

Phalaenopsis (Moth) Orchids

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Orchids are ancient plants believed to have evolved 83 million years ago



- A fungus gnat trapped in amber 45-55 million years ago. It is carrying a pollen sac from an orchid on the upper portion of a severed leg

Orchids are very ancient plants



- Amber-preserved bee carrying pollen of orchid *Meliorchis caribea*
- Dated to 15 -25 million years
- This extinct bee is preserved in amber. Its back is covered in orchid pollen and represents direct evidence of pollination in the fossil record.
- The orchid family today has 30,000 known species

Caring for Phalaenopsis Orchids



Phalaenopsis means
'moth like'
because of the flower form
and called phals. for short

Phalaenopsis Orchids

- Phalaenopsis Orchids phals. are the orchid you are most likely to be given or find in shops
- Their needs are simple and easy to meet in your home. They are a highly evolved and adaptable plant species able to tolerate a little neglect and abuse
- Some people treat them like cut flowers, discarding when flowering is finished
- If looked after, they grow more floriferous each year

Pragmatism

Give your plants as much indirect light as possible,
place within a meter of a bright window, avoiding direct sunlight
in autumn and winter could place in a South facing window

Water and feed regularly

either check if the compost is dry

or

simply water and feed, once a week or fortnight

Ensure compost fully drains by letting inner pot stand for
20 mins if not using an "orchid pot"

Phalaenopsis (Moth) Orchids

- Phals. are native to Southeast Asian rain forests (from India to China) where the climate is warm and humid
- Daytime temperatures in their native regions range from 20°C to 30°C during the day, with cooler nights
- In their natural surroundings, they grow as epiphytes (live in air), which means they don't need soil to thrive. Instead, they attach themselves to the bark of trees, extracting moisture and nutrients from the air and rain
- They are not parasitic and do not damage their host
- To care for them it helps to know a little about how the wild plants grow

Phalaenopsis



- Most orchids in the wild grow in tree canopies. They only use the trees for support and are not parasitic; but epiphyte which means they are “**air dwellers**”
- Nutrient requirements are low and the plants are very long lived
- They derive nutrients from detritus (dead leaves, insects and other creatures) which have died and are then dissolved in rain water that washes over the orchids roots
- The roots absorb moisture and nutrients directly from the air

Phalaenopsis



- Because roots are exposed to the air, they dry out when rain stops
- Important for the health of the plants and indicates how you must water and feed your plants
- When potted; need an “open” and coarse potting medium such as special conifer bark – called orchid bark that allows air circulation around the roots
- When you see orchid roots growing out of the pot, the plant is simply growing naturally. Those are feeding roots, can spray them
- Do not cut off the roots

Roots

- Phals. have thick, fleshy leaves and roots, that store water and nutrients. This allows the plants to survive long dry periods
- Roots are covered in a tissue called velamen, which acts as a sponge holding water and is enclosed in a one-way membrane

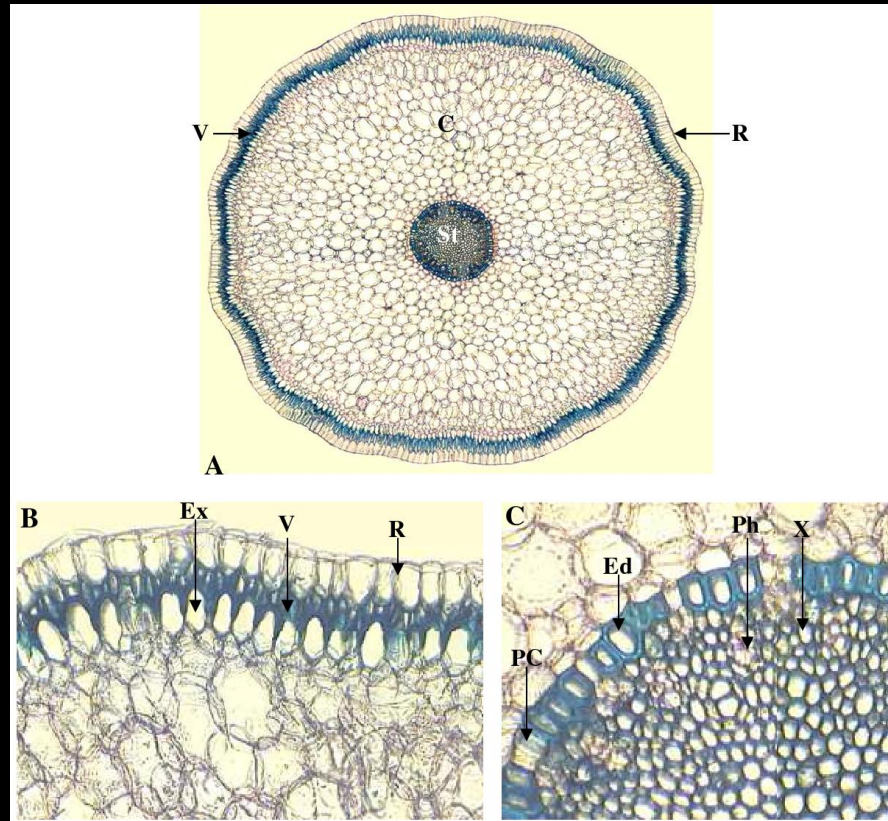


Fig. 1. Cross section of the aerial root ensemble (A: x 30), velamen (B: x 135) and stele (C: x 190).

- Phals. are perennial plants with an indefinite life span under good growing conditions
- Some species have a lot of small flowers known as multiflora, others are large-flowered called grandiflora, with flowers over ten centimetres across
- Flowers come in white, yellow, pink, and purple, and have flowers shaped and marked in different ways

Wild Phal. Orchids



Wild Phal. Orchids



How Long Do they Live

You might think they only live for a year or 2
Maybe 4 or 5 years

