

Selecting Plants

SAOS Beginners Culture Class - 2020-01 January

You hear all kinds of suggestions for how to select an orchid to bring home. Buy the largest plant you can afford, only buy blooming plants, buy a blooming plant each month to have flowers year-round, and on and on. There are so many different approaches to buying orchids, which is best for you?

Species and Hybrids. Some orchid growers love species, finding perfection in nature's beauty. Hobbyists and commercial growers line breed: self, sib and outcross species to change flower size, form, stem arrangement and other desirable qualities. Technically, hybrids are produced when two different species or hybrids are used to produce seedlings. Each seedling contains a unique combination of genes, so each seedling produced is, to some degree, unique, with variable growth habits and flowers. Sometimes a flower is so extraordinary, that it is cloned to produce an exact genetic replica, a mericlone. Mericlones are often given a cultivar name that follows the hybrid name within single quotation marks.

Mature Plants. New growers are often told to buy blooming sized plants, because it is easier to keep a mature plant healthy than it is to raise a seedling to blooming size. Plus, you know exactly what to expect when it reblooms next year. This is easier if your new orchid is healthy, particularly if you are just learning how to take care of orchids. Once you have decided on the plant with irresistible flowers, it is time to ignore the flower and inspect the plant to make sure it will not require any special attention in the near term.

- ★ *Well Rooted*
- ★ *Clean and Green Leaves*
- ★ *Plump Pseudobulbs*
- ★ *Plant Tags*

Seedlings. As you become more confident in your growing skills, you may find you are attracted to seedlings. They are less expensive, take up less space, and you will be the first to see it bloom, unless it is a mericlone. Some people buy multiples of seedlings of the same hybrid, so they can see how much variation there is in a cross. If you are at an orchid show or club meeting, you will often see a whole tray of seedlings offered for sale. Which one should you select? Pick out the one you think best, and then, if the sales booth is not too busy, ask the vendor which one they think you should buy. Then ask why, some suggest:

- ★ *Strong Growths*
- ★ *Healthy Runts*
- ★ *Wide Leaves*
- ★ *Unbloomed*

Vendors. Get to know your vendors. Some growers have stellar reputations for healthy, well-grown plants, making high quality hybrids or having unusual plants. You will meet them at your local Society and at Orchid Shows. Ask questions when you purchase a plant

Additional Links:

[Tips for Beginners](#), Courtney Hackney
[Orchids for Beginners: Your First Orchid](#), Courtney Hackney
[Understanding Your Plant Label](#), Courtney Hackney

[Selecting New Plants](#), Sue Bottom
[Bringing Home New Orchids](#), Sue Bottom