been seen in pots.



Pot type:

As quite a lot of *Vanda* are epiphytic and their roots require a large amount of air. They will grow well in baskets or on bark slabs as long as roots are able to hang from the vessel. The plants do not like to be repotted therefore these plants should be potted once and then left alone. Orchiata is a fantastic media, especially the Power+ and Super as it will not decay. The added moisture supplemented by the Orchiata will result in an increase of growth, especially in the 'real' pure *vandas* and closely related varieties. Ascocenda as an example, have Ascocentrum as an ancesto, and recently being potted.

Grades to use:

The important feature here is air. *Vanda* can grow in the largest grade Super Orchiata and using Super in the baskets similar to those used in Thailand will result in improved growth, especially for the Sanderiana influenced hybrids.

Humidity, Irrigation and Air:

Vanda prefers good amounts of water during the growing and flowering seasons, they should be watered every day during the warmer months and humidity kept high. Much of the moisture is absorbed through the roots by humid vapour. After flowering do not water for a few weeks to give the plants a rest period. Maintain good air movement and allow roots to dangle.

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Just Moss Canada
a division of Western Marine Company
T 604 253 6679
E sales@justmossCanada.ca



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Temperature:

Vanda are hot growing for the 'Sanderiana' types hybrids, and cooler to cold growing for the blue ones (the *Vanda coerulea* is in fact a cold growing species). However all can be grown in moderate temperatures of 28°C and nights of 12°C. Blue *vandas* will give their best growth and colour at cooler to cold temperature. It must be noted that most of the '*Vanda coerulea*' in the trade are complex look-alike hybrids and prefer slightly warmer temperatures. A real wild *Vanda coerulea* is usually cool to frost growing.

Light:

These orchids thrive on good light however as they are epiphytic, dappled canopy light is best. They can take full sun but a slight amount of shade will help to prevent burning of the foliage. The sanderiana types will take full sunlight, so will the teretree leafed *vandas* and mokaras. The blue ones prefer more shade.

Fertiliser:

Apply a 1g/L 20-20-20 every two weeks during peak growth period, during flowering replace with a floral booster fertiliser. During cooler months and rest periods feed once a month with a balanced fertiliser. Most *Vanda* do not need a real rest period to grow and bloom well.

General/Troubleshooting

To encourage flowering allow at least a 10°C difference between day and night temperatures. To encourage brighter flowers put budding plants into bright sunlight. *Vandas* are susceptible to fungi and viruses so ensure cleanliness and good conditions (good air movement, water and sunlight). One specific fungi the 'diamond fungus' and other varieties of leaf spots have come out of Thailand in recent years. Azoxystrobin, a newer generation fungicide, usually has a good curative effect.

Any *Vanda* displaying black crevices should be thrown away for fear of fusarium or rhizoctonia. Those two pathogens tend to develop relatively fast in pots with potting mix, but in plants with baskets are slow growing. Unfortunately, the wet/dry cycles will trigger sporulation, and hence contaminate the whole growing area.

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